

Kurahara Korehito's Road to Proletarian Realism

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Kurahara Korehito became the leading Marxist theoretician during the heyday of the Japanese proletarian art movement in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Emerging as the “winner” from a series of famous theoretical disputes, it was Kurahara who came to define orthodox theory within the politicized part of the movement. It was he who set the agenda for much of the theoretical debate, both concerning organizational matters and artistic method. Yet he and others were criticized, at the time as well as in retrospect, for precipitating the decline of the movement by subjecting proletarian art to direct political dictates. This article examines Kurahara's critical discourse in essays on literary method published from 1928 until his arrest in 1932. It seeks to determine, from the points of view of narratology and Marxist criticism, whether Kurahara's insistence on party literature contributed to the demise of the movement. A close reading of Kurahara's essays on literary method reveals that in fact he advocated an unbiased, critical type of realism largely in line with received notions of literary quality. The charge that his views were destructive of the proletarian literary movement thus appears unwarranted. On the other hand, the article concludes, mistakes concerning organizational matters, rather than strictly literary concerns, did play a part in the eventual demise of the movement.

Keywords: KURAHARA KOREHITO, PROLETARIAN LITERARY MOVEMENT, PROLETARIAN REALISM, MARXIST CRITICISM, LITERARY THEORY, NARRATOLOGY, EARLY SHŌWA, JAPANESE COMMUNIST PARTY, SOVIET INFLUENCE

Introduction

This essay deals with critique on literary method that Kurahara Korehito 蔵原惟人 (1902–1991) wrote from 1928 up until his arrest in 1932. This period was the heyday of the proletarian cultural movement in Japan,¹ and during it Kurahara emerged as the leading theoretician of the movement and overall one of its most prominent figures.

The road to prominence for Kurahara led through Moscow. Following study of Russian

language at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, he went to the Soviet Union to study Russian literature in 1925. While there he served as a special correspondent to the newspaper *Miyakoshinbun* 都新聞. After returning to Japan in 1926, he joined the proletarian literary movement; from March 1927, he began to contribute to the magazine *Literary Front* (*Bungei sensen* 文芸戦線). He established himself as a Marxist literary critic, and put his Russian to use by translating and introducing fundamental Marxist theories of art by Plekhanov and others. When the Japan Proletarian Arts League (Nihon Proletaria Geijutsu Renmei 日本プロレタリア芸術連盟) famously split in June of 1927, essentially over the question of the relationship between political parties and art organizations, Kurahara joined the breakaway faction. He and his group maintained that there was value in the unique character of art, while their opponents held that the only proper function of art was propaganda in the service of enlightenment of the masses. Via the formation of and participation in various other federations, Kurahara in March of 1928 succeeded in bringing the divided movement together—except for writers and critics now associated with the *Literary Front*—in a united front. The vehicle for this united front was the All Japan Federation of Proletarian Arts (Zen Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Renmei 全日本無産者芸術聯盟).² Popularly called Nappu ナップ, this organization was launched on 25 March in response to the crisis brought about by the nationwide political suppression of the leftist movement in the so-called March 15 Incident.

Emerging unblemished in a series of famous theoretical debates or *ronsō* 論争—for instance the debate over the popularization of art (*geijutsu taishūka ronsō* 芸術大衆化論争), the greatest debate of all within the proletarian literature movement; the debate over artistic value (*geijutsu kachi ronsō* 芸術価値論争); or the debate over formalism (*keishikishugi ronsō* 形式主義論争)—Kurahara came to be regarded as the foremost Marxist literary critic, succeeding to a role that had earlier been played by Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke 平林初之輔 and Aono Suekichi 青野季吉.³

Kurahara joined the Japanese Communist Party in April 1929, and a year later was forced to go underground when a warrant was issued for his arrest. Evading the police, he left Japan in June 1930, bound once more for the Soviet Union. Commissioned by the Communist Party's central committee to work for Comintern, he made plans for a long-term sojourn in Russia. Those plans were cut short by a roundup of Communist Party leaders back in Tokyo, following which Kurahara returned secretly to Japan in February of the following year. After his return he continued writing energetically, on both organizational matters and art theory, with the aim of revitalizing the stagnating movement. In Moscow Kurahara had attended the fifth congress of the Profintern (the Red International of Labor Unions), and he brought back to Japan the resolution that the agitation and propaganda section of that congress had adopted. Guided by that resolution, Kurahara advocated the restructuring of the movement with factories and villages as its basis. The idea was to form popular art circles in factories and villages in order to expand the movement into a mass movement. These circles were further organized under a central organ, the Japan Proletarian Culture Federation (Nihon Proletaria Bunka Renmei 日本プロレタリア文化連盟), or Koppu, established at the instigation of Kurahara in November of 1931. With the earlier Nappu as its power base, the later Koppu was intended as a legal organization that would unite the proletarian art movement centrally under the influence of the illegal Communist party. Hereby a pyramidal organization structure



Fig. 1. Kurahara Korehito with a copy of *Pravda*, by Nagata Isshū 永田一脩, 1928, said to have been exhibited at the first exhibition of proletarian art. Private collection.

was put in place, something that would have great impact on the movement's future activity. The formation of Koppu became Kurahara's last major organizational achievement and also the last major developmental change in the proletarian movement itself. At the beginning of 1932 the total number of copies of periodicals associated with Koppu is said to have reached 140,000 on a monthly basis.⁴ However, this point in time marked the movement's last moment of glory before its total collapse in 1934. In March 1932, Koppu was severely suppressed by the authorities. A month later, the police arrested Kurahara.

It was thus that Kurahara became the chief ideologue within the All Japan Federation of Proletarian Arts and the leading critic and theoretician writing for *Battle Flag* (*Senki* 戦旗), the official organ of the federation. The federation, which was undeniably under the influence of the Japanese Communist Party and Soviet guidelines, propagated a proletarian culture based on Marxist-Leninist principles. Its posture on culture placed it in sharp opposition to writers and critics associated with the less rigorous, in terms of political ideology, *Literary Front*. Within the context of the opposition that characterized the revolutionary art movement in Japan—some writers took a Marxist standpoint, others adopted social democratic ideas, and still others defined themselves as anarchists—Kurahara thus identified with the Marxists throughout. *Senki*, although not officially affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party, was

treated as a party publication. Used by the party in its cultural enlightenment campaign, *Senki* thus became the main, if not the only, legal means by which the banned communist party could disseminate its political credo, albeit in cultural disguise. Kurahara himself served as a member of the party's central propaganda section.

The discourse on literary method carried on by Kurahara and others was a weapon in ideological warfare. A vital part of a political project that had wide dimensions, it cannot be dismissed as harmless pedantry. In this sense, Kurahara's oeuvre can be read as documents that reflect the spirit of an important aspect of the age. He is of special significance, and merits our attention today, not only because he was the leading Marxist cultural critic of his times, but also because he focused on both practical, organizational matters and purely literary methodological concerns. Not surprisingly, his writings in both of these fields are characterized by the same revolutionary fervor.

All of Kurahara's writings from this time are imbued with utopian rhetoric and bear the unmistakable impress of the times, the times when Soviet socialism still seemed a very tangible alternative and attainable goal.⁵ They are underpinned by the conviction that history is being made here and now and that history is on "our" side. An unwavering faith in the eventual coming of socialism permeates all of his essays from this period.⁶ They seem to be written in a permanent state of kingdom come. Persistent struggle (*shitsuyōna tōsō* 執拗な闘争) is the mantra around which his arguments enfold. A recurring observation, whether it concerns the depiction of fictional characters in literature or the organization of cultural circles at factories, is that the movement is on the correct course but that what has been achieved so far is insufficient (*fujūbun* 不十分). Thus the gaze at a bright socialist future is constantly coupled with the methodological predilection for self-criticism. Contrary to what one might expect from a devoted and partial (Kurahara himself would insist it has all to do with objective historical analysis and nothing to do with partiality) political propagandist like Kurahara, his style is anything but trite or tiresome. Despite a definite streak of stereotypical Marxist jargon, for instance in the manner of accusing opponents of opportunism (*hiyorimishugi* 日和見主義) or defeatism (*haibokushugi* 敗北主義), and a certain didactic tone, his essays are a pleasant read. One recognizes Kurahara by his exceptionally concise and matter-of-fact discourse. More than anything else, his analysis is always down to earth, rooted in concrete reality and dealing with specific issues. A movement toward the concrete informs it. Thus, concreteness is defined not only as the guiding principle for proletarian writers to adhere to; it defines his own analytical approach. Consequently, the reading impression to be gained is that Kurahara writes for practical purposes, not for the sake of intellectual exercise. In a foreword to the edition of his collected essays written in 1966, Kurahara states that most of his critique from this period was written in response to specific needs and demands of the revolutionary and cultural movement at a certain time.⁷ Hence, while the various essays raise specific problems stemming from the practice of the movement, they may also for that very reason lack in systematization, Kurahara admits. Indeed, as we have seen, many of his texts are written as contributions to what have since become famous theoretical debates. In these debates it was invariably Kurahara who took the initiative. Usually, it was his standpoint that in the end became orthodox theory within the cultural movement.⁸

Overall, Kurahara's oeuvre gives an overwhelming impression of certitude. In retrospect it is hard to imagine the idealistic faith in the future that he and others in the proletarian

cultural movement expressed. Could they possibly have been so naïve? Or were they actually more calculating? Was the self-imposed rhetorical optimism dictated more by tactical concerns than honest beliefs?⁹ At any rate, there is no mistaking the idealistic optimism that the movement practiced and encouraged. At the same time one cannot help but marvel at how what once obviously induced so much hope would wither away so suddenly. As for Kurahara, he spent the years between 1932 and 1940 in prison, holding out as one of the very few imprisoned activists never to renounce Marxist beliefs (*tenkō* 転向). Immediately after the war he helped to form the New Japanese Literary World (Shin Nihon Bungakkai 新日本文学会) as a sort of successor to literary organizations of the proletarian movement, albeit not to the same scope or intent. Besides continuing his critical work he, among other things, also served as the head of the cultural section of the Japanese Communist Party for a period of time.

The relatively short-lived, if intense, proletarian cultural movement in Japan has generated an astonishing amount of discourse—so much, that to give a general overview of it once more, or to list again the important sources, has become meaningless. To begin with, it seems most of the surviving main figures of the movement felt compelled to record analyses of what took place during those hectic years, sometimes with obvious intent to provide retrospective justification for their own roles. Additionally, a veritable mountain of research by non-participants has accumulated over the years. However, to the best of my knowledge, the majority of existing presentations on the movement concentrate on its historical development. These accounts survey factional warfare within the movement, carefully listing the actors belonging to this or that faction at a particular point in time, in order to trace the development and eventual demise of the various proletarian cultural organizations belonging to it. Sometimes these accounts are coupled with an outline of the content of famous literary debates that were the cause or effect of the warfare, but the focus is on polemical issues.

It is not my purpose to add to the massive body of research by recounting Kurahara's role in this context, something that has been done by himself and others countless times already.¹⁰ On the contrary, my focus here is literary method, an area that is underrepresented in previous research. Therefore, this article *deliberately* steers clear of historical aspects of the movement and the issues of contention that regularly appear in writings within the field, in order to concentrate solely on Kurahara's methodological discourse on proletarian realism.

My purpose is twofold. First, I propose to present and discuss Kurahara's ideas from the perspective of narratological notions of literary technique on the one hand and from the perspective of Marxist literary critique in general on the other. Second, this article addresses another matter. Much of the critique on proletarian literature seems to be informed by the tacit assumption that since the movement ultimately failed it was necessarily doomed from its conception because of artistic shortcomings. There seems to be a critical agreement—at least among those who take an overall negative stance—that the movement killed itself by constant infighting and by subjugating literature to a political straitjacket even before authorities had a chance to crush it. This critique is, in the final analysis, directed against leftist theoreticians who supposedly suppressed writers' creative powers by subjecting them to political dictates or ideals that they could not realize in writing. The proletarian writer Tokunaga Sunao 徳永直 provided a representative statement of this view. Attacking Kurahara's advocacy of the method of dialectical materialism, Tokunaga likened the subjective and abstract attitude—

the purported practical outcome of the method—to a large cancerous tumour. To Tokunaga, it seemed that the method had resulted in: “The way of first bringing up a slogan and then thinking of a theory and next to gather up people and trifles that conform to these (although such things are inconceivable in reality). This trait . . . exists in all writers, beginning with Kobayashi Takiji. Needless to say, this tendency is something produced by guiding policy.”¹¹ In this context I intend to bring up Kurahara’s critique as a test case. By reading Kurahara side by side with the actual works of fiction that he discusses, I aim to investigate the appropriateness of this tacit understanding. In other words, did Marxist critics, here represented by Kurahara, actually propose an artistically inept kind of party literature that in effect precipitated the premature demise of the movement?

Kurahara wrote five articles that deal with the question of literary method in concrete terms. These articles were meant as practical guidelines for writers to follow in order to create a truly proletarian literature at the service of the class struggle. They are of particular interest because they belong to the body of fundamental texts of Marxist literary criticism in Japan. I will center this essay on these five articles.

Art as Organization of Life and the Proletarian Class

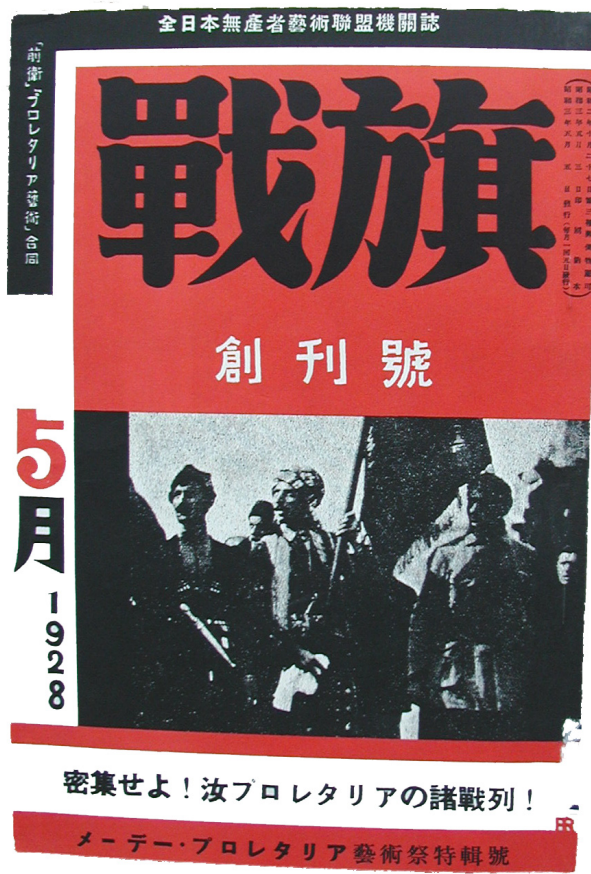


Fig. 2. Cover of first issue of *Senki*, May 1928, in which Kurahara’s “Puroretaria rearizumu e no michi” appeared.

As already mentioned, Kurahara’s essays from this period are roughly divided into those that deal with literary, artistic matters and those that deal with organizational matters of the movement. In the former category, the one that is the object of this study, his texts treating the subject of realism are surely his most important contribution to critical method. His “Puroretaria rearizumu e no michi” プロレタリア・レアリズムへの道 (The Road to Proletarian Realism), published in the first issue of *Senki* (May 1928), for example, was the first piece by a writer of the proletarian literary movement to address the problem of creative method in concrete terms.¹² This article was intended as a sequel to his earlier “Seikatsu soshiki to shite no geijutsu to

musan kaikyū” 生活組織としての芸術と無産階級 (Art as Organization of Life and the Proletarian Class),¹³ which appeared in the April 1928 issue of *Vanguard* (*Zen'ei* 前衛). As he later explained, these articles were meant to be a critique of both the naturalistic method still prevalent in *Bungei sensen* and the view, carried over from the Japan Proletarian Arts League, of literature as a mere march bugle (*shingun rappa* 進軍ラッパ) or artistic weapon (*buki no geijutsu* 武器の芸術).¹⁴

In the earlier essay Kurahara identifies two types of art for the purpose of the liberation of the proletariat. The first one is constituted by the art of the proletariat's subjective, or lyric, self-expression. This type is further divided into agitation art (*sendō geijutsu* 煽動芸術) and propaganda art (*senden geijutsu* 宣伝芸術). Moreover, this type facilitates the organization of life (proletarian art organizes the life of the masses in the direction of true proletarian emotion, thought and will), which Kurahara defines as art's most important function. Nevertheless, he warns of the strong tendency within parts of the camp to try to restrict the role of art to agitation and propaganda, important though these aspects may be, and points out that the field of proletarian art is much wider than this. Hence, he goes on to define the second type of proletarian art as an objective, epic art designed to facilitate an objective and concrete awareness of reality. Kurahara argues that if we were to rely on scientific analysis alone in order to attain awareness of the objective situation of workers, farmers and the petite bourgeoisie, then we would gain no more than an abstract and conceptual understanding of their situation. This is not enough. We need to know, he continues, case by case and in concrete terms what kinds of workers, farmers, and petite bourgeoisie exist, what kinds of life they are leading, and what emotions, thoughts and will they have.¹⁵ That is why, he concludes, an art that portrays this reality correctly, objectively, and concretely is needed. Notably, this call for greater specificity runs like a leitmotif throughout Kurahara's critique. It is not enough, he argues, to talk about workers or farmers; we need more concrete knowledge of what subgroups of these that we are dealing with.

At the end of his article Kurahara turns to matters concerning creative method: “At this moment in time our country's proletarian writers and artists must immerse themselves in every nook and corner of contemporary life and take correct objective and concrete notes of that life.”¹⁶ He stresses that what is needed is a record of contemporary life that as a first prerequisite represents reality and, second, represents reality correctly. At this stage, Kurahara turns to the socialist theme of having reality on our side:

The bourgeoisie fears describing the reality of this life since the reality of life turns its back on the bourgeoisie. However, the proletariat correctly perceives this reality and is able to represent it fearlessly since reality is an ally of the proletariat. Consequently, there is no need for us to embellish reality. Nay, all that we need is a description of reality without deceit. First of all we must eliminate that subjective, conceptual embellishment of reality that has hitherto colored most of our country's proletarian art.¹⁷

What is important to note here from a methodological point of view is that Kurahara is far from advocating any sort of so-called kitchen-sink realism: “However, to take concrete notes of life does certainly not mean to make a simple copy of life. The artist removes incidental and unnecessary things from this reality and has to have eyes discerning enough

to discover inevitable and necessary things in there.”¹⁸ In order to stake out the road to proletarian realism, Kurahara relies on Vissarion Belinsky’s (1811–1848) simile of reality as pure gold in a lump of ore and clay: art purifies and forms this reality of gold into beautiful shape. The road to true realism in art, Kurahara concludes, lies in chiselling out “a reality beyond reality” (*genjitsu ijō no genjitsu* 現実以上の現実).¹⁹

“Seikatsu soshiki to shite no geijutsu to musan kaikyū” was the first in a series of articles to take up the problem of realistic method. Although Kurahara has been credited with breaking new ground for the movement by giving writers concrete and practical advice, his guidelines are in fact quite vague and ambivalent at this early stage. One wonders, for instance, what exactly he meant by the phrase to “immerse oneself in every nook and corner of contemporary life and take correct, objective and concrete note of that life.” He seems to be exhorting writers to some kind of anthropological method of participation observation, reminiscent perhaps of Aono Suekichi’s notion of an investigated art as laid forth in “‘Shirabeta’ geijutsu” 「調べた」芸術 (Art that Has Investigated, in *Bungei sensen*, 1925:7), which advocated a method of searchingly and willfully investigating reality. Or should Kurahara rather be taken as calling for writers to apply their imagination only to subject matter from contemporary life that they have actually experienced, thus akin to the method supposedly adhered to by proponents of the I-novel (*shishōsetsu* 私小説)?

The Road to Proletarian Realism

Unfortunately, the picture does not get much clearer when we turn to Kurahara’s next article, the famous “Puroretaria rearizumu e no michi.” Here, he contrasts proletarian realism with the preceding genre of naturalism, which he taxonomizes as consisting of two distinct literary types, bourgeois realism and petit bourgeois realism. His point of departure is a notion of modern realism as first occurring together with naturalism—vice versa: naturalism set off with realism—in France during the 1860s centering on authors such as Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, Zola, Daudet, and Maupassant. Thus, by identifying naturalism with both an earlier bourgeois and a later petit bourgeois realism, Kurahara employs a somewhat wider concept of naturalism than the prevalent one that takes Zola as the progenitor of the movement. For Kurahara, naturalism appeared as a reaction against romanticism under the mottoes “return to reality” (*genjitsu e no fukki* 現実への復帰), “defeat of tradition” (*inshū no daba* 因習の打破), and “liberation of the self” (*kosei no kaihō* 個性の解放).²⁰ Naturalism was furthermore marked by the modern bourgeoisie’s aspiration for portraying reality as reality, objectively and without embellishments. However, the limitation that the earlier type of bourgeois realism, exemplified by *Madame Bovary* and Tayama Katai’s 田山花袋 *Futon* 蒲団 (*The Quilt*), was unable to overcome lay in the fact that it sought after something absolute and eternal within the individual and came up with man’s biological nature. Consequently, matters that had no direct connection with man’s instinct, like social life, were out of sight for these writers.

Petit bourgeois realism, on the other hand, exemplified by Zola’s *Germinale* and Shimazaki Tōson’s 島崎藤村 *Hakai* 破戒 (*The Broken Commandment*), constituted an improvement inasmuch as it at least took a social standpoint, even though relying on an individualistic perspective in the final analysis. For Kurahara the limitation of this type of

realism lay in its petit bourgeois subjectivity. He places the petite bourgeoisie in a mediate position, constantly vacillating, unable to either take a purely bourgeois stance or actively moving over to the proletarian one. As a result, they mostly stand for “harmony among the classes” (*kaikyū chōwa* 階級調和) in terms of politics and economics, while acting as accomplices of philanthropy, righteousness, and humanity mentally and morally speaking. These traits are exemplified within Zola's *Germinale*. This novel portrays a coal miners' strike that is defeated and handed over to the reformists. According to Kurahara, this is so far so good, as this depiction is in line with the natural attitude of a realist. The problem, however, was that Zola, while choosing such a conflict as his subject matter, portrayed the outcome *as if* it were a victory for the “doctrine of harmony among the classes” (*kaikyū chōwa shugi* 階級調和主義). Thus, Zola's effort to portray his material from a societal viewpoint, in itself correct, was defeated by his own intermediate class position, which did not allow for a correct historical and objective command of this material.²¹

It is against the background of these two types of realism that Kurahara moves on to delineate proletarian realism. He stresses that proletarian writers need to inherit the objective attitude towards reality—the attitude of trying to portray reality as reality, without any subjective structure or subjective embellishment—from previous types of realism. According to him, it is exactly this attitude that has been lacking in much of proletarian literature in Japan in the past. Since Kurahara arguably contradicts himself on this point, the well-known end of the essay merits quoting:

What is of importance for us *is not to distort or embellish reality according to our subjectivity, but lies in discovering in reality those things that are commensurate with our subjectivity, i.e., the class subjectivity of the proletariat*. In this way only will we for the first time be able truly to put our literature to the use of the proletarian class struggle. In other words, firstly, to look at the world with “the eyes” of the proletarian vanguard and, secondly, to portray this with the attitude of a strict realist—this is the only road to proletarian realism.²²

Read closely there seems to be a leap in logic involved here. To discover in reality what is commensurate with the class subjectivity of the proletariat by looking at the world with the eyes of the proletarian vanguard—does this writer's stance not entail portraying reality based on a subjective structure, the very thing Kurahara is warning against?²³ In order to answer this question we need to go back a few lines in the text to see how this argument makes sense to a Marxist mind. Earlier Kurahara has stated that the crux of the matter lies in the perspective applied by the writer and not necessarily in the subject matter. Therefore, the proletarian writer portrays not only the fighting proletariat, but all types of people that have some kind of connection to the emancipation of the proletariat: workers, farmers, the petite bourgeoisie, soldiers, and capitalists. But in doing so he portrays them from a class perspective, “the only objective perspective at present” (*genzai ni okeru yuiitsu no kyakkanteki kanten* 現在における唯一の客観的観点).²⁴ Thus, by defining class perspective the only objective perspective Kurahara makes his argument failsafe. All of a sudden, looking at the world with the eyes of the proletarian vanguard becomes an act of objectivity that does not contradict the prohibition against relying on subjective structures.²⁵

In this context it should be noted that Kurahara's first requirement, to "look at the world with the 'eyes' of the proletarian vanguard," actually defies certain received notions about literary realism in general. Elsewhere in the article he clarifies that the perspective of the struggling proletariat decides the subject matter for the proletarian writer: "He removes from this reality things that are useless for, and accidental to, the emancipation of the proletariat and picks up things useful for, and inevitable to it."²⁶ From the previous article it has already become clear that Kurahara envisages the vanguard eye to discern what is necessary, inevitable and typical in the flux of reality and to remove from it the accidental and useless. For this purpose the artist needs to rely on his artistic wisdom and sense. Hence, Kurahara's requirement is directly contrary to notions of reality that encompass the narrative device of "reality effect," first identified by Roland Barthes in his analysis of *Madame Bovary* and defined by Gerald Prince as

a seemingly functionless detail . . . presumably mentioned for no other reason than the fact that it is part of the reality represented. Reality effects (*effets de reel*) are exemplary connotators of the real (they signify 'this is real'), and an abundance of them characterizes realistic narrative.²⁷

This approach to literary realism obviously verges on "copying life," the very authorial stance that Kurahara warns against. To avoid that pitfall, in stark contrast to Barthes' type of realism, proletarian realism relies on the "vanguard eye" to root out details functionless to the emancipation of the proletariat and consequently deemed useless to narrate. Thus, Kurahara's type of realism appears more like realism with a bias. It is this very bias that makes it proletarian in character. Seen from a different perspective, all realisms are biased by necessity, since a choice of what to narrate and what to leave out is necessarily involved in the very act of narrating. In this sense the reality effect is no more than an illusion, created by reading conventions, since no "abundance" of detail can begin to resemble reality anyway.

Interestingly, Kurahara later remarked that he planned to address this very question regarding the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in a third article, which he intended to call "Geijutsu no kaikyūsei to kaikyūgeijutsu no kyakkansei" 芸術の階級性と階級芸術の客観性 (The Class Nature of Art and the Objective Nature of Class Art). For various reasons, this article was never written. Kurahara also reflected years later on that his understanding of literary history and art theory had been defective when he wrote "Puroretaria rearizumu e no michi," and this had erroneously led him to the opinion that naturalism was representative of bourgeois realism. As a result, he felt, he had not correctly dealt with the tradition of so-called critical realism that had emerged with Stendhal, Balzac, and Dickens in the 1830s, and consequently he had not concretely addressed the question of the succession to bourgeois realism.²⁸ It is noteworthy in this connection that Marxist critics in general (Georg Lukács is representative) compare the realist tradition of Balzac and Stendhal favorably to Zola's naturalism:

It might more legitimately surprise many that these studies express a sharp opposition to Zola and Zolaism. . . . The problem was first raised (apart from the Russian democratic literary critics) by Engels, when he drew a comparison between Balzac and Zola. Engels showed that Balzac, although his political creed was legitimist

royalism, nevertheless inexorably exposed the vices and weakness of royalist feudal France and described its death agony with magnificent poetic vigour.²⁹

The critique of “Zolaism” is based on the grounds that it concentrates on incidental trivia, on the average rather than the typical, and that it places too much emphasis on socially irrelevant matters such as instinct and sexual desire.

The Road to Proletarian Realism Revisited

Kurahara further developed his ideas on realism in “Futatabi puroretaria rearizumu ni tsuite” 再びプロレタリア・リアリズムについて (The Road to Proletarian Realism Revisited). This article, first serialized in *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞 11–14 August 1929, was allegedly written as a retort to criticism of the method of proletarian realism levelled by Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke 平林初之輔 in the same newspaper on 3 July 1929. What is of importance for present purposes is the way in which Kurahara refines his vision of the proletarian method. Quoting Lenin's axiom “reality is persistent,” Kurahara claims that to start from the persistent reality (*shitsuyōna genjitsuljijitsu kara shuppatsu suru koto* 執拗な現実—事実から出発すること) is the first requirement of proletarian realism. Here he reiterates his warning that this requirement by no means implies an enumeration of trivialities without the application of any perspective in particular—proletarian realism is fundamentally different from such superficial, trivial realism since it possesses a method of looking at reality, namely the method of dialectical materialism (*yuibutsu benshōhō* 唯物弁証法).³⁰ He does not elaborate on dialectical materialism's implications for literature, but summarily asserts that its application will enable proletarian realism to extract essentials from the extreme complexity of social phenomena and to portray them from the perspective of the direction in which they are inevitably heading.³¹ In other words: “Proletarian realism is nothing else than something that grasps society in its movement and expresses artistically, that is to say in the language of images, how it is inevitably moving towards victory of the proletariat.” Therefore, it may be labelled dynamic (*dōteki aruiwa rikigakuteki* 動的或いは力学的) realism as opposed to the older type of static (*seiteki* 静的) realism.³²

Next, Kurahara moves on to repeat his view that proletarian realism stands in sharp opposition to older types of realism, especially naturalistic realism, concerning the perception of the relationship between society and the individual: “We should not look for the motive power that moves society within the individual, on the contrary, it is precisely within society that we have to discover the causes of the individual's character, ideas and will.” This is where the second requirement of proletarian realism arises: it is always to view and portray everything from a social, class perspective (*shakaiteki, kaikyūteki kanten kara* 社会的、階級的観点から).³³ As the most eminent model to emulate, Kurahara singles out Alexander Fadeyev's novel *The Rout* (*Razgrom*, 1927). In this novel, which describes the Red partisans fight against Cossack forces and Japanese interventionists in the Far East during the Russian Civil War, Kurahara finds the characters' social and class appearances, as well as their roles in history, to be brilliantly depicted. He does not elaborate further at this point, but in all probability he is referring to features of the novel such as the eventual—Marxist rhetoric would probably have it as “inevitable”—defection and betrayal of Metchik, the sleek, well-mannered city boy who joins the partisans after indulging in romantic and naive reveries about revolutionary

guerrilla warfare. After Metchik's escape, which directly endangers the lives of the surviving partisans, Fadeyev shows class-consciousness as inexorably urging him on to the road back to the city despite feelings of remorse and self-pity because of his shameful act.³⁴ It is readily apparent why Kurahara hailed *The Rout* as a masterpiece. The dramatis personae are portrayed as ultimately driven by their respective class attributes, but the depiction as such does not rely on revolutionary terminology or trite set-phrases. On the whole the characters are round and believable, not stereotypes with predictable behavior. In short, *The Rout* does not read like a novel with a purpose. On the contrary, unless read very closely, it appears quite non-tendentious.

Kurahara is quick to point out that the social perspective he is referring to does not give an author permission to paint all people in a uniform color; on the contrary, without the depiction of living people (*ikita ningen no byōsha naku shite* 生きた人間の描写なくして) proletarian realism is inconceivable.³⁵ The reason for this impossibility is the fact that to depict abstract individuals as opposed to living people—within the art that is supposed to be the most embodied of all—contradicts the first requirement of starting from reality. Kurahara insists that people must be depicted in all their complexity and in their live form (*sono fukuzatsusei no naka ni, sono ikita keishō no naka ni* その複雑性の中に、その生きた形象の中に).³⁶ At this point he broaches the subject of psychologism or psychological depiction, which, according to him, has been boycotted within proletarian literature hitherto. To be true, he still advocates a strong opposition to absorption in the kind of private psychology that is cut off from society, à la Andrejev, Maeterlinck, or Strindberg. Here, Kurahara proposes a new way of approaching the problem of psychology. As opposed to bourgeois rationalists who tried to veil the subconscious behind the conscious, as well as opposed to the irrationalists of the late bourgeois era who declared that the subconscious world was all there was, the Marxist does not deny either realm.³⁷ The Marxist insists that, while the conscious and the subconscious interrelate mutually, in the end they are both controlled by material things, by real life (*genjitsuteki seikatsu* 現実的生活). Hence, by depicting conscious behavior alone, without mention of the subconscious, that character cannot be said to have been depicted in concrete form of flesh and blood. Therefore, proletarian realism requires becoming immersed in individual psychology and revealing it (*kojin no shinri ni made chinsen shite sore o shimesu koto* 個人の心理にまで沈潜してそれを示すこと). In doing so the proletarian writer seeks the origin of this psychology in society and determines its social equivalent. Kurahara again offers Fadeyev's *The Rout* as his prime example. From this argumentation Kurahara arrives at the third requirement of proletarian realism: "To grasp people on the whole, together with all their complexity."³⁸

The choice of *The Rout* as a lodestar for proletarian writers to follow when depicting human psychology also requires further commentary. First, it is interesting to notice that *The Rout* contains a surprising amount of depiction of characters' mental content, both conscious and subconscious. Read carefully, the psychological depiction of the novel shows how characters' behavior, consciously or not, conforms to their respective types and class attributes. Consider for example the following excerpt:

It had always seemed to Metelitsa that he did not like people, that he despised them for their dull and petty ways—they and everything about them. He had believed himself to be entirely indifferent to what people thought of him and what they

said of him; he had never had friends and had never sought them. Nonetheless, everything big and important he had done in life, although he himself was not aware of it, he had done because of his people and for his people, so that they might look at him with pride and admiration, and sing his praise.³⁹

As mentioned, Kurahara advocates psychology, the depiction of which he had so far found lacking in Japanese proletarian literature. In this context, note the well known letter that Kobayashi Takiji 小林多喜二 sent to Kurahara along with the manuscript of his *Kanikōsen* 蟹工船 (*The Factory Ship*, 1929), the most famous piece of fiction stemming from the movement.⁴⁰ To the man whom he looked up to as his mentor, Kobayashi interestingly comments on this very matter:

Of course, in this work each *individual's character and psychology*, like what I experimented with in *1928 nen 3 gatsu 15 nichi*, have totally disappeared. The depiction of delicate individual character and psychology is gradually beginning to disappear from proletarian literature. Judging from the fact that proletarian literature is communal literature, I think this has to become so. However, I have meant to take measures in order not to bring out the *deformities* and *dullness* that often come as a result [of not depicting character and psychology].⁴¹

In his review of *Kanikōsen* in The Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, dated June 1929, Kurahara mentions this private missive. Although he praises the novel as one of the most excellent works of late, he does not allow Kobayashi's view on the depiction of psychology to remain unchallenged. Initially, he commends *Kanikōsen* as a proletarian literary ideal; its powerful portrayal of a large social group, he observes, contrasts with bourgeois writers' obsession with the petty daily life and psychology of individuals. But always in Kurahara there is an important objection, a *however* (*shikashi* しかし). He counterbalances his approval of Kobayashi by warning of the danger of burying the individual in the group when concentrating on the portrayal of the latter:

Is the proletarian writer justified in totally burying the individual in order to portray the group? No. The materialistic view of history by no means denies the role of the individual in history and society. . . . Therefore, we do not raise the problem in the form of *individual or group*, but rather in the form of *an individual within the group*. I think that if the writer, having clearly realized this fact, had been able to depict the character and psychology of individuals in their capacity of representatives of each class and stratum, then this work might have turned out to be something even more splendid. Is not the reason for the occasional lack of a clear image, scene by scene, to be found in the fact that character and psychology are not depicted?⁴²

In contrast to Kobayashi's narrative ideal to blank out psychology, it is interesting to note that *The Rout*, the novel Kurahara lauded as a model for psychological depiction, even contains the modernistic literary technique of *interior monologue*, as in the following glimpse of the mental world of Levinson, the hero:

"Why this long, endless road, and these wet leaves, and this dead sky, for which I have no use now? Yes, I must get to the TUDO-VAKU valley. TUDO-VAKU valley—what a strange name! But how tired I am, how I long to sleep! What else can these men

want of me when I want to sleep so much? He's talking to me about scouts. Yes, to be sure, scouts. . . . He's got a round and kind head . . . like my son's . . . and of course we must send out scouts, and after that . . . sleep, sleep. . . . Not even like my son's, but. . . ."⁴³

As might be expected, the debate about psychological characterization had its parallel in the Soviet literary debate, where what may conventionally be termed “psychological realism,” a profound probing into the minds of fictional characters, was advocated as a means to the psychological re-education of man within the context of the cultural revolution. It was related to the depiction of the “living man,” one of the literary slogans of RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers.⁴⁴ In the larger scheme of things the slogan for “living people” aimed at shaping a perfect socialist man. Consequently, the depiction of the “living man” was given paramount significance and was even declared equivalent to applying the materialistic method in literature.⁴⁵

The Fight for Leninism in Art Theory

The last article in which Kurahara commented on the method of proletarian realism was “Geijutsu riron ni okeru Rēnin shugi no tame no tōsō” 芸術理論におけるレーニン主義のための闘争 (The Fight for Leninism in Art Theory). This article, which appeared under the pseudonym of Furukawa Sōichirō 古川莊一郎 in the November 1931 issue of *Nappu*, the official organ of the federation with the same name, was also the last major article he wrote before being arrested on 4 April the following year. It reveals undeniably that Kurahara was very strongly influenced by developments in Moscow.⁴⁶ He opens this article with the complaint that there has been no development whatsoever of Marxist art theory of late; on the contrary it has at times even retreated. He reiterates his claim that the development of the proletarian art movement is infeasible without a concomitant development of correct art theory. Referring to a recent political and theoretical reorientation in the Soviet Union, Kurahara levels harsh criticism against the art movement in Japan, himself in particular: “There is a need for directing the critique at Kurahara’s art theory in particular. This is definitely not because his theories contain the most errors, but rather because his theories are the most systemized and have exerted the greatest influence.”⁴⁷ The Soviet reorientation that Kurahara refers to is the thorough exposure of “Bukharin’s opportunistic theories” as well as of the “increasingly Menshevik idealism of the Deborin faction” and the fact that “the significance of the Leninist stage in philosophy has been clarified” (*tetsugaku ni okeru Rēninteki dankai no igi ga senmei sareta* 哲学におけるレーニンの段階の意義が闡明された).⁴⁸ Kurahara stresses that this development in the Soviet Union is of particular significance since Marxist theory had been imported to Japan exclusively via Bukharin and Deborin. It had thus not been inherited directly from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. In the art movement in Japan, Kurahara says, until recently guiding theory has been based on the idealism and mechanistic, syncretistic art theories of Plekhanov, Friche, Lunacharsky, and Bepalov, as well as on work by some of the leaders of RAPP. Such theories have hitherto been regarded as the orthodox school of Marxist thinking about art, even in the Soviet Union, and they have played an important role for the development of proletarian art theory. The time has now come, however, Kurahara goes on, to mercilessly criticize and to further develop these theories from the standpoint of the new stage of the practice of the international and national proletarian movement, as well as “from

the standpoint of the Leninist stage in philosophy” (*tetsugaku ni okeru Rēninteki dankai no kenchi kara* 哲学におけるレーニンの段階の見地から).⁴⁹ His self-criticism—“Furukawa’s” attack on Kurahara—was one of the first acts of merciless criticism that he now saw as necessary.

The recent developments in the Soviet Union and the Leninist stage that Kurahara mentions obviously refer to Stalin’s offensive on the theoretical front, starting in 1930, launched in order to “discredit and eliminate all rivals in the domain of theoretical Marxism and to assert himself as the only legitimate heir to the Marxist philosophical legacy.”⁵⁰ Although Kurahara does not mention Stalin in his article, it is interesting to note that his statement about the “disclosure” of “the increasing Menshevizing idealism of the Deborin group” (*Deborin ippa no menshevikika shitsutsu aru kannenron* デボーリン派のメンシェビキ化しつつある観念論)⁵¹ is a direct quote of Stalin from *Pravda*, as the following quotation shows:

On 9 December 1930, he [Stalin] attended the meeting of the above-mentioned Party cell [at the Institute of the Red Professors of Philosophy and Natural Science], where, for the first time, he defined the views of Deborin’s group as “Menshevizing idealism,” posed the problem of “clearing away all idealistic rubbish,” and urged that Lenin’s philosophical heritage be developed as “a foundation for further theoretical work on the philosophical front.” Stalin’s pronouncements appeared in *Pravda* for 26 January 1931.⁵²

This case shows that not only the “fight for Leninism” on the macro level, but also statements by Kurahara on the micro level, can be seen as conditioned by the debate in Moscow.

Having thus prepared the ground, Kurahara proposes to list suggestions for development of the movement based on criticism of his own theories. In this regard his commentary on the “question of art’s class attribute” (*geijutsu no kaikyūsei no mondai* 芸術の階級性の問題) is of special importance for the present discussion of literary method. Kurahara criticizes the tendency within the movement to divide content and form between two different classes, illustrated by such comments as “the content is proletarian but the form is petit bourgeois” (*naiyō wa puroretariateki da ga keishiki wa shōburujoateki da* 内容はプロレタリア的だが



Fig. 3. Cover of the final issue of *Nappu*, November 1931, in which Kurahara’s “Geijutsu riron ni okeru Rēnin shugi no tame no tōsō” appeared.

形式は小ブルジョア的だ).⁵³ On the contrary, following Lenin, the class attribute of art needs to be sought in the contradictions inherent in the unity of content and form:

The classic literary criticism that discovered the class attribute of art, not in its opposition of content and form but in the unity of that work itself, is Lenin's article discussing Tolstoy ("Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," *Collected Works*, vol. 15). Here he points out various internal contradictions in Tolstoy and clarifies their class attributes. We need to learn many things from Lenin also concerning the question of how to analyse works of art.⁵⁴

It is not surprising that the reappraisal of Tolstoy occurred in the context of Stalin's offensive on the theoretical front. As Herman Ermolaev notes, "The purge in philosophy entailed dethronement of Plekhanov as a Marxist theoretician, not to mention all other foreign and Russian Marxists, save Lenin. Stalin was acknowledged as an infallible Marxist authority." Moreover, the emphasis on Lenin's article on Tolstoy was no coincidence; it was one of the few texts to cling to, as "the effort to evolve a purely Leninist theory of art could not but be futile, because Lenin's doctrine simply did not provide sufficient pertinent material."⁵⁵

Although Kurahara does not state so specifically, Lenin's idea of literature as a "mirror" of society becomes relevant to the question of artistic value, to which he turns next. Here, he warns of falling into the trap of relativism by restricting artistic value to the socially utilitarian value at a certain time. Furthermore, it is not enough to merely specify the particular class ideology of which works of art are reflections:

Not only do works of art reflect the ideology of respective age and class, they also reflect, in some shape or other, the respective age's *objective reality* (nature as well as human life). Hence, when addressing the problem of the value of a piece of art we need to clarify the extent to which that work correctly reflects *the objectivity of that age's reality*. This is what constitutes art's *objective value*. Viewed from the opposite perspective, this is to clarify *how much the restraints of the age and class* to which a writer belonged (or belongs) *hinder the artistic reflection of objective truth*, or how much the class ideology of a writer distorts reality.⁵⁶

This discussion also relates to the question of methodology in art history. In this context Kurahara criticizes the tendency to content oneself with determining them as feudal, bourgeois, petit bourgeois, and so on in judging past works of art.

The *content* of this class attribute must be accounted for. That there exists some element of reflection of objective truth in it must not be overlooked. Consequently, it is wrong to characterize past art history as a "history of failure" and hence of no use to us. It has to be stipulated as *the developmental history of the correct artistic reflection of objective truth*.⁵⁷

Towards the end of his article Kurahara returns to the theme of merciless self-criticism. He calls for a struggle against endeavors to file away the proletarian movement's past art theories in the archives as possessing only historical significance. Only through the critical study of theories that have played a positive role at a certain historical stage will it be feasible to make progress toward more perfect theory. The movement hereafter has to further develop

the questions that have been broached in this article, he argues. This is a recurring narrative strategy in Kurahara. The impression he wants to convey to readers is of a theoretical movement inexorably heading in the direction of ever-higher refinement, of a mission in a permanent state of attaining higher perfection. It is obvious that the style is meant to infuse optimism into the movement through its rhetoric of certitude and assurance. Obviously, Marxist rhetoric does not leave any room for doubt. By an irony of fate Kurahara himself would be arrested and silenced within months, and the movement itself totally crushed within a few years. What happened, one might ask, with all “further developments”?

Thoughts on Artistic Method

We need to look a month or two earlier to find the essay in which Kurahara most systematically applies theory in the appraisal of actual works of fiction. “Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō” 芸術的方法についての感想 (Thoughts on Artistic Method) appeared in two long installments in *Nappu* in September and October 1931. For this essay, Kurahara chose the pseudonym Tanimoto Kiyoshi 谷本清. In it he provides a highly detailed and concrete methodological critique of Japan's proletarian literary movement.⁵⁸ He upbraids the movement for treating the question of “what” (*nani o 何を*) to portray as already having been solved. Referring to a list of sanctioned subject matters that had appeared in the July 1930 edition of *Senki*, Kurahara asserts that such mere enumeration, besides being inevitably incomplete, solves nothing unless this “what” is tied to a “how” (*nani o ika ni 何をいかに*). He elaborates his reasoning thus: In portraying for instance “vanguard activity” (*zen'ei no katsudō* 前衛の活動), one of the sanctioned subject matters on the list, the proletarian vanguard may be portrayed from a capitalist, social democratic, or proletarian perspective; even in the case of a seemingly proletarian standpoint, this vanguard might be portrayed either as a hero removed from the masses or as absorbed into the masses, as one of them; further, depending on the type of portrayal, a matter that does not appear to have any relation whatsoever to the class struggle may take on a positive significance. In other words, Kurahara continues, a subject matter is only an abstraction, a phenomenon divorced from the course of living reality. However, when both parameters of “what” and “how” are taken into consideration, it is “no longer a question of abstracted, separate ‘subject matters’ but a question of the core subject matter of the work as a part of the whole and a question of the theme, which comprises the writer's viewpoint on that subject matter.”⁵⁹ Elsewhere in this text, he defines theme as “subject matter arranged from the writer's perspective”: *shudai to iu no wa . . . sakusha no kanten kara seiri sareta daizai* 主題というのは…「作者の観点から整理された題材」.⁶⁰ Thus Kurahara urges writers to think in terms of subject matters integrated under a governing theme, rather than focusing on discrete subject matters. However, he argues, with the problem of theme, we have already entered into the domain of method, since the problem of method cannot be discussed without taking the problem of theme into consideration.⁶¹

Here, Kurahara seems to imply that the concept of sanctioning certain subject matters is flawed to begin with; since a correct understanding of subject matter involves the question of theme, the former cannot be considered in separation from artistic method. He advocates an approach of always connecting the problem of artistic method to the problem of theme

and, vice versa, the problem of artistic theme with the problem of method. Although the denomination *proletarian realism* had by this time already been replaced by *dialectical materialism* within the Soviet Union, Kurahara asserts that this was not because the call for proletarian realism pointed in the wrong direction to begin with. Rather, it was because the denomination had been vague and had not included clear provisions as to its application and therefore had led to mutually opposing interpretations, even within RAPP. Still, Kurahara insists that the slogan for proletarian realism had generally been correctly understood and practiced in Japan and within Nappu. Hence, their basic motto “to emphasize the vanguard perspective and to insist on starting from social reality” (*zen'eiteki kanten o kyōchō shi, shakaiteki genjitsu kara shuppatsu suru koto o shuchō suru koto* 前衛的観点を強調し、社会的現実から出発することを主張すること) had enabled them to treat the problem of method and theme, the matter at hand here, as an integrated whole.⁶² Consequently, when now confronting the problem of artistic method afresh, this should be conceived of as a development along the lines of proletarian realism, not as its denial.

After this methodological prelude, Kurahara turns to the very practical problem of the purported increasing uniformity of proletarian works of fiction: “Whatever work we take a look at, there is an organizer and a female militant, the organizer and the female militant rent a house . . . there is a roundup.”⁶³ Not only does Kurahara maintain that Japanese proletarian literature has become uniform, he laments that it cannot take pride in ever having flourished. Leaving the reasons for this tendency towards uniformity aside, Kurahara proposes to scrutinize the artistic practice that the recent call for diversification, raised as a countermeasure against this uniformity, has given rise to. This is the point at which he moves over to the assessment of actual works of fiction.

As a first example of the practical outcome of the call for diversification, Kurahara discusses a series of literary works treating the “problem of love” (*aijō no mondai* 愛情の問題). He lists “Aijō no mondai” 愛情の問題 by Kataoka Teppei 片岡鉄兵, “Akai koi' ijō” 「赤い恋」以上 by Tokunaga Sunao 徳永直, “Kiyoko no keiken” きよ子の経験 by Ema Nakashi 江馬修, *Puroretariāto no michi* プロレタリアートの途 by Yoshimura Kōtarō 吉村浩太郎, “Tetsu no gotoki koi” 鉄の如き恋 by Kishi Yamaji 貴司山治, and “Yokkakan” 四日間 by Tateno Nobuyuki 立野信之. Unsympathetic towards these works, Kurahara concentrates his critique on four main points. First, subject matter has hitherto been limited to strikes and peasant disputes, but now romance has been added as a main subject matter. Therefore, proletarian literature has undeniably become diversified. But in that case, it will become even more diverse by creating various new genres like “hygiene novels” (*eisei shōsetsu* 衛生小説) and “birth control novels” (*sanji seigen shōsetsu* 産児制限小説). In fact, Kurahara maintains, the new love novels resemble each other closely and have neither made proletarian literature richer nor helped to develop it. Second, the “problem of love” itself cannot constitute the central theme of proletarian literature. Just as in reality, where the “problem of love” is resolved solely through the practice of the proletariat's class struggle, this problem should only be dealt with to the extent that it is necessitated from the perspective of class struggle. Hence, it is not for the movement to trouble itself with proletarian love in general. Third, it is a fallacy to believe that a new human being, who has hitherto not emerged in proletarian literature, is being portrayed in these works. Love is one part of human life—at times a rather important part—but it is not all. To assume that human

nature would emerge in its entirety from these works belongs to the way of thinking of petit bourgeois sentimentalists. Moreover, since out of context love is an abstract notion, the facet of human nature that emerges from it is bound to be human nature in general, not concrete manifestations. The dialectical materialist does not try to discern human nature in general from reality: “Only in class struggle does concrete class human nature, not abstract supra-class ‘human nature,’ emerge” (*tada, kaikyū tōsō no naka ni nomi, chōkaikyūteki na chūshōteki ‘ningensei’ de wa nakute, kaikyūteki, gutaiteki ningensei ga arawareru* ただ、階級闘争の中にのみ、超階級的な抽象的「人間性」ではなくて、階級的、具体的人間性が現れる). Fourth, in these works love is portrayed as a fixed, purely personal emotion that is opposed to class obligations. This notion of love is similar to the opposition of *giri* and *ninjō* in Edo double suicide plays. The only difference is that in the Edo plays *ninjō* overcomes *giri*, while in these works love becomes the victim of class obligations. From these arguments, Kurahara concludes that these works are not the correct road for proletarian literature to take. For the proletariat the problems of family life and love life constitute one part of their interest but not the central one, hence they should be addressed as part of the general class struggle and not as the central theme of the work.⁶⁴

Kurahara next launches a broadside against Kobayashi Takiji's “Dokubō” 独房 (Solitary Cell), first published in *Chūō kōron* 中央公論 in July 1931. He sees this as just another experiment in diversification of proletarian literary subject matter, and he polemicizes against critics within the movement who, like Miyamoto Kenji 宮本顕治, view the novel positively as a vigorous development for Kobayashi. Kurahara scores Kobayashi for applying a dualistic perspective—a separation of man's biological and social aspects—common to many petit bourgeois writers. Kobayashi's intent to portray the “human side of the militant” (*ningen to shite no tōshi* 人間としての闘士) and the “brightness of life” (*seikatsu no hogarakasa* 生活の朗らかさ) inherent in that person's way of life is fine; these are aspects that should not be forgotten in the face of adversity, no matter how severe.⁶⁵ However, human emotions such as sexual desire and appetite need to be portrayed not in general, but concretely, from an integrated social and class perspective. Employing a notion of dialectical negation that Marxist logic had incorporated from Hegelian analysis—sublation (*Aufhebung*), through which thesis and antithesis interact to produce something new that negates and yet preserves them—Kurahara argues that “the physiological moment becomes sublated in a social moment” (*seirigakuteki momento wa shakaiteki momento no uchi ni shiyō sareru* 生理学的モメントは社会的モメントのうちに止揚される) when seen in an integrated social and class perspective.⁶⁶ To portray their human emotions in separation from the class struggle amounts to nothing more than proving that militants are humans after all, a proposition that requires no proof in the first place. Kurahara compares “Dokubō” unfavorably with Kobayashi's earlier works *1928 nen 3 gatsu 15 nichi* 一九二八年三月十五日 (*15 March 1928*), *Factory Ship*, *Fuzai jinushi* 不在地主 (*The Absentee Landlord*), *Kōjō saibō* 工場細胞 (*Factory Cell*), and *Orugu* オルグ (*The Organizer*). The language Kurahara uses is typical of his clear-cut, assertive style that leaves little room for objections:

In these works there are various flaws. But the direction is essentially correct. “Solitary Cell” contains various merits. But the direction is essentially wrong. This is something that reveals the first step in the fall from a proletarian perspective to a petit bourgeois

perspective. The critic would have had to point out this very fact had he taken the correct standpoint of class art.⁶⁷

In my view, “Solitary Cell” is almost too trivial a work for Kurahara to take seriously in an essay proposing a general critique of artistic method. It is a short story with a light touch, a “light” version of proletarian literature perhaps, written with the apparent aim to provide encouragement to comrades involved in the struggle. In other words, it can be considered feel-good literature for the movement, as exemplified by such lines as this: “Our companions even now call going to prison ‘going to the summer house.’ The cheerfulness stemming from the fortitude of the proletariat, never yielding no matter what the situation, is thus included in those words.”⁶⁸ Or perhaps even better: “The proletariat who never lose sight of the future are ‘cheerful’ wherever they might find themselves. They even hum to themselves in an easygoing manner.”⁶⁹ It is hard to disagree with Kurahara that compared to *Factory Ship*, “Solitary Cell” did not point in a promising direction for proletarian literature to take. To begin with, even though “the proletariat” is referred to in the text, the short story actually deals with imprisoned comrades without any mention of workers—or of work itself, for that matter—although it can be assumed that work and workers are indeed what proletarian literature should be all about.

Continuing, Kurahara blames the slogans for diversification (*sakuhin no tayōka* 作品の多様化) and reinforcement of theme (*shudai no kyōka* 主題の強化) for the defects in everything from the previous mentioned love novels to “Solitary Cell.” In opposition to these slogans, which had been asserted since the end of 1930, he propounds the notion of aggressiveness of theme (*shudai no sekkyokusei* 主題の積極性). Class struggle is invariably the ultimate theme of proletarian works of art. But this does not allow for a mechanical interpretation that says only matters like strikes and peasants’ disputes may be portrayed. Class struggle exists in all kinds of settings: political, economic, cultural, and daily life settings. However, these settings have to be portrayed from a revolutionary perspective, and this calls for the adoption of themes aggressive in nature. Kurahara maintains that the reason for the homogenization of proletarian art lies in writers’ lack of a clear revolutionary perspective, rather than in their sole dependence on revolutionary subject matters, as suggested by other critics.⁷⁰

This is not all Kurahara has to say about the “problem of love.” He returns to this subject to illustrate that the proletarian writer needs a correct grasp of dialectical materialism, although he never explains exactly how his critique derives from dialectical materialism. To prove this point, he focuses on “Aijō no mondai” by Kataoka Teppei (*Kaizō* 改造, 1931:1). The underlying proposition of this novel, he says, quoting Kataoka, is this: “Because of the necessities of class struggle all kinds of personal happiness are destroyed.”⁷¹ Kurahara’s dissection of this work is a means for him to show in detail his practical concerns for literary method. This case provides an elegant example of how Kurahara concretises his theoretical stance, and it is worth our while to outline his argument in detail. In Kataoka’s novel, a female militant takes up lodgings together with a comrade by the name of Ishikawa for reasons of the class struggle. Shocked at his request for sexual favors, she escapes to the home of comrade Miyagi, her lover. Here Kurahara devotes a whole page to a quotation of the ensuing dialogue between the two lovers. In short, Miyagi tries to send her back to Ishikawa.

He accuses her of defeatism and chastises her for having abandoned her post for irrelevant personal reasons. She is left without an answer and the “problem of love” is left unresolved for the time being. Predictably, Kurahara comments disdainfully, the author solves the problem through the narrative ploy of having Ishikawa arrested the following day. “The reason the author had to solve the problem by artifice,” Kurahara writes, “is because he could not truly solve it ‘artistically’ and, moreover, because he did not have a correct awareness of the problem.”⁷² Kataoka has interpreted “class necessity” extremely narrowly, restricting it to the movement’s immediate necessities, as Kurahara sees it. That everything has to be subjected to class necessity is entirely correct. However, to draw the conclusion from this that everything else has to be sacrificed because of the minute-by-minute changing necessities of the struggle is incorrect. Thus, if Miyagi had understood the concept of class necessity correctly he would not have sent the woman back to a man that had demanded slavish emotions of her. Since the protection of one woman’s human rights is also a class necessity, he would have let her stay with him until the problem was solved. Moreover, there is artificiality here inasmuch as Miyagi would not have sent his own love back to the other man so mechanically in reality. If the movement were to be built on such unreasonableness, it would begin to collapse from that point onwards. Consequently, in the case the author deals with this kind of reality he has to take a critical stance towards it, “since a communist movement must not be something built on unreasonableness” (*kyōsanshugiteki undō wa muri no ue ni uchitaterareta mono de atte wa naranai kara de aru* 共産主義的運動は無理の上に打ち建てられたものであってはならないからである). In the case of this novel, “the author’s emphasis would have had to be put not on how one woman has to ‘sacrifice’ her own ‘personal emotions’ because of ‘class necessities,’ but rather on Ishikawa’s anti-class behavior.” In general, Kurahara identifies a “male bias,” (*dansēiteki henkō* 男性的偏向) in the novel: “Whereas men’s personal emotions are being overlooked, sacrifices are demanded from women.”⁷³

Secondly, Kurahara continues, “human emotions” are portrayed out of context, as something fixed, in these love novels. However, in reality human emotions change according to changes in daily life and thinking. If thoughts on love and married life were to distinctly change, emotions towards women would change as a result. Contrarily, as long as emotions towards women remain the same, the way of thinking can hardly be said to have changed thoroughly. Therefore, it is a mistake to oppose human emotions to notions of duty and try to seek out the solution to the problem in that opposition in the way it is done in many novels on “the problem of love.”

That belongs to Freud’s psychoanalytical method of metaphysically opposing consciousness with subconsciousness, something which has nothing whatsoever in common with Marxism. Still, there are cases, as actual problems, where our thoughts and emotions, the conscious and the unconscious, oppose each other. Especially so in the case where the person in question is of a petit bourgeois origin. But that is by no means a basic opposition, nor an essential contradiction. Basic matters and essential matters are always class contradictions that exist throughout thoughts and emotions, as well as throughout the conscious and the unconscious.⁷⁴

Regardless of the appropriateness of Kurahara’s analysis, but related to the question of realism, one may wonder whether or not behavior like that of Ishikawa was portrayed on the

fictional level precisely because it did occur in reality within the movement. Marxist discourse à la Kurahara is always appealing to mankind's altruistic side and is always demanding extremely high moral and ethical behavioral standards. Of the activist it demands near total self-sacrifice and self-effacement for the revolution and eventual coming of communism and hence for the good of the collective. Whether this rhetoric actually conformed to practice is doubtful.⁷⁵ In any case, Kurahara here makes his own argument fail-safe by claiming that as long as attitudes towards women remain the same, the way of thinking in general cannot be said to have changed sufficiently enough. Hence, Ishikawa's behavior amounts to nothing less than anti-class behavior. It is by definition not the behavior of a proletarian activist. His conduct rules out the possibility of his being a true proletarian:

If Ishikawa were to insist on sexual favors from a female comrade, whom he neither loved nor was loved by . . . that would not entail bourgeois emotion triumphing over proletarian consciousness. It would rather prove that bourgeois elements survived in his very consciousness and thoughts. It would prove that he did not have a clear proletarian consciousness towards women.⁷⁶

Kurahara concludes this discussion by conceding that in the course of actual struggle this matter is not so vexing a problem that it requires the proletarian writer to blow it out of proportion. To have the protagonist anguish over such a matter is actually an "inconvenient story" (*futsugō na hanashi* 不都合な話).⁷⁷

The third kind of error Kurahara finds in these novels lies in their awareness of the relationship between "class responsibility" (*kaikyūteki gimū* 階級的義務) and "personal sentiment" (*kojinteki kanjō* 個人的感情), the concepts of which are mechanically positioned opposite to each other. For instance, in the narrative two lovers need to separate because of class necessity. The sacrifice of personal sentiment is required, which in turn creates a tragic schism between the sense of responsibility and personal sentiment. Thus, a heart-rending decision needs to be taken. Leaping from fiction to reality, Kurahara asks whether this need really be so. "Even in theory" (*riron to shite mo* 理論としても), personal happiness for the fighting proletariat is not sacrificed by class undertakings, but rather it is something that ought to be realized in those very undertakings.⁷⁸ The separation of two lovers because of necessities of the struggle, even seen as an actual problem, is not such a tragic or heart-rending matter after all. To have characters pretend indifference and have them force themselves to separate from each other, in the fashion of Kataoka's "Aijō no mondai," appears thoroughly dramatic and heart-rending. However, unless we understand "class responsibility" in an entirely mechanical way such a case would neither be so common, nor is it desirable for the movement to have it portrayed like that:

What we have to observe and portray in this case is not how the thing called personal love was "sacrificed" because of class necessity, but rather how the thing called love dissolves into "a thing stronger than love" and how the thing called personal happiness dissolves into a "greater happiness."⁷⁹

Although Kurahara has abandoned the motto of proletarian realism in favor of dialectical materialism at this stage, it would seem that in his invocation of a force stronger than love, he is leaning on idealism rather than on realism. Yet he elsewhere defines idealism as the

ideology of the diminishing classes and thus something that stands in opposition to realism, the ideology of the rising classes. Idealism as ideology is consequently shunned throughout his critique. In any case, Kurahara concludes that the reason why the reader senses artifice in reading novels by proletarian writers that deal with the "problem of love" is because matters that do not exist in reality, or only extremely exceptionally, are portrayed as though they were essential. What lies at the root of the matter is the lack of a correct awareness of "the problem of love" as well as of love itself.

Kurahara finishes this first installment of "Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō" by chastising proletarian writers for not correctly distinguishing the inevitable from the accidental. He goes as far as to claim that the majority of proletarian works is structured on the basis of the accidental. In this respect he gives actual examples of novels that receive their motive power from incidents that, although not inconceivable in themselves, are accidental to the class struggle. For Kurahara this means that

rather than clearly seeing and portraying the essentials and accidentals inherent in reality, proletarian writers are only aimlessly brushing the surface of reality or else they arbitrarily distort reality in their heads.⁸⁰

In the second part of "Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō" as in the first, Kurahara begins with a broadside attack on a novel. This time the target is Nakano Shigeharu's 中野重治 "Kaikon" 開墾 (Reclamation), published in the June 1931 issue of *Chūō kōron*. Kurahara takes this novel as a negative example, an illustration that works produced by Japanese proletarian authors yet have to attain the stage of proletarian literature in its true sense. Even though works in this vein may deal with highly "proletarian" subject matters portrayed in a highly "revolutionary" language, they ultimately fail in that they are not based on a correct class analysis. Nor is a theoretically correct analysis by itself enough: "It is necessary to have it [the class analysis] re-created in the work in the kind of vivid shape in which it exists in reality."⁸¹ For Kurahara, the fundamental flaw of "Kaikon," as a novel aspiring to be a proletarian work, lies in the fact that it fails to stand on a concrete class analysis of the farming village that is the setting. He finds it unsatisfactory that we have to wait until chapter four, that is, for the larger part of the novel, until a single farmer appears. It is clear from the text that there exist farmers exploited by landowners, he continues, but we learn nothing about how they were exploited in reality or how the two groups battled each other: "I should think that that would be the most significant features in a novel portraying a farm village, but the writer simply ignores all such matters."⁸² The fatal shortcoming of "Kaikon" as a proletarian work is that the writer "neglected the existence of farmers during the bourgeois liberal epoch and obliterated the differentiation among farmers during capitalism's period of expansion."⁸³ Kurahara's verdict on Nakano, one of the most prominent figures in the movement, is quite merciless: "However, if we scrutinize the fact that the author could not stand on a correct analysis of past farming villages, we arrive at the conclusion that, ultimately, the author did not hold a clear view of the differentiation, or its significance, of *present* farming villages."⁸⁴ Borrowing a simile from Marx, Kurahara concludes that since Nakano did not know human anatomy he was not able to dissect monkeys properly. If Nakano had endeavored to write about socialist reclamation of land in a farming village, in Kurahara's judgment, he would have had to stand on a correct class analysis to begin with, in order to show where the

fundamental class opposition of the village lay. He would have had to trace the development and differentiation of farmers, especially the occurrence and growth of poor farmers and agricultural workers during the progress of capitalism. What Nakano presents instead are various occupational groups belonging to the petite bourgeoisie, and he fails to make their intermediate position clear exactly because he fails to portray the fundamental exploitation relationship.

To be sure, judging by Kurahara's literary standards—at one point he speaks of “an organic unity on the whole” (*zentai to shite yūkiteki na tōitsu* 全体として有機的な統一)—“Kaikon” must be classified as a complete failure. As he points out, the reader only gradually and vaguely becomes aware of the grounds for the dispute in the village, and even then this awareness is hardly brought about by fictional means. Instead Nakano frequently resorts to a kind of clumsy explication that does not fit organically. For example, he writes, “If we take a look at the village tax of Hachi no he village at that time we will roughly find the following situation” (*sono jibun no Hachinohe-mura sonzei o mite miru to mazu kō iu guai ni naru* その時分の八の戸村村税を見てみるとまづかういふ具合になる), and then follows this with a brief outline of the tax system.⁸⁵ Thus, “Kaikon” appears more or less like a piece of social history embellished by a thin fictional veil. Having perceived this, one sees how and why Nakano uses the fictional ploy providing a retrospective look at the history of the village through the device of an embedded story told by “an old man who is the new type of farmer” (*atarashii kata no hyakushō no rōjin* 新しい型の百姓の老人) to the narrator of the novel.⁸⁶ The author lacked a clear vision of how to present his material and built artifice into the very structure of his novel. Nakano himself offers testimony for this assessment in a self-critical postscript to “Kaikon”; he apologizes to his readers and admits that the piece they have just read is nothing more than an incoherent scenario, not really a novel at all. He explains that he had come to realize that this kind of story could not be written in this way and that he had intended to rewrite and draw upon his creative powers, using an opposite method, but that he felt he had to submit something to the publishers since he had already had his deadline delayed once.⁸⁷ Not surprisingly, Kurahara offers an alternative accounting for Nakano's incoherence: “the fact that a coherent class perspective was lacking in the writer.”⁸⁸ Whether such a scathing comment was necessary, in light of Nakano's postscript, might be questioned.

In a segue to his discussion of Nakano's problems with depicting farmers' situation, Kurahara points out that Japanese proletarian writers hardly ever portray labor. They obstinately avoid production scenes, he remarks, leaving the reader unaware of when and what kind of labor workers are actually engaged in. The reason why he specifically raises this matter is the Marxist idea that labor, i.e., production relationships, constitute the foundation of all human life and the root of all class relationships. Hence, materialists reduce all social phenomena to their material cause. In condensed form Kurahara's argument runs along the following line. It is a mistake, for instance, to look at class struggle in the form of strikes and peasant disputes only. These kinds of controversies represent the intensified moment when class struggles rise to the surface. They are important to portray, needless to say, but there is more to class struggle than this.

It is infeasible to consider matters such as strikes and peasant disputes divorced from the material and spiritual contradictions that gradually accumulate through daily work. On the contrary, it is precisely all contradictions accumulated through

daily productive labor, precisely this covert class struggle that is the basis of strikes and peasant disputes. Therefore, writers must start from everyday work if they really seek to portray these disputes from a materialistic perspective. . . . Even in the case of portraying strikes and peasant disputes we demand that authors portray them in their close relationship to everyday work, or exploitation in other words. Yet, our writers detach these from the overt class struggle and portray them as cut off from everyday work. This is precisely why their works will not reach the ground but are floating in space. This is precisely why the strikes and peasant disputes that they portray become counterfeits lacking in reality.⁸⁹

At this point in his argument Kurahara pauses to pose the question of what this “persistent ‘disgust for work’” (*shitsuyōna “rōdō no ken’o”* 執拗な「労働の嫌悪」) may in fact signify.⁹⁰ First, he somewhat conventionally claims that proletarian writers have become prisoners of bourgeois ideology without their knowing it. Just as the bourgeoisie take all sorts of pains to conceal the production process from the eyes of the masses and even from their own eyes, their art, likewise, avoids and hides scenes of production. This is the case with proletarian writers as well. In his second answer to the question about the significance of “disgust for work,” Kurahara broaches what is often considered the gravest weakness of the proletarian literary movement in Japan—namely, most writers were intellectuals who did not really belong to the working class.

[T]his signifies that these writers do not really know the daily life of workers or peasants, or, if they know, they only know the side related to consumption. This is either because these writers come from classes that have no direct contact with workers or peasants, or even in the case they come from for instance farming villages, they themselves do not belong to the class of “working peasants,” or have not themselves had the experience of working in the fields, or if they have they have forgotten about it. But regardless of which, if we strive to portray the struggle of workers and peasants the very least we can do is to study their daily life if we lack that experience ourselves.⁹¹

Kurahara maintains that works by people actually living and struggling in farming villages and factories are written from a correct standpoint, at least in this respect. In this context he lauds two recent contributions to *Nappu*: “Shōden shashō” 省電車掌 by Kuroe Isamu 黒江勇 and especially *Wata* 綿 (*Cotton*) by Sui Hajime 須井一 (penname for Taniguchi Zentarō 谷口善太郎). Kurahara quotes the opening scene of *Wata*, which depicts the mother harvesting cotton from the perspective of the hungry boy protagonist. He approves of it not as an example of powerful artistic expression, but because it vividly portrays the work, exploitation, and life of poor farmers without the use of any “class” vocabulary. Although he criticizes the novel’s lack of concrete and artistic expression, he judges it superior to other works in that it seeks to clarify the various types of lives and struggles within a farming village. This is achieved by taking the real relationship between work, production, and exploitation as a starting point. Importantly, Kurahara deems the theoretical explication of the growth of capitalism, to be found in the novel, as totally superfluous. On the other hand, what makes *Wata* extraordinary among proletarian works in Kurahara’s view is “the fact that it stands on a sharp economic class analysis and with a thorough knowledge of farming

village life portrays this life concretely.”⁹²

As *Wata* is the sole work received favorably in his article, we need to scrutinize Kurahara’s analysis further at this point. In fact, notwithstanding his characterization of it, *Wata* contains very little in the way of depiction of work. Kurahara is correct in that the economic situation of the village is analysed in concrete terms with explicit mention of, for instance, the exact amount of tenancy that the tenant farmers are burdened with. But when it comes to actual scenes of labor, there is little depiction except in the introduction and very occasional descriptions, as, for instance, of the mother spinning cotton thread at night. On the whole, *Wata* seems to be a fairly standard story of indignation, the main business of which is to outline the landlord’s various acts of exploitation, including the one in the capacity of a “heartless moneylender” (*reikokuna kanekashi* 冷酷な金貸し), needless to say a stock figure in literature of proletarian inclination.⁹³ The ignorance and oppressed mentality of the farmers during the protagonist’s youth at the closing of the Meiji era are leitmotifs. Thus, the tenant farmers’ inability to understand the roots of their hopeless plight is repeatedly referred to throughout the narrative. This ignorance, resulting in gloom and despair and in a reluctance to unite and rise up in protest, is further thematically contrasted to the optimism that the protagonist encounters towards the end of the story. Having been forced to leave the village for confronting the landlord in public seventeen years earlier, he now returns in triumph as an agitator and possibly party member. To his astonishment he encounters a total shift of mindset in the villagers upon his return. Now the farmers are organized in unions and fighting for their rights, seemingly having been brought to awareness of their situation and historical role by the avant-garde of the movement. On the thematic level, therefore, an ignorant and passive feudalistic past is contrasted with an enlightened present permeated with socialist optimism. In short, *Wata* reads as a success story of how “the farmers who do not know how to fight” (*tatakau koto o shiranu nōmintachi* 戦うことを知らぬ農民達) learn how to become masters of their own destiny.⁹⁴ When it comes to Kurahara’s critique of the allegedly superfluous reference to the growth of capitalism it is immediately obvious what he is referring to. Thus, the novel contains a great deal of theoretical explication of the following kind:

Thinking about it, those days were the era just after the Russo-Japanese War, the era when capitalism had finally entered its stage of expansion after winning both the Sino-Japanese- and Russo-Japanese Wars. Private enterprise arose as opposed to government and government enterprise, and individualism in industry gained power as opposed to protective policies of the government. . . . Commodity production overflowed in cities with tremendous force and the belt of modern life was cast from city to farm village. Relying on the growth of communication lines, commodities, with the power of magic, cut into all corners of poor villages deep in the mountains, only to destroy in a moment the old order and mode of living maintained there. . . . Demanding cheap labor force capitalism also brought its cells of production structure to every corner of farm villages already experiencing a low standard of living. Businesses in farm villages developed afresh and old landlords colluded with new capitalists. The farm villages’ young men and women were roped in and rapidly turned into wage slaves in the city.⁹⁵

In a similar fashion, *Wata* also contains a critique of the switch from an economy based on self-sufficiency to a monetary one. In opposition to this kind of commentary on the growth of capitalism, it is obvious that Kurahara calls for a narration that “shows” rather than “tells” the ravages of capitalism, in the sense laid forth by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. In other words, rather than telling with the help of theoretical commentary applied to the story level, how the cultivation of cotton in the village has ceased, Kurahara would probably have preferred to have it shown, by literary means, as an integral part of the story. But let us turn back to the reason why Kurahara brought this novel up for discussion in the first place. If, as he states, *Wata* is written from a correct standpoint as far as the narrative treatment of work goes, then we may only marvel at the state of its treatment in proletarian literature in general. If the depiction of work in *Wata* stands out, scanty though it may be, then proletarian literature in Japan must indeed be characterized by a “persistent disgust for work.” Undoubtedly, a great many Japanese proletarian narratives deal with vanguard agitation activity in the movement, rather than with the lives of the toiling masses.

Kurahara turns next to the slogan for portraying “living people” (*ikita ningen* 生きた人間). The Japanese movement had adopted this from RAPP in the Soviet Union, but by the time they picked it up, it had already come under criticism. The problem with the slogan, Kurahara asserts, is that it was applied in Japan without the application of any class provisions. This becomes a problem since “there can be no ‘living people’ other than people in social classes” (*kaikyūteki ningen igai ni “ikita ningen” wa arienai* 階級的人間以外に「生きた人間」はあり得ない).⁹⁶ However, to depict people as members of social classes does not mean to depict class stereotypes, or class abstractions, as such do not exist in reality but only in people’s heads. The real world is more complicated than that, and “dialectical materialism requires that this complicated reality be perceived as a whole . . . the proletarian writer has to depict this complexity of reality.”⁹⁷ But, then, do Japanese proletarian writers grasp the method of dialectical materialism as applied to art? Kurahara’s answer is a regretful no: “[In their works] all workers and all peasants are frequently uniformly “class bound,” think uniformly and act uniformly.”⁹⁸ To illustrate this point, Kurahara quotes a passage of dialogue from Murayama Tomoyoshi’s 村山知義 novel *Shojochi* 処女地 (*Virgin Soil*). This dialogue takes place on the day when Zenkyō 全協 (National Council of Japanese Labor Unions) agitation handouts have been distributed at a factory. Niida, who has hitherto opposed the communists, now easily yields to the leftist youth Kawasaki, who explicates the differences between reformist labor unions on the one hand and Zenkyō on the other. Kurahara does not regard this depiction favorably:

In this novel Zenkyō activities are generally accepted among workers almost without any substantial opposition at all and its organization grows by leaps and bounds. But in the real case our activities collide with the influence of bourgeois as well as of social democratic organization and with ideology among the workers themselves. This fact gives rise to various difficulties. And so, workers first become convinced that we are correct through practical struggle, not by simple agitation handouts. Precisely by depicting these live workers and our relentless working upon them may we say that genuine reality has been depicted.⁹⁹

Kurahara furthermore stresses that the proletarian writer must portray “class people”

(*kaikyūteki ningen* 階級的人間) in their “total complexity” (*zentaiteki fukuzatsusei* 全体的複雑性), without losing sight of their “class nature” (*kaikyūteki honsei* 階級的本性). This is a difficult task, he admits, yet at the same time it must be an extremely intriguing task for them.¹⁰⁰ Kurahara’s specific critique against *Shojochi* appears somewhat unwarranted. In the narrative there is explicit mention that the agitation handouts are met with half belief and half distrust among the factory workers (*bira no naiyō ni tsuite wa mina hanshinhangī tee teido rashii yo* ビラの内容については皆半信半疑ってえ程度らしいよ). In another dialogue we learn that the heroes of the novel, quite modestly, expect to gain at least two or three comrades from the handout campaign (*are de waite kurereba sonnaka kara sukunakutomo nisannin no dōshi wa kakutoku dekiru ni chigaenee* あれで湧いてくれればそんなから少くとも二三人の同志は獲得出来るに違えねえ.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, in other respects, *Shojochi* is an ideal vessel for the distillation of Kurahara’s critique of proletarian literature in general. It shows a definite didactic streak in that it, for instance, expounds the superiority of Zenkyō compared to all other unions. Characters in *Shojochi* read *Senki* and even quote poems published in it. It also contains practical advice for activists, such as, for instance, when it portrays Kawasaki’s intervention in one of the discussions among the different groups of workers that had formed after the distribution of the handouts. By doing so he hopes to be able to influence the conclusions that the workers draw upon reading the handouts. In *Shojochi* Murayama obviously understands proletarian realism more as descriptive of agitation for the sake of heightening the class struggle, than as descriptive of the toiling masses per se. Work is portrayed as something that takes place on the sideline of the struggle, as a backdrop to when characters exchange secret intelligence among themselves. Thus, class struggle is not portrayed as something that necessarily springs from the material conditions of work in the sense that Kurahara calls for.

Towards the end of “Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō,” Kurahara sums up his estimation of the present state of proletarian literature in Japan. He endorses the concepts of “report literature” (*hōkoku bungaku* 報告文学) and a “documentary literature” (*kiroku bungaku* 記録文学) that the movement had coined and adopted as slogans in the spring of 1930. These slogans are useful for two reasons. First, to guide the masses towards literature that is truly theirs, it is of the greatest urgency to teach how to document revolutionary reality accurately. Second, report literature and documentary literature possess a direct, practical significance: “That is to mobilize and involve extensive ‘writing’ masses in actual struggle and also to have them mutually exchange their respective experiences of that struggle.”¹⁰² However, Kurahara writes, these types of literature have already become insufficient. Looking ahead, Kurahara says that the movement at the present stage needs something else: “From the ‘skilled workers’ of proletarian literature we now have to demand more than that, that is to say, a higher artistic generalization.”¹⁰³ What the movement is in need of is “guiding works of literature” (*shidōtekina sakubin* 指導的な作品). Existing works that deal with strikes or peasants’ disputes, he laments, treat these matters as merely separate, unconnected phenomena:

Among them there is unfortunately not a single work that brings into relief the struggle of that era in its total form. For this reason, individual strikes and peasants’ disputes in these works are depicted together with all their accompanying accidental incidents without any arrangement whatsoever. From these works we are neither

able to grasp the essence of the era nor to hear the writers' critique against that struggle.¹⁰⁴

Even Tokunaga Sunao's *Taiyō no nai machi* 太陽のない街 (*Street without Sunlight*) and *Shitsugyō toshi Tōkyō* 失業都市東京 (*Tokyo, City of Unemployment*), which have been considered to belong to the most excellent works up until now, contain these defects, according to Kurahara.

What we thus hear in "Geijutsuteki hōhō ni tsuite no kansō" is the most authoritative voice in the movement dealing quite summarily with its literary products. The few works that pass through his needle's eye, thanks to their efforts at artistic generalization, are: certain of Kobayashi Takiji's works, including *Kani kōsen*, *Fuzai jinushi*, and *Kōjō saibō*, Kataoka Teppeï's *Ryōrimura kaikyōroku* 綾里村快挙録, Murayama Tomoyoshi's various plays, besides the previously mentioned novel *Shojochi*, and Tokunaga Sunao's unfinished *Asozan* 阿蘇山 (*Mount Aso*). Even these works, however, have not really achieved a "comprehensive artistic summing up of the era" (*jidai no geijutsuteki gaikatsu* 時代の芸術的概括). Kurahara attributes this to the fact that their authors have not clearly discerned the "essence of the struggle of the particular era" (*sono jidai no tōsō no honshitsu* その時代の闘争の本質).¹⁰⁵

In a similar fashion, Kurahara stresses that artistic generalization needs to be applied to individual human beings as well. He assesses the record of Japanese proletarian literature as extremely meager in this respect. Because of this failing, he maintains, Japanese proletarian literature has not succeeded in producing artistic types along the lines of identical class stratum, occupation, age, gender, environment, consciousness, and so forth.¹⁰⁶ At this point, he becomes more than usually prescriptive and identifies the types that have some positive significance from the viewpoint of historical progress and are therefore useful to the movement. These are workers, farmers, soldiers, communists, social democrats, and fascists. Geisha, waitresses, modern girls (*moga* モガ), modern boys (*mobo* モボ), beggars, and vagrants, on the other hand, are useless to the movement and therefore in no need of literary treatment. In the case of portrayal of workers and farmers writers need to pay particular attention to new types that are in the process of formation.¹⁰⁷ Writers should have the ability to foresee the times. This does not entail their invention of new types. On the contrary, their task is to identify these types from reality at their germination stage, and to give them artistic generalization. Hence, proletarian writers must clearly distinguish and portray which types are about to become extinct and which types are about to come into existence: "Only by doing so . . . will his characters come to be loved and understood by and also popular with the toiling and farming masses. Only by doing so will he be able to heighten the thoughts and will of the masses."¹⁰⁸

In a sort of epilogue to this long two-part article on artistic method, Kurahara admits to having criticised contemporary proletarian writers and critics rather unreservedly. He denies having abused them, however, claiming that he has only dealt with comparatively superior works from the recent production of proletarian literature, works that show several steps of progress compared to the standard of a few years earlier. Therefore, his critique is not intended to be understood as directed at only the works mentioned. Here, he returns to his persistent theme of self-critique for the final time. He asserts that while it may be sufficient for bourgeois literature to rely on advice and critique from the outside, and for its writers to praise one another reciprocally among themselves, proletarian literature needs to rely on self-

critique in order to progress from the present stage:

Our critics are none other than ourselves. Only through literal merciless self-critique are we able to progress. Otherwise it [proletarian literature] will surely stagnate and decay. Moreover, our critical circles are not social halls where irreproachable ladies and gentlemen gather. We “sinful people” have many faults and commit many errors. We have to go on correcting these among ourselves. And this will not come about with half-heartedly gentle sarcasms and hints. These faults and errors have to be pointed out face on. If someone were to ask me why I have not praised the merits of our writers I would have answered with the words that comrade [Fritz] Heckert uttered about self-critique at Profintern’s Fifth Congress, he says: “*We do not have time enough to exchange expressions of praise among us, here only weaknesses must be pointed out.*”¹⁰⁹

After having criticized Japanese proletarian literature for over eighty pages, then, Kurahara ends on a note of absolute faith. He declares that the proletarian literary movement has already reached the point where it is about to solve its problems. With dialectical materialism on the agenda an objective situation has been established. What is left for writers to do is to take the decisive leap. In order for proletarian writers to occupy their just position within the whole of the proletarian movement they need to endure pain and self-sacrifice to no lesser degree than that of comrades involved in actual struggle. Through its practice, by producing works that are truly significant and great, the time has now come for proletarian literature to shake off the insulting invective of being the “special seat of the proletarian movement” (*puroretaria undō no tokutōseki* プロレタリア運動の特等席).¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Returning to the initial question of whether the proletarian movement self-imploded by subjecting art to political dogma, I would like to suggest that this investigation has provided us with a considerably more nuanced picture. If we presuppose that art must always stand free from political claims, then, certainly, the ideological architects of the proletarian movement went too far. But if we consider that art has a political mission to carry out—the premise accepted by Kurahara and the others involved in the proletarian movement in Japan—we might conclude that what critics like Kurahara actually advocated was not some type of superficial, party-sanctioned propaganda pamphlet. On the contrary, Kurahara’s various statements on method—whether on the question of psychological depiction of characters or on the question of credibility of plot—run more or less in line with conventional ideals of literary quality. Moreover, we have seen that Kurahara stressed a strict realistic stance throughout, thus leaving no room for the unconditional eulogization of the socialist hero. In this sense, Kurahara’s notion of realism belongs to a critical vein, rather than to the more vulgar type usually associated with politicized literature.

This investigation has shown that Kurahara, maybe before anyone else, unsparingly pointed out the weaknesses of proletarian literature. In view of this, much of the retrospective critique against proletarian works seems like battering at an open door. Regarding questions of literary method, at least, the critique levelled at the theoreticians of the movement does

not appear warranted. When it comes to common critique against proletarian literature—for instance, crude psychological characterization, stereotypical subject matters, implausible plots, tedious political explications—we may do injustice if we automatically hold theoreticians responsible. Is it not the case rather that the movement never succeeded in producing talents that could live up to the lofty artistic ideals of its architects? Consequently, it is hard to agree with Tokunaga Sunao when he accuses Kurahara of crippling artists with a mechanistic demand for ideological awareness. Despite Kurahara's advocacy of dialectical materialism (advocacy that has an air of not quite wholehearted commitment), in practical terms he vouched for an artistically adept literature at the service of the proletariat.

Still, if we insist on holding the movement itself responsible for its own collapse, we may have to look elsewhere for causes. Organizational matters may have contained the seeds of the ultimate demise of the movement. Hirano Ken 平野謙 suggests that Kurahara and the movement committed a grave mistake in launching its counteroffensive against authorities by centralizing power, with the formation of Koppu, right at the time of a state emergency occasioned by the Manchurian Incident. Even Profintern's resolution, which was one of the grounds for the formation of Koppu, advocated decentralization of power when operating in Fascist states; by centralising power movements run an impending risk of annihilation.¹¹¹ Moreover, Miyamoto Kenji argues that the insistence on the dialectical materialistic perspective became a sectarian obstruction that only served to alienate proletarian fellow travellers, the very writers whom the movement strived to incorporate.¹¹² Kurahara himself has later admitted that he had contributed to creating confusion in the movement by blurring the distinction between the respective roles of the vanguard party on the one hand and mass organizations on the other. Therefore, mass organizations like Zenkyō had been charged with parts of the tasks belonging to the vanguard party. When he became aware of his mistake and wrote that what is in need of "Bolshevizing" is the leadership of the art movement and that the movement and its organization was, oppositely, in need of popularisation, then it was already too late. At that stage the leftist movement was entirely heading in the direction of Bolshevism, something that created various difficulties for the art movement. As a result an effort to fixate Nappu as an organization for deliberate communist artists had been initiated.¹¹³ Moreover, as Odagiri Hideo 小田切秀雄 notes, the insistence on locating activities to circles in factories and villages in practical terms meant that extremely unreasonable duties were thrust on writers.¹¹⁴

Kurahara's literary critique, on the other hand, in retrospect appears quite reasonable judged by conventional notions of literary quality. This, in turn, may be occasioned by the fact that Kurahara adhered to the literary ideals of the RAPP, the dominant, moderate faction in the Soviet Union. This may also indicate that the proletarian art movement in Japan never had a chance to politicise and rationalize art to the extent that was experimented with in the Soviet case. Let us return to the socialist fatherland one last time:

The dogmatic, narrow theories of the RAPP leaders thus came closer to the conventional concept of literature than did the ultrarationalistic and superficial propaganda literature furthered by their leftist antagonists. The major reasons for RAPP's superiority over the latter were, first, RAPP's desire to create a monumental art, and its consequent emphasis on artistic quality.¹¹⁵

Kurahara Korehito was surely faithful to his Soviet comrades in that he also aspired to a monumental art for Japanese proletarian writers while emphasizing artistic quality throughout. Who can rule out the possibility that the road to proletarian realism might have led to works that were “truly significant and great,” had not the movement been suppressed?

A note on the text: Except for direct quotations, the references to Kurahara should not be understood as literal translations of his texts. In order to be able to present as much as possible of Kurahara’s thinking, and to get at the essence of his arguments, I have frequently paraphrased or condensed passages of his writing.

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NOTES

1 Herman Ermolaev provides a handy outline to the idea of a specific "proletarian art" that serves well as a background to the various discussions in this article: "The concept of proletarian culture stems from the Marxist theses that the dominant ideas of each age have been the ideas of its ruling class and that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional stage from the bourgeois class society to a classless Communist society. This dictatorship is considered a historical necessity . . . Though Marx and Engels wrote volumes on social, economic, and political questions, they evolved no comprehensive cultural theories. Least of all were they concerned with providing a recipe for solving the artistic and literary problems which might arise during the transitional period of proletarian dictatorship. Thus champions of proletarian culture and art in the twentieth century had to rely on general Marxist principles of historical materialism" (Ermolaev 1963, p. 9).

2 From the abbreviation NAPP, a combination of the initials in Esperanto: Nippona Proleta Artista Federacio. For an account of Kurahara's role in the formation of Nappu, see Satō Shizuo's "Wakaki hi no Kurahara Korehito" 若き日の蔵原惟人. According to Satō Kurahara's achievement was of great significance inasmuch as it was his advocacy, in the article "Muson kaikyū geijutsu undō no shindankai: geijutsu no taishūka to zensayoku geijutsuka no tōitsusensen e" 無産階級芸術運動の新段階: 芸術の大衆化と全左翼芸術家の統一戦線へ (*Zen'ei*, 1928: 1), that was directly instrumental in bringing about the actual formation of the united front (Satō 1988, p. 134).

3 Hirano Ken gives the publication of "Muson kaikyū geijutsu undō no shindankai" (cf. note 2) in January 1928 as the moment from which Kurahara emerged as the leading theoretician within the literary movement (Hirano 1959, p. 367).

4 Hirano 1959, p. 384.

5 Heather Bowen-Struyk identifies a similar characteristic in the fictional realm from the same time: "The Japanese nation and imperialism as a proletarian literary *topos* dealt with the variable meaning of *Japan*, the dependence of Japanese capital on Chinese markets and labor, the collusion between the Japanese state and bourgeoisie against the interests of the proletariat, Russian Socialism as an alternative" (Bowen-Struyk 2006, p. 376).

6 Honda Shūgo mentions a premonition that revolution is close as a presupposition within the movement (Honda 1955, p. 272).

7 Although Honda argues that Kurahara never lost sense of the intrinsic values of culture and art that transcend immediate political necessities (Honda 1955, p. 273).

8 Mizuno 1968, p. 525. Honda, furthermore, characterizes Kurahara's achievements as being erected on a fight against the naturalistic realism of the journal *Literary Front* (*Bungeisensen* 文芸戦線) on the right and against the extreme leftist liquidationism, as represented by Japan Proletarian Arts League (Nihon Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei 日本プロレタリア芸術連盟), on the left. (Honda 1955, p. 273.)

9 This note of optimism is something that Beckman and Okubo return to in their history of the Japanese Communist Party, for instance in the section on the national election of 20 February 1928: "The showing of the left-wing parties in the election was dismal. Their total vote was only about 5 per cent of all ballots cast. The election was a 'victory' for the 'bourgeois and landlord parties.' . . . None of

the communist candidates were returned.” Yet: “On the whole, they were optimistic, largely because of an increase in party membership, which totalled approximately 500 by the end of the election campaign” (Beckman and Okubo 1969, pp. 151–52).

10 For an initiated and informative, yet concise, account of the rise and fall of the movement, in the context of the surrounding literary milieu in general, see Hirano 1959. For a brief survey of Kurahara’s main pre-war articles and achievements, see Yoshida 1986.

11 Tokunaga 1933, p. 219. Cf. also Arima Tatsuo: “In retrospect, it appears that the movement itself was to blame for its rapid decline.” “It was the writer’s task to translate the academic jargon of Marxism into popular and comprehensible symbols and terminologies. . . . It is understandable that the party would demand that strict political discipline be imposed on writers.” “The theoretical stalemate, however, led to the *de facto* submission of the artists to the political tyranny of the Japanese Communist Party.” “The artists were paralyzed under a crippled party which would not admit its own death.” (Arima 1969, pp. 178, 179, 213.)

12 Kurahara 1954, p. 395. Hirano goes further and singles out the article as the first of its kind, the first “theory of method” (*bōhōron* 方法論) of proletarian literature in Japan (Hirano 1959, p. 367). Yamada Seisaburō states that the article is an epoch-making point in the history of Japan’s proletarian literary theory for the following three reasons: first, it elevated the question of art’s historicity and class nature, first raised by Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, to the theoretical level; second, it developed Aono Suekichi’s advocacy of an investigated art into a theory of realism; third, it undoubtedly guided contemporary writers in the direction of deliberate realism (Yamada 1968, p. 181).

13 Shea gives the title as “Art as a Living System and the Proletarian Class” (Shea 1964, pp. 126–27). However, as Kurahara is obviously referring to the *function* of literature this translation appears inaccurate. He identifies the organizing of life (*seikatsu no soshiki*) as art’s most important function and states that consequently art plays the role of agitation and propaganda.

14 Kurahara 1954, p. 395.

15 KKH, vol. 1, p. 131.

16 *Genzai waga kuni no puroretaria sakka, geijutsuka wa, gendai seikatsu no sumizumi ni made chinsen shite, soko kara sono seikatsu no seikaku naru kyakkanteki, gutaiteki kiroku o totte konakereba naranai* 現在わが国のプロレタリア作家、芸術家は、現代生活の隅々にまで沈潜して、そこからその生活の正確なる客観的、具体的記録を取ってこなければならぬ (ibid., p. 132).

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., pp. 132–33.

19 Ibid., p. 133.

20 Ibid., p. 137.

21 Ibid., pp. 140–1.

22 *Wareware ni totte jūyō na no wa, genjitsu o wareware no shukan ni yotte, yugameteri funshoku shitari suru koto de wa naku shite, wareware no shukan—puroretariāto no kaikyūteki shukan—ni sōo suru mono o genjitsu no naka ni hakken suru koto ni aru no da—kaku shite nomi hajimete wareware wa wareware no bungaku o shite shinjitsu ni puroretariāto no kaikyū tōsō ni yakudataseuru. Sunawachi, daiichi ni, puroretaria zen’ei no “me o motte” sekai o miru koto, dai-2 ni, gensei naru rearisuto no taido o motte sore o egaku koto—kore ga puroretaria rearizumu e no yuiitsu no michi de aru* 我々にとって重要なのは、現実を我々の主観によって、ゆがめたり粉飾したりすることではなくして、我々の主観-プロレタリアートの階級的な主観-に相応するものを現実の中に発見することにあるのだ-かくしてのみ初めて我々は我々の文学をして真実にプロレタリアートの階級闘争に役立たせうる。すなわち、第一に、プロレタリア前衛の「眼をもって」世界を見ること、第二に、厳正なるレアリストの態度をもってそれを描くこと—これがプロレタリア・レアリズムへの唯一の道である (ibid., pp. 146–47; emphasis as in the original).

23 Mizuno Akiyoshi, also, comments that Kurahara gives the impression of advocating subjectivism here. He defends Kurahara, though, by pointing to the fact that fundamental texts of Marxist art critique—especially Engels' letter to Harkness and Lenin's "Leo Tolstoy as the mirror of the Russian revolution," which is an example of Engels' analysis in the letter—still lay buried in the treasure houses at the time of Kurahara's writing (cf. note 29). As a result he had not been able to correctly grasp Lenin's theory of reflection and thus not, one surmises, properly appreciated the tradition of the so-called critical realism (Mizuno 1968, p. 545). In other words, an accurate type of realism may arise even with the adoption of an erroneous perspective.

24 KKH, vol. 1, p. 146.

25 Hirano discusses Kurahara's discourse on "proletarian vanguard" from another vantage point. He argues that what this phrase stands for, in the final analysis, is nothing else than the communist party. Concretely, this meant that writers were supposed to at least support the policies of the party, a blatant contradiction with the explicit intentions behind Nappu to be an all-embracing, united mass organization. The decree to portray with the eyes of the proletarian vanguard, embraced by the movement at the time, eventually resulted in periodicals like *Senki* turning virtually into acting organs for the party's propaganda department. Hirano claims that the mentality of the intelligentsia, which in general affirmed the Marxist literary movement, tacitly supported the politicising of the movement, which was in a state of rapidly adopting the perspective of the proletarian vanguard (Hirano 1959, pp. 367–68).

26 KKH, vol. 1, p. 145.

27 Prince 1987, p. 80.

28 Kurahara 1954, pp. 395–96. Elsewhere Mizuno discusses what Kurahara is, in all likelihood, referring to here. Namely, Maksim Gorky's ideas on "critical realism" that had become orthodox art history in the Soviet Union after the concept of "socialist realism" was proclaimed in 1932, thus after Kurahara's article appeared. According to Mizuno, Gorky equated bourgeois realism with critical realism, focusing on its aspect of positively contributing to human history as well as literary and art history. In Gorky bourgeois realism was further opposed to naturalistic realism (Mizuno 1968, pp. 545–46).

29 Lukács 1972, p. 10. The reference to Engels concerns a letter from him in English to novelist Margaret Harkness, dated April 1888: "The realism I allude to, may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions. Let me refer to an example. Balzac whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas *passes, présents et à venir*" (Marx and Engels 1956, pp. 478–80). It might appear surprising that a scholar of Kurahara's erudition should have been unaware of the orthodox negative appraisal of Zola. However, the letter in question was not published until in March 1932, in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* (The Literary Heritage), 1932: 2 (Ermolaev 1963, p. 225, note 99).

30 KKH, vol. 1 pp. 294–95.

31 Ermolaev notes that there are uncertainties about how the term 'dialectical-materialist method' came to be used in relation to literature in the first place, but concludes that the term was just a new name for the materialist method: the two names were even used synonymously for some time (Ermolaev 1963, pp. 67–68). On the whole, he identifies the dialectical-materialist creative method, proclaimed and imposed in 1928, as the "main defect" of RAPP's theories: "They [proletarian writers] were to portray reality in accordance with Marxist philosophical and sociopolitical teachings, with particular emphasis on the significance of dialectical contradictions in human experience. . . . Because of insurmountable difficulties in applying Marxist doctrine directly to literature, the efforts to develop the dialectical-materialist method led to an enormous waste of energy and a serious limitation of the creative possibilities of proletarian literature. In 1932 the Party finally realized that the crude imposition of Marxist principles on literature was unfruitful, and RAPP's method was rejected (Ibid., p. 4). On the practical level the dialectical-materialistic creative method was to be distinguished by realism: "Realism

was set forth as the most suitable literary method for expressing the essence of dialectical materialism. . . . Realism as the literary counterpart of dialectical materialism had already been advocated by Voronsky” (Ibid., p. 64). Interestingly, Mizuno, in a commentary emphatically disassociates Kurahara from the dialectical-materialist method, which had been introduced in Japan with a translation of an article by Leopold Averbakh, the chief executive of RAPP, in the June and August 1931 issues of *Nappu*. Mizuno claims that presently it will be recognized as a historical fact that Kurahara was not an expounder of the creative method of dialectical materialism. Firstly, although Kurahara states that there is a need to learn from the method in “Thoughts on Artistic Method” he actually uses the term without any real commitment to actively establish it as such. Secondly, in “The Fight for Leninism in Art Theory” Kurahara gives the name of Averbakh as one of the names belonging to a group within the RAPP leadership worthy of criticism (Mizuno 1968, pp. 548–49). In 1955 Kurahara stated that he had intended his ideas of this time as a development along the lines of proletarian realism, thus quite different from those of Averbakh, but that he was at a loss since dialectical materialism was now being advocated in the Soviet. (Quoted in Shida 1996, p. 214, note 30.) Thus, since the method was discredited in the Soviet Union there seems to have been a need to disavow it in Japan as well.

32 KKH, vol. 1, pp. 295.

33 Ibid., p. 296.

34 Fadeyev 1927, pp. 203–05.

35 KKH, vol. 1, 297. The phrase “living people” interestingly appears in *The Rout*, in the form of a judgement about the partisans on behalf of the narrator: “But for all that they were not people in books, but real, living people” (Fadeyev 1927, p. 19, cf. note 45).

36 KKH, vol.1, p. 298.

37 Ibid. This discussion parallels statements in a report to the First All-Union Congress of Proletarian Writers in 1928 by Fadeyev (cf. Ermolaev 1963, pp. 72–73).

38 *Ningen o sono subete no fukuzatsusei to tomoni zentaitekini haaku suru koto* 人間をそのすべての複雑性とともてに全体的に把握すること (KKH, vol. 1, pp. 298–99).

39 Fadeyev 1927, pp. 167–68.

40 For an investigation of Kurahara’s influence on Kobayashi Takiji, see Matsuzawa 1988.

41 KTZ, vol. 14, pp. 49–50.

42 KKH, vol. 1, p. 277.

43 Fadeyev 1927, pp. 198–99.

44 RAPP, the Rossiyskaya Assotsiatsiya Proletarskikh Pisateley (1922–1932, known as VAPP until 1928), was the dominant proletarian literary group, which turned into a mass movement with branches and affiliated organizations throughout the Soviet Union.

45 Ermolaev 1963, p. 63. Cf.: “The efforts to carry out the cultural plans designed to alter the face of the country were to be directed toward molding the public mind and shaping a perfect socialist man with appropriate psychology, emotions, and behavior. It was only logical that proletarian literature should serve as an agent of the cultural revolution. It was to carry out its mission by engaging in a ‘deepened psychological analysis’ of fictional characters and in presenting them as real ‘living people,’ complex and contradictory individuals. These propositions were incorporated in the collective programmatic declarations of the VAPP (later RAPP) leadership, which served as literary dictates and provided a foundation for further theoretical work” (Ermolaev 1963, p. 61). Interestingly, one of the earliest theories put forward by RAPP in the breeding of the socialist mind was the “harmonious man” destined to be the ideal literary hero. Furthermore, none other than Fadeyev’s *The Rout* was praised by the critic Vladimir Ermilov as the first novel to deal with this matter (Ibid., pp. 61–62). Thus, seen from this perspective, Kurahara’s praise for *The Rout* appears, at least to some extent, as conditioned by literary ideals in the Soviet Union. As a result of Stalin’s offensive on the theoretical front, however, RAPP

finally had to renounce its theory of the creative process, admit the “idealistic” errors stemming from the concepts of the “living” and “harmonious” man and “psychologism” (ibid., p. 110). Ultimately, it appears as though its emphasis on psychological depiction was the very thing that brought RAPP down when the slogan for “socialist realism” was adopted in 1932 and when the “critical vein in RAPP’s idea of realism . . . was now gradually replaced by an unconditional eulogization of the hero of socialist labor” (ibid., p. 111).

46 For discussions on the relationship between Kurahara’s critique and Soviet art theory, see Hariu 1981, Shida 1996 and Takeuchi 2003. Shida’s article, in particular, contains a useful outline of Kurahara’s indebtedness to various Soviet theoreticians. Shida claims that Kurahara in *Puroretaria rearizumu e no michi* asserted views in line with those of *Onguardist* Grigory Lelevich, but that he had to change position when leadership in RAPP switched from Lelevich to Averbakh (Shida 1996, pp. 210–11). Takeuchi’s conclusion is that Kurahara loyally followed the mainstream of Soviet literary theory (Takeuchi 2003, p. 58).

47 KKH, vol. 2, p. 264.

48 Ibid., p. 263.

49 Ibid., p. 264.

50 Ermolaev 1963, p. 89.

51 KKH, vol. 2, p. 263.

52 Ermolaev 1963, p. 91.

53 KKH, vol. 2, p. 267.

54 Ibid., p. 268.

55 Ermolaev 1963, pp. 91–92, 114.

56 KKH, vol. 2, pp. 268–69.

57 Ibid., p. 269.

58 As an example of concrete Marxist literary critique, Hirano describes the article as a superior piece, almost worthy of the epithet of classic (Hirano 1959, p. 393).

59 *Sude ni chūshōka saretā koko no “daizai” no mondai de wa nakute, zentai no ichibu to shite no sakuhin no chūshinteki daizai to sore ni tai suru sakka no mikata o mo fukumu tokoro no shudai (tēma) no mondai de aru* すでに、抽象化された個々の「題材」の問題ではなくて、全体の一部としての作品の中心的題材とそれに対する作家の見方をも含むところの主題(テーマ)の問題である (KKH, vol. 2, pp. 181–82).

60 Ibid., p. 187.

61 Ibid., p. 182.

62 Ibid., p. 185.

63 Ibid., p. 188.

64 Ibid., pp. 189–92. Interestingly, the Soviet Union had its own debate on the problem of love sparked by Yury Libedinsky’s novel *Rozhdenie geroya* (The Birth of a Hero, 1929) which “aroused a storm of controversy over its theme of the new social man’s approach to the problems of love and family life” and which was immediately attacked by leftists within RAPP for its alleged: “escape from socialist construction and the class struggle into the realm of personal and erotic experiences.” What was to blame in the Soviet case, though, was not the ignorance of writers but the purported “baneful influence exerted on literary creation by the idealistic theories of the RAPP leadership” (Ermolaev 1963, pp.102–103).

65 KKH, vol. 2, p. 193.

66 Ibid., p. 194.

67 Ibid., p. 195.

68 KTZ, vol. 6, p. 24.

69 Ibid., pp. 34–35.

70 KKH, vol. 2, pp. 197–98. Tokunaga Sunao, in his critique of dialectical materialism as a creative method, explicitly derived from the views embraced within the Union of Soviet Writers (the successor to RAPP) as represented by Valery Kirpotin, opposes Kurahara's notion of "aggressiveness of theme." Even though dialectical materialism contributes to the writer's awareness, the crucial point is the richness of his life experiences. Tokunaga asserts that the creation of proletarian works is possible by learning from the infinitely rich reality, even without the help of any special worldview. Therefore, writers should reject the bureaucratic control of literary criticism and instead create freely and spontaneously (Tokunaga 1933, pp. 223, 225, 227). Obviously, Tokunaga's advocacy is totally in line with tenets of socialist realism, by now promulgated within the Soviet Union, that held that firsthand knowledge of life was the main prerequisite for a faithful depiction of reality. Hirano admits that Tokunaga's article contains sound elements in terms of literary common sense, although he finds the views expressed all too timely, i.e. opportunistic, in the context of the increasing chaos in the revolutionary movement at the time and the ensuing *tenkō* phenomenon. In this article, one of the earliest in Japan to advocate a creative method without world view and Soviet derived socialist realism (leading to the great debate over socialist realism, *shakaishugi riarizumu ronsō* 社会主義リアリズム論争), Tokunaga equates Kurahara with Averbakh in his critique of the method of dialectical materialism. According to Hirano, however, Kurahara's criticism, as laid forth in *Thoughts on Artistic Method*, was incomparably more elaborate than the mechanical criticism of Averbakh (Hirano 1959, pp. 391–93). Miyamoto Kenji, for his part, takes a less benevolent view. He claims that the call for dialectical materialism ushered in a critical tendency to mechanically demand of writers perfection in their awareness of social science and philosophy. Hereby rigorism in the criticism dealing with fellow traveller writers was brought about (Miyamoto 1980, p. 574).

71 *Kaikyū tōsō no hitsuyō no tame ni wa, arayuru kojintekina kōfuku o hakai suru no da* 階級闘争の必要のためには、あらゆる個人的な幸福を破壊するのだ (KKH, vol. 2, p. 207). The original quote is from Kataoka 1931, p. 19.

72 KKH, vol. 2, p. 209.

73 Ibid., p. 210.

74 Ibid., p. 211.

75 Interestingly, Miyamoto examines Kurahara's discussion of "the problem of love" in great detail. He confirms that the kind of irresponsible attitude towards women that is portrayed in Kataoka's novel did in fact exist in parts of the movement. While highlighting the existence of such defects, the novel however lacks in reality because these defects are exaggerated in a highly unnatural manner (Miyamoto 1980, p. 612).

76 KKH, vol. 2, p. 211.

77 Ibid., p. 212.

78 Ibid., pp. 212–13.

79 Ibid., p. 213. This idea might, however, not be alien to Kataoka. Thus, the novel mentions "comradely love" (*dōshiai* 同志愛) as a stronger love that makes the world grow (*Kore koso chikarazuyoi aijō da. Kore koso, sekai o seichō saseru aijō da* これこそ力強い愛情だ。これこそ、世界を成長させる愛情だ). (Kataoka 1931, p. 40.)

80 *Puroretaria sakka ga genjitsu no naka ni okeru hitsuzen to gūzen to o hakkiri to mite sore o egaku kawari ni, tada genjitsu no hyōmen dake o nademawashite iru ka, moshikuwa atama no naka de katte ni genjitsu o waikyoku shite iru ka* プロレタリア作家が現実の中における必然と偶然とをはっきりと見てそれを描くかわりに、ただ現実の表面だけを撫でまわしているか、もしくは頭の中で勝手に現実を歪曲しているか (KKH, vol. 2, p. 219).

81 *Sore wa sakubin no naka ni, genjitsu ni sonzai suru yō na ikiiki to shita sugata de saigen sarete iru koto*

ga hitsuyō de aru それは作品の中に、現実中存在するような生き生きとした姿で再現されていることが必要である (ibid., p. 221).

82 Ibid., p. 223.

83 *Burujoa jiyūshugi jidai ni okeru nōmin no sonzai o mushi shi, shihonshugi hattenki ni okeru nōmin no bunka o massatsu shite shimatta* ブルジョア自由主義時代における農民の存在を無視し、資本主義発展期における農民の分化を抹殺してしまった (ibid., p. 225).

84 Ibid.

85 Nakano 1931, p. 20.

86 Ibid., p. 8. Fictional ploy or not, it appears Nakano actually received the material for the story from a peasant activist, an acquaintance of Tokunaga Sunao. Equipped with a letter of introduction from this activist, Nakano visited the village in question. (Tokunaga 1933, p. 223.)

87 Ibid., pp. 39–40.

88 *Sakusha ni ikkan shita kaikyūteki kanten ga kakete ita koto* 作者に一貫した階級的観点が欠けていたこと (KKH, vol. 2, p. 224).

89 Ibid., p. 230–31.

90 Ibid., p. 231.

91 Ibid., p. 232.

92 *Hakkiri to shita keizaiteki kaikyūteki bunseki no ue ni tatte iru koto, nōson no seikatsu o yoku shitte ite, sore o gutaiteki ni egaite iru koto* はっきりとした経済的階級的分析の上に乗っていること、農村の生活をよく知っていて、それを具体的に描いていること (ibid., p. 235).

93 Sui 1931a, p. 169.

94 Sui 1931b, p. 136.

95 *Kangaete miru to, tōji wa chōdo Nichiro sensō chokugo no jidai de atta. Nisshin, Nichiro ryōsensō ni shōri shite, shihonshugi ga iyoijo tenkaiki ni haitta jidai de atta. Kangyō to seifu ni taishite mingyō ga okori, seifu no hogo seisaku ni taishite sangyō ni okeru kojinsugi ga bokkō shita. . . . Shōhin seisan ga subarashii ikioi de toshi ni afure, kindai seikatsu no beruto ga toshi kara nōson e nagekakerareta. Shōhin wa majutsu o motte, kōtsūsen no hattatsu o osakibō ni yamaoku no kanson no sumizumi made kuikonde itta. . . . Soshite, soko ni iji sarete ita furui chitsujō to seikatsu yōshiki o hitotamari mo naku hakai shita no da. . . . Shihonshugi wa mata, yasui rōdōryoku o motomete, seikatsu teido no hikui nōson no sumizumi e, sono seisan kikō no saibō o mochikonda. Nōson ni okeru kigyō ga atarashiku tenkai shi, furui jinushi wa atarashii shihonka to kettaku shite itta. Nōson no seinen danjo wa karidasarete toshichi de chingin dorei ni hayagawari shita* 考へて見ると、当時は丁度日露戦争直後の時代であつた。日清、日露両戦争に勝利して、資本主義が愈々展開期に入つた時代であつた。官業と政府に対して民業が起こり、政府の保護政策に対して産業における個人主義が勃興した。…商品生産が素晴らしい勢で都市に溢れ、近代生活のベルトが都市から農村へ投げかけられた。商品は魔術をもつて、交通線の発達をお先棒に山奥の寒村の隅々まで喰い込んでいつた。そして、其処に維持されていた古い秩序と生活様式を一たまりもなく破壊したのだ。…資本主義はまた、安い労働力を求めて、生活程度の低い農村の角々へ、その生産機構の細胞を持ち込んだ。農村における企業が新しく展開し、古い地主は新しい資本家と結託して行つた。農村の青年男女は駆り出されて都市地で賃銀奴隷に早変わりした (Sui 1931a, p. 176).

96 KKH, vol. 2, p. 238.

97 Ibid., pp. 238–39.

98 *Shibashiba subete no rōdōsha, subete no nōmin wa ichiyō ni “kaikyūteki” de ari, ichiyō ni mono o kangae, ichiyō ni kōdō suru* しばしばすべての労働者、すべての農民は一樣に「階級的」であり、一樣に物を考え、一樣に行動する (ibid., p. 239).

99 Ibid., p. 241.

100 Ibid., p. 242.

101 Murayama 1984, pp. 272, 269.

102 KKH, vol. 2, p. 251.

103 *Ima ya wareware wa, puroretaria bungaku no "jukuren rōdōsha" kara wa, sore ijō no mono, sunawachi yori takai geijutsuteki gaikatsu o yōkyū shinakereba naranai* 今や我々は、プロレタリア文学の「熟練労働者」からは、それ以上のもの、すなわちより高い芸術的概括を要求しなければならない (ibid.).

104 *Sono naka ni sono jidai no tōsō no zen'yōshi o ukiagarasete miseta sakuhin wa ikan nagara hitotsu mo nai no de aru. Sono tame ni soko ni wa koko no sutoraiki ya kosaku sōgi ni fuzui shita gūzen na deki goto ga, nanra no seiri nashi ni egakarete ite, wareware wa soko kara jidai no honshitsu o tsukamu koto mo, mata sono sōgi ni taisuru sakusha no hihan o kiku koto mo dekinai* その中にその時代の闘争の全容姿を浮かき上がらせて見せた作品は遺憾ながら一つもないのである。そのためにそこには個々のストライキや小作争議に附随した偶然な出来事が、何等の整理なしに描かれていて、我々はそこから時代の本質をつかむことも、またその争議に対する作者の批判をきくことも出来ない (ibid., p. 252).

105 Ibid., pp. 252–53.

106 Ibid., pp. 254–55. This touches on the perhaps most persistent critique of proletarian literature in Japan, namely the tendency to portray characters as unbelievable types. Consider for example the following quotation from Donald Keene: “In May of the same year [1928] Kobayashi [Takiji] went to Tokyo . . . and met some of the prominent men in the proletarian literature movement, including the critic Kurahara Korehito who told Kobayashi that proletarian literature suffered from the inability of the writers to describe living people with varied personalities. This criticism was entirely to the point: no failing of proletarian literature is more conspicuous than the depiction of characters as types. Sometimes, as we have seen, an author intentionally avoided giving individuality to his characters, but that surely was not the intent in Tokunaga’s *The Street without Sunlight* and the few other popular works of proletarian literature. But Kobayashi was no more capable than Tokunaga of creating believable, rounded personalities even in works where this was essential” (Keene 1984, p. 617). Here, should be noted that “types” is an ideal, not an invective, from the Marxist point of view, cf. Engels: “Realism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances” (Marx and Engels 1956, pp. 478–79). In the ideal case there is thus no contradiction between creating types and creating “believable, rounded personalities.” The Marxian affirmative appreciation of types is more in line with Scholes’ and Kellogg’s usage of “type characters:” “whenever we consider a character as a type, we are moving away from considering him as an individual character and moving toward considering him as part of some larger framework. This framework may be moral, theological, referable to some essentially extra-literary scheme; or it may be referable to a part of the narrative situation itself” (Scholes and Kellogg 1966, p. 204).

107 KKH, vol. 2, p. 257.

108 *Kaku shite nomi hajimete kare no jinbutsu wa...rōdōsha nōmin no taishū ni aisare, rikai sare, shitashimareru no de aru. Kaku shite nomi hajimete sakusha wa taishū no shisō to ishi to o takameru koto ga dekiru no de aru* かくしてのみ初めて彼の人物は…労働者農民の大衆に愛され、理解され、親しまれるのである。かくしてのみ初めて作家は大衆の思想と意志とを高めることができるのである (ibid., p. 259).

109 Ibid., pp. 260–61. In his close reading of *Thoughts on Artistic Method*, Miyamoto attempts a rehabilitation of the writers at the receiving end of Kurahara’s critique. For this purpose Miyamoto rereads the works discussed in *Thoughts* one after the other. Kobayashi’s “Dokubō”, for instance, admittedly contains partial defects. However, as a whole the short story possesses a revolutionary and democratic vitality that makes it worthy of rereading even at this day. Murayama’s *Shojochi* portrays the essence of the era in a fairly realistic way, continues Miyamoto. Yet, the authors and works discussed in

Thoughts are criticized severely for not being perfect in this or that respect. In retrospect, it is, according to Miyamoto, clear that literary critique in an official organ like *Nappu* cannot be the stage for only pointing out defects. Therefore, the reference to Heckert is inappropriate in this case. Miyamoto concludes that Kurahara until *Thoughts* had contributed to the development of the movement with his consistent insistence on the importance of a new type of realism from a social and class perspective. However, *Thoughts* had on the whole not furthered this realism but meant the introduction of a mechanistic approach to literature (Miyamoto 1980, pp. 625, 627, 644, 648, 651).

110 KKH, vol. 2, p. 261.

111 Hirano 1959, p. 384.

112 Miyamoto 1980, p. 509.

113 Kurahara 1955, pp. 365 f.

114 Odagiri 1955, p. 391.

115 Ermolaev, p. 79.

要旨

蔵原惟人のプロレタリア・リアリズムへの道

マッツ・カールソン

蔵原惟人は1920年代から1930年代初期にかけて日本のプロレタリア芸術運動全盛期における指導的なマルクス主義理論家として知られている。一連の有名な文学論争の勝者として台頭し、プロレタリア芸術運動の政治的部分において正統派的理論を定義付けた。また当時の多くの論争において運動の組織論および芸術の方法論にかかわる協議事項を設定していったのも彼であった。しかしながら彼をはじめプロレタリア理論家たちは芸術を政治的指令の下におくことによって運動の低迷をさらに悪化させたと、当時のみならず後年においても批判されることになるのである。本稿は、1928年から彼が逮捕された1932年までの間に発表された文学の方法に関する評論などにみられる彼の言説を検討するものである。また、ナラトロジーとマルクス主義の理論にたって、蔵原の政治的文学の主張が活動の崩壊に実際貢献したかどうかの判定を試みる。蔵原の文学方法についての記述を詳細に読むと、彼が事実先入観のない批判的リアリズムを唱道していたことが明らかになるのである。この彼の文学的理想は、一般の純文学における文学価値に近いものであった。だからこそ、彼の意見はプロレタリア文学運動にとって有害であったという指摘は不当といえよう。それに対しこの論文では、運動を崩壊に導く要因となったのは組織方針の過ちであり、厳密な意味での文学論ではなかったと結論する。

