

## **The Rise of a New Poetic Form: The Role of Shimamura Hōgetsu in the Creation of Modern Japanese Poetry**

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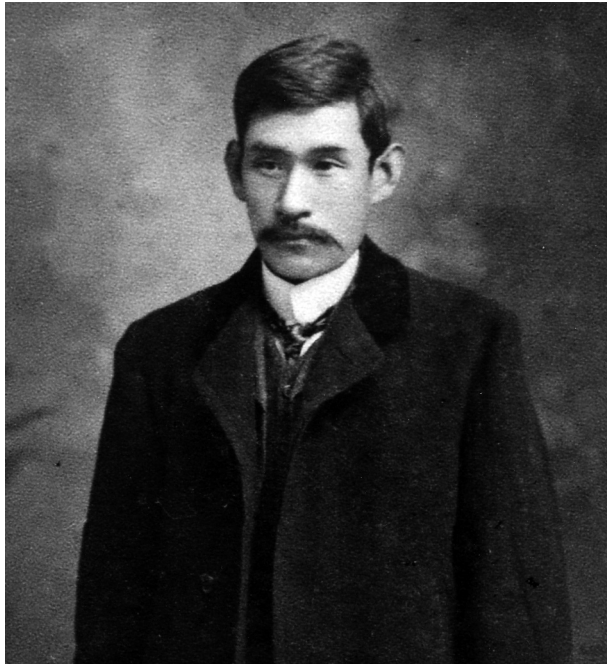
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Shimamura Hōgetsu was one of the most influential literary figures of modern Japan. He was deeply involved in literary criticism, the study of aesthetics and rhetoric, and the presentation of Western drama to the Japanese public. Yet despite his multifaceted career and the centrality of his influence, little attention has been paid to him since his death, particularly among scholars outside Japan. This study explores the evolution of modern Japanese poetry, describing Hōgetsu's pivotal role in the theoretical progression that led to the history-making acceptance of the vernacular in the process of poetic signification. From the problem of meter to that of style on to the question of language, Hōgetsu facilitated the development of a poetic form of expression that was not anchored to tradition but that reflected the emergence of modern themes and a modern sensibility. Although he was a strong advocate of the importance of meter, he did not believe that the traditional seven-five syllabic alternation should be considered a foregone conclusion, but argued that new meters could be created, and with them new linguistic devices that were not necessarily part of the classical canon. He also repeatedly questioned the authority of the classical medium, campaigning in favor of the vernacular and prompting younger generations of poets to experiment with the contemporary linguistic material available. Hōgetsu was one of the earliest advocates of the use of the colloquial in poetry and, as such, an important figure in the creation of a modern form of poetic expression in Japan.

**Keywords:** FORM, CONTENT, *SHINTAISHI*, METER, *MORŌTAI*, VERNACULAR, *GENBUN ITCHI*, NATURALISM, SHIMAMURA HŌGETSU

Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月 (1871–1918) was one of the most influential critics of the Meiji period (1868–1912). Born in a rural area of present day Shimane prefecture,

Hōgetsu's name is vitally linked to Waseda University, **the institution where he studied and taught, and to the establishment of the Meiji era's most central literary movement, naturalism.** However, his activity as a literary critic was by no means limited to the years of naturalism's popularity. Having written on a variety of topics while still in his twenties, from literature to art and theater, by the late 1890s Hōgetsu was already one of the most prominent literary figures in the *bundan* 文壇. In the years that preceded his departure for Europe in 1902 he wrote *Shin bijigaku* 新美辞学 (New Rhetoric), a work that signaled a major turning point in the course of rhetorical research in Japan, and published important essays on the problem of *genbun itchi* 言文一致 (unification of spoken and written language) that contributed greatly to the emerging call for a simplification of the literary medium.<sup>1</sup> During his professional career



Shimamura Hōgetsu. Courtesy of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University.

he also published novels and short stories that were well received by the literary world, and later in life he became one of the chief promoters of the modernization of Japanese theater. One of the leading members of Waseda University's drama group, the Bungei *Kyōkai* 文芸協会 (Literary Arts Society), **Hōgetsu's productions of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Hermann Sudermann's *Die Heimat* (also known as *Magda*, after the name of its protagonist)** had a significant impact on the social and cultural life of modern Japan. Hōgetsu became one of the leading spokesmen for women's rights, writing copiously on the problem of women's liberation, and concurrently leaving an indelible mark on the history of Japanese feminist discourse.<sup>2</sup>

Despite his central role in the literary developments of the Meiji years, very little has been written on him and his criticism thus far. This study aims at reversing this trend

by exploring Hōgetsu's contributions to one of the most debated issues of modern Japanese literature: the creation of a new form of poetic expression. In particular, it identifies and analyzes several of his contentions in the unfolding of the debate, such as the importance of meter and the value of the elusive style (*mōrōtai* 朦朧体), which have been largely overlooked by scholars but demonstrate beyond doubt Hōgetsu's central role in the evolution of poetry in Japan. The analysis also reveals Hōgetsu's pioneering support of the vernacular in poetic composition. Hōgetsu was in fact among the most passionate proponents of the use of the colloquial in literature, and his advocacy of this point remains a fundamental aspect of his contribution to Meiji literary criticism.

### The Publication of *Shintaishi shō* and the Beginning of the Debate

In 1882 scholars Toyama Masakazu 外山正一 (Chuzan 山), Yatabe Ryōkichi 矢田部良吉 (Shōkon 尚今) and Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (Sonken 巽軒) published their *Shintaishi shō* 新体詩抄 (A Selection of Poetry in the New Style). This volume was comprised of five original Japanese poems and fourteen translations from English that included Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard" and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Psalm of Life." The collection represented a significant turning point in Japanese poetics because it called for the creation of a new style and the development of a new poetic diction:

Waka written in the Meiji era must be waka of the Meiji era. They should not be old waka. Kanshi written by Japanese should be Japanese poems and not Chinese poems. This is why we decided to compose poetry in a new style. The rules for rhyming, the level of the vocabulary and the rest must be evolved gradually; they cannot be laid down at a single time.<sup>3</sup>

Language was a special concern for the compilers of this volume. Exposure to Western poetry had caused them to recognize the excessive gap between the language of traditional Japanese poetry and the one actually spoken by the people. Yatabe Ryōkichi observed that in the Western world

They never borrow words from foreign countries, nor do they pad their language with archaic words used a thousand years before. The result is that anyone, even a small child, can understand poetry, providing he knows the language of the country. . . . My colleague Chuzan and I, after consultation together, chose some Western poems and translated them as an experiment, using the language of daily speech.<sup>4</sup>

Toyama, Yatabe and Inoue called into serious question the use of an archaic language in poetry that no longer reflected the reality of contemporary life and society. Their advocacy of the colloquial, the employment of a broader vocabulary and the selection of themes and topics not easily conveyed by classical forms of poetry constituted a significant challenge to tradition. The *shintaishi* 新体詩 (poetry in the new style) they promoted defied the restrictions of waka, haiku or kanshi, and challenged the necessity of rhetorical conventions that had been accepted as inherent to those genres. It could then be defined as modern because it posited the feasibility of poetic forms that were not regarded as part of the classical canon.

Despite the significance of their literary challenge, the compilers of the collection did not, however, truly succeed in providing a model. None of the five original Japanese

poems contained in the volume met the theoretical standards of their composers. Toyama Masakazu's "Shakaigaku no genri ni dai su" 社会学の原理に題す (On the Principles of Sociology), for example, was later characterized by one scholar as "no more than an accidental accumulation of incompetent pieces absolutely undeserving of being discussed in terms of the artistic value of the contents."<sup>5</sup>

Oya ni sonawaru seishitsu wa  
 Iden no hō de ko ni tsutae  
 Teki suru mono wa sakaeyuki  
 Teki senu mono wa otoroete  
 Ima no sekai ni aru mono wa  
 Kikyō karukaya ominaeshi  
 Ume ya sakura ya hagibotan  
 Botan ni midori no karashi ya  
 Na no ha ni tomaru chōchō ya  
 Ko no ma saezuru uguisu ya  
 Kadobe ni asaru komadori ya

親に備はる性質は  
 遺伝の法で子に伝へ  
 適するものは栄えゆき  
 適せぬものは衰へて  
 今の世界に在るものは  
 桔梗かるかや女郎花  
 梅や桜や萩牡丹  
 牡丹に緑の唐獅や  
 菜の葉に止まる蝶てふや  
 木の間囀る鶯や  
 門邊にあさる知更鳥や

The characteristics the parents possess  
 Are transmitted by heredity to the children;  
 The fit go on flourishing,  
 The unfit perish.  
 In the present world, all that exists—  
 Bellflowers, pampas grass, the wild valerian,  
 Plum blossoms and cherry blossoms, clover and peonies,  
 And, associated with peonies, the Chinese lion-dog,  
 And butterflies that alight on the rapeflower leaves,  
 Song thrushes that warble among the trees,  
 Robins that hunt for food by the gate. . . .<sup>6</sup>

"Shakaigaku no genri ni dai su" was not acclaimed as a model of poetic excellence; furthermore, the poem was still composed according to the customary seven-five syllabic alternation, which illustrated how even self-declared innovators like Toyama found it extremely difficult to break away from tradition.

Despite the clumsiness of this and other poems contained in *Shintaisbi shō*, the collection was widely read, continuing to foster the notion that a new style of poetry had to be created in order to express the subtleties of modern thought and the new realities of life. This view implied a reconsideration of a number of issues of a linguistic and rhetorical nature that would strongly characterize the debate on poetry as it unfolded over the years. Among these issues was, first and foremost, that of meter. The advocates of the new style questioned the need for a fixed syllabic pattern in poetry as well as the necessity of defining poetry on the basis of that pattern.

Secondly, there was the conundrum of style. What type of stylistic features made the poem effective and aesthetically pleasing? And by contrast what type of characteristics detracted from it? These simple questions prompted a critical discourse that challenged the importance of classical diction, striking at the heart of the issue of rhetorical refinement and urging a reconsideration of the relationship between content and form. The issue of style, so much debated among fiction writers, became one of the recurring topics of discussion among poets too, reaching a peak with the rise of the *mōrōtai* controversy. The term *mōrōtai* (elusive style) indicated the alleged vagueness of the refined diction employed by some poetic factions, a point of contention that in turn spurred a larger debate on the definition of poetic elegance.

Finally, there was the problem of language itself. In a broad sense, the notion of composing in a new style opened the way to the possibility of employing contemporary language. The use of the vernacular, however, never really took off among poets until at least the very late Meiji years. The belief that classical and pseudo-classical expressions were absolutely essential to poetry was so well rooted in the *bundan* of the time that the feasibility of a literary language based on the colloquial, already a reality in the realm of prose, seemed quite unthinkable to many.

The problem of form soon became one of the most important topics of debate among the critics and poets of the time. The concept itself seemed to comprise a number of different categories, depending on writer and context. Thus, it indicated at times the issue of meter, at times the rules that governed the use of language, and at times poetic diction in general. Interestingly, the question of form was rendered even more momentous by the call against the conventional subject matter of traditional poetry that was gaining ground in those same years. By placing increased emphasis on the importance of thought, this outcry, in fact, ultimately caused a seemingly irreconcilable gap between the two categories of content and form, fostering a polarized view of the process of poetic signification.

This conflict between content and form was one of the major traits of modern Japanese literary criticism. Shimamura Hōgetsu was the one critic and scholar who most actively sought to mediate between these two equally important issues. He did so in the domains of both poetry and prose, by publishing a large number of articles between 1894 and the end of the Meiji period that addressed the feasibility of a theoretical compromise in the quest for a modern form of literary expression. His first important contributions were in the domain of poetry, where in the 1890s the notion of creating a poem outside the canon of traditional metrics still seemed preposterous to many.

### The Problem of Meter

The appearance of *Shintaishi shō* spurred considerable experimentation with new forms of poetry, leading to the publication of such important collections as Yuasa Hangetsu's 湯浅半月 *Jūni no ishiyuka* 十二の石塚 (The Twelve Stone Tablets) in 1885 and Mori Ōgai's 森鷗外 *Omokage* 於母影 (Vestiges) in 1889. As mentioned earlier, however, the publication of *Shintaishi shō* also contributed to stimulating an important theoretical debate over the feasibility of a poetic style free from the constrictions of classical diction. This debate began as early as the 1880s when a number of critics addressed the question of poetry and its future possibilities.<sup>7</sup> It then intensified at the end of 1890 when critic and author Yamada Bimyō 山田美妙 published his essay "Nihon inbun ron" 日本韻文論 (On Japanese Poetry).

In this essay, Bimyō (1868–1910) questioned the feasibility of a poetic form totally independent of an internal metrical structure, asserting by contrast the importance of meter as the chief discriminating factor between poetry and prose. He did not maintain that the seven-five syllabic pattern was the only one possible in Japanese poetry, but he did claim the necessity of a fixed configuration that would facilitate the achievement of a lyrical dimension not attainable in prose. He also suggested the possibility of implementing rhetorical devices such as rhyme that were typical of the Western poetic tradition.<sup>8</sup>

Bimyō's claim of the importance of such features as meter and rhyme was viewed by many critics as excessive, leading them to attack his assertion that a prescribed metrical configuration was an absolute prerequisite in poetry. Ishibashi Ningetsu 石橋忍月 (1865–1926), for example, criticized Bimyō's statement that poetry was "a form of writing made up of words and expressions that relied on rhyme," arguing that such a definition prioritized poetry's external fabric over the depth of its content. It would be equivalent, he observed, to judging a man by his appearance rather than his thought. For Ningetsu, Bimyō overlooked the fact that poetry was not just about form, but was rather about creating a "link between man, beauty and the universe."<sup>9</sup>

Bimyō responded to this criticism, partially accepting Ningetsu's arguments, but also asserting that his opponent's definition of poetry as something that linked man, beauty and the universe was so vague that it could be applied to the whole domain of pure literature.<sup>10</sup> His rebuttal, however, did not prevent him from becoming the target of further criticism. Writing in *Kokumin no tomo* 国民の友 in January 1891, critic Uchida Roan 内田魯庵 (1868–1929) challenged Bimyō's emphasis on the importance of meter, further widening the gap between those who believed in the supremacy of form and those who by contrast deemed content to be a priority.<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1890s the question was still a matter of contention as was demonstrated by the intensification of the debate that occurred in 1895. At the root of this intensification was not only the appearance of a number of articles in such journals as *Teikoku bungaku* 帝国文学, *Taiyō* 太陽 and *Waseda bungaku* 早稻田文学 that confirmed the increasing concern over the creation of a new poetic form, but also the publication of *Shintai shiikashū* 新体詩歌集 (A Collection of Poems in the New Style), a volume of poetry published by Toyama Masakazu in September of that year. The title of the collection was eloquent. Toyama had tried again to experiment with a new style that would pave the way for new developments in poetic composition. In the preface to his work, the scholar reaffirmed his contribution as one

of the pioneers of the *shintaiishi*, and articulated his new conviction that meter hampered the free expression of sentiment and ideas.

Commentators reacted vehemently. Reviews appearing in *Kokumin no tomo* and *Bungakukai* 文学界 disparaged the poems contained in this collection because of their excessive proximity to prose.<sup>12</sup> One critic, however, took Toyama's side in an important article that would prompt Shimamura Hōgetsu to finally join the debate on the issue. This critic was Takayama Chogyū 高山樗牛 (1871–1902).

In his essay “Wagakuni shōrai no shikei to Toyama hakase no shintaiishi” 我邦将来の詩形と外山博士の新体詩 (Dr. Toyama's *Shintaiishi* and the Future Form of Our Poetry), which appeared in October 1895 in the journal *Teikoku bungaku*, Chogyū reconsidered the main points of Toyama's thought, praising his determination to create a new poetic style.<sup>13</sup> He stated that the Japanese people were now in need of a form that went beyond the precepts of classical diction and that was able to convey the thoughts and feelings of the new age. The conventional seven-five syllabic pattern, and the archaic lexicon that very often accompanied it, unfortunately no longer served this purpose, and Toyama's efforts were precisely the result of a general sense of dissatisfaction towards the conventions of traditional poetry. The creation of a new style was consequently a task of immediate importance.

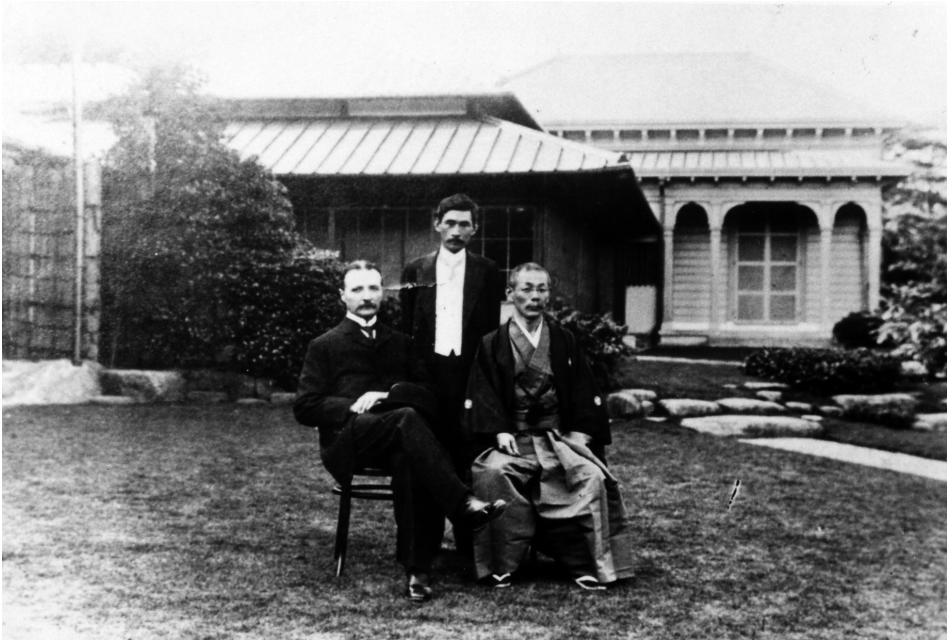
Why then, he asked, were some writers so vehemently critical of his endeavors? For many of these critics, he added, no verse could be considered poetry that did not follow the seven-five syllabic meter; they were willing to sacrifice content for the sake of form. In reality, Chogyū observed, the presence of an established meter was not necessarily a precondition to the creation of poetry. Form was for him a mere tool for the conveyance of thought.

Chogyū then articulated four points that contained the key ideas of his theory. First, he maintained that it was a mistake to consider form a special trait of poetry. Second, he affirmed that even if traditional poetry had a fixed form, it would be a mistake to consider that form as inherent to poetic composition. Third, he stated that the obstinate employment of a fixed pattern to convey thoughts and ideas that are subject to change with the passing of time would hinder the future development of poetry. And fourth, he emphasized that it was content that chose form and not vice versa. In sum, Chogyū supported Toyama's position, bringing forth, at the end of his essay, the notion that form had to be appropriate to content and that the balanced interaction of the two was a precondition to the creation of beauty.

Chogyū's important piece in defense of Toyama's theory prompted Hōgetsu to join the debate. The young critic had just made his debut in the literary world. He had graduated at the top of his class in 1894, after which, thanks to a recommendation by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遥, he had immediately joined the staff of *Waseda bungaku* with a salary of fifteen yen per month. Joining this influential venue had given him the opportunity to publish a number of significant essays and thus gain substantial recognition from his peers. But it was certainly with “*Shintaiishi no katachi ni tsuite*” 新体詩の形について (On the Form of the *Shintaiishi*) that his name began to be widely known in the literary world.<sup>14</sup>

In this article, Hōgetsu first reconsidered Toyama's claim of the necessity of a new poetic form. Essentially, he agreed with the Tokyo Imperial University 東京帝国大学 professor that the seven-five syllabic pattern was not an appropriate meter to express contemporary thoughts and ideas. However, he stated that arguing against the constraints of traditional metrics did not mean advocating a total absence of meter. After all, Toyama's poetry could not





Shimamura (standing) with William Archer and Tsubouchi Shōyō. Courtesy of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University.

truly be considered poetry as such, and was in his view merely a type of prose. In his opinion, meter remained essential to the composition of a poem.

Having thus criticized the theoretical framework of Toyama's thought, Hōgetsu began to analyze the meaning of the terms *shintaishi* (poetry in the new style) and *shikei* 詩形 (poetic form). The former term, he noted, was widely thought to indicate a type of poetry that differed from traditional forms such as *waka*, *haiku* and *kanshi*. Did its domain lie within the epic, the narrative or the lyric realm? In his view, the *shintaishi* was a type of poetry that lay in the lyric domain and as such it was to be considered subjective, that is, a form that prioritized the expression of sentiment over the description of things and events. This being established, he noted that virtually all of the poems that had appeared until then had employed a fixed meter. The *shintaishi* was thus a form of poetry that was lyrical, subjective, and created around a fixed meter. Since Toyama seemed to agree with these first two points, he observed, it was the issue of meter that remained at the core of the discussion. Specifically, was meter the most effective way to convey poetic thought? Could it be regarded as having the same value as content?

Hōgetsu then addressed the meaning of *shikei*. Since the debate at hand was whether a fixed meter was or was not the most suitable means to convey thoughts and ideas, he stated, it was appropriate to address the position of one critic—Chogyū—who had recently expressed his opposition to the presence of metrics in poetry. Touching upon the four points leveled by Chogyū in his essay, he affirmed that the fundamental question raised by the critic of *Teikoku bungaku* was “what to do with the future of our poetry.” This essentially meant, in his view, “what to do with meter (*rikkaku* 律格) in the *shintaishi*,” a problem that could be further divided into two smaller issues, namely which meter to choose and whether such a meter was necessary.



Addressing the first issue, Hōgetsu noted, the critic of *Teikoku bungaku* had derogated the seven-five syllabic meter, deeming it inappropriate for the expression of modern concepts and ideas in light of the apparent desire of the Japanese people to create a new poetic form more suitable to the changing times. This statement was, in his opinion, correct. Yet, the critic had failed to consider whether other meters would be viable, stopping at a mere refutation of this one possibility. As for the second issue, he had clearly affirmed that meter was unnecessary for the simple reason that “form in poetry should be determined by the content.” This type of belief was, according to Hōgetsu, the result of a misconception of the meaning of the term “form.” The misconception was particularly evident in the critic’s statement that form should not be predetermined in any case. There were certainly cases, Hōgetsu acknowledged, when form had to be determined on the basis of the content, but there were also cases in which the two stood equal in status and relevance.

Hōgetsu seemed to be theoretically close to the thought of Yamada Bimyō who had viewed meter as the chief discriminating factor between poetry and prose. In Hōgetsu’s opinion, poetry was something that linked beautiful images to language. The poet gave life to such images by relying on his subjectivity and then seeking to express them through the aid of language and predetermined configurations such as meter. Form and content were in his view ultimately inseparable.

Chogyū responded to Hōgetsu’s rebuttal by writing an anonymous article entitled “Shintaishikeiron” 新体詩形論 (On the Problem of Form in Poetry of the New Style), which appeared in the journal *Taiyō* one month later.<sup>15</sup> In “Wagakuni shōrai no shikei to Toyama hakase no shintaishi,” he noted, the critic of *Teikoku bungaku*—that is, **he himself—had argued** that form was nothing more than the necessary expression of the content, that it was not possible to approach content with a prefixed form, that form should not be regarded as the fundamental principle of poetry, and that poetry was not opposed to prose but rather, as a form of art, to science. *Waseda bungaku*’s critic, i.e., **Hōgetsu, had refuted these positions**, but his arguments had been a mere celebration of meter and were not therefore germane to the debate. Chogyū anonymously agreed that meter carried with it an element of beauty, but did not believe one should confer to it special meanings other than those for which it was normally used.

Hōgetsu reacted vehemently once again with a piece that appeared in *Waseda bungaku* the following month.<sup>16</sup> The critic writing in *Taiyō*, he observed, had judged his arguments as having little bearing on the debate at hand; if that was the case, he should feel the responsibility to explain why. Hōgetsu countered all the points made anonymously by Chogyū in his essay, addressing in particular the latter’s claim that meter should not be thought to have any special meaning other than the one for which it was used. The anonymous critic, Hōgetsu noted, admitted that meter contained elements of beauty but rejected the notion of its importance, maintaining that content transcended form in the domain of sentiment and aesthetic images. But was not meter, as something capable of carrying elements of beauty, part of that very domain? If it was, Hōgetsu concluded, then the argument of *Taiyō*’s critic was clearly vague and contradictory.

This exchange of views between the two critics essentially ended the debate on the problem of meter, even though it left a number of questions unanswered. The debate itself, however, brought Hōgetsu new recognition. *Teikoku bungaku* acknowledged the rigor of his analysis, and a number of leading journals such as *Bungakukai*, *Kokugakuin zasshi* 国学院雜

誌 and *Kokkō* 国光 essentially ratified his viewpoint of the necessity of meter in poetry.<sup>17</sup> Hōgetsu's role in the debate of the time was thus central and influential. According to Hisamatsu Sen'ichi 久松潜一, while Chogyū remained strongly indebted to those who at the beginning of the 1880s had argued in favor of content over form, Hōgetsu took Bimyō's claim of the centrality of meter in poetry to the next level, attempting a compromise between the polarized views of the two factions.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, for Yoshida Seiichi 吉田精一, Hōgetsu provided a crucial theoretical support for the experimentations of many poets of the time.<sup>19</sup> Hinatsu Kōnosuke 日夏耿之助 similarly praised the critic of *Waseda bungaku* for the depth and accuracy of his theory.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, Hōgetsu's most valuable contribution lay in his postulation that different types of meter could be used in the creation of Japanese poetry. For most critics and poets of the time, in fact, the question of form was merely a specific debate over the future of the seven-five syllabic pattern. For him, however, this was not the case. Hōgetsu advocated the importance of meter in general, but not of a specific meter. He thus brought forth a view of poetry that emphasized the value of form but not to the detriment of content. This point, which lay at the core of his rhetorical theory, suggested the possibility of developing metrical features as well as rhetorical devices that were not necessarily part of the classical Japanese repertoire. It was, in sum, the same theoretical differentiation between "true" and stereotyped rhetorical conventions he would draw a few years later in his writings on the *genbun itchi* issue.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, new developments were taking place in the *bundan*. Now that the importance of meter had been energetically addressed, the issue of style came to the forefront of the discussion, prompting critics and poets alike to discuss which stylistic features would be most suitable for the *shintaiishi*. These developments led to the rise of the *mōrōtai* debate, a controversy that in turn spurred a reconsideration of the value of the classical canon and a redefinition of elegance in poetry.

### The *Mōrōtai* Debate and the Redefinition of Poetic Elegance

One of the first and most important deliberations on the problem of style was the *mōrōtai* debate. According to scholar Kakuta Toshirō 角田敏郎, this controversy could be traced back to an essay entitled "Shintaishi no kyō kono goro" 新体詩のけふこのごろ (The Present State of Poetry in the New Style) that appeared in the journal *Taiyō* in February 1896.<sup>22</sup> The author of this article, said to be Chogyū, lamented that *shintaiishi* poets had not yet produced any remarkable works of art. In particular, the author wrote, even if some poets had succeeded in breaking free of conventional restrictions regarding the length of a poem, the content of their verses was still remarkably poor. It was true, the critic noted, that the language they employed was graceful and reminiscent of the classical literary tradition, but it was this very trait, he argued, that annoyed readers. Indeed, some poets tended to be over-complacent with their use of refined language, and as a result "reading their poems was equivalent to listening to a voice through the telephone or looking at a shape through a telescope." In Chogyū's view, the excessively mediating presence of sophisticated language hindered the immediacy of the aesthetic experience. The poets of the so-called academic school (*daigaku-ha* 大学派), which included Takeshima Hagoromo 武島羽衣, Shioi Ukō 塩井雨江 and Ōmachi Keigetsu 大町桂月, especially suffered from this irksome tendency.<sup>23</sup>

Toyama Masakazu echoed this criticism in an article entitled “Shintaishi oyobi rōdokuhō” 新体詩及朗誦法 (Poetry in the New Style and the Art of Declamation) that appeared in two installments in the journal *Teikoku bungaku* during the following month. There, considering again the seven-five syllabic alternation, he criticized the language employed by certain poets, calling their style *mōrō* 朦朧 (vague, elusive), and urging them to abandon the use of archaisms in favor of simple and direct vocabulary:

There seem to be many now who like to make extensive use of technical words (*yōgo* 用語), refined expressions (*gagen* 雅言), metaphors (*hiyugo* 比喩語), pleonasm (*jūigo* 重意語), and pillow words (*makurakotoba* 枕詞). There seem to be many who use different types of words and endeavor to render the meaning vague. . . . But in order to move people, is it not better to write in a clear manner, to avoid unnecessary embellishments, and to employ words that are easy to understand?<sup>24</sup>

Some poets of the academic school reacted to this criticism. Takeshima Hagoromo (1872–1967), who was among those having been accused of using excessively old-fashioned expressions, defended his stylistic preferences in two articles that appeared in March 1896 in the journal *Teikoku bungaku*. In the first piece, Hagoromo wondered if it was his poetry that was elusive, or whether this elusiveness did not lie “in the eyes of some readers.” Poetry, Hagoromo stated, differed from science in that it sought to create suggestive images rather than be clear and precise. As such it was only natural that poets would employ a type of language capable of producing such images.

In the second piece, he addressed the issue of style. *Shintaishi* poets, he observed, were now being urged to use simple expressions taken from the contemporary vernacular. This was because some critics, he asserted, wanted to implement the same stylistic changes that were taking place in the realm of prose, where classical and pseudo-classical styles were being gradually replaced by more colloquial modes of expression. According to Hagoromo, however, the poetry pursued by *shintaishi* poets was far from being similar to classical poetry. It was very different in nature, so that there was no reason to reject classical language. As for syllabic meter, Hagoromo felt that metric poetry was a natural expression of the Japanese language and he strongly supported it.<sup>25</sup>

The controversy over the elusiveness of the *shintaishi* inevitably prompted Hōgetsu to join the debate with an essay entitled “Mōrōtai to wa nani zo ya” 朦朧体とは何ぞや (What is the Elusive Style?).<sup>26</sup> Hōgetsu noted that the term *mōrōtai* was being employed to criticize the elusiveness and vagueness of style in the *shintaishi*; many, however, rejected this criticism, arguing that precision and clarity should not be considered attributes or prerequisites of poetic composition. In Hōgetsu’s opinion, emotion was the true province of poetry, and this was a fact acknowledged also by rhetoricians. It was a natural psychological process that clarity would at times suffer for the sake of intensity. From this point of view, he stated, elusiveness of meaning was not to be condemned, since a little confusion over meaning was certainly better than having a poem lack passion, which was the case with many poems in the new style.

Nonetheless, he noted, lack of clarity was not the only criticism made of the new style; the emotional aspect was also being attacked. In fact, the term *mōrōtai* indicated, for the detractors of this style, a poem with a poor and shallow emotional content. If this was the case, then it was not the elusiveness of the form that was to be blamed, but rather the

affective content itself. For Hōgetsu, seeking to counterbalance poor original content with the employment of a refined form was a grave mistake. The poets of the academic school were possibly guilty of not placing sufficient attention on the content of their poems, with an excessive reliance on form being the root of the problem.

Eventually, Hōgetsu stated, the controversy could be reduced to a dispute between two sides. One side maintained that the use of classical styles to express thoughts other than those for which they were originally created resulted in a corruption of the poem, while the other believed that traditional metrics and lexicon could be used to express any type of content. Whether this latter point was true, he observed, had not yet been proved, and so the creators of poetry in this style should be free to experiment with new vocabulary and metrical patterns. It was true, however, that the world of poetry was not yet ready to do away with traditional metrics and language, nor was there any compelling reason to do so. Classical metrics should continue to be at least one aspect of modern poetry, while at the same time poets should feel free to pursue an unrestricted expression of their thoughts.

Hōgetsu concluded his essay by addressing the meaning of the term *mōrō*. He rejected the notion that it merely indicated obscurity of content, and maintained by contrast its polisemic nature. He explained that a state of elusiveness and vagueness should not be the primary objective of poetry although it could be regarded as its final aesthetic outcome. For Hōgetsu, the conquering of the self and of the ordinary led to a contemplative dimension that preceded the achievement of this aesthetic outcome. This viewpoint, according to some, may have played a significant part in the establishment of romanticism first and the absorption of symbolism later.<sup>27</sup>

The debate over the elusive style continued to unfold over the following months. But in November 1897, the journal *Teikoku bungaku* essentially ratified Hōgetsu's position on the issue, dismissing the arguments against elusive poetry and an excessive use of sophisticated language.<sup>28</sup> It is vital to note here, however, that Hōgetsu's viewpoint was by no means a mere celebration of the supremacy of form. The critic, in fact, shared with Chogyū the belief that content had equal weight in the process of poetic signification; he was simply against the notion that a rediscovery of the importance of thought necessarily implied the indiscriminate rejection of the relevance of form.

Meanwhile, there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction in the literary world on the state of poetry. While fiction writers had by this time already produced a number of works that employed the vernacular and thus represented a considerable step forward in the quest for a new literary medium, poets were still wrestling with the question of whether a modern form of poetic expression was even possible.

Hōgetsu was among the first to express his concern in a piece entitled “Shintaishishū o yomu” 新体詩集を読む (Reading Collections of Poetry in the New Style), which appeared in *Waseda bungaku* in April and May 1897.<sup>29</sup> In this article he noted that despite the publication of a number of notable collections in recent years, he was not very impressed by the poetic production of the time, and elucidated five points, all having to do with form, that in his view needed to be addressed and improved.

The first of these points concerned an arrangement of words that was too commonplace and conventional, too plain to carry the tone that was inherent to poetry. Indeed, he stated, the use of words was so ordinary that these poems could just as well be rewritten as

prose, and there would be no significant difference. He maintained that ordinariness and simplicity were two entirely different things, and that poetry needed rhetorical devices such as postposition, for example, to create suggestive aesthetic images.

A second point had to do with grammar. According to the critic, the poets of his day were paying too much attention to the correct usage of language and often forgot that the domain of poetry allowed them by definition the freedom to play with grammatical rules. As long as one did not totally disregard the principles of grammar, rule violations were not only permissible but artful.

A third point had to do with the indiscriminate use of words or sounds whose only function was to allow conformation to metric restrictions. He was against this use of language, because it rendered the poem verbose.

A fourth point was concerned with the creation of new poetic expressions. For him, the expressions used by many poets suffered from an excessive reliance on the traditional canon.

Finally, the last point had to do with the issue of refinement. Hōgetsu stated that many poets lacked the ability to render language poetic. Of course, he observed, one could not think that the adherence to meter would result in a composition worthy of being called a poem, but many seemed to believe so, especially those who sought to employ a large number of colloquialisms and Chinese compounds. Some had called for the use of refined language, but he wondered what the word “refined” meant to them. Their notion or concept of refinement was in his view quite vague. In some cases it seemed to indicate the language of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) and *Kokinshū* 古今集 (Collection from Ancient and Modern Times); in other cases it seemed to be language that was conventionally associated with the concept of beauty; in still other cases, it connoted a type of language that sounded gracious by virtue of its old age. Even if this was the true nature of refined language, even if the language of waka was truly refined, this did not automatically mean that it was poetic.

For Hōgetsu, the concepts of *ga* 雅 (elegant) and *zoku* 俗 (vulgar) should not be segregated, with one being considered poetic and the other non-poetic. In his view, it was the poet who created poetry and it was up to his creativity and skills to render language, even ordinary language, refined. *Gago* 雅語 (elegant language) and *zokugo* 俗語 (common language) each had their merits and disadvantages, but any call for the elimination of either was theoretically groundless. The two should not be on conflictive terms. On the contrary, he urged, poets should seek to shift the vernacular toward the domain of poetry and adjust the classical linguistic canon to modern thinking.

As can be easily seen, all of the five points articulated by Hōgetsu in his “Shintaishishū o yomu” had to do with the questionable authority of the classical canon. Whether it was about the arrangement of words, grammar, meter, the lexicon or rhetorical figures, the main contention of his argument was the need to question the supremacy of the classical tradition and to envision the development of new poetic features that reflected the changing times.

Only one month later Hōgetsu published another important essay, “Shintaishi no inritsu” 新体詩の韻律 (The Prosody of the *Shintaishi*), which once again raised the question of whether the seven-five syllabic meter was the only one possible for the Japanese language, as had been the prevalent view until then.<sup>30</sup> His discussions of meter, language and style at

this juncture demonstrate that by 1897 he was already convinced of not only the possibility of creating alternative metrical patterns but also of the viability of the vernacular as a literary form of expression. His writings on the *genbun itchi* issue that appeared during the same years confirm this view. In these essays, Hōgetsu postulated that the vernacular was not intrinsically vulgar and that it had the potential to develop rhetorical features particular to its own language system.<sup>31</sup>

However, despite his early advocacy of these points, the world of poetry was still very much anchored to the use of language from the classical canon. It was in fact in the month of August of this same year that Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村 (1872–1943) published his famous *Wakanashū* 若菜集 (Seedlings). This collection was extremely well received by the *bundan*, but it was essentially still written in conventional syllabic meter and vocabulary:

“Hatsukoi”

Mada agesomeshi maegami no  
Ringo no moto ni mieshi toki  
Mae ni sashitaru hanagushi no  
Hana aru kimi to omoikeri

Yasashiku shiroki te o nobete  
Ringo o ware ni ataeshi wa  
Usukurenai no aki no mi ni  
Hito koisomeshi hajime nari

初恋

まだあげ初めし前髪の  
林檎のもとに見えしとき  
前にさしたる花櫛の  
花ある君と思ひけり

やさしく白き手をのべて  
林檎をわれにあたへしは  
薄紅の秋の実に  
人こひ初めしはじめなり

“First love”

When I saw you under the apple tree  
With your hair swept up for the first time  
I thought you were the flower  
In the flower comb you wore in front

When you gently extended your soft white hand  
And gave me an apple  
It was the very first time I loved someone  
With the pale red of the autumn fruit. . . .<sup>32</sup>



The extraordinary success of Tōson's *Wakanashū*, “phrased in alternating passages in seven and five syllables (though arranged in longer lines), inevitably inhibited serious discussion of more modern poetic language and forms.”<sup>33</sup> But despite such an apparent aversion toward the employment of more contemporary linguistic features, individuals like Hōgetsu continued the campaign against classicism. After his exchanges with Chogyū on the problem of meter and on the elusive style, the critic of *Waseda bungaku* continued to write on the topic of poetry, arguing that the adoption of a fixed seven-five syllabic structure was not to be a foregone conclusion. Only four months later the journal *Teikoku bungaku* noted the beginning of a new trend in the world of poetry that rejected the seven-five syllabic meter and moved towards a meter-free style.<sup>34</sup> The literary world was gradually coming to the realization that the development of a new poetic form was not an impossible task.

### ***Genbun itchi* in Poetry: The Naturalist Years and the Acceptance of the Vernacular**

The end of the nineteenth century marked the rise of romanticism in poetry. Journals like *Myōjō* 明星, which was founded in 1900 by Yosano Tekkan 与謝野鉄幹 (1873–1935), played an important role in the nurturing of poets like Ishikawa Takuboku 石川啄木 (1886–1912), Kitahara Hakushū 北原白秋 (1885–1942), and Takamura Kōtarō 高村光太郎 (1883–1956), who would later make substantial contributions to the development of poetic signification in Japan. In addition, the progressive introduction of symbolism through the works of Ueda Bin 上田敏 (1874–1916) and Kanbara Ariake 蒲原有明 (1876–1952) signaled a world of poetry that was becoming increasingly receptive to literary trends from overseas.

Despite these developments and the trend toward innovation with meter that had been witnessed in those years, the linguistic (and to an extent the thematic) fabrics of the *shintaisbi* remained very much tied to classical poetic conventions. The poems that appeared in the first years of the twentieth century for the most part maintained this practice, reinforcing the notion that to be a good Japanese poem, a creation must use classical words arranged in a traditionally approved meter.

As the poet and scholar Hitomi Enkichi 人見圓吉 has shown in his study *Kōgoshi no shūteki kenkyū* 口語詩の史的研究 (A Historical Study of Modern Poetry), the overwhelming majority of the poems published at this juncture were inevitably written in classical or pseudo-classical styles. The year 1901, for example, was a very active one for the world of poetry, but very few poems dared to employ colloquial language, and those that did were of a remarkably low quality.<sup>35</sup> The same thing could be said about the poetic production of 1902, and in 1903, Hitomi noted, the poems published in the magazine *Shōkokumin* 少国民, which had just changed its name to *Genbun itchi* 言文一致 in January of that year, were still composed in the classical medium despite the fact that all prose was written in the vernacular.<sup>36</sup> This is proof, according to the scholar, that while in theory many acknowledged the need to compose using everyday language, in practice, there was still a widespread belief that this was not suitable for use as poetic language.

The world of poetry continued to be thus characterized by the predominance of the classical medium and classical rhetorical devices. Of course, this does not mean that poems in the colloquial were not written at all. Some journals like *Shōnen sekai* 少年世界 published

poems of this type, although most of these were still somewhat immature compositions. Poets like Susukida Kyūkin 薄田泣菫 (1877–1945) made meaningful experimentation with the vernacular albeit very often within a linguistically archaic environment that characterized their poetry as essentially classical.<sup>37</sup>

These and other developments, while not yet entirely successful, certainly contributed to a growing awareness of both the possibility and the value of the vernacular in poetry. The second half of 1905 was in this respect especially important. The literary section of the *Tōkyō nichī nichī shinbun* 東京日々新聞 took note of this renewed awareness, welcoming the large number of collections published, and praising the efforts of poets like Kyūkin, Ariake and Iwano Hōmei 岩野泡鳴, who devised new metrical patterns (such as alternating lines of eight and seven syllables), and progressively incorporated colloquial language into their poems.<sup>38</sup>

Interestingly, this important juncture coincided with Hōgetsu's return from Europe. Hōgetsu had left in 1902, and after spending two years in England he had spent the remainder of his leave in Germany. Upon his arrival home, he found a profoundly changed literary scene. Japan had emerged from the Russo-Japanese war as a world power, and this new development had added to a number of already existing questions that challenged writers and intellectuals: questions about individuality, nation, the sense of belonging, the role of literature in society, and the relationship between art and politics. Now the chief editor of *Waseda bungaku* and in charge of the literary section of the *Tōkyō nichī nichī shinbun*, Hōgetsu was faced with the daunting task of providing new leadership to the *bundan*. The younger generations of students and aspiring writers at Waseda University and elsewhere were counting on his already legendary perspicacity as to how to read the developments that were taking place in those years.<sup>39</sup>

Although now increasingly focused on the formulation of his naturalist literary theory, in June 1906 Hōgetsu published “Isseki bunwa” 一夕文話 (One Night's Conversation), an article that constituted a significant step forward toward a solution to the debate.<sup>40</sup> In the section entitled “Genbun itchi to shōrai no shi” 言文一致と将来の詩 (*Genbun itchi* and the Poetry of the Future), he observed that when the *genbun itchi* style ceased to be considered as vulgar or unpleasant to the ear, then and only then, would it be ready to enter the domain of poetry. Thus far, he wrote, many had sought to compose poems using the vernacular but virtually no one had succeeded. However, since countries such as England had been successful in developing a literary style based on the vernacular, it was obvious, Hōgetsu stated, that the employment of colloquial expressions in poetry did not offend the ear of poets and readers. The *genbun itchi* style would eventually overcome its alleged vulgarity and become the language of Japanese poetry.

Hōgetsu's prediction that the *genbun itchi* style would become the medium of modern Japanese poetry came at a propitious time, contributing in an important way to the legitimization of the use of the colloquial both in prose and poetry. The article has been largely overlooked thus far, perhaps due to the importance of other essays written by the critic during the same year, but a few scholars have clearly highlighted its relevance. Kakuta Toshirō, for example, called it the true beginning of the movement for the employment of the vernacular in poetry.<sup>41</sup> For Hinatsu Kōnosuke, Hōgetsu's anticipation that the *genbun itchi* style would soon become the language of choice in poetic composition was not only accurate but also had

a significant influence in the literary world.<sup>42</sup>

Hōgetsu's call for a replacement of old poetic conventions with everyday language came at a time when many still questioned the feasibility of such a process, while even those who essentially supported it fell short of claiming the necessity of a true *genbun itchi* style in poetry. Essays published in a variety of venues attest to the presence of conflicting views on the ability of ordinary language to be poetic, showing that despite the increased support for the use of the colloquial, the language used by *shintaiishi* poets was overwhelmingly still classical or pseudo-classical. Thus, according to Hitomi Enkichi, in 1906 only seventy-seven poems were published that were written in the colloquial, while up to 1,664 appeared that were written in the classical medium.<sup>43</sup> From this point of view, Hōgetsu's notion of a "*genbun itchi*" poetic style was prophetic, especially when considering that it preceded by one full year Morikawa Kison's 森川葵村 essay "Zokuyōshi, genbun itchi shi" 俗謡詩・言文一致詩 (Ballads, and Poems in *Genbun itchi*), the piece that was highly praised by Yamamoto Masahide 山本正秀 for being one of the earliest to declare the need of writing poetry in *genbun itchi*.<sup>44</sup>

The following year, 1907, was decisive for the development of modern Japanese poetry. The year witnessed the publication of Kawaji Ryūkō's 川路柳虹 "Hakidame" 塵溜 (Rubbish Heap) regarded by many as the first poem successfully written in the vernacular. While still far from the lyric dimensions achieved almost a decade later by perhaps the most celebrated poet of the period, Hagiwara Sakutarō 萩原朔太郎 (1886–1942), the break with the fabrics and the metrical restrictions of traditional poetry was apparent. The theme of the poem, in particular, represented a drastic change from the subject matter of the past.

#### Hakidame

Tonari no ie no komegura no urate ni  
Kusai hakidame ga musareta nioi,  
Hakidame no uchi no wana wana  
Iroiro no gomoku no kusami,  
Tsuyubare no yū o nagare  
Tadayotte, sora wa kakkato tadareteru.

Hakidame no uchi ni ugoku ine no mushi,  
Unka no tamago, mata tsuchi o hamu mimizura ga  
Atama o motage, tokkuri no kakera ya  
Kami no kirehashi ga kusaremusarete,  
Chiisai ka wa wamekinagarani tonde iku.

#### 塵溜

隣の家の穀倉の裏手に  
臭い塵溜が蒸されたにほひ、  
塵溜のうちのわなわな  
いろいろの芥のくさみ、  
梅雨晴れの夕をながれ  
漂って空はかつかと爛れてる。

塵溜のうちには動く稲の虫、  
 浮蛾の卵、また土を食む蚯蚓らが  
 頭を擡げ、徳利壺の虧片や  
 紙のきれはしが腐れ蒸されて、  
 小さい蚊は喚きながらに飛んでゆく。

Rubbish Heap

Behind the neighbor's storehouse  
 The stench of the steaming dump,  
 Something quivers inside.  
 The smell of rubbish  
 Permeates an unusually clear evening during the rainy season  
 And floats as the sky burns and festers.

Inside the heap, midges and their eggs,  
 Soil-eating worms, all moving, raising their heads,  
 Fragments of a broken sake bottle,  
 Torn pieces of paper, decayed and fermented,  
 Tiny, buzzing mosquitoes flying away. . . .<sup>45</sup>

The appearance of “Hakidame” spurred a growing support for the employment of the vernacular, along with new developments that had already taken place in the early months of that year. In March, in fact, the young critics and poets affiliated with Hōgetsu and the journal *Waseda bungaku* began to come to the forefront of the literary stage. Sōma Gyofū 相馬御風 (1883–1950), Noguchi Ujō 野口雨情 (1882–1945), Miki Rofū 三木露風 (1889–1964), Katō Kaishun 加藤介春 (1885–1946) and Hitomi Tōmei (Enkichi) founded the *Waseda shisha* 早稲田詩社, a society that met twice a month with the purpose of discussing matters related to the problem of poetry. Hōgetsu himself was most instrumental in the formation of this group; it was he who encouraged Gyofū to create an organization of this kind.<sup>46</sup> After all, the chief editor of *Waseda bungaku* was perhaps at his peak in terms of influence and charismatic authority: anything Hōgetsu said was like gold for the students of Waseda University.<sup>47</sup> Gyofū visited Hitomi in April 1907 and relayed the following message from their mentor:

For the sake of individuality, it is certainly a good thing that friends compose poems on their own, but would you not get better results if you friends got together, formed a society and polished your style while exchanging views on poetry? Talk about it with Hitomi. If you create a poetic society, you can use a section of *Waseda bungaku* for your works.<sup>48</sup>

Hōgetsu's persuasive argument, the availability of a respected journal like *Waseda bungaku* as a possible outlet for their poetry, and the very fact that their teacher himself had just maintained in *Bunshō sekai* 文章世界 the theoretical feasibility of a poem written in the vernacular became a tremendous encouragement for these young poets who began to experiment with ordinary language.

But the most important development of this year was perhaps the rise of naturalism. Following the appearance of Shimazaki Tōson's novel *Hakai* 破戒 (The Broken Command-

ment) in 1906, Hōgetsu declared his full support for this literary school, writing a number of consequential articles that gave momentum to the rise of the movement. This surge of a strong naturalist trend touched all areas of literature. Naturalism's denunciation of traditional literary conventions and its call for a plain and direct mode of expression found fertile ground in the realm of poetry where such a call soon came to signify the rejection of a fixed meter and the employment of poetic expressions that were the result of the poet's own creation rather than a recycling from the conventional poetic canon. Its call for objectivity and for a direct connection to reality and one's environment also had a vital influence on poets and their poetic production.

Of course, it would be a mistake to overestimate the importance of objectivity in the naturalist discourse of those years, particularly within the domain of poetry. In fact, Hōgetsu had clearly stated on more than one occasion the need to emphasize "subjectivity," instead.<sup>49</sup> But the call for directness that was intrinsic to the naturalist message was so poignant and strong that its influence on the developments of the time should not be minimized. It is not a coincidence that after the appearance of "Hakidame," Hōgetsu continued to emphasize this very point. In "Gendai no shi" 現代の詩 (Modern Poetry), an article that appeared in the journal *Shijin* only two months after the publication of "Hakidame," the critic lamented the *shintaishi's* lack of directness, meaning that it had no connection with real life. For him, poetry in the new style had made remarkable progress; yet, it was still vague, and its emotional tone was still insufficiently intense. In his view, then, it was essential that poets seek to be straightforward in their works. It did not matter to him whether they achieved this directness through naturalism or symbolism; what was important was that they be able to convey a strong and lasting impression.<sup>50</sup>

In this same article, Hōgetsu also continued his campaign in favor of the vernacular. He emphasized that twenty years earlier few believed that the now commonly used copulas *de aru* である and *de arimasu* あります would ever become legitimate elements of literary style. Therefore, he affirmed, it was reasonable to believe that the same evolution would occur in the realm of poetry. Poetry had to be, in form and in content, close to contemporary life.

Hōgetsu's advocacy of the vernacular in poetry in this article had an enormous influence on the critics and poets of the period. On the one hand, this call was the clear expression of a strong concern for content at a point in time when, as Kakuta Toshirō pointed out, the issue of form seemed to be still the chief topic of debate among critics and poets.<sup>51</sup> It was a fundamental force in the process that led to the establishment of a *genbun itchi* style in poetry, and it is then not surprising Yamamoto Masahide and that others considered this piece of high historical importance.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, given Hōgetsu's weight in the *bundan* of those years, there is reason to believe that the publication of "Gendai no shi" following the appearance of Kawaji Ryūkō's "Hakidame" may have been an attempt by the editors of the journal *Shijin* to sanction the use of the colloquial through Hōgetsu's authoritative views.<sup>53</sup> It is certainly a fact that many drew from this position in the following months. In "Shikai no konponteki kakushin" 詩界の根本的革新 (The Fundamental Revolution in the World of Poetry), for example, Sōma Gyofū denounced the excessive reliance on traditional forms, calling for an absolute rejection of classicism, and urging poets to go back to the naked essence of their hearts and to express themselves freely. But, most of all, he asked that poetry should be written in the vernacular, just as, he noted, "Hōgetsu has advocated."<sup>54</sup> Similarly, at the end of 1908, Miki Rofū saluted the establishment of the vernacular, commending Hōgetsu for

explaining the reasons for its necessity.<sup>55</sup>

But, again, the most valuable aspect of Hōgetsu's theory at this time was perhaps the call for directness that characterized much of naturalist discourse. Hōgetsu believed that *shintaisbi* poets lacked a connection to real life. Their poems were unable to express the melancholy of the modern age and were incapable of conveying the introspective trends of the younger generations. Gyofū echoed this view and elaborated on this same point when, in discussing the limitations of Kanbara Ariake's poetry, he criticized the poet's inability to express the pain, the grief and the anxiety of the modern individual.<sup>56</sup> In the same way, more than a year and a half later, paraphrasing an advertisement seen on the train, Ishikawa Takuboku called for "poems to eat" (*kurau beki shi* くらうべき詩), poems, that is, with a direct and intimate link to ordinariness and everyday life. For Takuboku, revolution in poetry was not just about using the colloquial; it was about people, contemporary people writing about contemporary life in contemporary language.<sup>57</sup>

Now already in the later phase of his naturalist campaign, the phase in which he argued with vehemence for the need to separate the domain of art from that of real life, Hōgetsu looked back with satisfaction. The vernacular, he claimed, had established itself as a new poetic language. This development was now irreversible.<sup>58</sup> Considering that many at the time still opposed the use of ordinary language in poetic composition and that one would have to wait until well into the Taishō years to see in the works of Hagiwara Sakutarō the first true embodiment of fifty years of experimentation and debate, Hōgetsu's confident pronouncement was not only accurate but also farsighted, becoming the most eloquent expression of his continued commitment to the resolution of the problem of form in poetry.

As is clear, Hōgetsu played a crucial role in the evolution of poetry in Japan. In the mid-1890s he strongly advocated the importance of meter, maintaining however that the seven-five syllabic alternation was not the only possible metrical configuration for the poetry of the new style. On the contrary, he suggested that new meters could be created, and with them new linguistic devices that were not necessarily part of the classical canon. In other words, while reaffirming the importance of form, he also affirmed the possibility of creating alternative rhetorical patterns that could best express the new content and themes of modern life. In the following years he repeatedly questioned the authority of the classical medium and rejected the viewpoint that saw this and ordinary language as two mutually exclusive categories. It was up to the poet and his creative and artistic skills, he stated, to render language, even ordinary language, refined. This statement opened the way for a reconsideration of the vernacular as a viable poetic form. His continued campaign in favor of the vernacular during the naturalist years and the continued call for the establishment of a link between life and poetry was likewise critical, prompting younger generations of poets to experiment with the contemporary linguistic material available. From the problem of meter to that of style on to the question of language, Hōgetsu's deliberations **thus had significant influence on the** discourse of the time, facilitating the development of a poetic form of expression that was not anchored to tradition but that was the direct expression of a new, more "modern" sensibility. As such his contribution paved the way toward a resolution of the conflict between content and form that characterized much of Meiji literary criticism.



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## NOTES

1 The *genbun itchi* issue has been discussed by many scholars and intellectuals over the years. For a very recent enlightening viewpoint on this problem, see Suzuki 2005.

2 The events that surrounded his extra-marital relationship with young actress Matsui Sumako 松井須磨子 later caused Hōgetsu to resign his post from Waseda University and its drama group in 1913. In the same year, the critic then founded the Geijutsu-za 芸術座, which rose as one of the most successful theater enterprises of the time.

3 Toyama Masakazu, Yatabe Ryōkichi, and Inoue Tetsujirō, *Shintaishi shō* (1882); in Sangū 1974, pp. 40–41. English translation in Keene 1984, p. 195.

4 Ibid., p. 36. English translation in Keene 1984, p. 196.

5 Hinatsu Kōnosuke, *Meiji Taishō shishi* 明治大正詩史, vol. 1, p. 32. Quoted and translated in Keene 1984, p. 198.

6 Sangū 1974, p. 49; English translation in Keene 1984, p. 197.

7 As early as 1884, for example, individuals like Suematsu Kenchō 末松謙澄 (1855–1920) and Uemura Masahisa 植村正久 (1858–1925) were already addressing the problem of poetry in a variety of venues. See Hisamatsu 1950, pp. 453–71; and Kakuta 1989, pp. 9–10.

8 Yamada Bimyō, “Nihon inbun ron,” *Kokumin no tomo* 国民の友 (October 1890–January 1891); in Hisamatsu 1973, pp. 42–65.

9 See Ishibashi 1890, pp. 40–43.

10 Yamada 1890, pp. 43–44.

11 See Uchida 1891.

12 Quoted in Sadoya 1980, p. 216.

- 13 Takayama 1895, pp. 42–61.
- 14 See Shimamura 1895. Hōgetsu would become chief editor of *Waseda bungaku* in January 1906.
- 15 Takayama 1896a, pp. 101–102.
- 16 Shimamura 1896a, pp. 81–83.
- 17 On this point, see Tsunoda 1962, p. 52.
- 18 Hisamatsu 1950, p. 622.
- 19 See Yoshida 1980, p. 34.
- 20 Hinatsu 1973, p. 159.
- 21 See Shimamura 1898.
- 22 Kakuta 1989, p. 17.
- 23 Takayama 1896b, pp. 104–105.
- 24 Toyama 1896, pp. 8–9.
- 25 See Takeshima 1896a, pp. 92–93 and Takeshima 1896b, pp. 96–98.
- 26 See Shimamura 1896b.
- 27 See Iwasa 1976, p. 18.
- 28 See *Teikoku bungaku* 1897, pp. 89–90.
- 29 See Shimamura 1897a.
- 30 See Shimamura 1897b.
- 31 See, for example, Shimamura 1898, and Shimamura Hōgetsu, “Genbun itchi no sannan” 言文一致の三難, *Shinbun* 新文 2:1 (February 1902): in Yamamoto 1979, pp. 452–56.
- 32 See Shimazaki 1967, pp. 120–21. English translation in Rimer and Gessel 2005, p. 50.
- 33 Keene 1984, p. 204.
- 34 See *Teikoku bungaku* 1901.
- 35 See Hitomi 1975, p. 259. Among the notable collections that appeared during 1901 were Doi Bansui’s 土井晩翠 *Gyōshō* 曉鐘 (The Morning Bell) and Shimazaki Tōson’s *Rakubaishū* 落梅集 (Fallen Plum Blossoms).
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 298–99.
- 37 On this point, see *ibid.*, p. 386.
- 38 *Tōkyō nichichi shinbun*, January 1–6, 1906. Quoted in Hitomi 1975, p. 419.
- 39 For more details on the atmosphere of elation that followed Hōgetsu’s return to Japan, see *Shinshōsetsu* 1905, pp. 105–106; and Sadoya 1980, p. 104.
- 40 See Shimamura 1906.
- 41 See Kakuta 1973, p. 146.
- 42 Hinatsu 1973, p. 458.
- 43 Hitomi 1975, p. 500.
- 44 See Morikawa Kison, “Zokuyōshi, genbun itchi shi,” *Shijin* 詩人 2 (July 1907): in Yamamoto 1979, pp. 677–79. According to Yamamoto, Morikawa Kison was also one of the very first to use the term *genbun itchi shi* (poetry in *genbun itchi*). See *ibid.*, p. 127.
- 45 Kawaji Ryūkō, “Hakidame,” *Shijin* 4 (September 1907); reproduced in Hitomi 1975, p. 598. The English translation is mine.
- 46 Hattori 1963, p. 17.
- 47 On this point see Itō 1971, pp. 38–42.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 40. See also Hattori 1963, p. 17.
- 49 See, for example, Shimamura 1907a.
- 50 Shimamura 1907b.
- 51 Kakuta 1989, p. 23.
- 52 Yamamoto 1979 p. 135; and Yasuda 1973, p. 634.

53 Katagiri 1962, p. 64.

54 Sōma Gyofū, “Shikai no konponteki kakushin,” *Waseda bungaku* 28 (March 1908); in Yasuda 1973, pp. 63–65.

55 Miki 1908, pp. 508–11.

56 See Sōma Gyofū, “*Ariake shū o yomu*” 『有明集』を読む, *Waseda bungaku* (March 1908); in Yasuda 1973, pp. 66–67.

57 Ishikawa Takuboku, “Kurau beki shi” 食らうべき詩, in *Tōkyō Mainichi shinbun* 東京毎日新聞, December 5–6, 1909; reproduced in Yasuda 1973, pp. 72–76. Carl Sesar should be credited with the translation “poems to eat:” see Sesar 1966.

58 See Shimamura 1908.

## 要旨

### 島村抱月における近代詩の成立問題

マシミリアーノ・トマシ

島村抱月は近代日本文学の進展に最も影響を与えた文学者の一人である。若い頃、修辞学の研究に専念した抱月は後に自然主義文学の評論家として注目を浴びた。晩年時代、積極的に西洋演劇の紹介に務め、日本の演劇の近代化に大きく貢献した。このように抱月は修辞学を始めとして、文学、演劇などの様々な分野において活躍した日本文化史上見逃すことのできない存在である。

この論文では口語詩における問題を巡っての抱月に焦点を当てながら、彼がどのように近代詩の成立に関わったかを分析する。抱月は和歌や俳句の定型詩の伝統的な修辞の価値を認めはしたが、五七五とは異なる新しいミーターなどの可能性を唱え、周囲の若い弟子達に大きな刺激を与えた。抱月は早くから口語の使用の必要性も主張し、近代的な内容や感覚を表現できる近代詩の誕生に大きく貢献したと言えよう。