

TANIZAKI JUN'ICHIRO AS CULTURAL CRITIC

SUZUKI, Sadami

International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, Japan

No doubt, TANIZAKI Jun'ichirō is one of the greatest modern Japanese writers. The critical appraisal of his works, however, is by no means uniform. Especially, the texts TANIZAKI published during the 1910s and the early-1920s are regarded as the so-called culture of the erotic, grotesque, nonsensical (*ero guro nansensu*) which were the main characteristics of Japanese mass culture in the late-1920s and early-1930s. In this essay, I discuss briefly the significance of eroticism, grotesquerie, nonsense in the Taishō period, and the works TANIZAKI published, as well as during the Shōwa period, which exhibit a critical stance, a spirit of resistance, toward the dominant culture of each period. Although TANIZAKI does not formulate a clear political stance in the texts, as a cultural critic he is one of the most politically minded writers in modern Japan.

Keywords: CULTURAL CRITIC, EROTICISM, GROTESQUERIE, NONSENCE (*ERO GURO NANSENSU*), FANTASY, DECADANCE, DEDECTIVE STORY, SELF-PARODY, EMOTIONAL REVOLUTION, CULTURE IN TAISHŌ PERIOD.

TANIZAKI and *ero guro nansensu*

TANIZAKI Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) is indisputably one of the greatest modern Japanese writers. The critical appraisal of his works, however, is by no means uniform: before the Second World War TANIZAKI was regarded by progressive critics, affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party or Proletarian Literature Movement, as a reactionary, MIYAMOTO Yuriko, for instance, wrote that TANIZAKI was a feudalistic writer in her essay "Fuyu wo Kosu Tsubomi" (Buds Shutting in for the Winter, 1934). Opposing this stance, KOBAYASHI Hideo, one of the most important critics in the Shōwa period, remarks that TANIZAKI's works had the actual feelings of human life instead of ideological/political thought in his essay "Watakushi Shōsetsu Ron" (1935) which influenced deeply literal critics after the war. Around the late-1950s, the works of TANIZAKI began to win respect as a great writer of traditional aesthetic, but have often been critiqued on account of their supposed lack of intellectual substance or clear ideological/political stance. Even today, ODAGIRI Hideo wrote that TANIZAKI took no ideological/political stance.¹

Especially the texts TANIZAKI published during the 1910s and early-1920s are regarded less highly than the writings which appeared after the publication of *Chijin no Ai* (1924, Engl. translation *Naomi*). Even NOGUCHI Takehiko, one of the best critics of TANIZAKI in contemporary Japan, wrote that TANIZAKI slumped in the middle of the Taishō period.² The rather mixed reception of TANIZAKI's early work seemed to have to do with the fact that these writings anticipate in many respects the so-called culture of the erotic, grotesque, nonsensical (*ero guro nansensu*), as well as the literature of fantasy. The term *ero guro nansensu*³ refers to the main characteristics of Japanese mass culture in the

late-1920s and early-1930s. Typical examples of *ero guro nansensu* are the detective stories of EDOGAWA Ranpo (1894-1965).⁴

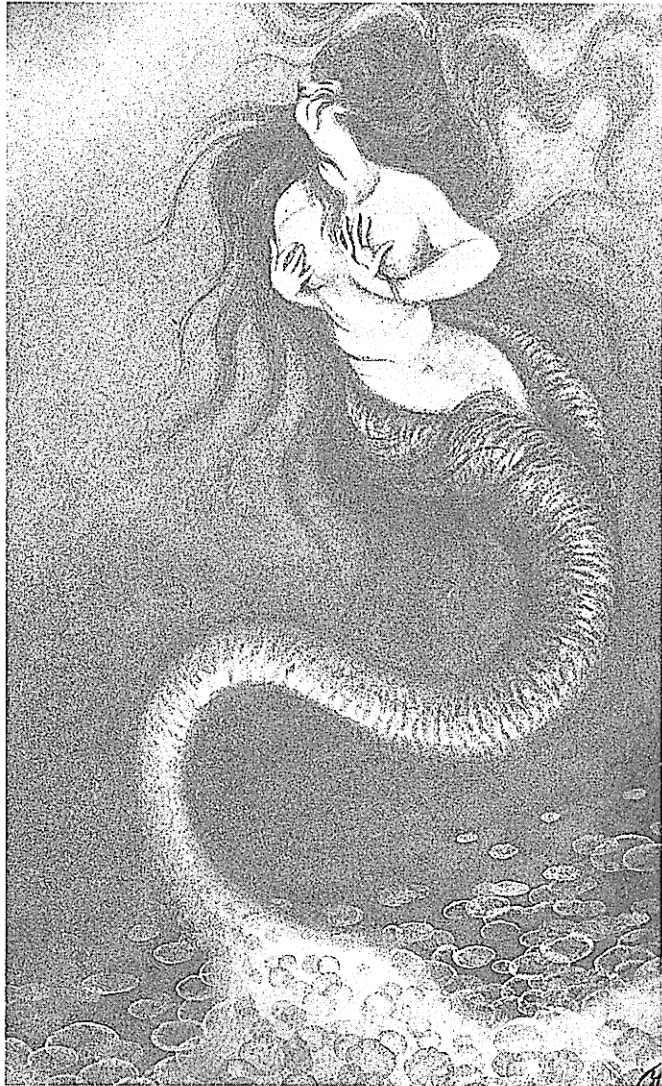
TANIZAKI's "Shisei" (The Tattooer, 1910) describes the extraordinary transformations that occur in a young girl who has a huge black-widow spider tattooed on her back by a tattoo artist named Seikichi. As Seikichi "pours (his) soul" and the best of his art into this tattoo, the young girl, who was originally shy and withdrawn, becomes the "femme fatale" the tattooer has always dreamed about. Conscious of her new powers, the young woman not only declares that "I can bear anything for the sake of beauty", in the end triumphantly announces to Seikichi that "you are my first victim". (The Tattooer, trans. Howard Hibbet, *Seven Japanese Stories*, p.169).

"Shisei" envisions an ideal of female beauty that not only bewitches men, but drives them to self-destruction. The narrative strategy of endowing the woman with the power to master and destroy men is clearly rooted in a masochistic desire. The text also provides one of the earliest examples of TANIZAKI's well-known foot fetishism.

As she left the tub, too weak to dry herself, the girl pushed aside the sympathetic hand Seikichi offered her, and sank to the floor in agony, moaning as if in a nightmare. Her disheveled hair hung over her face in a wild tangle. The white soles of her feet were reflected in the mirror behind her.(p.169)

Seen from a different angle, the mirror behind the girl obviously reflects more than just the soles of her feet: at least part of her naked, beautifully tattooed body

<Figure 1>



which is writhing in pain would be visible. The text seems to be luring the reader into the voyeuristic-sadistic pleasure of watching the young woman's suffering.

The eroticism that characterizes most of the texts TANIZAKI published during the Taishō period is a complex affair. In "Himitsu" (The Secret, 1911), for instance, we see "a slightly grotesque man" who likes to wear women's clothes and powder his face. In "Hōkan" (The Jester, 1911), there is a nonsensical scene which depicts the uproarious behaviour of a crowd of people who observe a long-necked balloon with a painted human face.

In "Ningyo no nageki" (The Mermaid's Sorrow, 1918) there is an erotic scene in which the naked body of the mermaid who is the protagonist of the story is illuminated by candles. The book in which this story included, published in 1919, has the alluring, bold eroticism of the cover illustration by MIZUSHIMA Yaou (Figure 1). In "Jinmenso" (A Boil with Human Face, 1918) we see an abscess with human features. Finally, "AOTSUKA shi no Hanashi" (The Story of Mr. AOTSUKA, 1926) portrays a man who satisfies his perverse sexual tastes by fantasizing grotesquely enlarged versions of various body parts of his favorite actress, or by having sexual intercourse with an exquisite rubber replica of the same woman.

The texts TANIZAKI published during the Taishō period—texts that have been unjustly characterized as abnormal or merely eccentric—thus combine fantasy and eroticism with the lurid and grotesque, as well as with the absurd and the nonsensical, in a way that strikingly anticipates the *ero guro nansensu* culture of the late-twenties and the early-thirties. In the remainder of my paper I would like to discuss briefly some aspects of this body of texts.

The Aesthetics of Decadence

"Shisei" begins as follows:

It was an age when people still possessed the noble virtue of foolishness (*oroka*), and life was not such a harsh struggle as today.⁵

Let us pause for a moment to consider the historical context in which this story was written. It was a time of fierce competition between the Western imperialist powers. Only a few years before the publication of "Shisei", the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) had produced a staggering 230,000 war dead and wounded on the Japanese side. This huge number of casualties resulted in a serious shortage of male labor that hampered the development of heavy and chemical industries, and the establishment of large factories in the initial post-war years. Tenant farmers became increasingly dependent on extra jobs away from home for their livelihood, while factory workers and other categories of city dwellers saw themselves buffeted about in the ruthlessly competitive society that was now consolidating itself. Darwinist thought, which emphasizes so-called natural selection was introduced in Japan around this time, became generally accepted as a theory that affirms the "scientific" necessity of struggle for existence.

NAGAI Kafū, was a writer who contributed largely to the debut of TANIZAKI in literary journalism in opposition to the trend of “naturalism” (*shizensyugi*) around 1907. The severely criticized this “Europeanized” society for its utilitarianism and lack of effort in creating a true national culture in his “Kichōsha no Nikki” (Journal of a Returnee, 1909). After the Great Treason incident (*Taigyaku jiken*, 1910) which involved the suppression of a supposedly treasonous plan against the Emperor Meiji Kafū began to show a decadent attitude, and to become lost in nostalgia for the popular culture of the Tokugawa era.

If we review “Shisei” from the perspective of the historical situation described above, a triple textual intent will become apparent: first, the text’s painstaking description of Seikichi’s tattooing of the young girl’s body and the positing of an ideal of female beauty that feeds on men’s life energy implies a valorization of such decadent, futile and “foolish” pursuits as art and the worship of woman. Second, the praise of “foolishness” in the opening paragraph of the story—its characterization as a “noble virtue”—is clearly a piece of nonsensical logic. The ironic affirmation of foolishness we find here implies an elitist contempt for, and desire to escape from the selfish, materialistic and profit-oriented world of the struggle for existence in capitalism. Third, the culture of the *Tokugawa* era is idealized. In other words, we see here a critique of modern civilization that takes the form of celebration of decadence.

Let us consider next the historical conditions that led to the formation, toward the end of the Meiji period, of an intellectual climate in which the exploration of emotions, the body and its sexualities could flourish. Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War marked the beginning of a new epoch which was relatively free of the nationalist fervor that had swept the country during the war. Popular discontent with the government, industrial capital and the landowning class took increasingly violent forms. This violence, which was initially sparked by dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Portsmouth which formally ended the war, reached a peak in the rice riots of 1918. It was such violent popular manifestations that paved the way for the advent of so-called Taishō democracy—a liberal political atmosphere that allowed both governmental and oppositional party politics to evolve as never before.

A parallel trend was what the critic ISODA Koichi has called “the revolution of emotion” (*kanjo kakumei*).⁶ This revolution was announced by unabashed, passionate expressions of desire such as the confession “I am starving for a woman’s body” (*Watashi wa onna ni uete iru*) in MUSHANOKŌJI Saneatsu’s *Omedetaki Hito* (Carefree People, 1911). Not only did such declarations seriously challenge the rigid Confucian teachings that constituted the foundation of the “people’s morals” (*kokumin no dōtoku*) that were instituted by government policy makers at the beginning of the Meiji period, but they celebrated the joys of life in a time when the latter was permanently exposed to threatening influences.

Only four years before the publication of MUSHANOKŌJI’s *Omedetaki Hito* TAYAMA Katai’s *Futon* had caused a public uproar through its blunt depiction of a middle aged writer’s abject desire for his young live-in pupil. The revelation of the protagonist’s sinful thoughts was found scandalous because it was regarded as an unadorned confession of the author Katai himself. “Futon” was written in the spirit of Japanese “shizenshugi” which had moved from exposing social ugliness to an interest in

the evil nature found in the human mind. In the Katai's text, however, we can find actually many tracks which indicate that Katai tried to write the protagonist comically, as GOTŌ Meisei has proved with regard to the conscious comicalization of the protagonist in "Shosetsu—Ikani Yomi Ikani Kakuka" (Novels—How to Read, How to Write, 1983). And after the publication of "Futon", many novels called "jōchi-shōsetsu" (novels of infatuation) in which many protagonists play at being consumed with blind passion were written⁷). The art of self-parody or of a tragi-comical image of himself in decadance, is also observed in many of TANIZAKI's works, for example, in dressing up like a woman in "Himitsu".

Apart from the problem of self-parody in decadance, the changes in the portrayal of sexual desire from "Futon" to "Omedetaki hito" may indeed be considered revolutionary. Amid this "revolution of emotion" we can identify features that were later designated as *ero guro nansensu*.

In KITAHARA Hakushū's poem "Kuchitsuke no Toki" (When we kiss, 1908), for instance, we find images of ecstatic sexual bliss:

The dizziness of two young lives burning incessantly,
tangled so close in passion you can't
tell them apart.

When our trembling lips meet, hot and yet not-daring
We quiver for an instant.

The poem goes on as follows :

Look, a big blue moon rises in the west while the light of the sun setting in the east
shakes with fever, billowing at the sky's end.

The ecstasy of desire produces a vision of the world in which everything is upside down, contrary to the normal way of things. Such a vision, which from the point of view of commonsense cannot but appear as utterly nonsensical, may also be regarded as an expression of radical dissent, as a calling into question of the historical context in which the poem is inscribed.

The exploration of emotions the body and sexuality in Taishō literature does not manifest itself only as rebellion against the dominant bourgeois morality and the normative concepts of heterosexual love: we also find unusual expressions of perverse or eccentric unconscious desires. A poem by HAGIWARA Sakutarō (1886-1942), for instance, describes a young man who fantasizes sexual union with a white birch.⁸ The poet and painter MURAYAMA Kaita (1896-1919) not only boldly addresses the topic of homosexual love, but in such poems as "Akuma no Shita" (The Devil's Tongue) goes as far as to linger over the pleasures of an anthropophagic meal of human flesh.⁹

We see in these examples the emerging contours of an aesthetics of the perverse and the grotesque that defamiliarizes objects—lifts them out of their usual context and prevents

them from making sense. Another way of putting this would be that (the art of) nonsense is inherent in the textual strategies of the grotesque.

The sophisticated Western style (*haikara*) children's art and literature published during the Taishō period in magazines such as *Akai Tori* (Red Bird) exhibits not only expressions and/or strategies of the fantastic and the fabulous, but also a pronounced penchant for mysticism. Such features may also be found in the children's stories of AKUTAGAWA Ryūnosuke and OGAWA Mimei, as well as in the children's songs of KITAHARA Hakushū.

To return to the works TANIZAKI published in the 1910s and the 1920s, the story "Ningyo no Nageki", which is a fantasy in a Chinese setting, foregrounds an infatuation with things Western/Occidental rather than with Chinese culture. In spite of such evidence of "Occidentalism", however, certainly not all texts TANIZAKI published in the Taishō period display an unqualified enthusiasm for Western fads (*haikara*): not only is the setting in "Shisei" unmistakably that of the Tokugawa period, but the long neck of the balloon in "Hōkan", as well as the kimonos worn by the man who likes women's clothes are obviously indigenous elements. What we find in these stories is an aestheticist attention to Western-style, or Western-like things that should not be confused with an infatuation with modern Western civilization.

The sophistication, flamboyance and preoccupation with Western-style things (*haikara*) in the art and literature of the Taishō period, rooted as they are in imported nineteenth-century European Romantic thought, imply a nostalgia for a supposedly more wholesome Japanese premodernity that was increasingly threatened by the forces of the equally imported modern Western civilization. Related to, and yet different from this romantic nostalgia is yet another aspect in the arts of the late-Meiji and Taishō periods, namely an escapist celebration of the sophisticated urban Tokugawa culture. A representative example of this trend are the writings of NAGAI Kafū, especially texts such as *Hiyori Geta* (Fine Weather Clogs, 1915), in which the search for lingering traces of the once flourishing Edo culture in the wards and back alleys of old Tokyo is especially apparent. The ideological and political thrust of this kind of writing aims at de-emphasizing and critiquing modern, Western-influenced urban culture by contrasting it with an equally sophisticated, indigenous urban environment. A similar critical strategy in European late-nineteenth and turn-of-the-century culture may be seen in John RUSKIN's cultivation of medieval art and industry, or in KROPOTKIN's identification with the world of Swiss watchmakers.¹⁰

The Origins of *ero guro nansensu*

What are the reasons for the overwhelming interest in exotic artifacts and the trends of other times and places that constitutes such a major characteristic of Taisho culture? After the Russo-Japanese War, the spirit of discontent and resistance that had sparked a series of outbreaks of popular violence gradually became diluted or found new goals in the activities of the new urban middle classes. There was a general feeling of boredom and ennui, as well as a lack of political orientation that eventually led to the development of an interest in philosophy and the arts, especially among the younger

generations. It was amid this climate, and supported by a general enthusiasm for the possibility of social advancement through the advantages of education, that the so-called current of "Taishō culturalism" (*Taishō kyōyōshugi*) arose¹¹.

An important characteristic of Taishō culturalism is the preoccupation with fantasy, the unconscious and/or aberrant or deviant psychic behaviour, which is in its turn stimulated by the development of psychopathology. The Taishō period texts of TANIZAKI not only anticipate this, as well as the *ero guro nansensu* phenomenon, but greatly contribute to the establishment of both trends. In "Akai Heya" (The Red Room, 1925) by EDOGAWA Ranpo—a well-known writer of detective stories, of *ero guro nansensu* and fantastic literature—the narrator explains the reasons why he has invented, and put into practice a series of methods for committing perfect murders that "will never be discovered by the law":

I am one of those people who find the world curiously dull and cheerless. Life is so insipid I could die of boredom.¹²

It is precisely the boredom of everyday life depicted here—a boredom only the urban middle classes could afford—that helped the Westernized, sophisticated literary and artistic trends that later became known as *ero guro nansensu*, as well as the interest in mysticism in Taishō culture come into being. In the late 1920s and early 1930s these trends not only were absorbed into the effervescent *modan* mass culture that developed in and around the great cities, but, as may be expected, changed in character, becoming more accessible and reflective of contemporary changes in taste. It was in this process that the designation *ero guro nansensu* became widely accepted. In this paper I have attempted to show that the origins of this phenomenon are located in the Taishō period, in particular in the works TANIZAKI published during that time. I have also suggested that in these early texts by TANIZAKI we can see an emerging resistance to, and critique of modern materialistic, profit-oriented civilization.

The opening paragraphs of "Hōkan" and *Chijin no Ai* offer evidence, not only of this critical spirit, but also of TANIZAKI's nuanced understanding of Japanese cultural history:

It was sometime around mid April in 1907. Though only two years had passed since the Treaty of Portsmouth announced the end of the Russo-Japanese War that had shattered the world, the country was alive and bustling and business prospered. Under the motto of developing national strength, new companies popped up one after another, a new aristocracy and new classes of nouveaux riches appeared almost overnight. ("Hokan")

As Japan grows increasingly cosmopolitan, Japanese and foreigners are eagerly mingling with one another; all sorts of new doctrines and philosophies are being introduced; and both men and women are adopting up-to-date Western fashions. (*Naomi*, trans. Anthony H. Chambers, 3)¹³

In these and other texts, having beautifully anticipated the *ero guro nansensu* phenomenon, TANIZAKI then turns his attention to the exploration of traditional Japanese aesthetics. This change in attitude is illustrated by a series of historical and pseudo historical novels and novellas published in the 1930s, as well as by the well-known essay *In'ei Raisan* (In Praise of Shadows, 1933). The next step he chooses, in typically ironic, TANIZAKI an fashion, is to situate his novel *Sasameyuki* (The Makioka Sisters), which he wrote in part during the Second World War, not in the remote historical past eulogized by the war propaganda, but at the time contemporary with his writing of the work itself.

The novel depicts in realistic manner the disintegration of the cultural values and norms of the bourgeois class under the exigencies of war. For instance, Yukiko's clothes and cuisine are poorer with each successive formal meeting with a view to marriage, and as time passes and the war deepens, the Makioka sisters can no longer afford to participate the traditional seasonal outings of cherry blossom and maple tree viewing.

Sasameyuki is a text with a clearly discernible symbolic-allegorical intent. For instance the portrayal of Yukiko evokes the image of noble ladies of the Heian period and her name suggests the disintegration of Japanese traditional culture. On the contrary, Taeko, the youngest of the Makioka sisters is a typical "modern girl".

Toward the end of the novel, Yukiko's marriage to a young aristocrat is settled. Her future husband is an engineer, a profession which was improper, to say the least for members of the aristocracy before the war. This fact is a clear indication of the major social changes that occurred in Japan after the end of the war. Not with standing that Taeko delivered an illegitimate baby who dies immediately after birth. Taeko's fate signifies the failure of modernism that appeared after 1920.

The last scene of the novel in which Yukiko suffers from a bout of diarrhea on the way to the wedding party is a riddle. But the key to this riddle is suggested in the portrayal and the name of Yukiko which evoke the symbol of Japanese traditional culture. The last scene symbolizes the weakening and contaminated Japanese traditional culture in the wake of the war.¹⁴

In conclusion, then, remark, we can say that the works TANIZAKI published during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, as well as during the Second World War, exhibit a critical stance, a spirit of resistance, toward the dominant culture of each period. In 1956, at a time when Japan's postwar economic recovery was completed and a period of high economic growth was about to begin, TANIZAKI published *Kagi* (The Key, 1956) a novel in which the techniques of the detective story and an unabashed depiction of the characters sexual fantasies stimulate the reader's imagination. The text also contains a hidden murder plan, which is yet another indication of the novel's affinities with the genre of the detective story. *Futen Rojin Nikki* (The Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1955) depicts an old man's sexual obsession, the treatment of senility in this novel anticipates the preoccupation with the problems of old age in contemporary society. Even though TANIZAKI does not formulate a clear political stance in the texts discussed in this essay, I think I have been able to show that as a cultural critic he is one of the most politically minded writers in modern Japan.

Acknowledgment

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The material in this essay, being revised drastically, will appear in the collection of essays of the TANIZAKI Conference edited by prof. Adriana BOSCARO, forthcoming from Michigan Center for Japanese Studies Publication.

Notes

- 1 ODAGIRI Hideo, "Being hollow of Literary Circle" (*Tokyo Shinbun*, 8 June 1994, ed. a evening). 小田切秀雄「空洞化する文壇」(『東京新聞』1994. 6. 8, 夕刊) It was written as one of a series of articles on politics with SUZUKI Sadami on the concepts of "jūbungaku" (pure literature) and "taishūbungaku" (mass literature).
- 2 "TANIZAKI slumped in middle of Taishō period." NOGUCHI Takehiko, "TANIZAKI Jun'ichirō" (*Nippon Gendai Bungaku Dai-jiten*, 1994, Meijishoin, Tokyo, 216) 野口武彦「谷崎潤一郎」(『日本現代文学大事典』作家篇、1994、明治書院)
- 3 The term of *ero guro* and *nancensu* were separated in the late 1920s and early 1930s. See KIDA Jun'ichirō "Dark Side of City and Sensation of Labyrinth" (*Ranpo no Jidai-Bessathu Taiyo*, *Nihon no Kokoro* No.88, Winter, 1994, 4-6). 紀田順一郎「都市の闇と迷宮感覚—エロ・グロ・ナンセンス時代と江戸川乱歩」、(別冊太陽、日本の心 No.88 『乱歩の時代』, 1994)
- 4 The term of "tantei shōsetsu" means detective stories as well as mysterious and fantastic stories in the 1920s and 1930s in Japan. And EDOGAWA Ranpo studied very profitably from TANIZAKI's works in the 1920s. See SUZUKI Sadami, "Mystery and Modernity—A Conversion of EDOGAWA Ranpo", (Expression of Modern City-Self, Illusion, Woman, Hakujisha, Kyoto), 88-114. 鈴木貞美『怪奇とモダンティ—江戸川乱歩の転向』(『モダン都市の表現—自己・幻想・女性』, 白地社)
- 5 I have altered here Howard Hibbett's translation, which renders the first part of the paragraph—*sore wa mada hitobito ga "oroka" to iu totoi toku wo motte ite*...—as "It was an age when men honored the noble virtue of frivolity..."
- 6 ISODA Kōichi, *The revolution of emotion in Modern age*, 1987, Sinchōsha, Tokyo. 磯田光一『近代の感情革命』(1987, 新潮社)
- 7 A typical novel is CHIKAMATSU Shūkō's "Kurokami" (Black Hair, 1914). This tendency, departs out from infatuated play and then turns up the element of self-parody and tragi-comical image of the narrator himself. We see this for example in UNO Kōji's "Kura no Naka" (In a Storehouse, 1919), MAKINO Shin'ichi's "Chichi wo Uru Ko" (A Son Who Sells His Father, 1924). On the critical scene around 1924, "jōchi-shōsetsu" and novels belonging to the same self-parodical chain were called "watakushi shōsetsu", it distinguish them from "shinkyō shōsetsu", a type of novel which the writer talks about the calm state of his mind in escaping from self-anguish, as for example, in SHIGA Naoya's "Kinosaki nite" (At Kinosaki, 1917). See SUZUKI Sadami, *A Few Key Concepts in Japanese Modern Literature*, 1994, Kadokawashoten, Tokyo, 128-146. 鈴木貞美『日本の「文学」を考える』(1994, 角川書店)
- 8 See HAGIWARA Sakutarō *Zenshū*, Vol. 1, 1975, Chikumashobō, Tokyo, 65-66 「恋を恋する人」『萩原朔太郎全集』第1巻、筑摩書房、1975.
- 9 See ed. SUZUKI Sadami, *Illusion of City* (Literature of Modern City Vol. 6), Heibonsha, Tokyo, 8-21. 鈴木貞美篇『都市の幻想』、「モダン都市の文学」第6巻、1991、平凡社
- 10 See SUZUKI Sadami, *Sexual Desire is a Will of Cosmos—From a journal of a Young Man in the Taishō Period*, *Waseda Bungaku*, Mar., 1995, No.227, 88-97. 鈴木貞美「性欲は宇宙の意志」(早稲田文学、1995年3

- 月号). Nostalgia in KITAHARA Hakushū, *Bungakukai*, Dec., 1995. 鈴木貞美「白愁郷愁」(文學界、1995年12月号). Nostalgia in Modern Japan, *Subaru*, Jan. 1996. 鈴木貞美「近代の郷愁」(すばる、1996年1月号)
- 11 The term of “*Taishō kyōyōshugi*”, as it was called after the Second World War, was essentially an great fever for philosophic and aesthetic among the intellectual young generations in the Taishō period. Actually, KUWAKI Genyoku, one of the famous philosophers in the Taishō period joined the neo-Kantian circle, and proposed in the middle of Taishō period the concept of “*bunkashugi*” (culturism), the notion which ascribes the highest worth to culture in various acts of human beings.
- 12 *EDOGAWA Ranpo Zenshū* vol.1, 1969, Kodansha, Tokyo, 161. 江戸川乱歩全集第1巻, 1969, 講談社
- 13 Translation by Anthony H. Chambers, 1985, Knopf, New York, 3.
- 14 See SUZUKI Sadami. “Bombs of Allegory—Novels with the Defeat in Japan”, *The Zero-degree of the Human Being, or the Escape from the Modern Expression*, Kawadeshobōshinsha, Tokyo, 90. 鈴木貞美, 「寓意の爆弾—敗戦小説を読む」(『人間の零度、もしくは表現の脱近代』, 1987, 河出書房新社)

文明批評家としての谷崎潤一郎

鈴木貞美

要旨：谷崎潤一郎は現代日本を代表する作家の一人と目されているが、その評価の内実は必ずしも定まっていない。今日でも「谷崎潤一郎には思想がない」という批評も行われているし、とくにその大正期の作品群については低調であるとされている。大正期の谷崎潤一郎の作品群は、江戸川乱歩に代表される昭和初年代の大衆文化について、第二次大戦後、侮蔑的に投げかけられた「エロ・グロ・ナンセンス」という言葉に示される傾向を、まさに先取りするものにほかならなかった。しかし、日露戦争後の日本の社会と思想、文芸をはじめとする文化全般の傾向を検討し直し、その中に当時の谷崎潤一郎の作品群を置いてみると、それらのもつ思想的な意味が明確になってくる。加えて、谷崎が、昭和戦前、戦中期を通して、それぞれの時代の支配的な思潮に対して鋭い見識をもって対峙し、批判的な姿勢を貫き通したことを明らかにする。