

CHAPTER 8

THE ACCEPTANCE AND EVOLUTION OF MODERN “LITERATURE”

8.1 The Acceptance of Modern “Literature”

8.1.1 Three “Histories of Japanese Literature”

When did “literature” in the restricted sense of linguistic art come to win out over the same term in its broader meaning?

Let us first consider the decline of that broader meaning. During roughly the 1890s the term in the sense of overall scholarly accomplishment seems to have all but vanished from use. In its very broadest meaning it served to set “literature” apart from physical science (*rigaku* 理学) or science as a whole (*kagaku* 科学), or generally to distinguish the liberal arts of a humanistic or social nature from the natural sciences. From there its scope shrank more and more often to designating the humanities as distinguished from the social sciences. This last meaning explains the title of a university “Bungakubu” (Faculty of Letters), which embraces philosophy (*tetsugaku* 哲学, including religion and sociology), history, and “literature” in the narrow sense. The stabilization of the recognized categories of learning presumably also played a role in this process.

The “literature” of the various “history of literature” works written during the 1890s was “literature” in the broad sense. That meaning began moving toward the narrower one with the publication in 1898 of William George Aston’s *A History of Japanese Literature*. Published in New York the following year, Aston’s work was then translated into French, and in many countries it is read even today as an introduction to Japanese literature.¹ Being the first such work written by a foreigner it attracted a good deal of attention in the Japan of the time, and it seems to have influenced the later concept and appraisal of “literature.” In general, Aston introduced works from early times to the Meiji period, provided information about them, and evaluated them from the standpoint of linguistic art. For example, as examples of ancient prose he briefly discussed the *norito* 祝詞 prayers (which he called “Shinto Rituals”), declared them by no means entirely devoid of “literary qualities,” and cited an illustrative passage.² He also explained that while *Izumo fudoki* 出雲風土記 is above all a factual work—a gazetteer—it also contains a small proportion of legendary

1 W. G. Aston’s *A History of Japanese Literature* is said to have been published in 1899, but the 1907 edition, published by William Heinemann, assigns the “first printing” to the year 1898. The French edition (Librairie Armand Colin) came out in 1902. The first part of the work, on classical poetry, was serialized in 1900 in the magazine *Myōjō* 明星, in a translation by Umezawa Waken 梅沢和軒. The complete work, translated by Shibano Rokusuke 芝野六助, appeared in 1908. However, the translator edited the text and omitted Aston’s discussion of Meiji literature.

2 Aston 1972, p. 10.

accounts.³ In his treatment of the Heian period he stated that since such fields as history, theology, science, and law were all discussed in Chinese, “native literature” (works written in Japanese) could no doubt all be classified as “belles lettres”; and he cited the genres of kanshi, fiction, diaries (*nikki* 日記), and literary musings (*zuihitsu* 隨筆).⁴ Aston used the term “belles lettres” in the sense of linguistic art, as opposed to learning (*gakumon*) and thought (*shisō*). This emphasis on linguistic art above all distinguishes Aston’s book from the *Nihon bungaku shi* of Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō.

Aston divided history into the following periods: ancient times, Nara, Heian, Kamakura, Nanbokuchō and Muromachi, Edo, and Tokyo. By “Tokyo period” he of course meant Meiji, at the start of which the capital had been moved to Tokyo. On the whole he did not slight the influence of Chinese civilization and devoted considerable space to Tokugawa kanshi, but he emphasized above all the special character of Japanese literature from a “national literature” perspective. His choice of works, and the weight he gave to each, naturally enough reflect at once his own interest in Shinto and critical opinion prevailing in Japan at the time. No doubt that is why he never even mentioned *Shinkokinwakashū* 新古今和歌集 (1205). However, his wonder at the fact that the greater and most important part of early Japanese literature had been written by women, and his praise for the refined quality of these works,⁵ may well announce the later reappraisal of “Heian women’s writing” (*Heian joryū bungaku* 平安女流文学), since no Japanese literary historian had ever before remarked so pointedly on the subject. In contrast, Aston described eighteenth-nineteenth century “popular fiction” of the “pornographic school” as sullyng Japan’s good name. He seems not to have assigned the Genroku-period works of Saikaku and Chikamatsu Monzaemon, which he called “popular literature,” entirely to the realm of higher literature, but his evaluation of them no doubt takes into account their high reputation in Japan.

In the following year, 1899, Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 published *Kokubungaku shi jikkō* 国文学史十講, a introduction to the history of Japanese literature addressed to students, and based on

3 Aston 1972, p. 23.

4 Aston 1972, p. 54.

5 Aston 1972, pp. 55-56. While Aston’s work assumes the broad definition of “literature,” his critical standard was “literature” in the narrow sense. However, he proceeded by analogy when applying the modern European notion of linguistic art to works in Japanese. His discussion of *Man’yōshū* poetry in Chapter 2, for example, makes this clear. He wrote (Aston 1898, pp. 24-25), “Japanese poetry is, in short, confined to lyrics, and what for want of a better word, may be called epigrams.” He credited Japanese poetry with offering “very few poems of a religious cast” (p. 25), and he concluded, “In short, the only thing in the mechanism of Japanese poetry which distinguishes it from prose is the alternation of phrases of five and seven syllables each. It is, in fact, a species of blank verse” (p. 28).

Needless to say, waka poetry has in point of fact many elements corresponding to epic poetry and is rich in religious sentiments. With respect to rhyme Aston’s description is inaccurate, probably in part because he excluded *Shinkokinshū*. His thoroughly one-sided judgments are based on an understanding of linguistic art alien to Japanese culture and required revision on the basis of a new standard, one transcending culture-bound assumptions.

However, this problem was set aside so that the narrow concept of “bungaku,” which had begun to achieve autonomy roughly in 1907, should stand upon the modern European conception of linguistic art. In the early Shōwa period, perhaps only Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 made an effort to go beyond the concept’s cultural foundation.

his lectures. He noted in his introductory remarks that the “bungaku” in prior works on “history of bungaku” had referred to the “learning required for literary composition” (*bunshō o tsukuru gakumon* 文章を作る学問, as Suzuki Hiroyasu 鈴木弘恭 put it in *Shinsen Nihon bungaku ryakushi* 新撰日本文学略史); or to learning as a whole (*geibun* 芸文, the term used by Konakamura Gishō 小中村義象 and Masuda Ushin 増田于信 in *Nihon bungaku shi* 日本文学史). He then went on to state his own definition as follows: “By bungaku I mean waka, prose, and so on: created works of art.” In other words, he clearly had in mind, among all “the works in which our ancestors set down their thoughts and feelings in our national language,” “those which succeed as splendid works of art”—i.e., those so written as to merit appreciation as “art literature” (*bi bungaku* 美文学).⁶

In *Kokubungaku shi jikkō*, Haga devoted less space than did other such works published during the same decade to the influence of Chinese civilization and the significance of kanshi and kanbun. He preferred instead to emphasize “the pure Japanese mode” (*junsui na Nihon fū* 純粹な日本風).⁷ By excluding learning (*gakumon*; Confucian, Buddhist, and historical writings) from the liberal arts in general (*gakugei ippan*), he inevitably diminished the relative importance of writings in Chinese and gave greater prominence to the special features of Japanese culture. No doubt his attitude in the matter reflects the mood of the period surrounding the Sino-Japanese War. Victory in that conflict had brought on a rush of confidence that Japan was superior to all the other countries of Asia, since Japan had been the first among them to master Western civilization, and this feeling gradually reinforced a tendency to downgrade the importance of writings in Chinese. With respect to the periodization of history, Haga in *Kokubungaku shi jikkō* employed the terms “far antiquity” (*jōko* 上古), “middle antiquity” (*chūko* 中古), recent antiquity” (*kinko* 近古), “the recent past” (*kinsei* 近世) and “the present” (*gendai* 現代) in order to refer, respectively, to history through the Nara period, the Heian period, the Middle Ages, the Tokugawa period, and the Meiji period. Apart from the question of what to call the Meiji period, Ōwada Takeki 大和田建樹 had adopted the same solution in his *Wabungaku shi* 和文学史.

The next year, 1900, ushered in a new century. For the first time since the introduction of the Western calendar, Japan was aware of the passage from one century to another. In June of that year *Taiyō* published a special issue entitled *Jūkyū seiki* 十九世紀. The issue was divided into three sections: “Overview,” “The West,” and “The East.” These covered, from various angles, developments in the world and in Japan during the course of the nineteenth century and speculated on the prospects for the twentieth. The section on “The West” far outweighed the others.

The “Japan” portion of “The East” was composed entirely by Kidera Ryūjirō 木寺柳次郎, who divided the whole into “Tokugawa” and “Meiji,” and provided a government-centered survey of developments in education and other areas. Its final chapter, on “bungaku,” surveyed Japanese “literature” in the nineteenth century. Under the sub-heading “Before Meiji” the opening passage begins, “With respect to pure literature, fiction [shōsetsu] was the first genre to count, even before Meiji.” In the first decade of the twentieth century there presumably was still a need to explain that “bungaku” meant “pure literature,” i.e., “literature” in the narrow sense. Despite holding the title of “doctor of letters” (*bungaku hakushi*), Kidera was of course not a specialist in “literature” itself.

6 Haga Yaichi 1899, pp. 5-6.

7 Haga Yaichi 1899, p. 20.

His late-Tokugawa to mid-Meiji view of “literature” must have been typical of other humanities scholars like himself.

Kidera divided his chapter on “literature” into five sub-headings: “Before Meiji,” “The Shōsetsu before Shōyō,” “The Shōsetsu after Shōyō,” “Theater Scripts,” and “Stagnation in the Literary Establishment.” He hardly mentioned poetry, centering his remarks instead almost entirely on fiction (the novel), the history of which he divided into “before” and “after” Tsubouchi Shōyō. The standing of fiction had risen so high that despair over the decline of “literature,” current only a decade or so earlier, was now forgotten, and Shōyō’s achievement was widely recognized.

There are two reasons for this. One is the diffusion of the view that the novel (*shōsetsu*) was equivalent to linguistic art. The other is a new perception among intellectuals that the novel was of value. Appealing as it did to the idea of linguistic art, the novel in the years surrounding 1900 had been criticized by enlightenment-minded intellectuals, for whom “literature” retained its broad meaning, and lumped together by them with the “novel of human feelings” (*ninjō shōsetsu* 人情小説). Only a few years later, however, the debate over “national literature” gave it new impetus. It began to deal seriously with social issues and thus gained wide recognition. So too, at the same time, did the significance of Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu shinzui* and *Tōsei shosei katagi*, which had initially inspired writers like Ozaki Kōyō and Kōda Rohan, and which appear then to have been in the process of canonization. The rise in Shōyō’s social position may help to explain this, but as the times changed, Shōyō himself had also been shifting perspective in various ways. The rise of Ozaki Kōyō’s Ken’yūsha 硯友社 to a position of unassailable prominence particularly encouraged this historic value change.

Kidera Ryūjirō concluded his discussion of “The Shōsetsu after Shōyō” with the statement, “Kōyō is a connoisseur, Rohan a philosopher, and [Higuchi] Ichiyō a genius.” This judgment was typical of the time. However, he wrote in his closing discussion of “Stagnation in the Literary Establishment”:

A conference of women’s higher school principals has decided that women students are to be forbidden to read novels, and many good families take the same position. At present it is above all young men who care about literature.

Under the influence of such writers as Zola, there had been lately a rash of novels on sexual, morally objectionable themes. In November of that same year, *Chūō kōron* published an article entitled “Iwayuru shizenshugi no shōsetsu” 所謂自然主義の小説. The term *shizenshugi* was coming into fashion. Just as the enlightenment-minded had, in the late 1890s, deplored the appearance of the Kōyō-style “novel of human feelings” as representing the “utter debasement of literature” (*bungaku kyokusui* 文学極衰), so those intellectuals who endorsed the post-Shōyō art novel (*geijutsu shōsetsu* 芸術小説) decried the vogue for *shizenshugi* as “stagnation in the literary establishment” (*bundan no fushin* 文壇の不振). This time, however, the framework for discussing the novel as linguistic art was different.

A little later, at the close of the Meiji era, *Taiyō* published a special, enlarged issue entitled *Meiji Seitenshi* 明治聖天子 (September 1912), filled with retrospective essays on the Meiji period. According to one, entitled “Meiji bungaku ryakushi” 明治文学略史, “What truly deserves to

be called Meiji literature began when, in 1886, Tsubouchi Shōyō published *Shōsetsu shinzui* and trumpeted realism (*shajitsu shugi* 写実主義).” This statement by the anonymous author shows that by then *Shōsetsu shinzui* was accepted as fully canonical. Considering who wrote for *Taiyō* at the time, the author was probably associated with the journal *Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学, but his praise of Shōyō is not necessarily attributable to this association alone. The view he expressed was presumably non-controversial. However, he also seems to have been aware of “literature” in its broad sense, since under the heading of “prose literature other than the novel” he discussed Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura Masanao 中村正直 (1832-1891), Fukuchi Ōchi, and Narushima Ryūhoku 成島柳北 (1837-1884).

8.1.2 The Term “Bungei” (Literary Art)

Let us return to the *Taiyō* special issue, *Jūkyū seiki*. Its section on “The West” contains an entry entitled “History of Literary Art” (*bungei shi*), written by Ueda Bin 上田敏 (1874-1916). Sure enough, Ueda displayed familiarity with artistic developments in Europe, but within a range that combined linguistic (*genjo geijutsu*) with visual (*bijutsu*) art. This may seem strange to us, but there was nothing unnatural about it at the time. The term *bungei* often designated at once “literature” in the narrow sense and the plastic arts. An example is the use of *bungei* in the passage quoted above (see the previous chapter) from Uchida Roan’s “Sengo no bungaku (kokumin o shite kiun ni jō-zeshimeyo).”

Ueda’s expression assumes a distinction, within the larger category of art, between art mediated by language on the one hand, and art mediated by form and color, sound, and the body on the other. This distinction is no doubt linked to the increasing spread of analytical thinking, of positivism, and of the tendency to distinguish art (*geijutsu*) from history and philosophy. Let us then consider this use of *bungei* further.

In “Bungaku geijutsu no san sayō” 文学芸術の三作用, published in 1908 (admittedly after the Russo-Japanese War), Tsubouchi Shōyō paired “bungaku” and “geijutsu” by placing them together within brackets (<文学、芸術>);⁸ in fact, he used *bungaku geijutsu* as a single term to designate both “literature” in the narrow sense and visual art (*bijutsu*). In his “Bungei ni taisuru mittsu no kotonatta hyōjun” 文芸に対する三つの異った標準 (1908) his subject was “bungaku” in the narrow sense, but he used “bungei” as an abbreviation covering both *bungaku* and *geijutsu*.⁹ In his “Bungei torishimari mondai” 文芸取締り問題 (1910) the term “bungei” refers to “a kind of painting combined with writing” (*aru shu no kaiga narabi ni chosaku* 或種の絵画並びに著作).¹⁰ Later, in “Purētō no mita shōnen kyōiku to bungei to no kankei” プレートーの観た少年教育と文芸との関係 (1923), “bungei” means something very similar, but this time its scope embraces not only the plastic and visual arts, but also music and dance. This usage appears likewise, as late as 1921, in Takasu Baikei’s 高須梅溪 *Kindai bungei shi ron* 近代文芸史論, which treats developments in both the linguistic and the visual arts from the time of the Meiji Restoration on.

In parallel with this usage, there also exist examples of “bungei” being employed to mean

8 [Tsubouchi] *Shōyō senshū*, vol. 6, p. 647.

9 [Tsubouchi] *Shōyō senshū*, vol. 6, p. 713.

10 [Tsubouchi] *Shōyō senshū*, vol. 6, p. 721.

the art (*geijutsu*) of literary composition (*bun*). For instance, in “Naibu seimei ron” 内部生命論 Kitamura Tōkoku described “bungei” as being equivalent in meaning to “pure literature.” This usage became more frequent with the passage of time, as the idea of “literature” in the narrow sense of linguistic art gained wider and wider acceptance. A few titles of critical essays will serve to illustrate the point.

Takayama Chogyū 高山樗牛, “Waga kuni genkon no bungeikai ni okeru hihyōka no honmu” 我邦現今の文芸界に於ける批評家の本務, *Taiyō* 太陽, June 1897.

Uchida Roan 内田魯庵, *Bungei shōhin* 文芸小品, 1899.

Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月, “Bungei to dōtoku” 文芸と道德, *Shinsei* 新聲, June 1901.

Takayama Chogyū, *Bungei hyōron* 文芸評論, 1901.

Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望, “Bungei zakkan” 文芸雑感, *Shinsei* 新聲, September 1901.

Kusamura Hokusei 草村北星, “Ippanteki naru bungei zasshi no ninmu” 一般的なる文芸雑誌の任務, *Bungeikai* 文芸界, April 1903.

Tokuda (Chikamatsu) Shūkō 徳田(近松)秋江, “Bungeika no kakugo” 文芸家の覚悟, *Chūō kōron* 中央公論, April 1904.

Hasegawa Tenkei 長谷川天溪, *Bungeikan* 文芸観, 1905.

Shimamura Hōgetsu, “Torawaretaru bungei” 囚われたる文芸, *Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学, January 1906.

Hasegawa Tenkei, “Bungei to mondai” 文芸と問題, *Taiyō* 太陽, March 1906.

Kaneko (Chikusui) Umaji 金子馬治, “Bungei no shōrai” 文芸の将来, *Chūō kōron*, April 1906.

Masamune Hakuchō 正宗白鳥, “Bungei jihyō” 文芸時評, *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞, June 3, 1906.

Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, “Bungei no tetsugakuteki kiso” 文芸の哲学的基礎, *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞, May 4-31, 1907.

Sōma Gyofū 相馬御風, “Bungeijō shukyaku ryōtai no yūgō” 文芸上主客両体の融合, *Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学, October 1911.

Shimamura Hōgetsu, “Bungeijō no shizenshugi” 文芸上の自然主義, *Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学, January, 1908.

This usage, which came into general use after the Russo-Japanese War, was favored especially by writers and critics in the *shizenshugi* camp.

Nevertheless, the term “pure literature” continued in use even after 1900 or so. In the preface to *Tsubaki-hime* 椿姫 (1903), his translation of *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas (fils), Osada Shūtō 長田秋濤 described the work as “a model of pure literature.”¹¹ In fact, the term still occurs even after the Russo-Japanese War. Tsuboi Kumezō’s 坪井九馬三 preface to *Meiji bungaku shi* 明治文学史 by Iwaki Juntarō 岩城準太郎 (1906) begins, “Pure literature is

11 *Meiji hon'yaku bungaku shū*, p. 270.

the flower of the national psyche, and the literature of a particular period is the expression of that society’s mind.”¹² The following year, Natsume Sōseki wrote in his preface to *Bungaku ron* that the definition of “literature” differed in English and in the Chinese tradition; and he had one of the characters in *Gubijinsō* say, “Philosophy and pure literature belong to different realms.” “Pure literature” occurs in Shirayanagi Shūko’s 白柳秀湖 *Tekka sekka* 鉄火石火 (1908)¹³ and also in a *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報 article (April 1910) on the inaugural issue of *Shirakaba* 白樺, which the article describes as “a magazine for pure literature enthusiasts.”¹⁴ Generally speaking, the use of “bungaku” and “bungei” to refer to linguistic art increased after the Russo-Japanese War, and “pure bungaku” gradually fell out of use.

However, being mediated by language, “literature” in the narrow sense can also contain expressions directly taken from religious or political thought. For that reason, certain difficulties stand in the way of neatly classifying “bungaku” just as one field of the arts (*geijutsu*), together with the plastic arts, music, and dance.¹⁵ That is where the special character of “bungei” is to be found.

8.1.3 When Modern “Literature” Became Established

Call it “bungaku” or “bungei,” there is yet another reason to believe that the conception of linguistic art gained more or less full acceptance after the Russo-Japanese War.

In August 1906, Takahashi Tansui 高橋淡水 published *Jidai bungaku shi* 時代文学史, a textbook for middle and higher schools’ Japanese courses. The *jidai* of the title meant “our time,” and the work was therefore a history of Meiji literature. It included the following chapters: “General Introduction” (*sōron* 総論), “Meiji Newspapers and Magazines” 明治の新聞雑誌, “Meiji Prose” 明治の散文, “Meiji Novels” 明治の小説, “Meiji Poetry in the New Style” 明治の新体詩, “Meiji Youth Literature” 明治の少年文学, “Meiji Tanka” 明治の短歌, “Meiji Haiku” 明治の俳句, “Meiji Kanshi” 明治の漢詩, and “A Chronology of Meiji Literature” 明治の文学年表. The two chapters on newspapers and magazines, and prose, were given special emphasis, and in this domain of “literature” their content overlaps a good deal with the *Meiji bungaku shi* of Ōwada Takeki.¹⁶ The author’s approach is conservative.

In contrast, Iwaki Juntarō’s *Meiji bungaku shi*, published in December of the same year, treats the existence of linguistic art as self-evident and also extends recognition to the *bundan* 文壇 (literary establishment) as a locus of competition among rival currents of artistic thought. Iwaki’s attitude on the subject no doubt announced an age in which “literature” could have no conceivable meaning other than linguistic art.

In roughly the 1890s the term *bundan* most often meant the world of “literature” in the broad

12 Quoted from Hiraoka 1982, p. 8.

13 *Meiji shakaishugi bungaku shū*, vol. 1, p. 251.

14 Personal communication from Ikeuchi Teruo 池内輝雄.

15 [*Tsubouchi*] *Shōyō senshū*, vol. 6, p. 778.

16 In “Meiji shoki ni okeru ‘bungaku’ no gainen” (p. 33), Wada Shigejirō cited the works of Takahashi Tansui providing more or less the last examples of “bungaku” used to designate humanistic writings in general. In his “Kaisetsu” to *Meiji Taishō bungaku shi shūsei* (12 vols., Nihon Tosho Sentā, repr. edition of *Jidai bungaku shi*, 1982), Hiraoka Toshio covered the issue very well.

sense, as did the *bungaku kai* 文学界 mentioned by Tokutomi Sohō in his “Bungaku shakai no genjō” 文学社会の現状 (1893). That is why Kitamura Tōkoku referred to the collectivity of people concerned with linguistic art as *jumbunkai* 純文界 in his “Meiji bungaku kanken” 明治文学管見 (1893)¹⁷ and as *jumbungaku kai* 純文学界 in his “Bunkai jiji (2)” 文界時事 (1893).¹⁸ In the following decade, however, most occurrences of “bundan” came to refer to the collectivity of novelists and poets. Hasegawa Tenkei had the world of “literature” in the restricted sense in mind in his “Bundan no kojinchugi” 文壇の個人主義 (*Shinbungei* 新文芸, February 1901), and the same is true of Yosano Tekkan in *Bundan shōmakyō* 文壇照魔鏡, vol. 1 (1901) and Tobari Chikufū in “Bundan hachimenkyō 文壇八面鏡 (*Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞, February 15-19, 1903).

There followed a period in which famous writers attained new heights of social prestige: one different in character from the late 1880s, when the standing of “literature” rose and politicians wrote so many “political novels” (*seiji shōsetsu* 政治小説). In June 1907, Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望 invited a group of literary figures, including Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, to a gathering entitled Useikai 雨声会. (Natsume Sōseki and Futabatei Shimei declined.) Then, in 1909, Education Minister Komatsubara 小松原 invited Kōda Rohan, Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, Shimamura Hōgetsu, and others to his official residence, thus symbolizing the honor enjoyed by the great writers of the time. At last, in 1911 the Ministry of Education established the Bungei Inkaikai 文芸委員会, of which Mori Ōgai, Ueda Bin, Kōda Rohan, Shimamura Hōgetsu, and others became members. An element in the background of this development was the so-called *bungei torishimari mondai* 文芸取締問題 (problem of control over literary art), which was becoming an increasingly serious social issue.

It is probably in 1904 that the need to write “pure literature” in order to specify “literature” as linguistic art began fading away, leaving “literature” alone as sufficient, in context, to make that meaning clear. This development surely had something to do with the fact that in that year Tokyo Imperial University finally recognized literature unambiguously, in its pattern of organization, as different from philosophy and history. The traditional Chinese understanding of the term of course lingered on among scholars of things Chinese, but its only institutional remnant was now the middle and higher school kanbun curriculum. For those associated with the university, “bungaku” now settled enduringly into two meanings: the administrative one found in “Bungakubu” (Faculty of Letters) and the more common one of “literature” as it appeared in the name of the Department of Japanese Literature (*kokubungaku* 国文学).

All in all, the modern meaning of “literature” as linguistic art appears to have taken firm root during the first decade of the twentieth century. If one were to pick a single year as the dividing line, a fair choice would be 1906.

The establishment of “literature” in this modern sense means that “literature” gained autonomy as a system of ideas relatively independent of others outside itself. As a result, the issue of its relationship to external concepts was no longer raised.

Saeki Shōichi 佐伯彰一 (b. 1922) passed harsh judgment on Iwaki Juntarō’s *Meiji bungaku shi* (1906) when he wrote that, compared to histories of literature written in the 1890s, Iwaki’s work had

17 [Kitamura] *Tōkoku zenshū*, vol. 2, p. 149.

18 [Kitamura] *Tōkoku zenshū*, vol. 2, p. 188.

lost "a healthy awareness of comparative culture" and become a "faithful, miniature version of the histories of literature written in Europe since the eighteenth century."¹⁹ This criticism is fair. Iwaki's book appeared when the concept of "literature" had become credited with an a priori existence. His treatment of his subject is indeed traced over the model of European histories of literature.

Modern nationalism treats the history of a civilization (or culture) within the closed domain of the nation-state, and the same happens with "literature" when it is conceived as the domain of works of linguistic art, independent of all other cultural domains. Thus "literature" easily becomes the literary history of a single nation. The collectivity of specialists (not necessarily all full professionals) who produce the works proper to this independent domain is the *bundan* (literary establishment). *Bundan* members principally critique currents of thought concerning literary art, classify them, and analyze their historical evolution. For this reason the complexities of intellectual conflict within the *bundan* form the leading indicator of the "history of literature."

It becomes possible to compare "European literature" and "Japanese literature," abstracted from their cultural matrix, because the concept of "literature" is taken to exist a priori. Those who form the *bundan* rush to be the first to adopt European currents of thought and strive to base their critical work on the standards these provide. The European view of "literature" and the European style of "literary history" then become a model for treating the history of Meiji and later literature in a manner that is a "faithful, miniature version of the histories of literature written in Europe since the eighteenth century."²⁰ Or else this Europeanized model makes it possible to critique various

19 Saeki 1977, pp. 324-25.

20 The following three points can be made concerning the fundamental problem of a Meiji *bungaku shi* that is a "faithful, miniature version of the histories of literature written in Europe since the eighteenth century." First, the work makes no attempt to define the relationship between "bungaku" and other areas of the culture, or between "bungaku" and culture itself. "Bungaku" is a part of culture as a whole and is constantly being influenced by other cultural areas, which it also influences in turn. The complexities and contradictions that arise within these different areas of culture are constantly reflected in "bungaku," converge within it, and are reflected back into the various areas of culture at large. This relationship exists between all fields of culture and the whole. However, once the concept of "bungaku" comes to exist on its own, a priori, one tends to look within it and nowhere else.

Second is the problem of how to critique trends in the literary arts, how to classify them, and how to analyze their historical evolution. At bottom, the work rests on a methodological error that reduces "bungaku" to "thought" (*shisō* 思想). No doubt this error appeared when romanticism, with its conception of the literary work as a product of natural genius, changed to positivism, and "genius" was replaced by "thought." A literary work is an expression of thought, i.e., of cognition and feeling, but it cannot be reduced to thought. Unfettered expression of thought is impossible, since expression is governed by its medium. The characteristics of established styles and genres, and the connections between them, function so as to regulate the form of expression. In the domain of fiction, in particular, expression in conformity with these strictures often betrays the author's own thought. Conversely, for the reader, only what can be abstracted from the actual expression on the page counts as "the author's thought." A new mode of expression can establish itself only by breaking through the strictures of the old. Consequently it is form of expression that must first become the object of analysis and criticism. One may commonly observe, anywhere, groups of works linked by character of expression, even though the authors' intellectual positions and artistic affiliations differ.

Third is the problem of the transformation of "literary history" as practiced in the countries of Western Europe into a model. Abstracting the literary work from its cultural matrix and reducing it

“distortions” (*yugami* 歪み) in the matter at hand.²¹

In order to preserve its “literature of a single nation” framework, European “literary history” had to remain constantly aware of intercultural influences, to cultivate a comparative perspective, and on that basis to argue for the uniqueness of the subject literature. The discussion may be confined to the realm of “literature,” but a comparative perspective is still required. In that sense, the “culture/history of a single nation” approach and the corresponding “comparative” approach, or the “literature/history of a single nation” and counterpart “comparative” approaches complement each other.

In Japan, however, influence has been construed since the Meiji period as a one-way movement of ideas from the West to Japan. In particular, for “literature” autonomy simply meant adopting the European model of “literary history.” The result has been a “literary history of a single nation” approach lacking any comparative cultural or literary perspective.

“Literature” in the narrow sense, together with its cultural foundation, was never questioned until Marxist criticism of the arts appeared on the scene. However Marxist methods, assuming as they do the decisive role of the infrastructure (the economy), reduce everything to social structure and therefore fail completely in their analysis of cultural domains that follow a trajectory relatively independent from that of the history of society.²² The Comintern Theses of 1932 defined Japan as

to thought within “literature” makes it possible to exchange one literary trend for another, but a developmental view of history, or a view of history as advancing by stages, easily infiltrates the value judgments involved.

These are problems common to the mainstream of modern European “literary history.” However, in the European case as well, the scope of the “literature” in “literary history” is not necessarily clear. It may be limited to linguistic art in the narrow sense, it may include the artistic aspects of other kinds of works, or it may embrace a wide diversity of elements of cultural history. In particular, “literary history” is intimately linked to standards of choice and judgment, which in turn are linked to the education of the population.

21 A typical instance is this passage from Nakamura Mitsuo, “Kōbungaku no fukkatsu” 硬文学の復活 (1963): “In Japan, naturalistic realism has the peculiarity not of directly revealing social hypocrisy, but of challenging social hypocrisy by means of the author’s own self-revelation.” The reason in this case is to be sought in the Japanese society of the time. It has to do with “the strict social morality of the late Meiji period and with the intricacy of personal relations.” Thus, the author “does not give his suffering literary form for others, he so to speak throws it at them raw.” This amounts to a sort of social reductionism, and the image of society it proposes clearly shows the influence of a historical view that defines Japanese society up to World War II as “semi-feudal.” (See below, 10.1.1.)

22 “The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.” (Karl Marx, preface to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 29 [*Karl Marx: 1857-61*], Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987, p. 263.) This declaration of Marx’s thesis, which reduces the problem of consciousness to a matter of existence (society), ignores even the “victory of realism” discerned by Engels in the work of Balzac, who, despite his own conservatism, was able to describe French society thanks to the technique of realism. It can be interpreted as stating that the “superstructure” (politics, thought, culture, etc.) is governed in its movement by the “infrastructure” (the economic base), but that in that sense the “superstructure,” governed as it may be from below, follows its own course, relatively separate from that of the infrastructure. At present, however, the very economic determinism that posits autonomous movement for the economy has become unable to explain this movement except with reference to political and governmental control, and has thus lost

a highly developed capitalist country, revoking the 1931 draft’s anticipation of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat; ignored Japan’s social structure and its position in the twentieth-century world; defined Japanese society as feudal, under the rule of the emperor and feudal landlords; and committed the fundamental error of calling instead for overthrow of imperial rule and a democratic revolution. Thus the 1932 Theses ignored the international situation and insisted on defining the degree of a single country’s progress in purely ideologically-driven terms.²³

its validity. There is no need to repeat here that while Marx’s model of the capitalist economy posited self-regulation based on the gold standard, the gold standard itself was adopted under British world domination, and that, when this theoretically self-regulating function collapsed, the world economy required managed adjustment of international exchange rates.

23 The Comintern Theses of 1932 failed completely in their analysis of the modern emperor system and of the present condition of Japanese capitalism, presumably because of a series of errors.

(1) Disregard of the international situation. While embracing the problem of the unequal treaties, the Meiji government, in the international context of the developing confrontation between Great Britain and Russia, was allotted Taiwan thanks to its victory in the Sino-Japanese War. Having concluded an alliance with a Great Britain isolated and subject to international condemnation for having started the Boer War, Japan both resolved the unequal treaty problem and, after barely the winning the Russo-Japan War for controlling influence in Manchuria, was allotted the southern part of Sakhalin. In 1910 Japan declared its “merger” with Korea; during World War I it aligned itself with the liberal camp, and after the war it enjoyed sufficient international standing even to become a permanent member of the Security Council of the League of Nations. Then, in 1932, it established the “phony state” of Manchukuo, under Emperor Pu Yi. Such is the portrait of a latecomer capitalist state, situated on the eastern edge of Asia, which managed to succeed in the imperialist struggle for acquisition of colonies.

(2) Mistaken analysis of the domestic situation and of the structure of society. After the Meiji Restoration Japan set out to become a great commercial nation, but heavy taxation following the Sino-Japanese War encouraged the breakup of agricultural communities, and the country set its course toward becoming an industrial nation instead. After the Russo-Japanese War, the direction shifted rapidly toward the establishment of great factories and heavy chemical industry, and by the end of the Taishō period there were more laborers in Japan than small farmers and more capitalists than landlords. During the 1920s, policies to survive the repeated panics that followed World War I, as well as the blow delivered to Tokyo capital by the great earthquake of 1923, led to further concentration of capital and set in train the monopolistic capital system of mass production, mass publicity, mass consumption, and mass disposal. In 1930, heavy chemical production surpassed that of light industry, and an urbanized, mass society was developing in parallel with the same trend in the advanced countries.

(3) An erroneous analysis of the modern emperor system. The modern emperor system provided for in the Japanese imperial constitution introduced Western-style constitutional monarchy. Domestically, however, this monarchy armed itself in conformity with an ideology quite different from that of Western Europe. For this reason the Theses misinterpreted the modern emperor system as “feudalism” or “absolutism.” First of all, the fact that the Meiji Restoration was carried out in the name of restoring the *ritsuryō* system gave rise to an ideology according to which the unbroken imperial line symbolized the unity of the nation. Second, there followed from this an attempt to unify society on the basis of a Confucian morality founded on “loyalty and patriotism” (*chūkun aikoku* 忠君愛国), on the conception of the *ie* 家 as the foundation of the nation, and on the principle of male superiority over women (*danson jōhi* 男尊女卑). Third, victory in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars heightened Japan’s prestige and the authority of the Japanese emperor; and thanks to this increased imperial authority, the sharpened social contradictions and nascent socialist thought visible after the latter were swiftly and forcefully suppressed. Fourth, the Meiji emperor was intentionally deified after his death (“the greatest emperor since the founding of the empire by Jinmu Tennō”), leading to

Generally speaking, the authors of later works on the “history of Japanese literature” thought less deeply than those of the 1890s about how to define “literature”; nor did they draw as clear a line as Aston or Haga Yaichi had done around their concept of linguistic art. Instead they too, as convention required, began their narrative with *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Fudoki*, thus confusedly perpetuating the practice of adding to the restricted category of “literature” works of high intellectual significance, or such historically important writing (*bunshō*) as Fukuzawa Yukichi’s limp prose, unexampled in early Meiji times. This enlarged category, clearly that of “literature” in the broad sense, conflicts with the narrower meaning of the term. Nonetheless, authors like these never questioned or reflected on this conflict. This presumably indicates that, in parallel with the habit of accepting “literature” in the restricted sense as self-evident, the “history of literature” variety of the same notion continued to exist within an independent framework of its own.

Meanwhile, interest in Japanese kanshi and kanbun dwindled away, and after World War II it disappeared almost entirely. This outcome resulted simply from the spread of the naive assumption that “Japanese literature” means “literature” written in Japanese. This is one consequence of “literature” and “history of literature” coming in the end merely to covet the lax comforts of convention.

However, as noted in 5.2.3 (Two Levels of “Bungaku”), the dual-level use of “bungaku,” in its broad and narrow meanings, was current throughout the prewar Shōwa period. For example, the title of *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū* 現代日本文学全集, the first of the hugely popular one-*yen* volumes (*enpon* 円本) published by Kaizōsha in the latter half of the 1920s, clearly refers (judging from the book’s contents) to “bungaku” in the broad sense. Nevertheless, the book gives pride of

a discussion of the proposition that sovereignty (*shuken* 主権) over the national polity (*kokutai* 国体) resides in the emperor—a view that became dominant in the Shōwa period. Fifth, the system weathered the repeated popular insurrections of the Taishō period and the rise of Communism in early Shōwa thanks to massive government repression, with the result that the domestic and international crisis fostered a new nationalism, and the absolutizing view of the emperor became widespread.

(4) The error of lowering the conceptually-defined strategic goal. The Japan Communist Party (Comintern) clearly failed in its analysis of the Japanese economy and of the political structure based on the modern emperor system. It did so largely because it exaggerated the link between the modern emperor system and the landowner class, almost all the members of which combined agricultural with industrial enterprise, and which controlled regional politics; so that it was unable to abandon the analogy with tsarist Russia on the eve of the revolution. Further, imperiled as it was by continual repression, the party organization was unable to respond, in a situation fraught with the danger of a hostile invasion of China, to the necessity of organizing a broad anti-war and anti-imperialist movement. The error seems to have arisen because, under these subjective conditions, the party attempted to downgrade the strategic goal of solving the problem to being a task of the democratic revolution.

After the publication of these 1932 Theses, the Japan Communist Party attempted to reduce the development of the literary arts in the Meiji period and later to a manifestation of a feudal social system. Miyamoto Yuriko 宮本百合子 wrote in her “Fuyu o kosu tsubomi” 冬を越す蕾 (1934) that, upon reading Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s 谷崎潤一郎 *Shunkinshō* 春琴抄, she felt how stubbornly the Japanese feudal system still controlled in their totality the methods and tendencies of literature (*Miyamoto Yuriko zenshū*, vol. 10, p. 237). Her remark perfectly illustrates the attitude in question. Finally, it is in conformity with the strategy and analysis presented in these 1932 Theses that vol. 7 of *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsushi kōza* 日本資本主義発達史講座 was compiled. The view of history proposed by this work was adopted by the so-called *Kōza-ha* 講座派 (Lectures faction) of scholars, which overwhelmingly influenced the progressive intellectuals of the postwar period.

place to the novel. This emphasis on the narrow meaning, while adopting the broad, represents a tendency that can be traced back to Fukuchi Ōchi (see 4.2). Kitamura Tōkoku came at last to share this position, which he then passed to Kinoshita Naoe 木下尚江 (1869-1937). Nakazato Kaizan 中里介山 (1885-1944) held it all his life,²⁴ illustrating a clear intellectual lineage. One may assume that this broad meaning of the term was common among those who laid the groundwork for the Meiji-period conception of “bungaku.”

8.2 Splits and Reversals: Their Rise and Evolution

8.2.1 Splits and Reversals

The acceptance of a stable concept of “bungaku” in its modern meaning meant at the same time giving up questioning the internal reality of this view by means of comparison with concepts external to it, and enclosing all eventual issues within “bungaku” itself. The elements enclosed within this solipsistic interiority are no more than the shadows of external concepts, and for that reason no conflict between them can give rise to self-development. Such is the solipsistic condition of self-enclosure. Instead of moving toward further development, self-enclosed “bungaku” constantly found its existence threatened by concepts external to it.

In 1906, just when the modern European concept of “bungaku” was beginning to take root, Natsume Sōseki wrote in the preface to his *Bungaku ron* 文学論 that “bungaku” (literature) was defined differently in Chinese studies and in English. Perhaps he feared that this difference was in danger of being obscured. One topic he treated, with examples from writings in English, was the degree to which human emotions (*ningen no kanjō* 人間の感情), as the material for a work of literary art, are concretely and analytically presented. It is possible that he had in mind replacing the “human feelings” (*ninjō* 人情) so central to Tsubouchi Shōyō’s conception of linguistic art—Shōyō’s “passions” (*bonnō* 煩惱), which Takayama Chogyū had in turn set aside in favor of the instinctual drive of “instinctual desire” (*seiyoku* 性欲)—with modern European psychological analysis. However, the times were changing. Sōseki then quoted from *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) by William James, suggesting the entry into Japan of the latest philosophical trends, which tended toward analysis and elucidation of the phenomenon of consciousness.

Sōseki wrote as follows in his essay “Yo ga Kusamakura” 余が「草枕」(1906): “The ordinary sort of novel—the kind that gives one a taste of the reality of human life [*jinsei* 人生]—is quite all right, but at the same time, I think there is also room for the novel that forgets the sufferings of life and brings comfort.”²⁵ At the time, the word *jinsei* was current in the sense not of individual life experience, but of the life within human beings, the original life-force, or the fundamental substance of humankind, and was thus synonymous with its homophone, *jinsei* 人性. No doubt Sōseki was addressing the nascent *shizenshugi* movement. So-called *shizenshugi* novels attempted to focus on those inhabiting the lower depths of society, and thence tended strongly to highlight the evil lurking in the depths of human nature.²⁶ In the 1900s there was much discussion of “art

24 On Nakazato Kaizan’s conception of “bungaku,” see Suzuki Sadami 2000b.

25 [Natsume] Sōseki *zenshū*, vol. 16, p. 544.

26 It is Hasegawa Tenkei’s “Genjitsu bakuro no hiai” (1908) which established this as the direction in

and morality” (*geijutsu to dōtoku* 芸術と道徳), and sharp criticism was directed particularly at two works by Kosugi Tengai 小杉天外 (1865-1952), a follower of Zola: *Meotoboshi* 女夫星 (1900) and *Makaze koikaze* 魔風恋風 (1903).

In the autumn of 1907 Sassa Seisetsu 佐々醒雪 (1872-1917) published “Bungei ni arawaretaru jūyoku” 文芸に顕れたる獣欲 (*Chūō kōron*, November-December). He began, “I shall call human sexual desire, i.e., the desire accompanying reproductive activity that we share with the lower animals, animal desire (*jūyoku* 獣欲). Mocking the recent tendency to treat this “animal desire” all too plainly, he glanced critically over early works such as *Kojiki* and *Genji monogatari*, as well as such Tokugawa-period writings as those of Ihara Saikaku, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, and Bakin, and then asked whether current novelists like Oguri Fūyō 小栗風葉 (1875-1926) cared only for finding that “man is an animal” (*hito sunawachi kedamono* 人即獣) and then “directly conveying” (*chokusha* 直写) that discovery in their writing. The following year, Matsubara Shibun 松原至文 published “Nikukan byōsha no igi” 肉感描写の意義 in the February issue of *Shinsei* 新聲. Then, in March, *Bunshō sekai* 文章世界 put out a special issue including a survey entitled “Nikuyoku byōsha ni tsuite” 肉慾描写について. All of a sudden, the issue had become the focus of literary attention.

To counter to rise of the *shizenshugi* novel, the socialist critic Shirayanagi Shūko 白柳秀湖 (1884-1950) wrote in “Gojin no mitaru genji no bundan” 吾人の見たる現時の文壇 (1903):

People nowadays want to see how and in what detail the artist [*geijutsuka* 芸術家] will go about describing such ugly realities as these. Thus, the ideals of the contemporary artist emphasize “realism” [*shajitsu* 写実] or “exposure” [*hyōshutsu* 表出] and give beauty only a secondary importance.

He further pointed out the growing

tendency boldly to disclose the most secret and minute details of human life. The fearsome trend that applies as it were the writer’s scalpel to dissecting the pathways of the human heart casts doubt on the hitherto totally unexamined foundations of science and hints at matters beyond the reach of social order and control.²⁷

It is not necessarily clear whether Shirayanagi had in mind sexual desire itself, or whether he meant what Schopenhauer (1788-1860) called “the will to live” or “the blind urge of life.” However, he unmistakably noted the movement to bring up into the light the rebellious urge that lurks in the depths of human life and runs counter to social morality. As examples of writers in this mode he cited Tolstoy, Zola, Ibsen, and Hauptmann. Noting the ambition of writers like Kosugi Tengai and Tokutomi Roka to emulate them, he criticized the shallowness of their work and their failure

which *shizenshugi* was to advance. However, Shimamura Hōgetsu, Iwano Hōmei, and others continued to champion a life-centrist (*seimeishugiteki* 生命主義的) doctrine under the name of *shin shizenshugi* 新自然主義 (new *shizenshugi*) or *junsui shizenshugi* 純粹自然主義 (pure naturalism).
27 *Meiji shakaishugi bungaku shū* 明治社会主義文学集, vol. 1 (*Meiji bungaku zenshū*, vol. 83, Chikuma Shobō, 1965), pp. 250-253.

hitherto to take it that far.

In *Tekka sekka* 鉄火石火 (1908), Shirayanagi Shūko wrote:

The term *shizenshugi* (naturalism) has replaced *shajitsu shugi* (realism) in response to the demands of an age that seeks to know the “truth” of human life. Yes, it is a response to the demands of an intellectual age that would consider and critique the substance of life.

Thus he stressed that “the demands of an intellectual age” had given rise to “the trend toward minute evocation of fleshly urges.” With authors like Izumi Kyōka and Hirotsu Ryūrō in mind, he declared that Ken’yūsha writers wrote only of the “outer form of life” and that, despite their championing of pure art, their works were the same as adventure or detective novels, being “aimed exclusively at entertaining the reader.”²⁸ Shirayanagi’s position is the polar opposite of Sōseki’s in “*Yo ga Kusamakura*.”

As Shirayanagi would have it, “intellect” (*richi* 理智) looks down on “pure art” (*jun geijutsu* 純芸術). And indeed, when *shizenshugi* became the mainstream of the literary establishment, former Ken’yūsha writers like Izumi Kyōka, Hirotsu Ryūrō, and Oguri Fūyō came to be scorned as “popular” (*tsūzokuteki* 通俗的). The term *tsūzoku* was common in the Tokugawa period as well, in the sense of “addressed to the people at large.” A certain elitism underlies the disdain it evoked. The situation had evolved since Kidera Ryūjirō, in the *Jūkyū seiki* issue of *Taiyō*, discussed *shizenshugi* in terms of the “stagnation in the literary establishment.” Perhaps the pattern resembles a transposition of the one to be seen in Yano Ryūkei’s assertion, made from the enlightenment-minded perspective of “bungaku” in the broad sense, that the *ninjō shōsetsu* (novel of human feelings) initiated by Tsubouchi Shōyō was for dilettantes.

Shirayanagi’s criticism of Kosugi Tengai and Tokutomi Roka issued from within, in full recognition of what these writers were trying to achieve; nor were his views on developments in literary art, either, expressed from the outside. Shirayanagi himself published a novel entitled *Chikushō no koi* 畜生恋 (1905), describing a social class tragedy in which laborers from the lower depths of society unintentionally commit violence against the very girl who had aroused their longing. At about the same time, Kinoshita Naoe published *Hi no hashira* 火の柱 (1904) and *Ryōjin no jihaku* 良人の自白 (1904-05), two novels with a socialist message. Shirayanagi wrote of them, “There is much in these to criticize, in comparison with the works of the so-called great writers, with regard to both technique and form, but they are nonetheless receiving a broad, enthusiastic welcome.”²⁹ He argued that this favorable reception constituted a warning to the Meiji literary establishment. The novelists of the 1900s showed themselves willing to engage with social issues, and even Kinoshita Naoe, whose work was more akin to the “political novel,” adopted the method of inner description (*naimen byōsha* 内面描写) in such a way as to bring these two streams fairly close together.

However things were different this time, in comparison with the 1890s, above all in that

28 *Meiji shakaishugi bungaku shū*, vol. 1, p. 271.

29 *Meiji shakaishugi bungaku shū*, vol. 1, p. 254.

shizenshugi now occupied the literary mainstream, and there was only scorn for the “political novel” and for the popular writers of the old Ken’yūsha. Indeed writers like Izumi Kyōka, who had advocated the broad path of romanticism (*rōmanshugi* 浪漫主義) and criticised *shizenshugi*, were ejected from the literary establishment and despised to the point of systematic ostracism. It makes sense to conceive the literary world of the time as consisting of three separate streams, although these streams in fact ran relatively close together.

In the debate of 1890, Uchida Roan declared that Yano Ryūkei’s “political novels” were “not art,” and he criticized the conception of the novel as entertainment (*goraku setsu* 娛樂説) as falling all too easily into pandering to the mood of the times. In this case his remarks amounted to condemning “pure art” (*jun geijutsu*) as “concerned only with being entertaining” (*kyōrakuteki* 享樂的). To put it schematically, whereas once “politics” and “intellect” (*richi* 理知) had joined with “entertainment” to criticize “beauty” (*bi* 美), i.e. “realistic depiction” (*shajitsu* 写実) of “feelings” (*kanjō* 感情), now the pursuit of “truth” (*shinjitsu* 真実) through “intellect” had turned “feelings” into the “natural” (*shizen* 自然), “ugly” (*shū* 醜) truth of human “fleshly lusts” (*nikujō* 肉情), and so dismissed “beauty” as being all one with “entertainment.” Thus in their conflict over “entertainment” the adversarial positions of “intellect” and “beauty” were reversed. Furthermore, whereas once “intellect” had advocated educating the people through “entertainment,” now “intellect” was at war with common “morality” and rejected both “beauty” and “entertainment.” It appears from this perspective that as soon as linguistic art gained public recognition as valuable in its own right, the structure of the ideas supporting the debate of the 1890s turned upside down.

Moreover, Shirayanagi Shūko’s “realism” (*shajitsu*) came to mean conveying not the reality of the external world but inner human truth, thus becoming equivalent to the “exposure” (*hyōshutsu*) of inner secrets. It is here that one can perhaps observe the shift in the concept of expression (*hyōgen gainen* 表現概念) from objective “realism” to “exposure” of secrets. In the context of interest in the workings of human consciousness, this equation of “realism” with “exposure” could easily change into “exposure of consciousness” (*ishiki no hyōshutsu* 意識の表出). Finally, amid a rising concern with “life-centrism” (*seimeishugi* 生命主義) the concept of expression could easily shift again to “exposure of life.”³⁰

8.2.2 “Mass (*Taishū*) Literature” and “Pure Literature”

Below, I will survey, with reference especially to the evolution of ideas, the way in which similar splits and reversals were enlarged and repeated over time.³¹ “Enlightenment” (*keimō* 啓蒙) conveyed through the “entertainment” advocated by Yano Ryūkei gave rise after the Russo-Japanese War to the socialist-oriented “social storytelling” (*shakai kōdan* 社会講談) of Sakai Toshihiko 堺利彦 (1870-1933) and others. Socialist thought gave rise to the idea of “popular art”

30 On the change in content of this expression, see Suzuki Sadami 1996b, Chapter 4 (*Taishō seimeishugi no tanjō* 大正生命主義の誕生), Sections 2 (*Seimeishugi no bungei* 生命主義の文芸) and 3 (“Seimei” no hyōgen 「生命」の表現).

31 On the establishment and evolution, in this regard, of the concepts of *taishū bungaku* 大衆文学 (mass literature) and *jun bungaku* 純文学 (pure literature) see the summary account in Suzuki Sadami 1994b.

(*minshū geijutsu* 民衆芸術) designed to provide the laboring masses with “entertainment” and “education,” in order to encourage the reproduction of the labor force. Attempts in this direction extended to drama as well.

Meanwhile, the magazine *Akai tori* 赤い鳥 run by Suzuki Miekichi 鈴木三重吉 (1882-1936), and the “children’s songs” (*dōyō* 童謡) movement initiated by Kitahara Hakushū 北原白秋 (1885-1942) in opposition to the Ministry of Education’s songs (*shōka* 唱歌) to be taught in schools, developed into an intellectual artistic movement to shape children’s sensibility. Kitahara Hakushū also tried his hand at writing “new folksongs” (*shimin’yō* 新民謡). Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛 (1888-1948) published much “current more fiction” (*tsūzoku shōsetsu* 通俗小説) addressed above all to women and depicting contemporary patterns of love, and his trade union sympathies also led him to raise the social standing of writers.

From such trends as these, and against the background of urban mass culture—mass production, mass marketing, mass consumption, and mass waste—there emerged in the late 1920s the large-scale phenomenon of “mass literature” (*taishū bungaku* 大衆文学). Historical novels originating in popular storytelling (*kōdan*) reached a wide audience already in the Taishō period. However, in 1925 the championing of “literature for the masses” (*taishū bungei* 大衆文芸), especially historical novels, by Shirai Kyōji 白井喬二 (1889-1980) aroused controversy, and in the following year the term “mass literature” came into common journalistic use. Its presence in the title of *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* 現代大衆文学全集 (1927, Heibonsha) shows how rapidly it gained full acceptance.³² At one *yen* per volume the series sold in huge quantities, thanks to mass marketing and in keeping with the general boom in *enpon* 円本 (one-*yen* books). The “mass literature” category of the time consisted principally of the historical novels (*jidai shōsetsu* 時代小説) of writers like Shirai Kyōji, Naoki Sanjūgo 直木三十五 (1891-1934), and Okamoto Kidō 岡本綺堂 (1872-1939), with the addition of the “detective novels” (*tantei shōsetsu* 探偵小説) of Edogawa Ranpo 江戸川乱歩 (1894-1965), whose work was popular also among members of the literary establishment. The term *bundan shōsetsu* 文壇小説 (literary establishment novel) came into use as an opposite for *taishū bungaku*. Soon the *tsūzoku shōsetsu*, which depicted the customs and manners of the time, came to be regarded as a branch of *taishū bungaku*, to which was also added, about 1935, the *yūmoa shōsetsu* ユーモア小説 (humorous novel) of writers like Shishi Bunroku 獅子文六 (1893-1969).

32 It is common to refer to the works of literary art accepted by the non-governing classes as *taishū bungaku*. However, the expression represents a borrowing from a term then newly current, and it might be more accurate to speak of *minshū bungaku* 民衆文学 (popular literature). If one includes songs, the history of *minshū bungaku* can be traced from ancient times. It was especially prominent in the Tokugawa period. *Taishū bungaku*, which appeared in the mid-1920s, represents an aspect of twentieth-century urban mass culture (*tōshi taishū bunka* 都市大衆文化), and I therefore prefer “mass literature” as an English translation.

The term *taishū*, originally Buddhist in origin, refers to an assembly of monks and was still used in that kind of meaning in the Meiji period. For example, Natsume Sōseki wrote in the preface to his *Bungaku ron* 文学論, “For dinner I went to the College and ate there with the assembly [*taishū*]” ([*Natsume*] *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 6). The word acquired its social meaning about 1920, when the socialist and former anarchist Takami Motoyuki 高見素之 (1886-1928) used it as a term to embrace such phenomena as the consumer movement. It appears to have come into widespread use after being taken up in its current sense by Shirai Kyōji.

Despite all these qualitative changes and this conceptual restructuring, the “mass literature” of the first and into the second decade of the Shōwa period differs in kind from the “popular literature” (*minshū bungaku* 民衆文学) produced and appreciated by the common people since ancient times. Because intellectuals wrote it for acceptance by a popular readership, they drew on the erotic or grotesque appeal, or the nonsense (ナンセンス) of popular literature, while striving at the same time to refine it. Suffering as they did repeated repression on the part of the governing authorities, they increased the complexity of their mode of expression and constantly sought the novelty of new devices, albeit within set patterns; they also worked in many media and mixed genres. In that respect their work bore a certain resemblance to the “pastime accomplishments” (*yūgei* 遊芸) of Tokugawa times. However, such work that developed in the twentieth century and especially after the 1920s, in the formative period of urban mass culture, differs decisively from Tokugawa “pastime accomplishments,” if only because “bungaku” existed by then as a stable, accepted category. In response to “mass literature” multimedia, mixed genre character there arose such artistic genres as theater, photography, and film, all of which influenced it, and all of which it influenced in turn. It also differed clearly from its Tokugawa counterpart in that, while influenced by European and American mass culture, it situated itself at the same time amid the culture and customs of the developing modern metropolis, which it also adopted as its subject matter; in its assimilation of twentieth-century avant-garde methods; and in its dependence at once on both the domination of the mass media and consumption by the “faceless crowd.”

Meanwhile Marxist influence gained strength among young intellectuals, until in the early Shōwa years works by writers of “proletarian literature” or their sympathizers gained such prominence as to become the exclusive preoccupation of arts journalism. The rise of “mass literature” and “proletarian literature,” together, brought about the collapse of the late Taishō literary establishment. Against the background of “proletarian literature” and the development of mass society, increasingly entertaining “mass literature” came completely to dominate the literary world, and “literature” entered a period of “politics” and “amusement.”

The “proletarian literature” battle lines moved back and forth between political thought and problems of methodology, but debate—for example, over the “mass popularization of the arts” in 1928, or over “political values and artistic values” in 1929—continued to be centered on the three categories of political, artistic, and entertainment content. Kurahara Korehito 蔵原惟人 (1902-1991), Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902-1979), and Hayashi Fusao 林房雄 (1903-1975) can usefully serve to represent each of these three in the debate over political and artistic values. Kurahara Korehito held art (*geijutsu*) to be a technique for spreading political thought among the masses. Hayashi Fusao’s position resembled the Taishō-period view of popular art (*minshū geijutsu*), inspired as it has been by socialist thought, and also that of Shirai Kyōji on “mass literature.” The difference between Kurahara and Hayashi took the same form as the split between such enlightenment-minded Meiji intellectuals as Yano Ryūkei over the issue of “entertainment.” Nakano Shigeharu advocated the independence of artistic values with respect to politics, in this sense resembling Tsubouchi Shōyō in *Shōsetsu shinzui*; but of course he upheld more than mere technique. His position in the debate represents an extension of the argument that “art” does not follow the aims of “politics” but has its own values—an argument aimed at achieving formal recognition for the modern concept of “literature,” as well as independence of that “literature” from

government authority. His view fundamentally lacked the objective recognition that, quite apart from the issue of direct subservience to political ideology, in any particular situation no art can fail to be colored by political and social values. The convention that “literature,” as “literature,” has autonomous values of its own can even be said to have given rise to the illusion that “literature” is independent not only of government authority, but also of political values. Obviously, when the issue is a debate within a vanguard party the great goal of which is revolutionary struggle, and when that party is subject to government oppression, it is hardly possible for such a party to accommodate the autonomy of “art.” The debate reached in the end the conclusion that the role of “art” is to promote the spread of the vanguard party’s political message.

In the context of this large-scale movement, the *bundan shōsetsu* changed as well. The Great Tokyo Earthquake (1923) prompted widespread changes in cities throughout Japan, and the people’s mode of life also changed in obvious ways. It is against this background that such writers as Kataoka Teppei 片岡鉄兵 (1894-1944) and Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一 (1898-1947), who were engaged in a search for new modes of linguistic expression, formed the Shinkankaku-ha 新感覚派. There appeared then on the scene yet another group, termed Shinkō Geijutsu-ha 新興芸術派, that took for its subject matter the new ways of the modern city, symbolized by office buildings, cafés, apartments, bicycles, and cars. There ensued a notable exchange of influences between this stream of writing and “mass literature,” especially the detective novel and “proletarian literature.” However, in about 1932 writing of this kind was overwhelmed by the popularity of the latter two. The writers concerned turned to championing the pursuit of pure art as ideal, and the term “pure literature” came into use. In 1933, when the Marxist camp all but collapsed under the weight of oppression and “conversion” (*tenkō* 転向), voices began to call for the “revival of literary art” (*bungei fukkō* 文芸復興). The “I novels” and “mental-state novels” of Taishō literary establishment writers like Tokuda Shūsei 徳田秋声 (1871-1943) and Uno Kōji 宇野浩二 (1891-1961) were revived, and “proletarian” writers “converted” away from Marxism began producing a stream of novels on the theme of their inner struggle. Novels like these, too, came to be called “pure literature.”

However the boundary between “pure literature” and “mass literature” was described at the time as vague, with writers like Tanizaki Jun’ichirō and Kōda Rohan even denying that it existed at all. Elsewhere, Yokomitsu Riichi’s “Junsui shōsetsu ron” 純粹小説論 (1935) advocated adopting the narration of self-awareness from the methods of the “I novel” and aiming to work the appeal of the novel of contemporary life into works at once “pure” and “popular” (*tsūzoku* 通俗). There arose likewise a movement to raise the level of the historical novel; the detective novel was developed further in the direction of modernistic technique; and such writers as Hisao Jūran 久生十蘭 (1902-1957) and Yumeno Kyūsaku 夢野久作 (1889-1936) began publishing works that included entertaining or amusing elements as well. In response to journalistic demand, individual writers like Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 (1899-1972) came to write in varying styles; while journalism, for its part, can hardly be said to have tried to distinguish clearly between “pure” and “mass literature.” That much is obvious at a glance from the literary columns of *Kaizō* 改造 and *Chūō kōron*.

The distinction became clear only in the early 1950s, when it was institutionalized by the “pure bungaku” and “middlebrow fiction” (*chūkan shōsetsu* 中間小説) magazines that survived the postwar chaos. “Middlebrow novel” referred to a work intermediate between superior “pure literature” and inferior “mass literature,” and offering in suitable proportion both literary quality

and entertainment. However, this level of writing tended to be conflated with “mass literature” itself, thus confirming the dualistic schema of “pure” vs. “mass.”

The above discussion has shown that the splits separating “politics,” “art,” and “entertainment,” amid the intellectual struggle between the Meiji enlightenment’s broad conception of “literature” and the narrow, modern one, brought about a reversal of the values involved simultaneously with the latter’s triumph. The route followed should therefore be clear. These splits, contained for a time within “literature,” then multiplying into finer subdivisions vying with one another for rank and constantly shaken from outside by the oral performance arts and film, by the appeal of popular and mass art, and by the vicissitudes of the revolutionary movement, underwent repeated reformulation.

Nonetheless, what made this schematic opposition between “pure” and “mass literature” appear to characterize the entire history of the novel from the Meiji period on was the debate in 1961 between Hirano Ken 平野謙 (1907-1978) and Takami Jun 高見順 (1907-1965). The occasion for it was the crisis faced by the “pure literature” magazines amid rising economic prosperity and the reconstruction of urban mass society. It drew in many members of the literary establishment and came to be known as “the controversy over the changed nature of pure literature” (*junbungaku henshitsu ronsō* 純文学変質論争). This debate sealed the view of “bungaku” as having been divided ever since Meiji times into the dualistic schema of “pure” and “mass bungaku.”

Its debate lies over Ochi Haruo’s contention, in *Kindai bungaku no tanjō*, that Yano Ryūkei’s motive for writing *Ukishiro monogatari* had to do with a belief less in “national (*kokumin* 国民) literature” than in “a kind of mass literature.” In short, our way of reading Meiji and later “literature” has been strongly influenced by this postwar literary debate and by the view of history to which it gave rise.

8.2.3 Changing Views of “National (*Kokumin*) Literature”

In present-day Japan, the term *kokumin bungaku* 国民文学 refers vaguely to the works of writers favored by the public at large. We have already seen, however, that the concept was originally rooted in modern European nationalism and that the issue of its formation was widely debated in the 1890s and after. I will now outline the way the Meiji conception of *kokumin bungaku*, from Tokutomi Sohō and Takekoshi Sansa 竹越三叉 to Takayama Chogyū, changed in later times. Within Japan, the tension felt by the whole nation gave way to a feeling of emptiness as the Russo-Japanese War drew to a close, and there arose a movement of violent opposition to the Potsdam Treaty, which conceded Japan so little in relation to the sacrifice the country had made. Popular revolts broke out frequently in the period between then and the rice riots of 1918. Meanwhile, the rise in national prestige resulting from victory in the Russo-Japanese War was accompanied by a marked ambition to create a new *kokumin bunka* 国民文化 (national culture). However, amid the prevailing mood of “Taishō democracy” a vigorous debate went forward, within socialism in the broad sense, over “popular art” (*minshū geijutsu* 民衆芸術). The Meiji controversy over *kokumin bungaku* (national literature) did not continue. Amid the mid-1920s debate over “mass literature” a few voices maintained that “mass literature” was “national literature,” but the framework of the discussion as a whole concerned *bundan bungaku* (the literature of the literary establishment). For that reason the debate never took up the question of what “national literature” should be.

The debate over “national literature” revived in 1937, the period corresponding to the widening of Japan’s war in China. It seems to have been set off by Asano Akira’s 浅野晃 essay “Kokumin bungaku ron no konpon mondai” 国民文学論の根本問題 (*Shinchō* 新潮, August 1937). Asano belonged to the Nihon rōman-ha 日本浪漫派 (Japan romantic movement) led by Yasuda Yojūrō 保田与重郎 (1910-1981), who considered the modernized government and culture of the Meiji period and after to be decadent, and who championed the revival of the “Japanese spirit.” In his essay Asano declared “modern Japanese literature, i.e., the new Japanese literature ever since Meiji” to be the product of a “parasitic mind” (*kiseiteki chisei* 寄生的知性).³³ A product of the Shinjinkai 新人会 (New Man Society) at Tokyo Imperial University, Asano had adopted from state nationalism the idea that, in a socially stratified society, the intellectual class is no more than a parasite on society as a whole. Behind his attitude there lay the leftist intellectual’s guilt at having lost touch with the people. The debate in question continued under various headings (*kokubō* 国防 as well as *kokumin bungaku*, for example), until in roughly 1940 the issue came completely to dominate literary criticism. On the side opposed to Yasuda’s Nihon rōman-ha, Ara Masahito 荒正人 (1913-1979) (in “Kokumin bungaku ron’ ni furete” 「国民文学論」に触れて, 1940; originally published under the name Akagi Shun 赤木俊) connected the establishment of *kokumin bungaku* with the Meiji-period rise of the nation-state.

After the end of World War II, the term *kokumin bungaku* emerged once more in 1950 when, thanks to the San Francisco Treaty, Japan became independent under international law. This time, the advocates of *Kokumin bungaku* (ed. by Minka Geijutsubukai 民科芸術部会) were on the left. (For example, Iwagami Jun’ichi 岩上順一, in *Sōsaku hōhō to kokumin bungaku* 創作方法と国民文学, 1952.) Those stirred by the postwar Chinese revolution began to grapple with the issue of the independence of peoples. The Japan Communist Party having adopted the goal of freeing Japan from subservience to the United States, the Communist-influenced Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai 歴史学研究会 and Nihon Bungaku Kyōkai 日本文学協会 announced *minzoku no bunka* 民族の文化 (the culture of the people) and *minzoku no bungaku* (the literature of the people), respectively, as the themes for their annual conferences in 1951. In “Kindaishugi to minzoku no mondai” 近代主義と民族の問題 (1951), the China-sympathizer Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 (1910-1977) criticized the “modernism” (*kindaishugi*) of Taishō and later literary figures for offering no access to the *minzoku* problem. His critique, which began with the modernism that formed the mainstream of postwar literary criticism,³⁴ further developed his debate with Itō Sei 伊藤整 (1905-1969) on the subject of *kokumin bungaku*.

Seen from any angle, the idea of *kokumin bungaku* is inextricably linked with cultural nationalism and with the notion of the “literature” of the people at large (*minshū ippan* 民衆一般). When Takeuchi Yoshimi criticized postwar “modernism” as he did, he meant not only that the critics were evading the problem of nationalism, but also that intellectuals were confining themselves within “literature” and not looking beyond it. Needless to say, “literature” indeed faces the major task of unraveling the nationalism that, ever since Meiji times, has evolved under the influence of two superimposed polarities: “Western modernization” vs. “Japanese tradition” and “The West” vs. “Asia.”

33 *Gendai Nihon bungaku ronsō shi*, vol. 2, pp. 228-34.

34 Included in Takeuchi Yoshimi 1966. In “Shidōsha ishiki ni tsuite” 指導者意識について (p. 16), Takeuchi suggested “seizing the opportunity for resistance from within the world of *ero-guro* [the erotic-grotesque].”

Ochi Haruo's *Kindai bungaku no tanjō* reflects not only the influence of the early 1960s controversy over the changing nature of "pure literature." Behind Ochi's analysis of Yano Ryūkei's *Ukishiro monogatari*, and his scrutiny of the antecedents of Murakami Namiroku and Oshikawa Shunrō 押川春浪 (1876-1914), there undoubtedly also lies the experience of having confronted the postwar *kokumin bungaku* debate. That experience is surely what encouraged him to highlight a lineage of novels different from that of Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei, with whom modern Japanese realism is said to have begun, and to problematize the association between "literature" as a whole and the reality of nationalism. A similar awareness of the problem, although from a different perspective, is to be found in Isoda Kōichi's assessment of the possibilities inherent in the inclusive view of "literature" (embracing as it did even near-"pastime amusements") taken by Taguchi Ukichi in his *Nihon kaika shōshi*. Isoda showed himself willing to treat nationalism from the standpoint of the confrontation between literary art and *realpolitik*. In order to look back over "modern Japanese literature" and its history, one cannot avoid examining the literary controversies of the postwar period, as well as the "literature" and "histories of literature" written under their influence.

8.3 The Concept of "Japanese Literature" and the Evaluational Reformulation of the Classics

8.3.1 The Formation of "Japanese Literature"

Today, all would agree that *Man'yōshū*, *Genji monogatari*, and the haikai of Bashō form the group of works that best represents Japanese literature. There may be other candidates as well, but this section will discuss just these three examples of waka, monogatari, and haikai—examples the supreme value of which no Japanese, and no one outside Japan familiar with Japanese literature, would wish to deny. We will consider when, how, and why they came to be accorded their masterpiece status.³⁵

The value attributed to a literary work is likely to vary according to individual taste, historical period, social standing, social class, and so on. In the case of *Man'yōshū* and Bashō's haikai, each poem may elicit different appraisals. However, when such a work is accepted as a masterpiece, any judgment concerning its value is made within a set framework, one transcending individual tastes and values. I will now re-examine that framework, namely, the concept of "Japanese literature." This concept does not refer just to the totality of linguistic compositions produced in Japan or written in Japanese. Instead, it is a value complex which separates that totality into a hierarchy, recognizing masterpieces on the one hand and excluding certain works on the other.

An attempt to answer the following questions should make the issues clear. Do the Ainu *yukar* and the Okinawan *omoro* belong to the literature of Japan? Are *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (books of myth and history) literature? What about Rai San'yō's *Nihon gaishi*, a historical work written in

35 This section (The Concept of "Japanese Literature" and the Evaluational Reformulation of the Classics) is, roughly speaking, based on a paper given as a keynote address at the 1999 conference of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies in Boulder, Colorado, and published as "From Canon Formation to Evaluational Reformation: Man'yō, Genji, Bashō" (*Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, vol. 1, Summer, 2000). An earlier version was published in Inami and Inoue 2001.

kanbun? Can Ihara Saikaku’s *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* and Takizawa Bakin’s *Nansō Satomi hakkenden* 南総里見八犬伝 be considered representative masterworks of Japanese literature? What is Nakazato Kaizan’s 中里介山 *Daibosatsu Tōge* 大菩薩峠? These queries can be answered in various ways. One might say, “The *yukar* songs are in Ainu, not Japanese, so they cannot be called Japanese literature. Even if one considers the language of Okinawa to be a dialect of Japanese, the *omoro* songs predate the incorporation of Okinawa into Japan and so cannot be thought of as Japanese literature. These two belong to Ainu literature and Ryukyuan *bungaku*, respectively.” Or again, “Works of myth and history like *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are not normally included in the category of ‘literature.’” Or again, “I have never even heard of Rai San’yō’s *Nihon gaishi*, nor have I heard that it was ever held in high esteem.” Or again, “*Ichidai otoko* and *Hakkenden* were addressed to an Edo-period popular audience. They can hardly be called fine examples of literature.” Or again, “*Daibosatsu Tōge* is popular, not pure literature, and therefore low-class.” Naturally, all these replies can also be countered or debated.

The issue to highlight now, however, is that none of these answers represents an individual or subjective evaluation of the form or content of the work in question. None requires the speaker to have actually read it. The answer that invokes as a standard whether or not the work was written in Japanese, or whether or not it was written within Japan, can change according to one’s definition of “Japanese literature.” The same is true for whether or not to include myth and history in the category of literature. That the kanbun works prized at least until the Meiji period as a part of “Japanese literature” should now be completely forgotten has to do with the devaluation of kanbun within “Japanese literature, or its complete exclusion from that category. This is a result merely of shifting convention. The same can be said of changes in the way readers rank works or define genres. All such judgments involve debate over the definition of “literature” and its constituent categories, over the definition of “Japanese literature,” over the genres to which various works belong, and over readers themselves; and they are accompanied by major historical changes in accepted values. They are settled long before any individual reader passes individual judgment on any particular work, and they are communicated by the process of education, or else fuel debate on that subject. Certainly, the idea of “Japanese literature” has its history of shifting definitions and associated values. Individuals do not pass value judgment in a vacuum. Whether we follow accepted notions uncritically or disagree with them, that value complex and its history inevitably shape our thinking.

How, then, was this conception of “Japanese literature”—this conception that shapes our judgments—formed, and how has it changed over time? In order to approach this question it will be worth considering how the three undoubted masterpieces just mentioned came to acquire that status. The process will also reveal, at least to a degree, an outline of how this value complex coalesced and evolved.

Of course, individual opinions of *Man’yōshū*, *Genji monogatari*, and Bashō’s haikai must always have been as numerous as readers themselves. One need not take them all into account. It will be sufficient to select and consider, as appropriate, materials that afford insight into the coalescence and evolution of the value complex in question. I will first discuss the relevant sections of the “histories of Japanese literature” that had a broad influence on reader opinion. They undoubtedly represent the sum of scholarly research at the time. However, that alone will not suffice, since in

most cases it is not only scholars of “bungaku” who reformulate the value attributed to it, but also writers themselves, and those who discuss the direction taken by these writers’ work. In other words, it is important to examine what one might call “criticism through practice,” which has played a major role in every period.

The value complex known as “Japanese literature” naturally presupposes the existence of the concept of this literature. This concept began to coalesce in early Meiji, and by the end of the Meiji period (the first decade of the twentieth century) it had become more or less what it is today. In the meantime, the concept itself went through a transition period, during which *Man’yōshū* was recognized as a representative masterpiece of “Japanese literature.” *Genji monogatari* achieved the same standing somewhat later, when the new concept was already formed, and by a different evaluation process. Consciousness of the uniqueness of “Japanese literature,” and particularly of its view of nature, seems to have become established during the Taishō period. It appears in extreme form in Taishō evaluations of Bashō. In that sense, the reformulation of the value complex known as “Japanese literature” was an ongoing process.

In some ways our contemporary concept of “Japanese literature” actually remains vague. Still, neither the concept nor the words corresponding to it existed at any time during the Tokugawa period. The Tokugawa period knew the word “bungaku,” which was in common use, but the word did not mean at all the same thing as today. The dominant concept of “bungaku” in Meiji times was based on that formed in Europe in the course of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the idea of “Japanese bungaku” was derived from that of “national literature,” which arose in Germany in the 1770s and spread throughout Europe during the nineteenth century. No doubt about it was possible. The Tokugawa period had its own concept corresponding to the later “literature,” and postwar “Edo literature” and “modern literature” scholars upheld as truth the notion that this concept was divided into *ga* 雅 (elegant) and *zoku* 俗 (vulgar). Actually, however, this conviction had nothing to do with reality and constituted no more than a projection of the postwar conception of “literature” onto Tokugawa times.³⁶

The Tokugawa period of course distinguished many smaller genres, such as kanshi, waka, haikai, monogatari, *sōshi*, *yomihon*, *gesaku*, *zuihitsu*, or the scripts of bunraku or jōruri. However, there did not yet exist any inclusive concept of linguistic art, corresponding to the dominant modern one of “literature.” Indeed the prerequisite of this concept, the very category of “linguistic work” (*genko sakuhin* 言語作品), had not yet emerged either. These written genres were loosely subsumed, together with calligraphy, painting, tea, and the shamisen, into the broader category of “pastime accomplishments” (*yūgei*), as distinguished from the “martial arts” (*bugei*). One reason for this is undoubtedly that, as the period progressed, linguistic works addressed to the people became more and more closely linked to painting and music. At the time, it would have been as difficult to devise the concept of “linguistic work” as to isolate from today’s picture books or musicals the category of “literature” alone; in fact, the concept would have then been so new as to require an even greater leap. Conversely, it may not be unfair to see a degree of inconsistency in the present category of “literature,” which attempts to treat identically both the scripts of plays meant for actual performance and linguistic works written solely to be read.

³⁶ See above, 4.1.3.

Another possible reason is that there existed in the Tokugawa period a strong sense of a distinction between higher-class and lower-class “pastime accomplishments.” The former corresponded to what one might call the traditional, originally Chinese concept of “bungaku.” It included intellectual works in Chinese or Japanized Chinese (in other words, scholarship), and kanshi. Such works had been more or less consistently prized by Japanese intellectuals since ancient times. In that sense the core of Japan’s “bungaku,” kanshi, together with works in the fields of Confucian studies and history, had already been written by Tokugawa times. This body of writing is covered by Emura Hokkai’s *Nihonshi shi* (5 vols., 1771). It does not include the waka or monogatari favored by the imperial court, or the noh and kyōgen popular among the warriors. It is also sharply distinct from the popular genres—haikai, *sōshi*, *yomihon*, *gesaku*, *jōruri*, kabuki—enjoyed especially by the common people of Tokugawa times. These last formed the lower-class “pastime accomplishments.” The domain formed by some relaxation in the boundaries of the “higher,” and by the merging of the “higher” and “lower” divisions of “pastime accomplishments,” certainly constituted that of the “elegant” (*ga*). Within it, and apart from painting, music, and the performing arts, there may well have existed a category for linguistic works. However, there never emerged a category that embraced both these and the “vulgar” (*zoku*) domain of genres intended for the common people. Fine books, then called *mono no hon* 物の本, and works for the common people, remained sharply distinct, and the latter were marketed more or less as toys.

Nonetheless, Tokugawa Japan was no doubt better prepared than China to assimilate the concepts of “literature” or “polite literature” in the modern English sense. In China, “wenxue” in the sense of the superior category of poetry and Confucian-centered learning was translated as “polite literature,” while “wenxue” was adopted as one of the terms to translate the English word “literature.” The latter is the term that formed the core of the idea of “national literature,” so common in nineteenth-century Europe.

It is entirely natural that the Chinese word *shi* 詩 and the English word “poetry” should have been used to translate each other, and that both should have been recognized as belonging to the domain of “wenxue” or “polite literature.” However, the Chinese value system defined as “wenxue” works based on true experience deepened by feeling and the imagination, while fiction (*xugou*, Jp. *kyōkō* 虚構) was secondary and treated as outside “wenxue.” That is why tales of wonders and prodigies in the manner of *zhiguai* 志怪 or *zhuānqī* 伝奇 were consistently referred to by the pejorative term *xiaoshuo* (Jp. *shōsetsu* 小説). There was no question of including the scripts of Yuan drama, or of other dramatic forms in the category of *shi*. In short, recognition of (essentially fictional) linguistic art as a sector of “wenxue” would have required a complete dismantling of traditional categories. The reason China lagged behind Japan in the development of the modern conception of “wenxue” and “wenxue shi” (literary history), despite its earlier exposure to the English “literature” and “polite literature,” is no doubt to be found here. The first “history of Chinese literature” was written by a Japanese, in imitation of histories of Japanese literature.

In Japan, however, the reformulation of the traditional notion of “bungaku” was accomplished easily for the following reasons. First, there already existed a conception of *shiika* 詩歌 (poetry), which combined kanshi (a recognized constituent of “bungaku”) with waka, a genre excluded from “bungaku.” Second, although in late Tokugawa times there existed as yet no concept corresponding to linguistic work or linguistic art, a conception of genre corresponding to the

Western categories of poetry, fiction, and drama was already in the process of formation. Third, one might cite a repeatedly manifested tendency to overthrow the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy created by the Tokugawa government in the context of the “Tokugawa peace.” It is fair to say that in the late Tokugawa period, in particular, rejection of arrogant behavior as “crude” (*yabo* 野暮), and the acceptance of “pastime accomplishments” as “refined” (*iki* 粋), had penetrated even to the highest levels of warrior society. *Genji monogatari* and other such Heian works were associated with the category of *miyabi* 雅; Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s conception of art as treading “the fine line between the true and the false” (*kyojitsu himaku* 虚実皮膜) was quite widely known; and Takizawa Bakin did not hesitate to describe *monogatari* and Chinese *xiaoshuo* fiction as *mono no hon* (serious reading).³⁷

The early Meiji scholars of Western learning who adopted the idea of “national literature” (*kokumin bungaku*), combining as it did both intellectual writing in Japanese and linguistic art, developed the new concept of “Japanese literature.” After 1890, when Kyōiku Chokugo (Imperial Rescript on Education) was promulgated, scholars began writing the “history of Japanese literature,” above all for the middle school students whom they saw as the future of Dai Nippon Teikoku 大日本帝国 (the Great Japanese Empire). Thus “literature” in this context was not limited to linguistic art, but embraced intellectual works as well. It is therefore no wonder that the histories of Japanese literature written at this time should have traced the origins of their subject back to *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Fudoki*. We do the same today, and yet our dominant, contemporary concept of “literature,” referring as it does to linguistic art, excludes myth, history, and local gazetteers. The reason we do not hesitate to follow the old practice is that we mechanically follow the habit established by our mid-Meiji predecessors, without even noticing the discrepancy.

It is on this point that the present concept of “literature” still remains vague. This vagueness has been criticized by those who wish to restrict “literature” clearly to its narrower sense of linguistic art. Those who take this modernist view include the followers of Okazaki Yoshie’s 岡崎義恵 (1892-1982) *bungei gaku* 文芸学 (study of literary art). However, to believe that in Japan this vagueness has distorted the modern Western concept of “literature” is to fall into a debate that ignores the concept’s historicity.

Even today the English term “polite literature” is not necessarily used exclusively in the sense in linguistic art, and, especially in a history of literature, may commonly include intellectual works of high value. Nor do European histories of literature necessarily seek the origins of their topic exclusively in works of linguistic art. It is instead more common to find those origins in the earliest works, of whatever genre, written in the language in question. That is because “national literature” means above all works written in the vernacular of that country, in other words, the language used by the common people in contrast to Latin, the lingua franca of medieval European intellectuals. That is the basis on which further discussions of definition and scope are carried forward.

It appears that in Egypt, for example, a conception of linguistic art was once widespread, even before the adoption of the modern European concept of “literature.” However, the formation of this concept in the course of modernization led, just as in Japan, to a broad and a narrow definition of “literature” (*atab*). Unlike Japan, however, there was never any attempt to write a history of

37 See above, Chapter 5.

Egyptian literature starting from ancient times. Instead, premodern works were treated as “Arabic literature,” while “Egyptian literature” became customarily reserved for the modern period and after. This is no doubt because of Egypt’s long period of subjection to the Ottoman Turks. It, too, illustrates the proposition that historical conditions affect concept formation.

In a quite different sense, however, the concept of “Japanese literature” formed in the mid-Meiji period, and the modern European concepts of “polite literature” or “national literature,” are entirely dissimilar. Those who began then to write histories of Japanese literature ignored the European definition of “national literature” in order to emphasize the long history of a Japanese literature that included writing in kanbun. That is because they wished to contrast the older cultural tradition of Japan and East Asia with the literary histories of the European powers, which went back no further than the Middle Ages. Thus the state nationalism learned from modern Europe gave rise to the conception of a “national literature” (including kanbun) with a tradition older than that of any European country. In that sense it constituted a double invention of “tradition.” This attitude can be discerned in every history of Japanese literature written in mid-Meiji, whatever the author’s approach otherwise.

Serious study of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* was initiated in the mid-Tokugawa period by scholars of the Kogaku 古学 and Kobunji-ha 古文辞派 schools, which resisted the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy of the Tokugawa government. It was then turned to ends redolent of anti-Chinese cultural nationalism by *kokugaku* 国学 scholars, whose ideas acted, for Meiji intellectuals, as a receptor for the European idea of “national literature.” Nonetheless, these same intellectuals elaborated their own form of cultural nationalism, in a movement of resistance against Western civilization. They often displayed pride in the antiquity of the East Asian cultural tradition and so inclined toward asianism, on which point they differed from their Tokugawa-period *kokugaku* predecessors, who deplored the importing of Chinese culture into Japan.

Before closing this section it will be worthwhile briefly to note the difference between Meiji-period “Japanese literature” and European “national literature.” Almost all the westernizing scholars who had learned the concept of “national literature” from Europe, such as Fukuchi Ōchi (“*Nihon bungaku no fushin o tan-zu*,” 1875) or Taguchi Ukichi (*Nihon kaika shōshi*, 1877-82), classified the plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the *kōshoku mono* of Ihara Saikaku, and the *gesaku* works of Takizawa Bakin or Shikitei Sanba, as “popular literature” (*minshū bungaku* 民衆文学).³⁸ That may be because they wished to show that the literary genres proper to modern Europe had arisen in Japan as well, but it is also because they themselves were sufficiently open to enjoy and esteem Tokugawa popular culture. However, as the modern European conception of “polite literature” spread in Japan, and as the ideology expressed in *Kyōgaku Seishi* 教学聖旨 (1879) or *Kyōiku Chokugo* (1890) took hold, there emerged an increasing tendency, especially among academics

38 The term *kōshoku mono* 好色もの, which had designated works like Saikaku’s *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* 好色一代男, was changed in the Kyōhō reforms to *ukiyo zōshi* 浮世草子. As far as I know, *kōshoku mono* also covered such material as courtesan critiques (*geigi hyōbanki* 芸妓評判記), while *ukiyo zōshi* extended to variations on Chinese comic tales, ghost stories, and so on. It is Meiji scholars who subsumed all these things under the term *ukiyo zōshi*, which they understood to refer to fiction that gave a realistic (*shajitsuteki* 写实的) description of life. The history of such genre terms, their substantive changes and their coalescence, remains unexplored.

(though with certain exceptions discussed below), to dismiss “popular literature” with contempt. The 1873 banning of *Saikaku zenshū* 西鶴全集 (edited by Ozaki Kōyō and Ōhashi Otowa 大橋乙羽, and published by Hakubunkan in its Teikoku Bunko series) sufficiently demonstrates that this tendency had official backing.

8.3.2 The Scope of “Japanese Literature”

The conception of “Japanese literature” shaped by Meiji state nationalism was limited to works in the language of the dominant population and excluded any in Ainu or Ryukyuan. I would like to offer my own opinion on the scope of “Japanese literature” in this sense.

If “Japanese literature” is defined as “literature written in the Japanese language,” then this definition excludes “literature” in a language other than Japanese, even if it was produced in the Japanese islands. Such material includes not only all of Ainu oral literature, but also the entire body of poetry and prose, written in Chinese or Japanized Chinese, that intellectuals prized as “bungaku” from ancient times to the Tokugawa period, and that the common people, too, came to enjoy from the mid-Tokugawa on. The works affected naturally include *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Fudoki* 風土記, but also poetry in Chinese from *Kaifūsō* on, Rai San’yō’s *Nihon gaishi*, and Mori Ōgai’s and Natsume Sōseki’s kanshi and kanbun. Such a definition therefore fails to cover all the linguistic works written and read by the dominant population of the Japanese archipelago.

If “Japanese literature” is to be understood as “literature” produced in Japan, there arises the question of how “Japan” is to be defined. A question then hangs over works produced in pre-Meiji Okinawa, since Okinawa was not incorporated into the territory of Japan until early Meiji; in Okinawa between the end of World War II and 1972, when Okinawa reverted to Japan; in Taiwan, which became a part of Japan after the Sino-Japanese War; in Karafuto, which became a part of Japan following the Russo-Japanese War; and in Korea, which was annexed to Japan between 1910 and 1945. Even if the scope accommodates works in mixed Japanese and dialect, can one include within “Japanese literature” such works written in such areas as continental China, Manchuria, and Southeast Asia, which were invaded by the Japanese Empire?

Thus, neither definition yields a clear understanding of the category “Japanese literature.” The simplest solution is no doubt to define it as referring to all “literature” written in Japan or in Japanese.

Of course, one may also debate the status of works written by Japanese in other languages, such as the English poetry of Noguchi Yone (1875-1947); works in Japanese by non-Japanese authors, such as the Japanese essays of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904); and of works translated into Japanese. However, doubts concerning these can be more or less settled by taking into account the language of the readership assumed by the original work.

It might be possible to bring this standard—the language of the original readership—into the debate surrounding the two definitions of “Japanese literature” already discussed. There did not occur in Japan, as there did in Europe, any process of formation of a “national language.” In the European case this process, which was meant to systematize the language spoken by the people at a time when the old Latin-language community of intellectuals was breaking down, is known as the vernacular revolution. It was a policy of the modern nation-state to form a standard language and to

bring about acceptance of that language by means of the education system. This was indeed one of the goals of “modernity.” In Japan, the main written language used by intellectuals had always been kanbun, that is to say, Chinese or Japanized Chinese. At the same time, however, there had existed since ancient times a tendency for educated members of the court to write in their own language and to produce works written in so-called *wabun* 和文. In other words, the language of courtier-readers of ancient times was dual, consisting of both kanbun and *wabun*. Of course, their spoken language was what linguists call a social dialect. No surviving materials convey directly anything of the language actually spoken then by the common people.

Courtier intellectuals’ knowledge of kanbun declined markedly in the latter part of the ancient period. However, from the Muromachi period on, the Zen monks of Kyoto and Kamakura printed woodblock editions of many Chinese works, especially ones related to Buddhism. These were in either correct or debased Chinese. Knowledge of Chinese characters also rose among the general population from the late medieval period on, and the common people, too, began to read and write Japanese written partly with these characters (*wakan konkō bun* 和漢混淆文). Fiction in this style was written and circulated in print. There appeared works written for the common people in their own vernacular. Official notices and decrees, too, came to be written in *wakan konkō bun*. Thus, from the medieval period on, the language of the readership of such works was dual, consisting of kanbun on the one hand and of texts written according to Japanese grammar on the other. Moreover, the latter group became increasingly diverse in style.

In the Meiji period, the Japanese-style reading of kanbun (*kanbun yomikudashi*) was adopted as the official style for government documents, and an intellectual had to be familiar with both kanbun and English. The language of the readership thus became three-tiered: kanbun, English, and Japanese, and the styles of written Japanese became more and more differentiated according to genre. However, it was the *yomikudashi* style of kanbun or debased kanbun that was adopted as standard in the early Meiji period. This style was difficult to distinguish from *wakan konkō bun*, and in middle and late Meiji the *yomikudashi* style gradually changed. Sentence-final verbs shifted from *nari* or *tari* to *da* and *de aru*. The common style (*jōtai* 常体) of today was becoming established, and for newspapers the process seems to have been completed by about 1924. However, it would still be some time before the same, common style became generally adopted for all novels, for poetry, and for letters. In these areas, intimately associated as they were with popular culture, the diversity of written styles continued.

So much for the works read by the dominant inhabitants of the Japanese islands, and of the style in which these works were written. As for the subject peoples of the islands, AINU “literature” belongs to the AINU language sphere, which itself was subdivided into dialectal regions where these works were sung or told. With respect to RYUKYUAN “literature,” before that region was incorporated into Japan, some works were written and read in Chinese, and others in RYUKYUAN. Even if one considers RYUKYUAN a dialect of Japanese, these latter works were not addressed to readers in Japan, and they therefore deserve to be treated as “RYUKYUAN literature.” However, this does not mean that they should be excluded from the category of “Japanese literature.” Their special character needs to be respected, and they need to be treated as belonging to a neighboring domain. I believe they should indeed be defined as coming under the heading of Japanese *bungaku*.

Other “literature” in Japanese, and to be treated as such in the sense that it is addressed to

Japanese readers at large, includes that of Okinawa under American control, and that produced by members of subject populations as well as populations denied Japanese citizenship. However, this does not mean that such works are to be seen as belonging exclusively to the category of “Japanese literature.” If written by a Chinese or a Korean, a work of this kind could certainly be seen as belonging also to Chinese or Korean literature, despite being in Japanese. Conversely, anything by a member of one of the subject populations of the Japanese islands, even if not addressed to readers in continental China, on Taiwan, or on the Korean peninsula, and written in however inexpert a form of Chinese or Korean, could certainly be included in the category of literature of the Chinese or Korean language spheres.

The diffusion in Japan of the modern Western idea of “national literature” resulted in *Man'yōshū* being put forward as a representative masterpiece of “Japanese literature.” The entire work is written in Chinese characters, since at the time Japan had no writing system of its own, but the use of *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 increases throughout its length. *Kokugaku* scholars understood the words written in characters used for phonetic value only, the so-called *yamato kotoba* やまとことば, to be “pure Japanese.” Thus, seen in the light of European notions of “national literature,” *Man'yōshū* turned out only to have borrowed Chinese writing, and actually to be written in “pure Japanese.” In the first volume of their *Nihon bungaku shi*, Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō wrote, “The creation of kana letters, which came to gain proud recognition as our country’s unique writing system, is a matter for rejoicing.” They then went on, “That is because the kana letters that so uniquely benefit our country developed from *man'yōgana*.”³⁹ Of course, the use of *man'yōgana* is not limited to *Man'yōshū*, which also contains the katakana letters that developed in association with reading the Buddhist scriptures. The will to honor the antiquity of the East Asian cultural tradition is evident here. Mikami Sanji and his colleagues wrote, “*Man'yōshū* is in fact our country’s own *Shijing*.”⁴⁰ This is why in mid-Meiji times *Man'yōshū* was regarded as Japan’s representative classic. When the new, narrower meaning of “literature” as linguistic art overtook the older, broader one, and state nationalism began to rise, the standing of *Man'yōshū* became still more secure.⁴¹ As the great collection of Japan’s ancient poetry, *Man'yōshū* clearly belonged within the category of linguistic art.

8.3.3 The Evaluation of *Man'yōshū*

The topic so far has been the attitudes adopted by early Meiji scholars of Western learning on the one hand, and by mid-Meiji authors of histories of Japanese literature on the other. Things were different in the world of tanka poetry. Until the mid-Meiji period, tanka poets’ chief allegiance was to *Kokinshū*. In the Tokugawa period, those who championed *Man'yōshū* belonged to the Kogi

39 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, p. 106.

40 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, p. 137.

41 In “Kokumin kashū to shite no *Man'yōshū*” (Haruo and Suzuki 1999), Shinada Yoshikazu treated roughly the same issue from a quite different approach. He then discussed the circumstances that followed, and the question of the introduction of the concept of “folk song” (*min'yō* 民謡) in the late ninth century. However, on this issue his discussion begs for an analysis of how the concept and awareness of *kokumin* evolved.

and Kokugaku schools opposed to officially sanctioned Neo-Confucianism. For them, *Man'yōshū* gave direct expression to the feelings of the Japanese of ancient times. However, in the early nineteenth century Kagawa Kageki 香川景樹 (1768-1843), while still respecting the *Kokinshū* model, advocated replacing poetic expressions used only in the old poems with contemporary language. This call renewed the world of waka. It seems to have been influenced by the Seirei-ha (Ch. Xinglingpa) 性霊派 movement, which in the Qing dynasty aimed to achieve immediate expression of individual feeling by similar means, and which had considerable impact in Japan. The so-called Keien-ha 景園派 style, originated by Kagawa Kageki and Hatta Tomonori 八田知紀 (1799-1873), passed to the Outadokoro-ha 御歌所派 group associated in the Meiji period with the imperial house and became the mainstream of waka poetry.⁴²

Even in this domain, however, there emerged from the late 1880s on an increasing tendency to look to *Man'yōshū* instead. It was associated with the various movements that, influenced by the Western conception of “literature,” sought to “improve” the traditional literary arts. The inspiration for it came first of all from such works as *Kagaku ron* 歌学論 (1884-85) by Suematsu Kenchō 末松謙澄; *Kadō no enkaku* 歌道の沿革 (1886) by Konakamura Gishō 小中村義象; *Kokugaku waka kairyō ron* 国学和歌改良論 (1887) by Konakamura Gishō and Hagino Yoshiyuki 萩野由之; and *Man'yōshū mifugu shi* 万葉集美夫君誌 (1901-1911) by Kimura Masakoto 木村正辞. At about the same time, and within the Outadokoro-ha itself, Sasaki Hirotsuna 佐佐木弘綱 (1828-1891) published “Chōka kairyō ron” 長歌改良論 (*Fude no hana* 筆の華, September 1888), in which he sought to inspire a new, epic poetry that would embody the spirit of the creation of the new nation-state. A political romanticism is visible also in “Taiyō no uta” 太陽の歌 (*Taiyō*, January 1895), a poem written by his son Nobutsuna 信綱 (1872-1963) in the time of the Sino-Japanese War, according to the principles of the “improved *chōka*.”

Ochiai Naobumi 落合直文 (1861-1903), like Konakamura Gishō (1861-1923) and Hagino Yoshiyuki (1860-1924) a graduate of the Department of Classical Studies at Tokyo Imperial University, and in 1889 the founder of the Kokugo Denshūjo 国語伝修所, established his Asakasha あさ香社 in 1893 and set out to reform the tanka. Such poets as Kaneko Kun'en 金子董園 (1876-1951) and Yosano Tekkan 与謝野鉄幹 followed his lead in the waka domain. It is clear from testimony such as that of Kaneko Kun'en, in his *Uta no tsukurikata* 歌の作り方 (1916), that the substance of Ochiai's tanka revolution lay in the ideal of direct expression of feeling. It is noteworthy here that Ochiai's basic principle should have been one associated with kanshi. Kaneko's “Ochiai Naobumi no kokubun shiika ni okeru shin undō” 落合直文の国文詩歌における新運動 (*Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学, June 1925) leaves no doubt on this score.

The realism of kanshi rejected fiction and rested upon the truth of experience. In Japan, the *Rongo* statement that “The Odes are three hundred in number [and] can be summed up on one phrase: Swerving not from the right path,”⁴³ as well as Ogyū Sorai's interpretation of it, to the effect that expression of the true feelings of the people is to be prized, contributed importantly to the tradition of seeking direct expression of emotion. It represented an application to Japan of Chinese ideas of reverence for the past—ideas turned by Motoori Norinaga to the purposes of

42 See Suzuki Sadami 1999, pp. 40-48.

43 Lau 1979, p. 11.

anti-Chinese cultural nationalism. In *Isonokami no sasamegoto* 石上私淑言 (1763, first published 1816), Norinaga maintained that while in ancient times Chinese poetry could indeed give direct expression to feeling, it had been stunted by Confucian and Buddhist ethics and had fallen into mere cleverness. Instead, he wrote, direct expression of feeling lived on in the waka tradition.⁴⁴ Presumably it is Sorai's understanding that acted as a receptor when Kagawa Kageki adopted the Seirei-ha idea principle of direct expression of individual feeling and spirit. The practice of kanshi revived in mid-Meiji times, thanks to the thoroughly Seirei-ha-minded Mori Kainan 森槐南 (1863-1911) and others. This style of kanshi eschewed any touch of "Japanese flavor" (*washū* 和臭) and sought closely to follow the Chinese example; in which sense it can perhaps be called a revival of an attitude resembling Sorai's. It is easy to imagine this sort of Confucian universalism acting as a receptor both for Western romanticism, with its emphasis on the expression of personal feeling, and for nineteenth-century realism, almost as though they had been one and the same. Thus *Man'yōshū*, rediscovered in accordance with modern Western ideals as the origin of linguistic art in the "national language," satisfied, thanks to kanshi ideals, the modern Western aesthetic standard—romantic, realistic—of direct expression of feeling, and thus came to be regarded as the representative masterpiece of Japanese literature.

No doubt this development also betrays the influence of Motoori Norinaga's explanatory principle of *mono no aware*, according to which "directness of feeling is the essence of humanity and the heart of the Japanese." In the field of the novel, it shares something fundamental with Tsubouchi Shōyō's championing of the realism of "life and feeling" (*setai* 世態, *ninjō* 人情).

Because kanshi and Norinaga's *mono no aware* constituted the receptors for the European literary arts of the time, imagination and originality, the two standards of excellence for European romanticism, were considerably diluted in Japan. Then, at the turn of the century, the authority of *shizenshugi* (naturalism) commended the goal of scientific accuracy and inclined toward revelation of human "inner nature," i.e., of sexual desire. At the same time, under the stimulus of the new philosophy, attention turned to "consciousness" and "sensation," both of which were then absorbed into the artistic theory of Taishō life-centrism, according to which art is an expression of the individual's inner life, which in turn is a manifestation of the "greater life of the universe" (*uchū daiseimei* 宇宙大生命). In this way, the romantic values of imagination and originality, and modern European objective realism, both struck deep root in the world of the Japanese literary arts. Despite their confrontation they have thus often been held responsible together, especially after World War II, for the "stunted modernization" (*kindaika no okure* 近代化の遅れ) of Japanese literature.

In the domain of the tanka, this reception of European romanticism and realism threatened to be variously divisive. Ogyū Sorai's interpretation of the *Rongo* passage quoted above gave rise on the one hand to Motoori Norinaga's belief that the illicit love described in *Genji monogatari* represented the summit of *mono no aware*—a view that passed down the *kokugaku* line of scholarship. European romanticism, too, tends to exalt the theme of love. Kanshi, on the other hand, does not. That appears to be the source of the clash between the Outadokoro-ha, which despite its appreciation of *Man'yōshū* still upheld *Kokinshū*, and what one might call the Department of Classical Studies faction, with its movement to revolutionize the tanka.

44 See above, 4.3.2.

Consider, for example, Yosano Tekkan’s “Bōkoku no on: Gendai no hijōfuteki waka o nonoshiru” 亡国の音—現代の非丈夫的和歌を罵る (1894). It begins, “With each in-breath and out-breath the true man [*daijōbu* 大丈夫] directly draws in and expels the universe. On this vast scale he sings the universe. The universe is my songs.” To one who would reflect “the natural rhythm of the universe,” Tekkan commended unity of spirit and nature, and he condemned the Outadokoro style of love poem, modeled on *Kokinshū*, as “songs of derivative passion” (*mohōteki jōka* 模倣的情歌). This amounts to a vigorous declaration of the poetic spirit of the European romantic movement, which prized originality and creativity; and it also resembles almost a translation of the key portion of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s (1803-1882) transcendentalist discussion of the poet. However, such a position was also easy enough to reach as a recasting, via the transcendentalist Wang Yangming philosophy current in the Bakumatsu and Restoration periods, of the early sixth-century *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 by Liu Xie 劉勰 of Liang 梁. This essay holds *wen* 文 to be that which reflects the pattern of the universe. In that sense, Tekkan’s manifesto is in the spirit of *kanshi*, which he composed well. In the background of his attack on “songs of derivative passion” lies, among other things, widespread criticism to the effect that Outadokoro-ha poetic training sometimes involved breaches of sound morals. There were even calls to expunge the books of love poems from the imperial anthologies. In rebuttal, Sasaki Nobutsuna quoted the statement from Norinaga’s *Isonokami no sasamegato*, “It is the true, sincere heart that knows *mono no aware*.”⁴⁵ The Outadokoro-ha and Yosano Tekkan agreed on the importance of direct expression of feeling, but they presumably parted company on the issue of whether to stand on the *kokugaku*-style, feminine principle seen as “effeminacy” (*memeshisa* 女々しさ), or on that of the masculinity championed in the spirit of *kanshi*. Perhaps the educational ideals for the people of the new nation state, created from the fusion of Confucian morality and reverence for the emperor, thus contained an inconsistency of principle that, in the domain of *waka*, gave rise to this split between the *kokugaku* and *kanshi* approaches.

Let us consider another famous poetic debate concerning veneration of *Man’yōshū*. In “Utayomi ni atauru sho” 歌よみに与ふる書 (1898), Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867-1902) acquiesced in this trend, which had begun some ten years earlier, but advocated directness of expression as “the standard for literature in all places and times,” i.e., as an universal aesthetic principle. His essay clearly assumes the modern, narrow definition of “literature,” since it discusses under that heading not only haiku, but also Chinese poetry, Western poetry, fiction, and drama; combines in the standard it proclaims both Western romanticism and the criterion of realism; and also accepts *kanshi* ideals, as the Tang and Song examples he cited make sufficiently clear. In short, his position represents a recasting of enthusiasm for *Man’yōshū*—an enthusiasm supported by then-current *kanshi* ideals—in the light of the modern Western, narrow definition of “literature.”

However, the *tanka* world of the day all but ignored “Utayomi ni atauru sho.” Shiki’s individuality can be seen in his praise for the hitherto neglected poetry of Minamoto no Sanetomo 源実朝 (1192-1219), but by then the narrower concept of “literature” was already quite well known, and his essay may have given the impression of restating in overly clever terms a position similar to the one already taken by Yosano Tekkan. Of course, it also brought him and Itō Sachio 伊藤左千夫

45 *Kokoro no hana*, no. 3 (April 1898). See Suzuki Sadami 1999, pp. 40-48.

(1864-1913) together, leading to the birth of the poetry journal *Araragi* アララギ. Within *Araragi* the essay of course held canonical status, and it became later on the basis for Saitō Mokichi's 斎藤 茂吉 (1882-1953) theory of *shasei* 写生. There is ample evidence that Saitō Mokichi kept Shiki's words in mind as he pursued his own ideas. However, all this took place only within a single faction. The success of Yosano Tekkan's *Myōjō* 明星 and changes within the tanka world itself, where some were beginning to advocate *shizenshugi*, meant that *Araragi* did not come to represent the mainstream until about 1920. Until then it remained difficult even to keep the journal going, as Shimaki Akahiko 島木赤彦 (1876-1926) and others have often recalled.⁴⁶

Man'yō shūka 万葉秀歌 (1938), Saitō Mokichi's selection of outstanding *Man'yōshū* poems, based on his theory of *shasei*, reached a wide audience and until the end of the war considerably influenced the way *Man'yōshū* was seen. However, it is not possible to discuss the further history of *Man'yōshū* reception without treating earlier developments. For the moment it will be sufficient to restate as follows the purpose of this section: to show (1) how *Man'yōshū*, praised in Tokugawa times by Kogaku and *kokugaku* proponents, first came in the Meiji period, amid enthusiasm for the ancient tradition of "Japanese literature" discovered in this great age of modern nation-building, to be honored as a work of linguistic art written in "pure Japanese"; (2) how the *Man'yōshū* cause was strengthened by the criteria of genuine experience and direct expression upheld for *kanshi*; (3) how these factors coalesced with the diffusion of the narrower concept of "literature" and with the aesthetic and technical standards of modern European romanticism and realism; and (4) how this complex was then elevated to a "universal value."

8.3.4 The Evaluation of *Genji monogatari*

Genji monogatari, a long work of prose fiction written in eleventh-century Japan, evokes many immoral love affairs. Enjoyed by countless readers, from Heian aristocrats to the common people of the Tokugawa period, it also attained for some the status of a model. All this is well known. However, its wide popularity and exemplary standing in the eyes of certain groups do not mean that it gained immediate recognition as a representative classic of "Japanese literature." In Japan, where no single religion ever wielded hegemonic power, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto governed ethics in common; but seen from the perspective of any among them, many of the love affairs in *Genji monogatari* unquestionably violate ethical norms. In the late Heian period a sutra was transcribed in order to save both the author and the readers of the work from being sullied by it, and Buddhist ceremonies were performed for the same purpose. Some people proposed that *Genji* was written in order to teach Buddhist or Confucian doctrine, but in the mid-seventeenth century Motoori Norinaga swept all such ideas aside.

At that time—the Genroku period—human feelings, especially family affection and physical love—were celebrated in burgeoning popular culture as *mono no aware*. There also arose a trend of thought, based on early Confucianism, that stressed human feelings and stood in opposition to officially sanctioned Neo-Confucianism. In a similar vein Motoori Norinaga wrote in *Shibun yōryō* 紫文要領 (1763) that the immoral affairs described in *Genji monogatari* represent the pinnacle

46 Suzuki Sadami 1999, pp. 40-48.

of *mono no aware*. In *Isonokami no sasamegato*, written in the same year, Norinaga argued (in the context of Sorai’s comment on the *Rongo* passage discussed above) that Chinese poetry was once the same but instead had come to expound only reason and order (*dōri* 道理); while in Japan the “truth of the human heart” (*kokoro no mama* 心のまま) still lived in *waka* and *monogatari*.⁴⁷ As noted earlier, Norinaga’s interpretation did not constitute the Tokugawa mainstream. In the late Tokugawa period, Rai San’yō devoted one of the poems of his *Jūnien zekku* 十二媛絶句 to Murasaki Shikibu, praising her literary talent as peerless among the women of Japan, but also lauding her chastity for having refused the all-powerful Fujiwara no Michinaga.⁴⁸ His appraisal of her corresponds to that of other late Tokugawa Confucian *kanshi* poets.

In the early Meiji period, Tsubouchi Shōyō discussed in his *Shōsetsu shinzui* (1885-86) the widespread technique of realism in the late nineteenth-century European novel, in terms of evolution; and in the course of arguing for the faithful portrayal of human life and feeling (*ninjō setai* 人情世態), he quoted from Motoori Norinaga’s *Genji monogatari tama no ogushi* 源氏物語玉の小櫛 (1796). Although *Shōsetsu shinzui* exerted considerable influence on such young writers as Ozaki Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1867-1903), it did not then play in the literary world the decisive role often attributed to it today. Instead, it was criticized as the work that inspired the “novels of human feeling” (*ninjō shōsetsu* 人情小説) of Ozaki Kōyō and Kōda Rohan. It did not come to be seen as important until the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

In the context of Meiji cultural nationalism, *Genji monogatari* was certainly taken seriously as an example of Japanese linguistic art. However, praise of it was almost inevitably accompanied by moral condemnation. This is all too natural, considering that the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku Chokugo), promulgated in 1891, sanctioned emperor worship and Confucian ethics as central to popular education. For example, Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō wrote in their *Nihon bungaku shi*,

Genji monogatari, known as a supreme masterpiece and the most marvelous work ever written, is not only the crowning glory of the *monogatari*, but also represents the

47 See above, 4.3.2.

48 The whole poem was quoted by Nakamura Shin’ichirō 中村真一郎, *Rai San’yō to sono jidai*, p. 604. Nakamura remarked that Arthur Waley interpreted Murasaki Shikibu’s encounter with Michinaga, described in *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, quite differently.

49 In “*Shōsetsu*” *ron*, Kamei Hideo argued from various angles that *Shōsetsu shinzui* is an epoch-making work that marks the beginning of writing on the modern novel, but he did not succeed in demonstrating the extent of its influence at the time. There is probably still room for research on its direct influence on the novel in the years surrounding 1907. Ōkubo Tsuneo has already expressed doubt on the subject in *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* 昭和文学研究. Concerning the question of the formation of the concept of “*shōsetsu*” as a genre, and of its assimilation into the category of “*bijutsu*,” in the English-speaking world as in the case of Masao Miyoshi the fundamental issue had to do with rhetoric. However, the matter surely needs re-examining with respect to its relationship to “*bungaku*” in the narrow sense. For example, in Hippolyte A. Taine’s *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863-64), poetry, drama, and the novel are clearly given special standing, and the influence of that tendency on the English-speaking world needs looking into. In the English-speaking world, the use of “*literature*” in the sense of “*rhetoric*” is said to have survived longer in the United States than in England, although the accuracy of this contention remains to be seen.

essence of Heian literature and the culmination of elegant style.⁵⁰

A little later, however, they continued,

In those days of pervasive frivolity and lasciviousness, when wives and daughters were little more than courtesans, Murasaki Shikibu's lofty self-respect makes her not only a literary model for the ages, but also an exemplar of virtuous conduct.⁵¹

In short, their appraisal of her coincided precisely with Rai San'yō's.

Nonetheless, they cited two shortcomings of *Genji monogatari*. The first concerned its style. The author's writing certainly exemplified the elegance and refinement (*enrei chimitsu* 艶麗緻密) of the Japanese language, and was characterized by courtly composure (*onkō chinchaku* 温厚沈着). "However," they added, "monotonous smoothness of flow and lack of strength are the weaknesses of this style, which, being moreover a woman's, is not of sufficient value to conceal them."⁵² In other words, Murasaki Shikibu's style still suffers from the general defect of Heian-period *gabun* 雅文. The second shortcoming noted by the authors was a moral one. Faithfully conveying as it does the life of the Heian court, *Genji monogatari* goes further and idealizes it, thus idealizing also the court's dissolute ways. For the authors, it is a mistake to condone such things, as Motoori Norinaga did, on the grounds that they display the depth of *mono no aware*. That is because, for them, the ideal of beauty is to be sought in the platonic harmony of good, beauty, and truth. "Alas!" they wrote, "those of old did not yet understand this. They apparently thought the purpose of fiction was only to entertain people, not to instruct them."⁵³

In contrast, the introduction to Haga Yaichi's 芳賀矢一 (1867-1927) *Kokubungaku shi jikkō* 国文学史十講 (Fuzanbō, 1899) makes clear a position of respect above all for the Japanese language, and of belief that "bungaku" is equivalent to *bibun* 美文, i.e., linguistic art. His concept of "literature" was therefore the narrower one associated with the modern European idea of "national literature," hence close to the concept of "literature" current today. On that basis Haga valued *Genji* not only as a precious historical and linguistic document, but also, from the standpoint of "pure literature," for its powerful style, its literary skill, and its influence on later literature; and he concluded by describing it as "the greatest achievement [*ōdatemono* 大立物] in the history of Japanese literature."⁵⁴ Here, the proposition that *Genji monogatari* is the representative masterpiece of Japanese literature is perfectly clear.

However Haga, too, had his moral reservations about the work, though his praise of the work is more muted than that of Mikami and Takatsu. Whereas Mikami and his colleague praised Murasaki Shikibu's talent and character in the manner of the late-Tokugawa Confucians, Haga argued that *Genji* was born from *Utsuho monogatari* 宇津保物語,⁵⁵ took it as a "realistic novel" (*shajitsu*

50 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, p. 233.

51 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, p. 253.

52 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, pp. 262-63.

53 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, pp. 267-70.

54 Haga Yaichi 1899, pp. 110-111.

55 Haga Yaichi 1899, p. 106.

shōsetsu 写実小説) on the grounds that “the main task of the novelist and the poet is to evoke feeling [*nasake* 情]”; quoted Norinaga’s *Tama no ogushi* in support of the position that “sullied love” was necessary to convey the beauty of *mono no aware*;⁵⁶ and at last concluded,

It is truly deplorable that one should be obliged to treasure as the greatest masterpiece of our literature a work that describes so depraved [*fuhai shita* 腐敗した] a society. That students should be made to read it in school as a textbook is exceedingly unfortunate.⁵⁷

While Mikami and Takatsu considered the harmony of truth, goodness, and beauty to be the ideal of literature, Haga held to beauty alone, but still seems to have perceived a certain difficulty in doing so.

Mikami Sanji and Haga Yaichi were each in their time influential scholars. Their two histories of Japanese literature show that, as the narrower conception of “literature” spread in the Meiji period, *Genji monogatari* gradually rose in value from being the masterpiece of Heian literature to being one of Japanese literature as a whole. However, its standing was nonetheless limited by Meiji moral strictures. Who, then, praised *Genji* as the greatest work of literature ever written in Japan, without regard for moral considerations?

Roughly at the same time Haga’s book came out, the first English history of Japanese literature appeared in London: *A History of Japanese Literature* by William G. Aston (1841-1911). From the linguistic works he discussed (for example, the *norito* 祝詞 prayers), Aston abstracted the artistic elements and proceeded to critique them. From this perspective, he treated *Man’yōshū* as an example of linguistic art worthy of representing Japanese literature as a whole, praising the subtlety and emotional refinement of its language, and the superb beauty of its phrasing.⁵⁸ Further on, he stressed that the greater and most significant portion of Japan’s best literature was written by women (something he described as noteworthy and unexampled), and he rated *Genji monogatari* especially highly.⁵⁹ His attitude differed completely from that of Mikami Sanji or Haga Yaichi, who noted the defects of Heian women’s writing, including *Genji*.

Scrupulously avoiding discussion of moral issues, Aston described Murasaki Shikibu as the creator of this kind of fiction in Japan, as Fielding had been in England. However, he observed, Murasaki Shikibu’s talent more resembled that of Fielding’s great contemporary, Richardson. No one before Murasaki Shikibu had written so long a work, or one so romantically removed from daily reality. *Genji monogatari*, he declared, is realistic in the highest sense of the word.⁶⁰ Aston also praised the unflinching refinement of the style, observing that nothing in it need bring a blush to the cheek of the youngest reader.⁶¹ While recognizing, with reference to Norinaga’s *Tama no ogushi*, that Japan’s language and customs had changed a great deal since those early times, Aston judged

56 Haga Yaichi 1899, pp. 110-111.

57 Haga Yaichi 1899, p. 117.

58 Aston 1972, p. 34.

59 Aston 1972, p. 55.

60 Aston 1972, p. 94.

61 Aston 1972, p. 98.

Genji by the standards of the modern European novel to declare it the indubitable masterpiece of Japanese literature. Indeed, he strove to emphasize its contemporary character. For example, he noted in the work the absence of excessively dramatic circumstances, and also of any miraculous or supernatural element that might strain the reader's credulity.⁶² It is as though *Genji* was for him the very wellspring of the modern novel.

If the standards of the modern novel are to be defined, as Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) did in his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilu* 中国小说史略, as consciously constructed fiction, clear awareness of style, and realistic evocation of character, then it is not impossible to discern their origin in the *zhuangqi* 传奇 of Tang China.⁶³ Moreover, seen in that light *Takekoto monogatari* too, *zhuangqi*-influenced as it was, is no doubt a modern-style novel. Therefore, there is indeed something to Aston's appraisal of *Genji monogatari*. Thanks to the gothic romance, English readers of Aston's time may really have seen nothing surprising in spirit possession or exorcism. However, to think in this way is to disregard the ancient world-view and cultural background that fundamentally define the work. With respect to cultural background, *Genji* is utterly different from a modern novel, printed for an indeterminate readership and bearing a particular author's seal. In Japan, such works made a clear appearance only in the Tokugawa period, and even then not until Genroku times.

At any rate, it is undoubtedly Aston who sealed the modern judgment of *Genji*, to the effect that *Genji* is Japan's first romantic, realistic long novel, written in a style of outstanding quality. His history of Japanese literature was widely read, and partial Japanese translations of it began rapidly to appear. The work therefore played a major role, in Japan as well as in the English-speaking world, in establishing *Genji* as the representative masterpiece of Japanese literature. However, this role was not determining. The romantic spirit tends to idealize the past, and a romantic perspective easily idealizes the works of the past. In addition, both *Man'yōshū* and *Genji monogatari* offered realism, that other modern value. In the end it is, above all else, modern Japanese cultural nationalism that promoted both works to their "masterpiece of Japanese literature" status.

There arose in the intellectual and literary world of the Taishō period three movements that confirmed and further heightened the standing of *Genji monogatari*. The first was the current of thought in favor of the emancipation of women. The second was a tendency toward aestheticism, or aesthetic and moral decadence. The third, which overlapped the other two, consisted of a tendency among male intellectuals toward self-caricature, absorption in sensual pleasure, and a consequent acquiescence in social degradation.⁶⁴ In this context the modern Japanese translations by Yosano Akiko 与謝野晶子 (1878-1942) and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965) undoubtedly helped still further to consolidate the work's reputation. However, this reputation was not yet unshakable. During World War II *Genji monogatari* was called a national disgrace and suffered accordingly. It was rehabilitated after the war, and particularly in the 1960s it came to receive unstinting praise. The foundation of this praise was no doubt laid after the Russo-Japanese War, but values changed in many ways thereafter. In parallel with these changes, the reputation of *Man'yōshū* and *Genji monogatari* went through major transformations.

Among the various outlines of Japanese literary history, Fujioka Sakutarō's *Kokubungaku shi*

62 Aston 1972, p. 96.

63 See above, 2.2.3.

64 See below, 11.3.

kōwa (1908) remained well known until after the end of World War II. As Asō Isoji 麻生磯次 (1896-1979) observed in his “Afterword” to the postwar edition (1946), the work has a distinguishing characteristic. Unlike earlier ones of the same kind, which tended to resemble catalogues of matters related to the topic, Fujioka attempted to “follow the evolution of literature itself in relation to the broader thought of the times,” and to convey an “organic, comprehensive,” and “systematic order.”⁶⁵ Above all, he aimed to “elucidate the totality of the natural, personal, social, and intellectual circumstances surrounding the works and authors of each period, and to grasp the living contact and exchange between these and government, ethics, religion, and literature.”⁶⁶ The substance of his “systematic order” was “the genius of the people” (*kokuminteki seijō* 国民の性情)⁶⁷—an idea derived from Hippolyte Taine, who held that the task of literary history is to elucidate the nature of a nation’s people. Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō had adopted it, too.⁶⁸ Fujioka attempted more concertedly than they to understand the works he considered in the context of their time, but the most striking aspect of his endeavor was undoubtedly his pervasive effort to grasp an “organic, comprehensive” whole. Moreover, the whole as he conceived it had a clear foundation. In the book’s opening pages he proclaimed that “Japanese society is one great family,” formed under the “everlasting imperial line.”⁶⁹ This theme sums up the theory of the family state (*kazoku kokka ron* 家族国家論) that formed the mainstream of thought among academics in the humanities after the Russo-Japanese War. Katō Hiroyuki and others had propounded this theory already in the mid-Meiji period, but it had also been influenced by another, related to German idealism: that of the state as an organism (*kokka yūkitai ron* 国家有機体論). The latter flourished especially after the Russo-Japanese War. As others have already pointed out, it formed the basis for Minobe Tatsukichi’s 美濃部達吉 (1873-1948) theory of the emperor as an organ of state, which became controversial about 1912.⁷⁰ Katō Hiroyuki, too, had supposed the “family state” to represent Japan’s ancient tradition. Thus Fujioka’s critical approach consisted of what one might call, in a nutshell, an organic view of culture. However, the theory of the emperor as an organ of state, based as it was on the organic view of the state, remained dominant from the 1920s to 1935.

Another feature of *Kokubungaku shi kōwa*, as Asō Isoji noted in the postwar edition, is Fujioka’s view of nature. He wrote in an early section entitled “Love of Nature” (*shizen no ai* 自然の愛), “A comparison of the two continents suggests that while Westerners focus their attention on man, Easterners honor nature. Literary art [*bungei*] makes this difference clear.”⁷¹ Fujioka went on, “Generally speaking, the Eastern attitude toward nature is one of submission.” He also wrote:

However we, like other Easterners, do not fear nature but instead feel close to it and respect it; and we do so because we love it. Ours is not the poor villager’s attitude

65 Fujioka 1908, pp. 363-64.

66 Fujioka 1908, p. 366.

67 Fujioka 1908, p. 367.

68 See above, 4.2.3.

69 Fujioka 1908, pp. 5-6.

70 Hozumi Yatsuka made this point, without citing Minobe’s name, in “Kokutai no isetsu to jinshin no keikō,” *Taiyō*, October 1912. On the entirety of this debate, see Ishida Takeshi 1954.

71 Fujioka 1908, p. 22. From the context it is clear that, in conformity with the usage of the time, the term *bungei* here refers at once to literature and to art (*bijutsu* 美術).

toward the merciless landlord. No, as a people we are positive, optimistic, vigorously active, and we seek to develop infinitely the power of human life.⁷²

The term *jinsei* 人生 (“human life”) occurs here in the sense most common at the time and means not individual life, but the life inherent in humanity itself. It is therefore close in meaning to the word *seimei* 生命. Fujioka’s conception of the special features of Japanese culture clearly reflects the mood that prevailed after the Russo-Japanese War. However narrow the Japanese victory may have been, triumph over Russia, one of the great powers, meant the exhilarating prospect of Japan’s entry into the company of those same powers. That mood underlies Fujioka’s affirmation of the special unity of Japanese culture. At the same time, however, the magnitude of the sacrifice exacted by this imperialist war inspired among intellectuals deepening doubts about modern civilization. This claim of a uniquely Japanese love of nature was born of this elation and these doubts, and it gradually gathered strength. Regarding this positive side of the Japanese people, Fujioka wrote,

For proof, just look at the vigorous poems of *Man’yōshū*; or consider the Heian or Genroku periods, confident of their own strength and free of influence from abroad. No doubt one is aristocratic and the other of the people, but do not both value feeling above all, convey love, and evoke human life exactly as it is?⁷³

Fujioka’s book praises *Genji monogatari* and Bashō’s haikai for the same sort of reason.

Concerning *Man’yōshū*, Fujioka saw depth of “sympathy” (*dōjō* 同情) in the *chōka* of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂 and credited Hitomaro with having reformed waka by replacing its unfortunate tendency toward improvisation with a new solemnity and dignity.⁷⁴ In contrast, the tanka of Yamabe no Akahito 山部赤人 are “beautifully touching” and break fresh ground in waka description. The uniqueness of his style, combining as it does emotion with description, comes from the way “he successfully effaces himself, merges with nature, and becomes one with mountains and rivers,” or “submerges his subjectivity in the scene before him.”⁷⁵ As an example he cites Akahito’s poem (*Man’yōshū* 381):

<i>inishie no</i>	The old embankment,
<i>furuki tsutsumi wa</i>	relic of a vanished past:
<i>toshi furumi</i>	The deepening years
<i>ike no migi wa ni</i>	along the margin of the pond
<i>mizukusa oinikeri</i>	lie buried in the tangled reeds. ⁷⁶

According to Fujioka, Chinese poetry influenced Hitomaro and Akahito very little, but perhaps one may discern in Akahito’s poems an adaptation of the traditional Chinese technique of

72 Fujioka 1908, pp. 24-25.

73 Fujioka 1908, p. 25.

74 Fujioka 1908, pp. 53-55.

75 Fujioka 1908, pp. 56-57.

76 Cranston 1993, p. 306.

“expressing one’s thoughts through the medium of things” (*kibutsu chinshi* 寄物陳思, Ch. *jiwu chensi*). Even if that is not the case, Fujioka’s theorizing about the unity of subject and object in Akahito’s descriptions betrays the influence of the age in which he wrote. Together with *chokkan* 直観 (direct insight), *shukyaku gōitsu* 主客合一 (unity of subject and object) was about to become a buzzword among young intellectuals. One should recall in this connection *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (1911) by Nishida Kitarō, the close friend who contributed a preface to Fujioka’s work. *Zen no kenkyū* posits “pure consciousness” (*junsui ishiki* 純粹意識 — pure experience, or non-reflective consciousness) as the origin of all thought. “Pure consciousness” itself is a concept from the psychology of William James (1842-1910). It refers to a condition of acting in complete forgetfulness of self, that is to say, in a condition prior to that of self-reflective consciousness, hence prior to any division between subject and object: a condition of direct insight. *Zen no kenkyū* came out three years after *Kokubungaku shi kōwa*, but interest in Jamesian psychology is evident already in Natsume Sōseki’s *Bungaku ron* (1907), published a year earlier. In any case, while *Kokubungaku shi kōwa* was published in August of 1908, in January of the same year Shimamura Hōgetsu’s 島村抱月 “Bungeijō no shizenshugi” 文芸上の自然主義 had called positive union with nature *junsui shizenshugi* 純粹自然主義 or *shin shizenshugi* 新自然主義. The latter expression then served as the title for a book that Iwano Hōmei 岩野泡鳴 published in October.⁷⁷

Let us return to Fujioka Sakutarō’s evaluation of *Man’yōshū*. Fujioka cited the superiority of Yamanoue no Okura’s 山上憶良 knowledge of Chinese literature and thought.⁷⁸ Then he turned to Ōtomo no Yakamochi 大伴家持, outlining his life and citing above all two poems from his later years: *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 5 and *Man’yōshū* 4489. The latter, a *chōka*, is too long to quote, but the former indicates the tone:

If we go on the sea,
our dead are sodden in water;
If we go on the mountains,
our dead are grown over with grass.
We shall die
by the side of our lord,
we shall not die in peace.⁷⁹

Fujioka commented, “This makes clear, by singing the sentiments of the people, the foundation of the national polity [*kokutai* 国体].” Fujioka’s analysis of poetic style and his effort to assign each poet a clear place in the history of Japanese literature set his work apart from earlier ones on the same theme, and that is why *Kokubungaku shi kōwa* remained influential into the postwar period.

How, then, did Fujioka appraise *Genji monogatari*? He noted that at the height of the Heian period “Japanese literature” surpassed that of China, and like Aston he held it to be an unprecedented wonder that the principal writers of the time should have been women of the court. He interpreted

⁷⁷ On *Zen no kenkyū* by Nishida Kitarō, see Suzuki Sadami 1998; and on *shin shizenshugi*, see Suzuki Sadami 1996b.

⁷⁸ Fujioka 1908, pp. 58-59.

⁷⁹ Cranston 1993, vol. 1, p. 155.

Genji itself as mingling “an optimistic mood that valued love above all else” with “the Buddhist view that the world is dross.” Noting the role of karma in the “ten Uji chapters,” he wrote that although *Genji monogatari* “studies in detail the feelings and ways of the people of the time,” it is not merely a “realistic novel” (*shajitsu shōsetsu* 写実小説). Instead, “we see the Heian stage as evoked in *Genji* entirely through the author’s critical lens, and there is no reason at all not to call the work a novel of ideals (*risō shōsetsu* 理想小説).” He concluded, “This unprecedented and thereafter unequaled masterpiece arises from the marriage of scrupulous observation and deep reflection.”⁸⁰ The way he sublimated the dualism between *shajitsu* and *risō* no doubt reveals something of contemporary debates concerning the novel, although it is not possible to pursue that topic here. It will be sufficient to note the influence of Buddhist thought and the emphasis on a critical attitude toward the realities of life.

With respect to *Genji*’s defects, Fujioka remarked of Heian monogatari in general that their scope is confined to the life of the aristocracy; that the evocation of lower-class or provincial people is limited to aspects of love between men and women; and that the love and duty that bind parent and child are neglected.⁸¹ Thus he criticized Heian monogatari for not embracing the totality of the culture. His observation that aristocratic society knew nothing of “moral sanctions” is similar in spirit to the views of Mikami Sanji in the mid-Meiji period. However, he singled out *Genji* from among all other monogatari for showing awareness of the sins of males, and he roundly condemned the men of the court. His sympathy for women, forever constrained and the playthings of men, was unheard-of among earlier historians of Japanese literature.

8.3.5 The Evaluation of Bashō’s Haikai

Fujioka Sakutarō’s opinions rest upon views that were just then gaining currency among intellectuals: the conception of Japan as a family state, and the idea that the special character of Japanese culture is to be found in positive union with nature. However, his approach to the Heian monogatari, written by women, shows a distinctly liberal stance. This stance is evident in his appraisal of the works addressed above all to the burgeoning merchant class of Tokugawa times: works that he called “common people’s literature” (*heimin bungaku* 平民文学). His attitude contrasts with that of almost all Meiji literary historians, who, unlike the early Meiji westernizing scholars, with their high opinion of *gesaku* works, looked down on the popular literary arts as mere pastime and amusement. Mikami Sanji, for example, had high regard only for Chikamatsu Monzaemon and Takizawa Bakin. As Mikami himself noted, Chikamatsu was often compared at the time to Shakespeare;⁸² while Bakin’s *yomihon*, founded as they were on Confucian principles, were frequently reprinted from mid-Meiji on and found many new readers. Haga Yaichi and William Aston more or less adopted Mikami’s position. Aston, in particular, referred to *enpon* 艶本 works as the “pornography school” and described them as an embarrassment to Japan.⁸³

Among the language arts of the Tokugawa period, haikai was especially popular among the

80 Fujioka 1908, pp. 118-22.

81 Fujioka 1908, pp. 58-59.

82 Mikami and Takatsu 1890, vol. 1, p. 441.

83 Aston 1972, p. 56.

urban lower classes, and for that reason both Tokugawa intellectuals and Meiji literary historians considered it unworthy of consideration. The only exceptions were Matsuo Bashō and Yosa Buson, since both were versed in Chinese poetry. Bashō, especially, brought new life to the moribund world of Japanese poetry and was famous even among merchant shop boys. Needless to say, it is Masaoka Shiki’s reform movement that, in the Meiji period, gained haikai acceptance as linguistic art, i.e., “literature” in the restricted sense. This development took place more or less simultaneously with the publication of Aston’s history of Japanese literature, that is to say, about 1900. Shiki’s reform movement was confined to the hokku 発句, the first link in a haikai or renga sequence, and it contributed to the shift toward calling this verse form “haiku” instead. Shiki, who emphasized “clarity of impression” (*inshō no meiryō* 印象の明瞭),⁸⁴ regarded Buson highly, but Bashō’s hokku impressed him less. For that reason Bashō did not enjoy an especially high reputation in Meiji times. Most critiques of him have to do with his thought, particularly Zen. For example, in “Bashō-an Tōsei” 芭蕉庵桃青 (*Taiyō* 太陽, May-September 1897), Uchida Roan took a modern approach in order to discuss Bashō’s travels as the Buddhist practice of *angya* 行脚, as well as Bashō’s Zen spirit, but he had little to say about Bashō’s work as linguistic art. Mikami Sanji and Haga Yaichi treated the subject similarly. However, Aston touched on Bashō’s symbolic technique and wrote of how he rendered the moment sacred, his verses fusing true feeling and beautiful imagining into perfect, luminous jewels of poetry.⁸⁵ Fujioka Sakutarō carried his analysis of Bashō’s works further and clearly grasped his improvisatory diversity, his aesthetic principle of *fueki ryūkō* 不易流行 (permanence and change), his Zen concepts of *sabi* さび (understated depth) and *shiori* しをり (a kind of pathos), and the mood of *karumi* 軽み (lightness) that Bashō favored in his later years.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, despite changes in the concept of “literature” itself, the Meiji appraisal of Bashō was generally carried forward within the context of literary history. In other words, Bashō seemed to belong to the past and to have relatively little significance for the present.

The revival of interest in Bashō’s haikai began in the mid-Taishō period. The occasion for this development was the intense admiration of Ōta Mizuho 太田水穂 (1876-1955), a poet who in late Meiji had moved from *shizenshugi* to the symbolism of “unity of subject and object,” inclined as it was toward life-centrism (*seimeishugi* 生命主義). Beginning in October 1920, Ōta gathered together Kōda Rohan 幸田露伴 (1867-1947), a man well versed in both Buddhism and Confucianism, Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889-1960), Abe Jirō 阿部次郎 (1883-1959), Abe Yoshishige 安倍能成 (1883-1966), Komiya Toyotaka 小宮豊隆 (1884-1966), and other young scholars caught up in the whirlwind of “Taishō culturism” (*Taishō kyōyōshugi* 大正教養主義), to study Bashō’s *kasen* 歌仙 (haikai sequences). Ōta and his group then published their findings, in the form of conversations, in a series of three volumes: *Bashō haiku kenkyū* 芭蕉俳句研究 (Iwanami Shoten, 1922), *Zoku* 続 *Bashō haiku kenkyū* (1924), and *Zokuzoku* 続々 *Bashō haiku kenkyū* (1926). Ōta also serialized his own study of Bashō in the tanka journal *Chōon* 潮音, then published it in book form as *Bashō haikai no konpon mondai* 芭蕉俳諧の根本問題 (Iwanami

84 See below, 10.2.1. In Saitō Mokichi 1920-21 (see section 2, “Masaoka Shiki no yōgo rei” 正岡子規の用語例), Saitō saw “clarity of impression” (*inshō meiryō*) as being at the core of Shiki’s idea of *shasei*.

85 Aston 1972, p. 294.

86 Fujioka 1908, pp. 262-65.

Shoten, 1926). This work gives a good account of the intellectual context of Bashō's time and of Bashō's own place within it, but it devotes particularly detailed discussion to the notion of "life" (*seimei* 生命) that was central to Bashō in his later years. "Life" in this sense refers to the ground of the universe, the flow of phenomena, and the fundamental unity of all things. Perhaps one could call the resulting world view "life-centrism" (*seimei chūshinshugi* 生命中心主義). Ōta explained it in terms of the Tendai original-enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覺) principle of the non-duality of phenomenon and substance (*genshō soku honshitsu ron* 現象即本質論), and in terms also of the Buddhist word *en'yū* 円融 (fullness in mutual harmony). He also stated that, in terms of Western thought, it corresponded neither to monotheism nor to polytheism, but instead to pantheism.⁸⁷

Ōta's "life-centrism" may have been of his time, but it was not of Bashō's. The word *seimei* was little used before it became accepted as the translation term for the English "life." In meaning it was equivalent to its homophone 性命 and referred to the span of years allotted by Heaven, or to the essence of all things. Ōta's system of thought attributed the life-force of all things to the universal circulation of *ki* 氣, the great source of which was *genki* 元氣 (original *ki*). Founded as it was on *seimei*, it simply did not exist in the Tokugawa period.

This world view, known as "Taishō vitalism" or "Taishō life-centrism" (*Taishō seimeishugi* 大正生命主義) deserves further comment. Various views of "life" entered Japan from the West throughout the Meiji period. These included "life" as the basis of human rights; Christian "eternal life"; the romantic or poetic spiritual "life" of such men as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and William Wordsworth (1770-1850); the evolutionary conception held by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882); the genetic conception of the chain of "life"; the organic theory of the state, derived from German idealism; the thought of Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900); the idea that "God is life," so central in *Les Confessions* (1879-1881) by Lev Tolstoy; and so on. The absence of any dominant religion meant that all these notions of "life" entered Japan without resistance, encouraged, though undoubtedly also modified, by related, traditional concepts in Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Under the name of modern science, the evolutionary view of "life" (reproduction, the survival of the fittest, etc.) received various, more or less arbitrary interpretations, but it seems to have spread even more rapidly in Japan than it did in America or Europe. As noted above, the Japanese version of various domestic or international struggles (between social classes, between nations) familiar in the West, interpreted as they were in terms of the struggle for survival, and of such solutions as the organic theory of the state or social imperialism, entered the mainstream of political thought.

Another trend was spurred on by the Christian or romantic views of life; the Spencerian idea of universal evolution; the concept of the "universal will" or the "blind will of life" characteristic of German idealism, especially Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860); and the "life monism" of Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). This was the elaboration of a world, indeed a universal, life-centrist view that gradually merged the traditional notion of *ki* with that of *seimei*. The chief inspiration for this movement came from the widespread feeling of threat to life caused by the rapid development of material civilization after the Russo-Japanese War, but it was also fed by Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) concept of *élan vital* and by the German "philosophy of life." The result was Taishō life-

87 Ōta Mizuho 1926a, pp. 211-36.

centrism (see Figure 17). The fundamental difference between this Japanese movement and the Western ideas that gave it its impetus was that Japan, having no conception of a creator external to the world, could posit “life” as the source of the world and the “flow of life” as underlying the world. Nishida Kitarō’s *Zen no kenkyū* represents the first theoretical systematization of this topic. However, Nishida’s work played no critical role in the development of Taishō life-centrism; instead, it served in various fields and on various levels to confirm belief.⁸⁸ Thus, from the vague interpenetration of life-centrism and organic theory there arose the ideas that informed Ōta Mizuho’s *Bashō haikai no konpon mondai*.

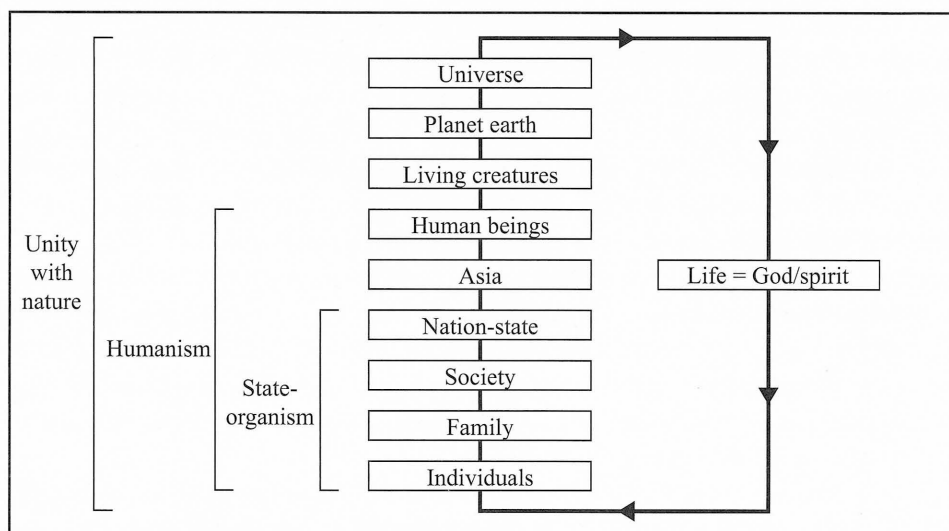


Figure 17 Flow Chart of “Taishō Life-centrism”

Ōta Mizuho founded the poetry magazine *Chōon* in 1915, with the help of Wakayama Bokusui 若山牧水 (1885-1928), and in the following year he began serializing in it his “Tanka ritsugen” 短歌立言 (published in book form by Iwanami Shoten in 1921). In it he championed symbolism and intuition-inspired emotion founded on “universal love” (*ban’yū ai* 万有愛), itself grounded in the inner life, that is to say, consciousness of universal life; and he charged the *shasei* principle advocated in *Araragi* with being merely trivial. His ideas were in the same spirit as the *junsui*

⁸⁸ For further details, see Suzuki Sadami 1996b. However this work, an interim research report, does not fully account, as here, for the process of this formation. See also Suzuki Sadami 2002b; and, in addition, Suzuki Sadami 1998. In German idealism, and especially in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* by Johann G. Fichte (1762-1814), the origin of the world is posited as being “the One” of Neo-Platonism. What flows from this “One” is “the stream of life.” The vitalist philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) inherited this approach. In his own world view, Dilthey substituted “life” for Hegel’s absolute reason, and one may imagine the possibility of its becoming an element in his conception of the organic unity of spirit and culture. Nishida accepted such ideas, but he did so via the intermediary of Zen and Wang Yangming thought, which became the core of his vitalist philosophy. Needless to say, in his case the position of the celestial “One” had to be moved from the heavens to “the bottom of the world.”

shizenshugi or *shin shizenshugi* proclaimed by Shimamura Hōgetsu and Iwano Hōmei. Seven years earlier Fujioka Sakutarō had published his *Kokubungaku shi kōwa*, and Nishida Kitarō's philosophical systematization of Japanese life-centrism had appeared four years before.

Four years after Ōta's "Tanka ritsugen," Wakayama Bokusui wrote in his *Tanka sahō* 短歌作法, "I respect nature, but by nature I mean the sort of inspiration—a cosmic will, so to speak, or nature, or the will of nature—that moves through every manifestation of the universe, embracing every landscape, every aspect of ourselves, and all else as well." "'Nature' and the spirit of the writer, achieving union, give off a full and perfect light."⁸⁹ Moreover, two years before Bokusui's *Tanka sahō*, the *shasei* of Araragi, once criticized by *shizenshugi* advocates, had come to be defined as follows: "To reflect, by contemplation of the truth of all things, the unity of self and nature."⁹⁰ This is from Saitō Mokichi's famous "Tanka ni okeru shasei no setsu" 短歌に於ける写生の説 (1920-21). In the background of this movement lies a major shift from conceiving art as the "re-creation" (*saigen* 再現) of reality, to seeing it as the "expression of life" (*seimei no hyōgen* 生命の表現). This shift was fundamental to the avant-garde art of Europe. Feeling its stimulus, Japan strove to position its "traditional" aesthetics above modern artistic ideals. Needless to say, as a world view this effort was supported by life-centrism and functioned as an aspect of it.

Thus it is easy to understand that in *Bashō haikai no konpon mondai* Ōta Mizuho should have drawn his initial thesis—the ideal of "universal love"—from the current of Taishō life-centrism, borrowed ideas from Buddhism to develop it into an ideal, and then discovered that ideal in Bashō. As his example shows, Taishō life-centrism, rich as it was in ideals such as direct intuition, unity of subject and object, fusion with nature, and so on, made possible the revival of Eastern aesthetics, especially such concepts as *yūgen*, *wabi*, and *sabi*.

Taishō life-centrism overlapped in its development with the movement to "overcome the modern" (*kindai no chōkoku* 近代の超克), which attempted to provide a fundamental solution to the problems created by the structure of modern society, such as human alienation; the hurtful consequences of material civilization; the imbalance between knowledge, feeling, and will; and the split between subject and object. That is because the idea of "life" as the ground of the universe unifies all things and promises the possibility of resolving all alienation. It is fair to say that the winds of "impermanence" (*mujō* 無常) set blowing by the Great Tokyo Earthquake of September 1923 encouraged this trend still further. Satō Haruo's essay "'Fūryū' ron" 「風流」論 (*Chūō kōron*, April 1924) makes this clear. Satō defined *fūryū* as the beauty of the moment when self and nature merge, cited Bashō's haikai as an expression of that moment, and thus proclaimed victory over the modern novel, with its evocation of the struggles of the ego. Needless to say, Ōta Mizuho's interpretation of Bashō, while set forth in academic form, resembles Satō's essay in that it points the way forward for the literary arts of its time. This call to "overcome the modern" in the field of literature gave rise to such declarations as that of Hagiwara Sakutarō 萩原朔太郎 ("Shōchō no honshitsu" 象徴の本質, 1926), according to which European symbolism was a copy of Japanese symbolist aesthetics. (Hagiwara's view represented an expanded version of the notion proposed by an Alsatian poet, a member of the German expressionist movement, to the effect that German

89 Wakayama Bokusui *zenshū*, vol. 9, pp. 80-81.

90 Saitō Mokichi *zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 804.

expressionism was copied from Japanese haiku.) No doubt this sort of thing prefigured the political appeal for the East to overcome modern Western civilization.⁹¹

Thus Taishō life-centrism together with the idea of “overcoming the modern,” which developed as a complement to it, gradually reinforced and gained acceptance for Fujioka’s proposition that the special character of the Japanese view of nature lies in union with nature. Fujioka himself did not necessarily see the essence of Bashō’s haikai as the spirit of union with nature. However, the way Ōta Mizuho couched Taishō life-centrism in terms of Buddhist thought, or perhaps the vitalistic interpretation he gave Buddhist thought, made of Bashō’s haikai the great expression of the Japanese feeling for union with nature.

It is also worth noting that the late Taishō enthusiasm for Bashō⁹² was not unrelated to the development of Shōwa modernism. An example is Kajii Motojirō 梶井基次郎 (1901-1932), who in the autumn and winter of 1926, in his student room in the Azabu district of Tokyo, studied an annotated edition of Bashō together with Miyoshi Tatsuji.⁹³ Moreover, one of the short stories he wrote at this time bears the same title—“Fuyu no hi” 冬の日—as one of Bashō’s own works. He called the technique employed in this story “realistic symbolism” (リアリスチック シンボリズム).⁹⁴ Kajii’s method of “recreating” (*saigen* 再現) actual experience by reconstructing his feelings and consciousness in words can be seen already in his early story “Remon” 檸檬. However, these words only seek to name objectively, yet symbolically, the existential condition of modern man, struggling to escape the fatigue eating into his spirit and seeking a thrilling tension in the midst of illusion. “Takehi no hanashi” 笈の話 (1928) evokes the deep despair of someone who feels spiritual vitality returning to him as he listens in fascination to the murmuring of water in an old bamboo water conduit (*kakehi*) in the mountains, but then realizes that what he hears is only an illusion. The following words end the story: “All I have to look forward to now is eternal tedium; the illusion of life is superimposed on despair.”⁹⁵ They show immanently, existentially, that beneath the spirit of modern man, searching for *yūgen*, *wabi*, and *sabi*, there lies a great weariness. The example of “Takehi no hanashi,” together with that of Satō Haruo’s essay “‘Fūryū’ ron,” demonstrates that the changing appraisal of the classics is intimately related to the development of the modern novel.

For most Japanese, whether general readers or specialists, *Man’yōshū*, *Genji monogatari*, and

91 See Suzuki Sadami 1997b.

92 At the time, Bashō’s haikai were seen as demonstrating the uniqueness of Japanese literary art and its capacity to resist that of the West. This view can be seen for example, in Uno Kōji 1925. Uno, who in his self-parodying novel *Amaki yo no hanashi* (1920) had affirmed that the Shirakaba school notion of a *shōsetsu* (a rambling work that never mentions the status, profession, appearance, etc., of the protagonist-narrator) was not a *shōsetsu* at all, changed his view in this essay. He redefined rambling (*zuihitsu* 随筆的) “mental state fiction” (*shinkyō shōsetsu* 心境小説) as being “ill-conceived, somewhat absurd I-fiction as seen from the perspective of first-person fiction”; and he went on to say that although people praise the fiction of Kasai Zenzō 葛西善藏, the long and short novels of the West do not at all suit Japanese readers, who can at least take refuge in the world of Bashō.

93 From Miyoshi Tatsuji, “Kajii Motojirō no koto.” (*Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshū*, vol. 6, p. 24). Kajii liked Wakayama Bokusui’s tanka and travel accounts. Various evidence suggests that the interpretation of Bashō’s *kasen* studied by Kajii and Miyoshi was that of Ōta Mizuho.

94 Letter from Kajii to Kondō Naoto 近藤直人, dated February 4, 1927 (*Kajii Motojirō zenshū*, vol. 3, p. 192).

95 *Kajii Motojirō zenshū*, vol. 1, p. 157.

the works of Bashō are undoubtedly masterpieces of “Japanese literature.” Above, we have looked into the principal “histories of Japanese literature” written in the time under consideration, and we have seen how these works were judged during this transitional period in the formation of the concept of “literature.” More detailed work on the subject of course needs to be done, as well as work on the period surrounding World War II and on up to today. A similar examination is naturally required for *Kokinshū*, *Shinkokinshū*, *Makura no sōshi*, *Tsurezuregusa*, *Heike monogatari*, Zeami, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Ihara Saikaku, Takizawa Bakin, Yosa Buson, and so on, as well as for modern and contemporary writers like Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 or Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎. The evaluation of these, too, has evolved a great deal, as several passages above suggest. A telling example is that of Aston, whose history of Japanese literature never mentions *Shinkokinshū*.

So far, studies of the evaluation of representative masterpieces of Japanese literature have taken as their standard “literature” in the modern, narrow sense (linguistic art), or else the concept of “Japanese literature” derived from it. For that reason, they have not necessarily managed to discuss successfully the value judgments made in successive periods from a wide variety of standpoints: moral, religious, aesthetic, establishment, anti-establishment, academic, journalistic, history of literature, the work and the critical influences bearing upon it, etc. The concept of “literature” in the modern sense, whether broad or narrow, did not exist in the Tokugawa period, and officially-sanctioned Neo-Confucianism tended to look down even on kanshi. The judgment passed on *Man'yōshū* and *Genji monogatari* consigned these works to the domain of *ga* 雅, where they were certainly popular, but, so to speak, only privately so; while Bashō's haikai belonged to popular culture. The new Meiji government set out to build a nation-state on the basis of emperor worship and Confucian ethics, and this development encouraged the formation of a new concept of “Japanese literature” in the broad sense. For that reason *Man'yōshū*, with its many *yamato kotoba* poems written in *man'yōgana*, came to be considered a representative masterpiece of “Japanese literature”; *Genji monogatari* continued to be subjected to moral criticism; and Bashō's haikai were judged in terms of the Chinese poetry and Buddhist thought that lay behind them. Then Aston's *A History of Japanese Literature* showed a special regard for linguistic art and gave high praise to Heian women's literature; while Fujioka Sakutarō's *Kokubungaku shi kōwa*, written roughly ten years later, approached its topic from the standpoint of the culture as a whole, treating linguistic art as one element of an organic system and pointing out how its failings issued from the deficiencies of contemporary society itself. These two examples, written so close to each other in time, demonstrate how rapidly critical standards and methods changed. They show how the assessment of *Man'yōshū* and of Bashō's haikai moved from “history of literature” toward a perspective that incorporated more the author's own point of view. This trend is intimately linked with the development of modern literary art, including fiction.

The above has demonstrated the validity of studying the methods and content of the criticism of “literature” in terms not only of political thought, but in connection with changing values. Needless to say, the history of changing assessments represents only one aspect of the history of literary art. Such a study considers the study of “literature” to open out onto the cross-disciplinary study of culture, and it requires a rewriting of existing “histories of literature.” The relativizing of our own concept of “literature” and of our own values, within the context of cultural history, promises a new evaluation not only of the classics, but also of modern and contemporary literary art.

8.3.6 From *Shi* 史 to *Rekishi* 歷史

In the course of its development, Japanese literature embraced the dual composition in both Chinese and Japanese above all because ever since ancient times Japanese intellectuals wrote in both languages, and because in the Tokugawa period this bilingualism extended even to the middle classes. If this dualism required no other explanation, however, then Japan, too, might have adopted its counterpart to the notion of a “national language” that excluded Latin. In order to equip itself properly to resist the “literary history” of Europe, Japan had to admit many intellectual works written, for the most part, in kanbun. In particular, it could not afford to exclude the works that recorded the beginnings of Japanese “history”: those that supported Japan’s long and proud tradition, i.e., the imperial view of Japan’s history, centered on the historical continuity of the Japanese imperial line.

I would like therefore to comment on the reformulation of the concept of *rekishi* 歷史 (history) in the Meiji period, and on the formation of the “history of the imperial land view” (*kōkoku shikan* 皇国史観) to it.

According to Chinese dictionaries, the term *rekishi* (Ch. *lishi*) first appears in its modern sense in the Chinese translation of the works of Thucydides. Earlier, the word appears to have been associated with the idea that Heaven bestows its mandate on a particular dynastic founder and withdraws it when displeased with one of that founder’s successors (*ekisei kakumei shikan* 易姓革命史観). Thus each dynasty had its “history” (*shi* 史), and the succession (*reki* 歷) of these “histories” was termed *rekishi*. One might therefore refer, for example, to the “Twenty-four Histories” (*Ershisi shi* 二十四史). This usage appears in the title of *Lishi gangjian bu* 歷史綱鑑補, a manual for those studying for the official examinations.

Among the twenty-four dynastic histories of China, the first four, beginning with the *Shiji* 史記 of Sima Qian 司馬遷, were comprehensive histories (*tsūshi* 通史, i.e., works that embraced all, or a broad sweep, of Chinese history). However each of the later ones, covering a single dynasty, was composed by officials of the succeeding dynasty on the basis of the subject dynasty’s official documents. That the source documents be official ones was important, but no effort was normally made to reconcile differences between them.

Japan, for its part, produced the *Rikkokushi* 六国史, six officially sanctioned historical works beginning with *Nihon shoki*, composed in kanbun and centered on the imperial house. However, the dynasty never changed, and the only need was therefore to update the record at suitable intervals. When real power passed to the regental house of the Fujiwara, the “official history” (*seishi* 正史) of this house was written in Japanese; and when the warrior houses took control, their “official history” was compiled in a similar fashion. In this way there appeared several levels, or strata, of “true history.” (See 3.1.2.1.) Each naturally stressed the legitimacy of the then-dominant power. Aspects of these histories were of course disputed. In comparison with China, they were no doubt also relatively open to falsification and embellishment.

Concerning the word *rekishi*, *Nihon kokugo daijiten* notes its presence (twice) in a work by the eighteenth-century Shinto scholar Masuho Zankō 増穂残口; but these occurrences seem to represent Zankō’s misunderstanding of the term as it appears in the title of *Lishi gangjian bu*, which was well known at the time in a Japanese edition. Its use can hardly have been widespread

otherwise in the Tokugawa period. Japanese Confucian scholars used *shi* as a matter of course. In Japan too, therefore, the word *rekishi* seems to have become commonplace only in the Meiji period. (See 4.1.3 for the use of *rekishi* in the works of Nishi Amane.)

As special features of the Meiji view of history it is no doubt appropriate to cite the development of the “history of the imperial land view” central to the formulation of tradition in the modern popular state, and the growing importance of European philosophical positivism, bibliographic positivism, and evolutionary theory. Both, as they spread, clashed and combined in complex ways. Below, I will outline in chronological order (1) the formation of the history of Japanese civilization (*Nihon bunmei shi* 日本文明史), as seen in the activity of early Meiji scholars of the West; (2) the formation of the “history of the imperial land view” in early and mid-Meiji; and (3) the formation of “national history” (*kokushi* 国史) in middle and late Meiji as an encounter with “the age of the study of history” (*rekishigaku no jidai* 歴史学の時代).

(1) The formation of the history of Japanese civilization. Many early Meiji intellectuals read *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* (1828-30) by François Guizot, *Origines de la France contemporaine* (1876-94) by Hippolyte Taine, and *History of Civilisation in England* (1857) by Henry Thomas Buckle, written under the influence of Auguste Comte. Taguchi Ukichi followed this lead with his *Nihon kaika shōshi* (6 vols., 1877-82), which covered the development of Japanese civilization from ancient times to the present, from both the material and the spiritual perspective. Also known as the translator of Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) and Herbert Spencer’s *Principles of Sociology* (1876-96), Taguchi was well versed in economics and social Darwinism. In Japan, where Christian influence was weak, Spencer’s work on social Darwinism, as well as Darwin’s theory of biological evolution, were often read in English, and evolutionary ideas, variously interpreted, penetrated the country throughout the Meiji period. A pioneer in this regard was Katō Hiroyuki, who rejected the Christian notion of the natural rights of man as outdated and published, in *Jinken shinsetsu* 人権新説 (1882), a view of human rights based on social Darwinism. Katō held that the ancient Japanese emperor system, the focal point of ancestor worship, had always assured the people’s protection. On the subject of Spencerian religious evolutionism, Katō denied that the cults of the ancestors was “religion,” declared that the emperor system was the focal point of morality, affirmed that the ancient social organization under tribal chiefs (*zokuchō* 族長) continued to survive in a unique form, and thus invented a “superior tradition” for Japan.

This does not mean, however, that Katō Hiroyuki completely rejected individual pursuit of profit. His position served the purpose of providing reasoned support for giving to “restoration of imperial rule” (*ōsei fukko* 王政復古) the form of constitutional monarchy. Therefore it cannot be seen simply as giving a modern gloss to the idea that Japan is the “land of the gods” (*shinshū* 神州), created under the absolute authority of the emperor and the imperial house: an idea that took shape from late Tokugawa into Bakumatsu times, thanks to the explosively popular Shinto of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤, the thought of the later Mito school, and the teachings of Fujita Yūkoku 藤田幽谷 (1774-1826), and further by his son, Tōko 東湖 (1806-1855), who promoted the “revere the emperor, expel the barbarian” (*sonnō jōi*) conception of national polity (*kokutai*)

so prevalent among the warriors of the Bakumatsu period. It reinterpreted this conception of national polity in the light of modern, evolutionary thought. Whatever one may think of Katō Hiroyuki, it is probably fair to say that, without this reinterpretation, constitutionalism would not have gained the acceptance of Meiji intellectuals. At the time all sorts of efforts were being made to adopt modern European thought and, on the model of Europe, to invent or create a new “tradition” and even a new “history.” Katō’s *Jinken shinsetsu* was only one of these. As his example shows, some of these efforts led to the invention of a tradition “superior” even to that of Europe.

(2) **The formation of the “history of the imperial land view.”** The Imperial Constitution was enacted as though to reconcile constitutionalism with the notion of a divinely inspired national polity, and with reference to the Prussian and Sachsen constitutions, each of which contained, as a survival of the divine right of kings that supported absolute sovereignty, a clause proclaiming the document “sacred and inviolable.” Then came, in exchange for the recognition of freedom of religion, the invention of non-religious State Shinto. It is clear from the opening lines of Kyōiku Chokugo that this move lent authority to the history of the “empire” (*kōkoku* 皇国, characterized by “one line [of emperors] for a myriad generations” (*bansei ikkei* 万世一系). It could not help provoking various debates over the proper relationship between modernization and the shaping of tradition, and these were nowhere more vigorous than in connection with history. Here are some typical examples.

First, let us consider the “history of the imperial land view” in 1890, the year after the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution, and the very year of Kyōiku Chokugo. The same year saw the publication, from Hakubunkan, of a series entitled *Katei kyōiku rekishi tokuhon* 家庭教育歴史読本. The first volume begins by citing Kyōiku Chokugo and then gives twenty-seven model examples of loyal retainers and chaste women, starting with the attack of the Forty-seven Rōnin. Curiously enough, there is nothing about Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛, Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉, or Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康. Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 and Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 appear in secondary or opponent roles. As far as the history of Japan is concerned, not even the ethics textbooks of the time show this degree of bias. There is not a word about Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子. His role in Soga no Umako’s 蘇我馬子 assassination of Emperor Sushun 崇峻天皇 had led to Tokugawa Confucianists calling him contemptuously the “Regicide Prince” (*shigyaku ōji* 弑逆皇子), and his reverence for Buddhism made him their enemy. Apparently this sort of attitude still survived. Shōtoku Taishi was rehabilitated by Meiji constitutionalists as a “superb statesman.” *Katei kyōiku rekishi tokuhon*, with its emperor-centered stress on loyalty and filial piety, scorns warrior rule and can be called an example of the purest “history of the imperial land view.”

Seven volumes of the *Katei kyōiku rekishi tokuhon* series, a quarter of the whole, are devoted to the period of the Northern and Southern Courts. One might call this the Kenmu Restoration view of history: one that emphasizes a brief restoration of direct imperial rule at a point roughly mid-way between the old ritsuryō state and the Meiji Restoration itself. However, Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成 and all the other exemplars of loyal service to the emperor during this time were all on the side of the Southern Court, whereas Emperor

Meiji belonged to the Northern lineage—a major contradiction. Apart from reconciling the idea of the divinely inspired national polity with constitutional monarchy, the modern emperor system had one more area of weakness. This was the problem of the Northern and Southern Courts, which, together with the conception of the emperor as an organ of the state (*tenmō kikan setsu* 天皇機関説), became a controversial issue with respect to school textbooks. The *Katei kyōiku rekishi tokuhon* series was the joint work of Ochiai Naobumi 落合直文 and Konakamura Gishō. Both had graduated from the Department of Classical Studies created by Katō Hiroyuki in the Faculty of Letters at Tokyo Imperial University, and both, in accordance with positivist bibliographic methods advocated by Leopold von Ranke, rejected rumor and legend, recognizing as legitimate only orthodox documents. They were also active in the movement to reform the *tanka*. Their example nicely demonstrates that the pure “history of the imperial land view” was elaborated thanks to collaboration between modern research methods and the invention of tradition. Nonetheless, the tortuous result was praise of the side that had opposed the reigning imperial lineage.

- (3) **The encounter with “the age of the study of history.”** Early Meiji scholars of the West, like Nishi Amane and Taguchi Ukichi, were drawn to histories of civilization written under the positivist influence of Auguste Comte. However, from middle to late Meiji, those who undertook historical research could not help falling under the influence of von Ranke’s bibliographic methods and of social Darwinism. Von Ranke’s methods, which advocated interpreting history through foreign policy documents, secret government records, and so on, held sway in the Europe of the time, to the point that historical research could shake a government. It was the so-called age of “historical studies.” Meiji historians applied these methods enthusiastically to their own work. One manifestation of this trend was Katō Hiroyuki’s establishment of a Department of Classical Studies at Tokyo Imperial University, and another was the project to edit the encyclopedia of documents *Koji ruien*. A further reflection of it was no doubt the insistence of the Min’yūsha 民友社, a political party founded by Tokutomi Sohō, that history (*shiron* 史論) is central to “literature.” Thus in the early Meiji period, *rekishi* constituted a part of “literature,” taken in the sense of the humanities in general. By mid-Meiji, however, the split between historical studies and “literature” in the sense of linguistic art was well advanced. (See 5.2 on the reformulation of the university curriculum.) Spencer’s conception of social Darwinism continued to spread. The example of Kume Kunitake 久米邦武 (1839-1931) nicely illustrates the diffusion of evolutionary theory as well as of positivistic approach to historical documents (*bunken jissshōshugi* 文献実証主義).

Kume Kunitake’s “*Shintō wa saiten no kozoku*” 神道は祭天の古俗, written when he was an associate professor in the Japanese History Department of the “College of Letters” (Bunka Daigaku 文科大学) of Tokyo Imperial University, provoked such wrath among Shintoists that he was obliged to resign his post. The article appeared in 1891, in the journal *Shigakukai zasshi* 史学会雑誌. The following year, Taguchi Ukichi reprinted it in *Shikai* 史海 (Vol. 8, January 1892.) Its key thesis is that “Shinto is not a religion,” but instead a folk custom of ancient origin that consists simply of “worshiping heaven and performing purifications in order to avert disasters and invite good fortune,” so that it has naturally subsisted in parallel with

Buddhism. “It is practiced without anyone ordering that it be so, and it is the firm foundation on which sovereign and subject, high and low are unified in a single national polity. The very thought brings tears to one’s eyes.”⁹⁶ Having set forth the elements of sun worship, Kume also wrote, “All the countries of the world issue from within Shinto, but Japan alone, despite many changes, preserves the essence of the land [*kokuhon* 国本] and progresses in a normal manner.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, he concluded, “although in later times there may exist those who wish to turn Shinto into a religion, their efforts are misguided, and the history of this land [*kokushi* 国史] will not permit it.”⁹⁸

After reading this much, one may well assume that Kume is affirming the orthodox origins of Shinto and the national polity. However, Taguchi preceded the reprinted article with quite a provocative preface addressed to “an ardent Shinto believer of our time.” The reactions began to appear in Volume 11 of *Shikai*, and both they and the ongoing debate between Kume and Taguchi attracted considerable attention. The February 1892 issue of *Kokkō* 国光 contained an anonymous article entitled “Kokka no daiji o bakuro suru mono no fuchū fugi o ron-zu” 国家の大事を暴露する者の不忠不義を論ず. It contained the following criticism: “In the name of scholarship, [this article] presumes to discuss in a farfetched and distorted manner the Emperor’s ancestors, heaps scorn on the Three Regalia, and blasphemes the Imperial Mausolea.” This is thought to be the source of Kume’s troubles over the issue. The view nowadays is that “Kume and Taguchi both misread the depth of the relationship between Shinto and the ideology of the modern emperor system.”⁹⁹ Concerning Kume’s resignation, there exists a debate over differences of opinion within his department, but I take the affair as a manifestation of a historical trend.

This trend involved State Shinto, which, in exchange for the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, was situated above all religion; so that no religion could be allowed to come into conflict with it, and the founding of a new, Shinto-related religion could still less be condoned. In actuality, this amounted to limiting freedom of religion. Kume’s approach, meanwhile, had been to consider in historical perspective why Shinto was not a religion. Since Spencer’s views on the evolution of religions, expressed in his *Principles of Sociology*, were widely known by then, to discuss the primitive character of Shinto was equivalent to defining it as a pre-religious religion, that is, a religion of barbarians.

Shintoists who revered their doctrine and ritual, and, in the aftermath of the movement to disestablish Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku undō* 廃仏毀釈運動), took pride in the Imperial Constitution’s definition of Shinto as “a religion above all other religions,” undoubtedly took Kume’s historical reflections as an insult. That much is clear from the anonymous *Kokkō* article’s complaint that Kume “heaps scorn on the Three Regalia and blasphemes the Imperial Mausolea.” Indeed, the article deems it blasphemous merely to discuss the imperial house.

In another article, published in January 1904 issue of *Taiyō*, Kume Kunitake discussed “Shōtoku Taishi no taigaikō” 聖徳太子の対外硬. Rejecting the legend that Shōtoku was

96 Kume Kunitake 1891-92, p. 41.

97 Kume Kunitake 1891-92, p. 67.

98 Kume Kunitake 1891-92, p. 68.

99 Miyachi 1991, p. 445.

born in a stable as a Christian-influenced fable, as well as the Tokugawa-period Confucian condemnation of him as the Regicide Prince who initiated the adoption of Buddhism as Japan's state religion and collaborated in the assassination of Emperor Sushun, Kume evoked him as an admirable statesman. This piece contains the gist of Kume's *Shōtoku Taishi jitsuroku* 聖徳太子実録, published the following year. This work reveals his debt to German-school bibliographic methods, attempting as it does to sweep away all legendary accretions. In its background lies the celebration, just the year before, of the 1300th anniversary of Shōtoku Taishi's Seventeen-Article Constitution, which encouraged a revised appraisal of him. Kume also praised Shōtoku's stance toward the Korean peninsula as both firm and conciliatory, and in conclusion he expressed the hope that the Russo-Japanese problem could be solved peacefully by the same combination of firmness and accommodation. This was in fact a major motif of Kume's appraisal of Shōtoku Taishi as a whole. Seen from the standpoint of those who supported the Imperial Constitution, Kume's views suggested criticism of Kyōiku Chokugo, which for those who supported the constitution was the pillar of State Shinto and of the Confucian ethics enjoined upon the people. In the context of the revival of Chinese studies and of frequent discussion of current events in terms of anecdotes and precedents from Chinese history, Kume's attitude demanded a scientific re-examination of those same materials. Of course, it is also clear in retrospect that his effort to re-examine history with a scientific attitude was also a response to a strong intellectual demand of the times.

Thus the positivism that permeated historical studies, the new standards of documentary research, and biological and sociological Darwinism—or, rather, attitudes patterned after these—gradually permeated the world of literary art and came to be trumpeted as under the name of *shizenshugi* (naturalism).