

ON THE ORIGINS OF “MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE”

10.1 The Pitfalls of History as History of Realism

10.1.1 The Bias toward Modernizationism

The origin of “modern literature” depends on how one defines the concept. To define it as the expression of the “modern self,” and then to discuss the immaturity of that self in the context of Japanese modernity, is to espouse the “modern self” view of history (“*kindaiteki jiga shikan* 近代的自我史観). But what is the “modern self”?

Senuma Shigeki 瀬沼茂樹 remarked that discussions of the “modern self” never defined it clearly, and he attempted to fill that gap (“*Kindai bungaku ni okeru jiga no mondai* 近代文学における自我の問題, 1948). His definition was “the capitalist spirit” (*shihonkateki seishin* 資本家的精神).¹ Senuma can be said to have reaffirmed in his essay the “history as history of the self perspective” (*jiga shikan* 自我史観) that he had set forth earlier in “*Shinri bungaku no hatten to sono kisū*” (1930), but this time he said nothing about advancing toward “proletarian literature”; instead, the dissolution of the “modern self” in the period of Shōwa modernism turns up everywhere. At any rate, defining “the modern self” as “the capitalist spirit” is likely immediately to call to mind, as examples of works that accurately depict the inner thoughts of people inhabiting a world of money and greed, Saikaku’s *Nihon eitaigura* 日本永代蔵 and *Seiken munazan’yō* 世間胸算用.

It is also possible to define “modern literature” in terms of the “inner loneliness” of those who have left their village community to inhabit modern society. In that case too, however, the lyrical character of Tokugawa-period expression is bound to become a problem. For example, in “*Kindai joryū shijin*” 近代女流詩人(1991), Nakamura Shin’ichirō discovered modern urban lyricism in the works of women kanshi poets of the Tokugawa period.²

Another example can be cited from the “*Yomi no maki*” よみの巻 chapter of *Nishiyama monogatari* 西山物語 (1768) by Takebe Ayatari 建部綾足 (1719-1774). Ayatari quoted the following poem (*Man’yōshū* 4316) by Ōtomo no Yakamochi 大伴家持:

<i>uraurani</i>	In the endless calm
<i>tereru haruhi ni</i>	of a spring day bright with sun
<i>hibari agari</i>	a skylark rises;
<i>kokoro kanashimo</i>	and my heart—how sad it is
<i>hitori shi omoeba</i>	as I ponder here alone. ³

1 Senuma 1969, p. 317.

2 Included in Nakamura Shin’ichirō 1994.

3 *Takebe Ayatari zenshū*, vol. 4, p. 52. Translation from Cranston 1993, vol. 1, p. 476.

A comment on the poem shows that Ayatari meant it to convey the forlorn mood of his heroine, abandoned by her lover. Of course, many ancient poems convey a similar mood, similarly caused. However, there is something different about this one. Apparently, it had never been commented on before and had been completely neglected as lacking any interest.⁴ Ayatari's use of it can be said to announce the beginning of a new attitude: a willingness to divorce a poem from the biography of its author (in this case Yakamochi) and to appreciate it as a sign of an individual's inner loneliness—in other words, a willingness to assess an ancient poem in terms of a “modern” aesthetic sensibility. Skepticism in matters of faith, individuality independent of the governing power, the pain of alienation from society—however one may define the “modern self,” countless emblems of its affective experience are there to be found in the literary art of the Tokugawa period.

This state of affairs accords easily with the standard of “objective realism” (*kyakkanteki* 客観的 *riarizumu*) upheld by Nakamura Mitsuo. In *Shōsetsu nyūmon*, Nakamura explained in simple terms the technique of realism in the novel as the latter developed in nineteenth-century Europe.

The novel is important as a modern literary art because it transports us just as we are, in our daily consciousness, into a storytelling world. That world is always fictional, and, to press the matter a step further, it is inevitably the world of the author's thought. That, I believe, is what distinguishes it from newspaper articles, factual records, reportage, and so on. . . .

In most novels the author does not communicate his sentiments to the reader directly. Instead, he creates a hero who in a sense represents his own thoughts and feelings, and through whose actions he persuades the reader forcefully, although indirectly, of things the reader would be less likely to accept if they were presented quite simply. That is the fundamental character of the novel.

In that sense, the hero of a novel is inevitably endowed to a degree with the poetry (*shi* 詩) of the author, which gives the work its artistic quality.⁵

Is it possible that the *ukiyo zōshi* of Ihara Saikaku and Ueda Akinari, and the *gesaku* fiction of Santō Kyōden, Shikitei Sanba, and Jippensha Ikku fail to satisfy the terms of this definition? Or did Nakamura Mitsuo deny *gesaku* fiction any “poetry”? Such works are full of expressions of widely varying emotion. So where did his objection lie? In short, it is perfectly clear, whether one's approach be history of the modern self or history of objective realism, that such writers completely ignored the reality of Tokugawa literary art. For them, that reality does not even deserve consideration. Their task has been to apply the standard of the modern European novel to the Japanese novel of the Meiji period and after, and to expose the places at which the latter is either immature or distorted. The following passage occurs immediately before the one just quoted from *Shōsetsu nyūmon*:

4 In “Kaisetsu: Kokinshū no mezashita mono” 解説—古今集のめざしたもの (in Okumura 1978, pp. 402-403) Okumura Tsuneya quoted three poems agreed to be representative of Yakamochi, including this one, and stated, “Medieval treatises on poetry are vast in number, and there are many from the Edo period as well, but not a single one cites, still less discusses these three poems.”

5 Nakamura Mitsuo 1959b, pp. 29-30.

In our country, undue importance has been attributed to the prose character of the novel, or to that aspect of it which reproduces actuality exactly. As a result, the fundamentally fictional character of the novel has been ignored. Ever since naturalism gained ascendancy in the late Meiji period, thanks to the conviction that the basic method of the modern novel is to eliminate fiction, it has exerted its influence over the contemporary novel as well. This is a very great mistake.⁶

This passage gives clear expression to the idea that ever since the rise of Japanese naturalism, which aspired to eliminate fiction, the realist method (*riarizumu no gihō* 技法) developed in the novels of nineteenth-century Europe had become distorted. This amounts to what one might call idealization of the realist method. However, it is simply not true that late-Meiji naturalism aspired to eliminate fiction. Tayama Katai 田山花袋 (1871-1930), who advocated “plain description” (*heimen byōsha* 平面描写), defined it as follows in “*Sei ni okeru kokoromi*” 「生」に於ける試み (*Waseda bungaku*, September 1908): “One not only adds nothing of the author’s subjectivity, but one also avoids intruding in any way on the interiority of objective phenomena or the inner spirit of the character, in order to describe things seen, heard, and touched exactly as they are.” These words are concerned exclusively with the way the author of *Sei* sought to portray the world through the eyes of his narrator. The standard they evoke has no direct connection with the novel’s fictionality itself.⁷ Of course, Nakamura Mitsuo did not simply make up his view of the matter. For example, even postwar novelists were well aware of the naturalist faith espoused by Uno Kōji 宇野浩二, to the effect that one writes on the basis of what actually exists (*jijitsu* 事実). However, in “*Aishō to kodoku no bungaku: Oda Sakunosuke no sakuhin*” 哀傷と孤独の文学—織田作之助の作品 (1947), Uno Kōji, who fully sympathized with his subject’s sorrow and loneliness, nonetheless quoted as follows from a letter he had written to Oda himself:

I, too, approve of writing in a novel ‘untruths’ [*uso* 嘘] about a world that does not actually exist, and by and large I do the same myself. However, I can by no means approve of a work that leaves the impression, after one has read it, that it is untrue.⁸

The target of his criticism was the kind of work in which the writer’s hand is too visibly present in the elaboration of the story. It is clear from his words that he had no intention of excluding fiction from a work’s plot or structure. Nakamura Mitsuo’s opinion rests on a decisive misunderstanding of Japanese naturalism.

Late Meiji novels perfectly illustrate the use of realism as fictional technique. An example is the following passage from *Ame* 雨 (1902) by Hirotsu Ryūrō.

“Thank you. Well, then, elder sister, I won’t be seeing you again for a while. . . .”

Tears spilled again from O-shime’s eyes.

O-yae forced a smile. “I’ll come to see you myself, later on. You’re leaving

6 Nakamura Mitsuo 1959b, p. 29.

7 See Sone 1993.

8 Uno 1968, p. 403.

tomorrow I suppose?”

“No, I’m taking the train tonight. He’ll come to fetch me at dark.”

“Tonight? Really?” O-yae wanted to give her a parting gift, and she was a bit flustered because she had been unable to think of anything. “I’d like to give you a present, O-shime, but dear me! Ha, ha, ha... Anyway, I’ll see you later. I want to give you a present *then*, though.”

“But, elder sister, I keep telling you you don’t have to!” O-shime gazed at O-yae’s face. “Well, then... It’ll be a while before I see you again. Elder sister, do make sure you’re all right!”

“Oh, thank you. You look after yourself too, O-shime.” Inexpressibly sad now, O-yae went on, “Oh, O-shime, I so hate the idea of our being apart! I feel just as though we really *are* sisters, you know.”

O-shime once more collapsed in tears.

“Be strong, O-shime,” O-yae said firmly. “I’m so sorry what I said made you cry. Please don’t. You won’t, O-shime, will you. Promise.”

O-shime lifted her head a little and looked at O-yae. “Elder sister, I’d better not talk at all.”

She said nothing further. Tears welled forth every time she tried, so she stood up with her sleeve pressed to her eyes.

O-yae got up, too, and followed O-shime to the door. “I’ll come and see you later on, I really will.”

O-shime made a gesture of farewell, stepped into her old geta, one foot then the next, and picked up her battered parasol.⁹

Of course, Hirotsu Ryūrō was not a naturalist writer in Nakamura Mitsuo’s sense, having been known in the period following the Sino-Japanese War for what were then called “wretchedness novels” (*hisan shōsetsu* 悲惨小説). During that time the lineage of novels initiated by Tsubouchi Shōyō became almost indistinguishable from the “political novels” deeply colored by socialist ideas, so broad had they become in their outlook on politics and society; and Hirotsu Ryūrō’s *Ame* was a product of the same mood. (See above, 7.2.3.) However, for Nakamura Mitsuo that lineage did not count.

In *Nihon no kindai shōsetsu* (1954), Nakamura Mitsuo identified the simultaneous rise of *shajitsu* 写実 (realism) and *genbun itchi* 言文一致 (unification of spoken and written language) as originating in Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu shinzui* and *Tōsei shosei katagi*, and in Futabatei Shimei’s *Ukigumo*. He also cited Tsubouchi Shōyō’s decision not to write “political novels” but instead to pursue “improving” *gesaku* fiction as one reason why the Japanese “modern novel” (he meant naturalism) had lost any broad perspective on politics and society.¹⁰ In short, for Nakamura Mitsuo the problem was the “distortion” of Japanese naturalism, this being the reference point from which he viewed everything. In fact, his idea that “eliminating fiction” was for naturalism

9 Hirotsu Ryūrō *shū*, pp. 28-29.

10 Nakamura Mitsuo 1954, pp. 39-51.

“the basic method of the modern novel” probably explains why he believed naturalism to be the source of “I-fiction.” Thus everything came back, sure enough, to “I-fiction.” Naturalism became distorted in the stunted spiritual landscape of Japan, and “I-fiction” arose from this distortion: such was Nakamura Mitsuo’s schematic conclusion.¹¹

“I-fiction” was never the mainstream of “modern Japanese literature”; there existed only a historical view that interpreted “modern Japanese literature” in terms of “I-fiction.” That is why there was posited a line from Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei to naturalism and thence to “I-fiction,” and why no one cared whether objective realism had developed anywhere else.

10.1.2 Another Explanation of the Origins

As a precondition for the appearance of realist technique in modern Europe, Nakamura Mitsuo in *Shōsetsu nyūmon* cited the development of a style “capable of bringing [the reader] into contact with the very flesh of the author’s ideas.” This style, he explained, was created and perfected by Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), who wrote “without ever striking any authorial pose,” “in a thoroughly rational spirit that gives equal weight to observation of self and observation of the other.”¹² This is a commonplace remark in terms of the history of French literature, but for some reason the heart of the matter has been passed over in silence: the fact that in the third book of Montaigne’s *Essais* (1588), the author’s doubts about God are set forth in French. Doubts concerning God are, precisely, a hallmark of modern human nature (*kindaiteki ningensei* 近代的人間性), and the fact that Montaigne wrote them down not in Latin but in the vernacular language (which, although not yet settled as to spelling and other aspects of notation, freed him from traditional rhetoric) constituted further evidence of modernity. However, this standard of “modernity” (*kindai*) applies exclusively to Europe, and Nakamura seems to have believed that, in the case of Japan, the elimination of traditional rhetoric was sufficient. If so, then that belief may have become in time the ultimate source of repeated error in discussions of the subject.

Etō Jun took a contrasting position in “Riarizumu no genryū: Shaseibun to tasha no mondai” リアリズムの源流—写生文と他者の問題, in which he proposed as the standard a “living style” capable of appealing directly to the contemporary reader. On this basis he criticized the established view. As an example of “living style” he cited *Musui dokugen* 夢酔独言 (1843), a book of reminiscences written in downtown Edo vernacular by Katsu Kokichi 勝小吉, the father of Katsu Kaishū 勝海舟 (1823-1899), the famous bakufu retainer and expert in Western military technology who in 1868 negotiated the bloodless surrender of Edo castle. Comparing it to the modern style adopted by Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei, he vividly demonstrated that the latter is not “living” at all, and that the realism of these two writers is only theoretical. He asserted that in literary art a “living style” had been achieved thanks to the *shaseibun* 写生文 published in *Hototogisu* by Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) and Takahama Kyoshi 高浜虚子 (1874-1959).¹³

Etō Jun quoted an anecdote from Kyoshi’s “Shasei shumi to kūsō shumi” 写生趣味と空想趣

11 For a critique of Nakamura’s appraisal of Japanese naturalism, and an alternative proposal, see Suzuki Sadami 1994b, Chapter 6, Sections 24 and 25.

12 Nakamura Mitsuo 1959b, pp. 26-27.

13 Etō 1989, pp. 8-15.

味 (1906) in order to show the difference between Shiki's idea of *shasei* and Kyoshi's attitude on the subject. Kyoshi wrote that once, while looking at a *yūgao* 夕顔 flower, Shiki managed thanks to *shasei*, to ignore the obvious association with the "Yūgao" chapter of *Genji monogatari* and to grasp a set of implications in an entirely different mood. Kyoshi remarked on this subject that he disapproved of disassociating language and aesthetic experience in this way. He then continued:

It may be dreary of me to point this out, but Shiki, who believed *shasei* had inevitably to exclude all fantasy [*kūsō* 空想], i.e., the allusions and associations that attach themselves to the object, actually occupied a position quite close to that of Shōyō. In the background of his theory lay science, and the idea of *shasei* as objective aspired to the objectivity of science. To put it as simply as possible, in Shiki's mind "yūgao flower" was not just a phrase, but the complex of impressions constituting the experience of "seeing the form of the flower with one's own eyes." In this usage, words are stripped of their autonomy as words and become, as it were, almost infinitely transparent signs.¹⁴

As a condition for the development of a "transparent" style, Etō Jun held that it was necessary to break the chain of traditional notions attached to certain words (for example, the *Genji* associations attached to the word "yūgao"): in other words, to achieve the objectivity of *shasei*. He believed that Shiki had elevated the realist technique to an ideal. However, there is no direct connection between breaking the traditional chain of notions attached to certain words and "aspiring to the objectivity of science." The scientific approach is certainly founded on rejecting subjectivity, but normally the science of each era is pursued in terms of its own complex of ideas—its own chain of traditional notions—and does not go beyond these. Moreover, Etō Jun neglected another matter of fundamental importance.

In Kyoshi's reminiscences, Shiki says only that the impression he derived from a *yūgao* flower changed when he arrived at the technique of *shasei*. It never occurred to him that however successfully his *shasei* might sever for himself the association between "yūgao" and *Genji monogatari*, there would be readers for whom any mention of "yūgao" would bring up that same association. For such readers, as for Shiki himself before he mastered the technique of *shasei*, a mere photograph of *yūgao* flowers would bring *Genji monogatari* to mind. Shiki had forgotten the connotations of the flowers themselves and of the word "yūgao." His forgetting these connotations amounts to forgetting both the word and the reader.

For Shiki at the time, the words "yūgao flower" referred to a complex of impressions constituting the experience of "seeing the form of the flower with one's own eyes"; and this, according to Etō Jun, distinguished him from Takahama Kyoshi, who knew that a word cannot escape the processes of association. However, this Shiki is only the one who lived on in Kyoshi's memory. Shiki may really have expressed himself that way at the time, but whether or not he did is not the issue. Shiki as Kyoshi remembered him completely forgot the matter of connotation, but Kyoshi himself never imagined that it was possible to free a word from its chain of connotations.

14 Etō 1989, p. 29.

If the word “yūgao” is to be used in a manner divorced from its connotations, then the only way to proceed is to construct a context that brings to mind no *Genji* associations whatever. Any such attempt is bound nonetheless to fail for some readers, but success with most will only alert them to the fact that the narrator has purposely eliminated all such connotations.

Was that really the goal of Masaoka Shiki’s work? Quite apart from the Shiki that Kyoshi remembered, Shiki the writer was certainly not one to forget either words or the reader. For example, in “Hototogisu daiyonkan daiichigō no hajime ni” ホトトギス第四巻第一号のはじめに (1900) he wrote, “I have striven to write so that whoever reads me should immediately see with his own eyes the thing I have evoked and find it fully present before him; and I have striven as well to avoid going on and on in such a way as to tire the reader.”¹⁵ This passage suggests that the goal of Shiki’s *shasei*, especially in his haiku, was not to reveal his own feelings directly, but to achieve what Tsubouchi Toshinori called “sympathy with the reader” (*dokusha to no kyōkan* 読者との共感).¹⁶ In that sense, Shiki’s *shasei* can be said to resemble the realism that the modern novel selected as a technique to appeal to civil society. However, as others have noted, one may still wonder whether he sought to apply the *shasei* principles of Western painting to haiku and “narrative prose” (*jojibun* 叙事文).

10.1.3 Is *Shasei* (Sketch) Realism?

Concerning the *shasei* of the late 1890s and after, the following interpretation was current until recently. I will quote from Kitazumi Toshio’s 北住敏夫 article (“Shasei setsu” 写生説) in *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* 日本近代文学大事典.

Originally, in China, the term *shasei* 写生 referred to painting the likeness (写) of living things (生物) such as birds and flowers. However, in the Meiji period the term came into use as a translation for “sketch.” It is Masaoka Shiki who applied it to literary art and upheld the so-called “principle of *shasei*” (*shasei setsu*). From the late 1890s on, Shiki used the term *shasei* in a sense more or less synonymous with *shajitsu* 写実 (depicting reality). Inspired by such Western-style painters as Nakamura Fusetsu 中村不折, Shiki wrote in the newspaper *Nihon* and in the magazine *Hototogisu* that *shasei* is more important than the ideal (*risō* 理想), i.e., fantasy (*kūsō* 空想). He aimed to reform haiku and tanka thanks to the technique of conveying “reality just as it is,” objectively and concretely; and, applying the same principle to prose, he originated *shaseibun* 写生文. The result was a sort of *shaseishugi*. However, there was within this *shaseishugi* a strong tendency to seek less the truth of reality than an impressionistic beauty that vividly conveys the way the subject looks.¹⁷

¹⁵ Masaoka Shiki *zenshū*, vol. 11, p. 369.

¹⁶ Tsubouchi Toshinori 1987, the chapter entitled “Shasei to kōshō” 写生と口承. Tsubouchi’s rich analysis of Masaoka Shiki’s *shasei* is instructive on many other points as well. Another study emphasizing Shiki’s rhetoric is Awazu 1982.

¹⁷ *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*, *Jikō* 事項 volume, p. 184.

It is well known that Shiki's principle of *shasei* owes a great deal to Nakamura Fusetsu (1866-1943), an illustrator for the *Nihon* newspaper. Nakamura had studied Western painting at the art academy led by Asai Chū 浅井忠 (1856-1907), and from 1876 to 1878 he had learned theory and technique from Antonio Fontanesi (1818-1882), an Italian painter who taught at the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō 工部美術学校 (Technical Fine Arts School). In short, Fontanesi was the source of Shiki's principle of *shasei*. Fontanesi's theory of artistic description, which advocates exactness of outline, color, light and shadow, and perspective, as well as the importance of selection and composition in order to focus attention on the subject, survives in the published collection of his lectures. It has recently been shown, with reference to this material, how Fontanesi communicated his teaching to his students; how this teaching reached Shiki through Nakamura Fusetsu; and how Shiki assimilated it into his own work, especially as it touched upon matters of perspective and focus of attention on the subject.¹⁸ Shiki clearly experimented with applying the ideas on description in painting taught him by Nakamura Fusetsu; but did he really place them at the center of his own theory of haiku and give them a key role in his poetic practice?

Let us consider, for example, Fontanesi's technique of focusing attention on the subject. Kawahigashi Hekigotō 河東碧梧桐 criticized it in the following terms ("Zoku sanzenri" 続三千里, November 1910):

If you wish to establish a clear focal point, then even granting that your procedure is based on *shasei*, there are times when, in order to achieve that goal, natural phenomena will have to be sacrificed. In other words, there are times when you will be unable to establish your focal point unless you misrepresent nature.¹⁹

There are among Shiki's haiku examples that, from the standpoint of Hekigotō's own ideas on *shasei*, do not properly uphold *shasei* at all, since they contain an element of fiction. Tsubouchi Toshinori wrote, "Shiki never entirely eliminated 'fantasy' [*kūsō* 空想]."²⁰ Indeed, he observed, "It is probably fair to say that most of the haiku in Shiki's vast output do not actually evoke anything he had before his eyes"; and he demonstrated the truth of this assertion with reference to the haiku:

<i>maki wo waru</i>	Splitting firewood,
<i>imōto hitori</i>	my sister, alone,
<i>fuyugomori</i>	house-bound by winter. ²¹

The problem goes beyond that of establishing the center of interest in haiku. Even the dictionary entry quoted above judges Shiki's *shasei* against the standard of "seeking the truth of reality" and finds that it displays a "strong tendency to seek [instead]... an impressionistic beauty that vividly conveys the way the subject looks." Etō Jun, too, seems to have understood that Shiki stressed

18 Matsui 1997.

19 Watanabe Naomi made this observation in his *Riarizumu no kōzō: Hihyō no fūkei*. Watanabe Naomi 1988, p. 61.

20 Tsubouchi Toshinori 1987, p. 219.

21 Tsubouchi Toshinori 1987, p. 223.

above all “clarity of impression” (*inshō meiryō* 印象明瞭), by which he did not mean “clarity of impression” with respect only to the scene evoked. Rather, Shiki gave first priority to a “clarity of impression” connected with the way he arranged his words. Perhaps that is precisely why he opted for the technique of clear description (*kei no meiryō* 景の明瞭), i.e., *shasei*.

This should be clear from Shiki’s answer when, in a well-known episode (no. 110) of his “Byōshō rokushaku” 病床六尺 (1902),²² Hekigotō demanded that Shiki reword this haiku:

<i>kaki kueba</i>	As I eat a persimmon
<i>kane ga naru nari</i>	I hear the temple bell toll:
<i>Hōryūji</i>	Hōryūji. ²³

to read:

<i>kaki kuute</i>	While I am eating a persimmon
<i>oreba kane naru</i>	the temple bell tolls:
<i>Hōryūji</i>	Hōryūji.

Shiki replied, “You have a point. However, I think doing so might weaken the verse a little.” He meant that to make the simple coincidence plain, so as to eliminate any possibility of provoking the question of why the temple bell rang when “I” ate the persimmon, would fall into prosaic explanation and damage the verse.

Regarding writing (*bunshō* 文章), what Shiki advocated was not actually *shaseibun*, but rather *jojibun* 叙事文 (expository prose). (If it had not been, he would not have solicited for *Hototogisu*, immediately after pieces on set themes [*daieiteki na bunshō* 題詠的な文章], documentary compositions on the business of daily life [*seikatsu zatsujī no kirokubun* 生活雑事の記録文], nor would writing of this kind have developed later; in which sense one cannot ignore the name applied to the genre.) Regarding such *jojibun*, it has been pointed out that Shiki’s own examples of it include some that are “opaque” (*futōmei* 不透明) and burdened with traditional ideas.²⁴ This is not just a matter of the gap between theory and practice. The problem involves both the actual content of Shiki’s *shasei* and *jojibun*, and the critic’s attitude toward it.

On the basis of Takahama Kyoshi’s “Shasei shumi to kūsō shumi,” Etō Jun argued, “Words are stripped of their autonomy as words and approach more and more the condition of transparent signs.” In this case, however, the one who thought that impressions, or objects themselves, can be intimately related to words was not Shiki, but Etō Jun himself. Etō is one critic who elevated realist technique to the status of an ideal.

Etō Jun believed that liberation from the normative standard of *bibun* 美文 (decorative prose), i.e., from the code of “traditional” style—in other words, achieving *genbun itchi* 言文一致 (unification of spoken and written language)—was accomplished by descending from the world of ideas into cognitive realism (*ninshiki* 認識 *no riarizumu*); and he identified this development

²² *Masaoka Shiki zenshū*, vol. 11, p. 369.

²³ Keene 1984, p. 102.

²⁴ Watanabe Naomi 1988, p. 64.

with the origins of modernity (*kindai*) in literary art. Behind this position lay, on the one hand, the attribution of modernity to the vernacular revolution in Europe and, on the other, liberation from the conceptual world of Christianity, that is to say, the diffusion of philosophy, from empiricism to positivism—in short, the attribution of “modernity” to the appearance of objective realism in mankind’s intellectual understanding of the world. It is certainly true that, in modern Europe, liberation from Christian ideas and the vernacular revolution went forward in parallel. However, in principle the two were unrelated, as suggested by the fact that the initial stimulus for the vernacular revolution in German was provided by Luther’s German translation of the Bible. Etō Jun closely resembled Nakamura Mitsuo in linking these two “modernizations” so that they seemed to him to be one; in applying this notion to Japan, the cultural base of which was utterly different in the sense that it had never been governed by Christian thinking; and in then seeking to discover when the “modernity” thus defined had begun. The fundamental difference between them was that, whereas Nakamura problematized realism as a novelistic technique (*fikushon no gihō*), Etō reduced technique to cognition.

10.1.4 The Trap of the “Unification of Spoken and Written Language”

First, if liberation from religious thinking is to be taken as a standard, then that standard is fully met in the case of Japan by the wide diffusion of secular thinking (*genseshugi* 現世主義) in the Tokugawa period. If, in the spirit of preferring the real to the ideal, the issue is to be the “source of realism” (*riarizumu no genryū* 源流), then it would probably be correct to consider the Chinese tradition, which in conformity with Confucian ideas excludes fiction (*kyokō* 虚構) and honors both external and affective reality (“the heart as it is”: feelings, imagination, thoughts—the reality actually experienced by the author), and above all the tradition of Chinese poetry, to have continued unbroken. Moreover, if the “source of realism” is to be the rise of real (*riaru na*) description of actually witnessed scenes, then it is surely to be found in kanshi as well. For example, Nakamura Shin’ichirō quoted from Minagawa Kien’s 皆川淇園 (1734-1807) *Kien bunshū* 淇園文集 (*kan* 卷 2, “Rankyō kikō” 嵐峽紀行) and commented as follows: “By means of his skill at kanbun he succeeds with a detailed description that seems almost to be written in the vernacular. This passage is pure genius.”²⁵ If the criterion is scientific, objectively realistic cognition, then it will be sufficient to glance at minutely detailed drawings of medicinal plants, or at Maruyama Ōkyo’s 円山応挙 (1733-1795) *sokubutsu shasei* 即物写生 (faithful sketch) paintings—the ones of which Ueda Akinari wrote, “When Ōkyo appeared in the world, *shasei* became all the rage, and everyone in Kyoto painted the same way” (*Tandai shōshin roku* 胆大小心録, 1808).²⁶ One whose interest lies in records of human affairs should look at the sketches and writings of Kakizaki Hakyō 蠣崎波響 (1764-1826), who observed and described the Ainu.

Concerning the question of what corresponds in Japan to the vernacular revolution, Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō proposed in their *Nihon bungaku shi* the universal use of *man’yōgana*, so unlike the Chinese writing system from which it is derived, in the later portions

25 Nakamura Shin’ichirō 1989, p. 146.

26 Ueda Akinari *zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 170.

of *Man'yōshū*. One might suggest also the thoroughgoing reliance on native Japanese in the kana preface to *Kokinshū*. Then there is the idea put forward by Katsumoto Seiichirō 勝本清一郎, in opposition to the postwar claim that “modern literature” began in Meiji, to the effect that it actually began in Muromachi times, when vernacular prose works appeared. All these notions depend on the standard adopted. In Europe the transition took place, as it were, all at once (although in France it actually took about a century and a half), whereas in Japan it can be seen more accurately as having occurred in several stages. Thus, in the Tokugawa period popular, vernacular works could appear at any time, in any region.

As an example of how a “living style” was achieved early in areas outside literary art, Etō Jun cited the reminiscences that Katsu Kokichi wrote in the popular language of Edo. In reality, however, the world of literary art itself offers countless such examples. In *Shōsetsu shinzui*, Tsubouchi Shōyō mentioned as “close to the vernacular”²⁷ the style adopted by Santō Kyōzan 山東京山 (1769-1858) and Ryūtei Tanehiko 柳亭種彦 (1783-1842) in their *kusa zōshi*. Indeed, in discussing the narrative portions of these works, Shōyō noted that the authors had written them in the *kamigata* (Kansai) vernacular, which lent them its distinction. In other words, *genbun itchi* was achieved long ago for transcribing conversation. The *gesaku* works of Jippensha Ikku and Shikitei Sanba offer any number of passages resembling those to be found in Katsu Kokichi’s book. The problem of *genbun itchi* in Meiji novels is due not to the absence of a vernacular style, but to the question of how to handle the narrative parts (“*ji*” *no buntai* 「地」の文体) of such works—in short, how to settle upon the mode of expression proper for the novel genre. There is no need at this time to cite examples, but Tokugawa writers amused themselves with many transitional styles in between formal, decorative prose (*bibunchō* 美文調) and the spoken vernacular.²⁸ Just when *shasei* was becoming an issue in *Hototogisu*, Uchida Roan showed, for example in “Yuna” 湯女 (1898), that it had always been possible to write the narrative portions of a novel in the rough, first-person spoken style of downtown Tokyo (*beranmei chō* べらんめい調).²⁹

Etō Jun, who cited Katsu Kokichi’s reminiscences as an example of “living style,” elsewhere quoted a passage from Takahama Kyoshi’s “Sensōji no kusagusa” 浅草寺のくさぐさ, of which he noted that it was written in the literary language (*bungotai* 文語体). He continued, “In style it breaks free of the framework of the self-perpetuating *kambun kuzushi* 漢文崩し and *giko buntai* 擬古文体 (archaizing) styles, so that the writing adapts itself directly and flexibly to its subject; the result being, as the current expression has it, exactness of description.” Etō argued that this success was due to the author’s basing his style on *shasei*.³⁰ Either writing down one’s recollections in vernacular conversational style, or basing one’s writing on *shasei*, will thus yield a “living style.”

27 Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Shōsetsu shinzui*, Iwanami Bunko, 1966, p. 129.

28 The short “explanations” (*shakubun* 釈文) written on erotic prints (*makura-e* 枕絵) illustrate this proposition. For example, the one associated with Kitagawa Utamarō’s “Negai no itoguchi” ねがひの糸ぐち (1799) begins in a pastiche of Heian monogatari style, turns into colloquial conversation, and ends with the inarticulate grunts and moans of a couple in the throes of sexual intercourse. See Kobayashi Tadashi 1995, vol. 1, p. 125.

29 TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The original cites from “Yuna” two lines (*Uchida Roan zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 161) that do not come across adequately for the purpose in English.

30 Etō 1989, pp. 17-18.

What matters above all is to set aside all associations of ideas accompanying traditional models of style.

What in the Meiji period was called “unification of spoken and written language” went forward at a level wholly different from that of the vernacular revolution in Europe. In contrast with the widespread adoption of the *kanbun kuzushi* style in early Meiji, great efforts were also made to create models of style close to the language normally spoken by the people. In that connection some people advocated abolishing Chinese-style vocabulary entirely, but this proposal came to nothing because in fact the people used Buddhist and other lexical items of that kind daily. Things went better with avoiding rare Chinese terms, such trappings of Chinese-style rhetoric as parallel couplets, and turns of phrase taken directly from *kanbun* readers, such as *masa ni . . . sen to su*. Similarly, sentence-final expressions like *nari* and *tari* (as in old-fashioned *wabun* 和文 style, which remained in use only in specialized genres like the novel and women’s letters) were replaced by *da* and *de aru*, or by *desu* and *masu*. When writers were free to choose, they tended strongly to compose political essays in *kanbun kundoku* style, but in the period between the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars the “unified style” (*genbun itchi tai* 言文一致体) came year by year into more frequent use, until after the Russo-Japanese War it overwhelmed the former completely. (See above, Figure 12 and surrounding text.)

The *shaseibun* published in *Hototogisu* was a manifestation of this trend, which it certainly played its part in encouraging. However, the *genbun itchi* phenomenon had sprung, in a manner quite unrelated to Masaoka Shiki’s championing of *jojibun* in 1900, from articles in the style of directly transcribed conversation; and Takahama Kyoshi’s testimony, quoted by Etō Jun, to the effect that the *shaseibun* pieces in *Hototogisu* were the driving force behind *genbun itchi*, amounts to no more than “the self-advertisement for which Kyoshi was famous.”³¹ Kyoshi’s testimony lacks any substance.

In contrast to Etō Jun’s error-riddled view of the origins of *shasei*, i.e., of “the origins of realism,” it was Karatani Kōjin, in *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* (1980), who demonstrated theoretically that Kunikida Doppo’s “discovery of landscape” (*fūkei no hakken* 風景の発見) had turned the previously existing world upside down and first begun to construct the “cognitive arrangement”³² (*ninshikiteki na fuchi* 認識的な布置) so familiar to us now; and that what happened with Masaoka Shiki was roughly the same. Etō Jun forced Japan’s “modern literature” to fit the theory that realism in cognition of the world—positing nature as nature, the eternal world as the external world, in contrast to the Christian view of nature and those inhabiting it as blessed by God—arose at the same time as the lonely confrontation between the inner self and the outer world. Moreover, Etō noted that this realism appeared even in the premodern language (*bungotai*). Quite unlike him, however, Karatani made the audacious demand that it be linked to *genbun itchi*. If the issue is this sort of bipolar opposition between the external and the inner worlds, then such an opposition can be found in any number of realistic, objective descriptions from the Tokugawa period, so that the origin of the phenomenon is obviously elsewhere. Karatani Kōjin merely performed a somersault on a fragile tightrope provided by Nakamura Mitsuo, whose *kindaikashugi*-based postwar criticism

31 Etō 1989, p. 15.

32 Karatani 1980, p. 33.

muddled the historical perspective on Japanese linguistic expression, and by Etō Jun, who reduced the problem of expression to that of cognition.³³

When did (or did not) the realism brought forth by modern Europe, vague though it remained in terms of whether it was a matter of expressive technique or of world view, become established? It will remain impossible to grasp the true picture of Meiji-period *shajitsu* and *shasei* as long as one continues to seek their origins from this angle, by applying one standard or another while ignoring the cultural context. Criticism of Shiki’s *shasei* against the standard of a realism that “seeks the truth of reality” is in the same vein. What, then, did *shasei* mean to Masaoka Shiki, as well as to Kunikida Doppo?

10.2 *Shasei*: The Idea and Its Expressions

10.2.1 *Shasei* according to Masaoka Shiki and Kunikida Doppo

Masaoka Shiki’s theory of haiku is to be understood as assuming that a haiku is the realization (*jitsugen* 実現) of “beauty” (*bi* 美), hence an example of linguistic art—a notion that itself conforms to the modern Western view of “literature” as “art”; that adopts above all “clarity of impression” as a strategy in order to realize this “beauty”; and that follows, to that end, the tactic of excluding the “ideal” (*risō* 理想, ideas) and conveying “the reality of the scene” (*jikkei* 実景). Shiki’s attention to the “reality of the scene,” in the interests of cultivating a clear “impression,” no doubt came in part from the technique of modern European realism. However, it surely had more to do with the respect for fact (*jijitsu* 事実) that was traditional in the world of kanbun and kanshi. It is worth considering the possibility that Kawahigashi Hekigotō’s theory of *shasei*, which shunned falsehood and stressed reproducing fact, was simply an attempt to carry Shiki’s further. The problem concerns the functioning of the receptor involved in the reception of modern Western realism, as well as the possible role played by modern Western ideas in supplementing traditional ones.

Therefore it makes sense to hold that the technique of “structural arrangement” (*kekko fuchi* 結構布置), an application of the theory of mimesis (*mosha setsu* 模写説) in Western painting, was one of the methods adopted by Shiki in pursuit of “clarity of impression,” and that for him this technique was equal in importance to the arrangement (*haigō* 配合) of words. It makes sense to believe this because, for one thing, Shiki consistently upheld “change of [literary] device” (*shukō no henka* 趣向の変化). In his writings on tanka and haiku, and from the 1880s to his last years, Shiki sought to avoid settling on a single device (*shukō*). In that sense, even when Shiki applied the mimetic techniques of Western painting (perspective, focus on the subject), he had not the slightest intention of clinging to them at all times.

Concerning Shiki’s “impressions,” they need to be considered from various angles, including the fact that they were often inspired by hallucinatory “impressions”; that, until the “Byōshō rokushaku” of his last year, he wrote of the pleasure he derived from *shasei* paintings of the Tokugawa period; or that he was attentive to “the secret of nature” (*zōka no himitsu* 造化の秘密). Here, however, I will only quote a passage by Tsubouchi Toshinori, discussing four haiku from

³³ See Suzuki Sadami 1990a and 2005a.

Shiki's *Dassai shooku haiku chō shō* 瀬祭書屋俳句帖抄:

<i>harukaze ni</i>	Spilling over
<i>koborete akashi</i>	in the spring breeze, how red—
<i>hamigaki ko</i>	my tooth powder! ³⁴
<i>hirugao ya</i>	Bindweed flowers—
<i>Adatara ame o</i>	Mt. Adatara won't
<i>moyōsazu</i>	let loose the rain.
<i>aki no sora</i>	The autumn sky—
<i>aonaguruma no</i>	prolonged by a train of carts
<i>tsuzukikeri</i>	laden with greens.
<i>waranbe no</i>	There goes a boy,
<i>inu daite yuku</i>	a dog cradled in his arms,
<i>kareno kana</i>	through a withered field.

Each of these mobilizes every resource available to the poet, including the effect of the haiku form, imaginative power, and the action of *shasei* to settle the image; and each stands out among Shiki's many works. Regarding the "harukaze" verse, the focus of attention is undoubtedly on this new discovery of the tooth powder. The tooth powder spilled by the spring breeze gains its existence from the resulting expanse of red. An item of daily utility, the tooth powder thus has its existence dislocated; and what is achieved thanks to this dislocation is not the commonplace level of *shasei*, which often stops at moving a single piece in the scene of life, but a marvelous linguistic space.³⁵

This remark captures the very essence of the way Shiki composed haiku. It stems from the conviction that the haiku tradition is founded on its ability to incorporate new elements that appear in the world around the poet. That is the case with the tooth powder. That ability is not limited to new elements, however. It also includes the mental state, experienced by Shiki, of the unnamed "kind of bliss associated with plants and flowers." This mental state inevitably alienated Shiki from the society in which he lived, despite his "feeling of solidarity with Meiji Japan"; and, as Tsubouchi Toshinori noted perceptively, that alienation was the source of his *shasei*.³⁶

Kunikida Doppo, like Masaoka Shiki, learned *shasei* from painting. The words "sketch" (*suketchi*) and "shasei" appear in *Musashino* 武蔵野 (1901), and in a conversation between the nameless literary youth Ōtsu 大津 and the nameless painter Akiyama 秋山 in "Wasurenu hitobito" 忘れえぬ人々.³⁷ They turn up likewise in "Koharu" 小春 (1900), in a conversation between the narrator, who resembles Doppo himself, and the narrator's younger brother, an artist.³⁸ The

34 Keene 1984, p. 103.

35 Tsubouchi Toshinori 1987, pp. 233-34.

36 Tsubouchi Toshinori, *Shiki zuikō*, the section entitled "Shasei e no katei" 写生への過程.

37 Kunikida 1956, p. 130.

38 Kunikida 1956, p. 183.

borrowing is therefore clear. The terms are used in the sense of a “timely sketch” (*taimurī suketchi*) intended to record natural scenes and impressions of people for one’s own future reference.³⁹

Masaoka Shiki is believed to have begun his outdoor poetic journeys (*ginkō* 吟行) in 1894. In the following year, after realizing on the banks of the Sorachi River 空知川 that life amid the wild nature of Hokkaido was not for him, Kunikida Doppo began writing his “Shizen no nikki” 自然の日記 while living among the woods of Shibuya, on the outskirts of Tokyo. In January-March 1900, in the newspaper *Nihon*, Masaoka Shiki published “Jojibun” 叙事文. He devoted this essay to “a method for conveying in appealing language all things that manifest themselves in the world (whether natural or human); and he wrote:

When you witness a scene or some human moment and in one way or another are touched, then in order to have your reader experience the same feeling you must avoid ornamenting your words. The right way to go about it is to reproduce your subject exactly as it was, exactly as you saw it.⁴⁰

This could be taken as a *shaseibun* manifesto. Earlier, however, Kunikida Doppo had published “Ima no Musashino,” which he described as having been written in January 1898. The “Konogoro no Fuji no akebono” 此頃の富士の曙 section of Tokutomi Roka’s *Shizen to jinsei* 自然と人生 (1900) bears exactly the same date. Only a comparison of *shasei* as advocated respectively by Shiki, Doppo, and Roka, with respect to expression and method as well as to supporting ideas, can yield an understanding of the characteristic features of all three in their contemporary context.

It is obvious to anyone that Shiki’s theory of *shasei*, his declaration on the subject of *jojibun*, and the *suketchi* of Doppo and Roka, are contemporary. Doppo’s models, however, were the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and the landscape descriptions of Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883); so that his sympathy for romantic aesthetics is clear. In postwar scholarship and criticism there has been a strong tendency to treat romantic aesthetics as standing in opposition to realism, and for that reason the two have never been properly compared. In that sense Katatani Kōjin’s attempt to discuss both Doppo and Shiki on the same level was a bold one.

Nonetheless, it is completely beside the point to critique on the same level both Shiki’s idea

39 At present, those familiar with Meiji-period discussions of Western-style painting agree that *shasei* seems to translate not “sketch” but “drawing” (*dessan* [Fr. *dessin*]). For Doppo, however, *shasei* clearly meant “sketch.” Perhaps by his time artists, too, had come to use it in that sense. “Drawing” and “sketch” clearly overlap in meaning. However the term *shasei*, which was traditionally contrasted with paintings of birds and flowers, does not really make a satisfactory translation for either “drawing” or “sketch.” Perhaps it appeared in this sense already in mid-eighteenth century English-Chinese dictionaries.

On the subject of the term *shasei* in the Tokugawa period, one can consult such works as Kano Hiroyuki 狩野博幸, “Kinsei kaiga no tokushitsu: *Shasei* no go o megutte” 近世絵画の特質—「写生」の語をめぐって, in *Kachō* 花鳥, Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1981. According to Imahashi Riko 今橋理子 (*Edo no kachōga* 江戸の花鳥画, Sukaido スカイドア, 1995, note 18), in nineteenth-century Japan the word *shasei* came to have many synonyms. No doubt it also acquired many meanings. I thank Inaga Shigemi 稲賀繁美 for his help on this subject.

40 *Masaoka Shiki zenshū*, vol. 11, pp. 77-79.

of “reproducing your subject exactly as it was, exactly as you saw it” and Doppo’s approach to description in *Musashino*. In the third chapter of “Koharu,” the narrator (“I” [*jibun* 自分]) tells how, when he was at Saeki 佐伯 in Bungo 豊後 province, “I was a student of nature, under the tutelage of Wordsworth’s poetry.” Then, a little later, the narrator continues:

The Wordsworth who made fun of Scott for carrying a pencil and notebook with him on his walks certainly did not in his poetry present the topography and flora of the Lake Country with a realist [*shajitsuteki* 写实的] eye for nature. Rather, he watched the emblematic changes of nature itself and sang the beauty of their essence, so much so that our own land of Japan provides countless examples corresponding to particular lines from his poetry.⁴¹

The issue here is not seeing nature with a realist eye; it is the proposition that Wordsworth “watched the emblematic changes of all things in nature and sang the beauty of their essence.” Despite knowing that Wordsworth “made fun of Scott for carrying a pencil and notebook with him on his walks,” Kunikida Doppo brought up the subject of *suketchi* in both “Wasurenu hitobito” and “Koharu.” Perhaps this had something to do with *A Hunter’s Sketches*, the title of Constance Garnett’s English translation of Turgenev’s famous work. However, whatever the case may be with Turgenev’s fictional painter, as far as the author in his own “sketches” is concerned, he looks upon nature with no realist eye, but instead can indeed be said to “watch the emblematic changes of nature itself and sing the beauty of their essence.” Of course, Turgenev’s “sketches” of human moments display a similar attitude. Needless to say, this is one mode of realism in art. However the difference between it and the “clarity of impression” sought in Shiki’s *shasei* is obvious.

Masaoka Shiki valued “changes” (*henka* 変化) highly, but by that he meant above all richness of variety in expressive devices. He did not value variety of natural scenery, as Doppo did. In *Kindai bungaku ni miru kanjusei* 近代文学にみる感受性 (1994), Nakajima Kunihiko cited many examples of the pleasure taken at the time in scenic “changes” and of the attempts made to convey them in words. He traced their source to *Nihon fūkei ron* 日本風景論 (1894) by Shiga Shigetaka 志賀重昂 because, according to that work (in the chapter entitled “Nihon ni wa kikō, kairyū no taken tayō naru koto” 日本には気候、海流の多変多様なる事), it is characteristic of the landscape of Japan that “All things in creation are nourishing and beneficent in their emerging and their changing, in their rising and their falling, and in their straightness and crookedness.”⁴²

An outstanding example of taking pleasure in nature’s changes is provided by Kōda Rohan’s “Kumo no iroiro” 雲のいろいろ, which, in twenty-three distinct passages (*dan* 段) centered on the terms used in the Japanese classics, evokes clouds’ diverse appeal. The work as a whole is in the form of a *monozukushi* ものづくし (exhaustive list), one to which Rohan returned a little later in “Hana no iroiro” 花のいろいろ. In contrast, Kunikida Doppo’s “Ima no Musashino” 今の武

41 Kunikida 1956, p. 179.

42 Nakajima 1994, p. 381. Chapter 24 (“Komoro no kumo, Pari no kumo” 小諸の雲、パリの雲), centered on Shimazaki Tōson’s 島崎藤村 “Kumo” 雲, discusses “changes” (*henka* 変化) in the treatment of the “cloud” (*kumo*) motif in Masaoka Shiki, Tokutomi Roka, Natsume Sōseki, and Nagai Kafū, and on that basis defines changes in the characteristics of each writer’s style.

蔵野 is constructed more in the manner of a guidebook or travel account, although now and again it describes the Musashino landscape “as though the author himself were moving for the purpose of capturing ‘actuality’ [*genzai* 現在] as with a moving camera,” or as though “sometimes, like Turgenev, ‘he sat down’ in a forest, ‘looked all around, then simply listened’.”⁴³ The latter passage was quoted by Noda Utarō from Futabatei Shimei’s first translation (1888) of “The Rendezvous,” one of the stories in *A Hunter’s Sketches*. It is no doubt superfluous to point out that, just as Turgenev wrote “The Rendezvous” while recalling the birch forests of Russia during a tour of France and other countries, so Kunikida Doppo described his views of Musashino not from direct observation, but from memory.

Musashino as a whole follows the pattern of *A Hunter’s Sketches*, in which the narrator, on a hunting trip to the Russian countryside, puts together a record of “things he has seen and heard” (*kenbunroku* 見聞録), i.e., “sketches,” of the life of the peasants there. *Musashino* consists of many short pieces, chiefly “sketches” of the life of the poor inhabitants of Musashi plain. However, these pieces, which employ varied literary devices, include the guidebook-like “*Ima no Musashino*,” various poetically inspired fragments, “*Wasureenu hitobito*” with its many sketches of individuals grouped under a single title, and “*Koharu*” with its quotations from Wordsworth, the narrator’s comments on them, and also the narrator’s *suketchi*. In fact, it can be seen as a work in the literary musing (*zuihitsu*) genre, studded with many different modes of expression such as the guidebook entries of “*Ima no Musashino*,” extracts from the author’s own “*Shizen no nikki*” and Futabatei’s translation of “The Rendezvous,” waka quotations, descriptions that indeed recall cinematic “moving pictures,” impressions gleaned from “sitting down, looking all around, then simply listening,” and even comments by the narrator’s friend, the reader addressed. It is surely no exaggeration to believe that, here too, the goal is diversity of expressive devices. In this respect Doppo resembles Shiki. If so, then where did this mode of writing and editing, one so favoring variety of literary device, come from? Was it a legacy of the Tokugawa period, or did it come from somewhere entirely different? For the moment I have no answer to these questions.

Now, what does it mean to say that someone “watched the emblematic changes of nature itself and sang the beauty of their essence”? This question must be answered if one is to understand the *shasei* of *Musashino*. The outline of Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” shows through in “*Koharu*.” At the start of “*Koharu*” the poet praises the beauty of the banks of the River Wye for having sustained him even in the days he spent in the city, away from the river, and even during the time when he “was troubled by the strange secret of heaven and earth”; and he writes, “I felt when I reached perfect, meditative peace that with the subtlest movement of each breath I touched the life of things [*ban’yū no seimei* 万有の生命].” He also writes, “Now I have learned to see nature. Now I have lent an ear to the faint cries of human suffering. Now I have experienced that which flows through the setting sun, the open ocean, the pure breeze, the blue heavens, the human heart.”⁴⁴ In Wordsworth, that is just what “seeing nature” means. Doppo’s

43 Noda Utarō 野田宇太郎, “*Kaisetsu*” 解説, in *Musashino*, p. 217. Noda knew perfectly well that the expression “as with a moving camera” (*eiga no idō satsuei no yō ni* 映画の移動撮影のように) was anachronistic.

44 Kunikida 1956, p. 176.

ban'yū no seimei is his translation of Wordsworth's original expression, "the life of things."⁴⁵

When Kunikida Doppo wrote of watching "the emblematic changes of nature itself" and of "singing the beauty of their essence," he presumably meant by "essence" (*shinzui* 真髓) that same "life of things": an expression that Wordsworth himself must have used in the full knowledge that it would be condemned as representing delusion in matters of faith. Doppo, for his part, would have feared nothing of the kind. The notion of *ki* 気 as the vivifying force of all things was widely accepted, and his replacing it with *seimei* would have aroused no protest. In "Gakan shōkei" 我観小景 (1892), Miyake Setsurei had attempted an adaptation of German contemplative philosophy, in which he wrote of contemplating the universe as a vast living entity and the self as a small one; while *Bungakukai* 文學界 members like Kitamura Tōkoku, in his "Naibu seimei ron," wrote of a *seimei* filled with something very close to Christian spirituality.⁴⁶

10.2.2 Tokutomi Roka's *Shizen to jinsei*

Kunikida Doppo favored variety of device in both nature and expression. Tokutomi Roka, however, had no interest in deliberate variety, apparently preferring to note down scenic changes as they actually occurred in time.⁴⁷ The title of the collection of fragments known as "Shizen ni taisuru gofunji" 自然に対する五分時 (included in Roka's *Shizen to jinsei*) demonstrates this vividly. Quite unlike Doppo, who remained fully aware that Wordsworth had "made fun of Scott for carrying a pencil and notebook with him on his walks," Roka noted down natural changes in the presence of nature itself. He also drew pen sketches.⁴⁸

"Shizen ni taisuru gofunji" begins, "Dawn over Fuji lately is something I would like to show a person able to appreciate it!" After noting the time ("after 6 a.m.") and his vantage point ("the beach at Zushi"), he recorded the way the view of Fuji actually changed, and then concluded by repeating his opening words.⁴⁹ It is almost as though he displayed a film of the scene. However, that is not what he was doing. That would be impossible. His is a written record, and it cannot escape the confines of its mode of expression. The metaphors creep in: "Sea and mountain are still sleeping," or, "Fuji is about to wake from sleep." There are appeals to the reader ("Reader, if you are not impatient, linger here a while"). There are comments, as in the piece entitled "Tone

45 William Wordsworth, *Poems*, ed. John Hayden, Vol. 1, Penguin Classics, 1977, p. 359.

46 Suzuki Sadami 1996b, pp. 52-55, 143-47.

47 "Ima no Musashino" 今の武蔵野, which Kunikida Doppo placed at the head of his *Musashino*, was published in March 1901, but it was only five years later, with the publication of *Unmei* 運命 (1906) that his name became widely known. Thus it is fair to assume that *Musashino*, too, became well known only after the publication of *Unmei*. In contrast, Tokutomi Roka's *Shizen to jinsei* 自然と人生 (which included "Konogoro no Fuji no akebono" 此頃の富士の曙) came out eight months after his best-selling *Hototogisu* 不如帰, published in January 1900, and only heightened his reputation. In other words, Roka's *Shizen to jinsei* became famous six years before Doppo's *Musashino*. However, I have tried here to follow the evolution of *shasei* from one to the other. That is because, despite the order of publication, Roka's *shasei* in *Shizen to jinsei* seems to have been inspired by Doppo's idea of the "nature diary" (*shizen no nikki* 自然の日記).

48 Tokutomi Roka described his ways at the time in his autobiographical novel, *Fuji* 富士.

49 Tokutomi Roka, *Shizen to jinsei*, Iwanami Shoten, 1933, pp. 53-54.

no shūgyō 利根の秋暁: “The voices of the birds calling one another across the river are really lovely.” There are even impressions and fancies: “I seemed to see dawn rising up from the river, between the birds calling from either bank.” Elsewhere, after describing in “Jōshū no yama” 上州の山 how a range “of sheer bluffs and soaring peaks stands in mighty dignity, rooted in earth and touching the sky,” he went on to talk of his human ideal: “The great man who, while mingling with the petty affairs of daily life nonetheless rises above them to face to infinite heavens must in truth be like this.”⁵⁰ Again, in “Kūzan ryūsui” 空山流水, which narrates his experience in a mountain gorge in Shinano 信濃, he concluded his remembered account by writing, “Even now, whenever I wake from a dream at night and my heart is at peace, I hear that sound somewhere in the distance.” In “Haru no hiai” 春の悲哀 he swept description of natural scenery completely aside in favor of comments of his own:

In spring, nature is indeed a loving mother. Man melts into nature and is clasped to nature’s breast, lamenting the brevity of life and longing for eternity. Clasped thus to the loving mother’s breast, he feels a kind of sweet sadness.⁵¹

Such passages are a long way from the objective realism of modern Europe. Surely they do not merit discussion as *shaseibun*.

In “Kōzan mikka no kumo” 香山三日の雲, Roka then returns to noting precisely the transformations of clouds over time; while in “Sagami nada no suijōki” 相模灘の水蒸気 he devotes himself to observing the changes in a landscape over a period of fifteen minutes. Such is the manner of the fragments gathered together under the title “Shizen ni taisuru gofunji.” Perhaps even here the aim is variety of literary device.

In his next collection, “Shaseichō” 写生帖, Tokutomi Roka gathered together fragments centered on more human scenes. His gaze tended to settle, sure enough, on the poor. The collection appeals to the anger of people starving amid the euphoria of victory in the Sino-Japanese War. The final piece, entitled “Kokka to kojīn” 国家と個人, ends, “Oh, do not allow the Emperor’s little child to starve!” Meanwhile, “Muhon ron” 謀叛論 (1910) urged pardoning those accused in the High Treason Incident of 1910 (Taigyaku jiken 大逆事件), thus continuing a clear trend in Roka’s thought. Even so, however, these works still evoke at times his childhood memories or feature narration by a woman, thus displaying a variety of literary devices.

In “Shōnan zappitsu” 湘南雑筆, which includes scenes of people’s lives among its landscape sketches, Tokutomi Roka displayed less attentiveness than before (in “Shizen ni taisuru gofunji,” for example) to conveying changing scenery and the beauty of nature in terms of the passage of measured time, achieving instead a more generous, living freedom of style. The following is a passage from a section entitled “Banshū no kajitsu” 晩秋の佳日:

Toward sundown I stood again on the river bank whence I had just viewed Fuji, contemplating the westering sun, which would soon be setting to the right of

⁵⁰ This life ideal seems to have been influenced by the Wang Yangming concept of the “great man” (*da-zhangfu*, Jp. *daijōbu* 大丈夫) and by the Emersonian ideal of the poet. See Suzuki Sadami 1997d.

⁵¹ Tokutomi Roka, *Shizen to jinsei*, p. 123.

Nakizuru. Its dazzling light was too bright for my eyes. Against that light, Nakizuru lay in shadow. Ishigaki was dark as well. Below Ishigaki rode a single boat. The sail furled halfway up its mast stood out black against the sun, while the ropes trailing from the masthead were gilded on their sunward side.⁵²

The composition of this scene, the play of chiaroscuro, the sentence, “Its dazzling light was too bright for my eyes”: all vividly recall the paintings of Joseph Turner (1775-1851) or the post-Manet French impressionists.

Again, the following passage occurs in another section, entitled “Tōmei rinzen” 透明凜然:

The wind stopped, and the trembling air grew clear and still. The air was then metallic. It transmitted sounds not in languid waves, as in spring; for when the three arrows flew, the air rang with their passage, then in an instant all was quiet again.⁵³

Roka used *kūki* 空気 (air) here in connection not with light but with sound. This passage, which would speak of *onpa* 音波 (sound waves) if Roka had wished to express himself on the matter from a scientific perspective, is perfectly apt. Note that this sensitivity to sound is a feature of Roka’s style.

Shizen to jinsei begins with a short story, entitled “Kaijin” 灰燼, about the tragedy suffered by a Nakatsu 中津 family as a consequence of the Seinan War 西南戦争. Next come “Shizen ni taisuru gofunji” (29 pieces), “Shaseichō” (11 pieces), and “Shōnan zappitsu” (47 pieces). The book ends with an essay in art criticism entitled “Fūkei gaka: Koroo [Corot]” 風景画家: コロオ. Such diversity might make the contents seem miscellaneous, but in fact they are not. It cannot be due, either, simply to “variety of device” (*shukō no henka* 趣向の変化). “Shizen ni taisuru gofunji” consists of sketches of “nature,” “Shaseichō” of sketches of “human life” (*jinsei*), and “Shōnan zappitsu” of sketches of both. The short story that opens the book is probably meant to contrast with “Shizen ni taisuru gofunji” and its evocations of how the grandeur of nature changes over time. The closing essay undoubtedly proposes the mode of life adopted by Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875), who loved nature and remained detached from the world, as an ideal in terms of *Shizen to jinsei*, and at the same time evokes the spirit of his work as a model for the author’s own.

At any rate, the essay is well done. Having discussed Corot’s learning and the changes in his method (“He first studied nature as though dissecting it, then painted it synthetically”) in a manner that announces his own progress from one to the next of the three collections included in *Shizen to jinsei*, Roka wrote, “Nature is alive. It is not the same from second to second.” From there he went on to define the essence of Corot as an artist: “He captured in their vital presence the message of nature’s living changes, the poetry of nature, the moods of nature, and the faces of nature.” Corot, he wrote, “strove always to observe the look of the sky, the feel of the air, the shifting light, and to capture the subtly, ceaselessly trembling pulse of sky and air and leaves.” He concluded, “Corot in his paintings missed nothing of the embrace of moving air and sunlight. . . . He is the great

52 Tokutomi Roka, *Shizen to jinsei*, p. 218.

53 Tokutomi Roka, *Shizen to jinsei*, p. 216.

forerunner of the Impressionists.” After touching on what Corot shared with Wordsworth, Roka ended his essay with the words, “I truly love Corot’s paintings, and even more Corot the man.”⁵⁴

Judging from various passages (such as “observe[d] the look of the sky, the feel of the air, the shifting light,” “rarely resorted to any color that might dazzle the eyes,” or “[Corot’s style] was always quiet, never agitated; always at peace and never brusque”), Tokutomi Roka had clearly obtained some critical opinion on the post-Manet Impressionists. In fact, it is through such opinion that he viewed Corot. After finishing the novel *Hototogisu* 不如帰 (1900), Roka got from somewhere a statement of the Impressionist theory of the impromptu in art,⁵⁵ to the effect that only a painting finished in a moment, outdoors, is worthy of the name. Needless to say, *Shizen to jinsei* was an experiment undertaken to demonstrate that only writing done outdoors, in an instant, deserves to be called writing. Of great interest, too, for their relationship to the idea of the energy (*ki*) flowing through the cosmos, are the passages about “the subtly, ceaselessly trembling pulse of sky and air and leaves,” and how Corot “missed nothing of the embrace of moving air and sunlight.” It is not difficult to guess what receptor was active, where, when Doppo and Roka assimilated the poetic ideas of Wordsworth.

It may well be correct to gather that Tokutomi Roka’s discussion of Corot worked for him in much the same way as had Kunikida Doppo’s treatment of Wordsworth, through whom Doppo had discerned the “emblematic changes of nature itself,” the “essence” of which was the “life of things.” It is good that Roka should have written of how Corot had captured in his painting the movement of “life” in nature, the “life of things.” Surely in Doppo’s appraisal of Wordsworth, as in Roka’s of Corot, there are present the first stirrings of the idea of “the expression of [the] life (*seimei no hyōgen* 生命の表現) of all things.⁵⁶ If so, then Roka’s feeling that “Man melts into nature and is clasped to nature’s breast, lamenting the brevity of life and longing for eternity” is the ideal of a life attuned to the “life” of all things; in which case there was never any need to distinguish sharply between the outer and the inner worlds and to struggle on that basis toward objective description. In terms of Western expressionist trends, Roka had made a great leap less toward Impressionism than toward Expressionism.⁵⁷

54 Tokutomi Roka, *Shizen to jinsei*, pp. 229-43.

55 See Inaga 1997, Chapters 4 (“Tasogare aruiwa reimei” 黄昏あるいは黎明) and 5 (“Shunjisei no bigaku” 瞬時性の美学).

56 The concept of the “expression of [the] life” (*seimei no hyōgen* 生命の表現) of all things seems to have formed thanks to the mutual influence of “life-centrism as a world view” (*seikaikan to shite no seimeishugi* 世界観としての生命主義) and of the “life-centrist concept of expression” (*hyōgenron ni okeru seimeishugi* 表現論における生命主義), namely, the expression of “inner life.” It characterizes the literary theory of Taishō-period vitalism. See Suzuki Sadami 1996b, Chapter 4, Section 3 (“*Seimei no hyōgen*” 「生命」の表現).

57 Derived from ideas expressed by Jean-Jacques Origas (1937-2003) in a lecture at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in 1996. For example, Origas stated that in comparison with Poussin (1594-1665), Corot was long known only for his peaceful, bucolic scenes and drew little attention except as a forerunner of the Impressionists. However, a retrospective exhibition held in Paris in 1996 led to his re-evaluation, with the result that the core of Tokutomi Roka’s appraisal of him accords well with the current view. Origas went on to explain the appeal of Roka’s “Shōnan zappitsu” (included in *Shizen to jinsei*) by using the term “Expressionism.”

10.2.3 Shimazaki Tōson's Sketches

Tokutomi Roka's *Shizen to jinsei* appeared in August 1900. In the same year Shimazaki Tōson, who had made many sketches of natural scenes after moving to Komoro 小諸, published his "Kumo" 雲 in the magazine *Tenchijin* 天地人. In "Kumo," Tōson told how in Komoro he had experimented with making sketches of clouds, but how his interest in nature had recently changed. He related that he had turned his attention to clouds after being attracted to the subject by the chapter "Of Truth of Clouds" in John Ruskin's (1819-1900) *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, 1843. From July 24, 1899 into the following winter he kept a cloud observation diary. However, noticing that the harmony between sky and earth changed with the seasons, he reconsidered making such efforts to observe clouds alone, for he saw that he must instead observe the relationships between clouds, light rays, and air—after all, Ruskin had discussed such matters himself. Tōson therefore thought better of what he had been doing. He closed by confessing that his shift of interest had been brought about by a painter friend in Komoro, Miyake Katsumi 三宅克己 (1874-1954).

Ruskin's discourse on clouds presents the contemporary scientific analysis of them, in terms of upper, middle, and lower-level clouds, their form and color, and their changes.⁵⁸ Tōson wrote of Miyake Katsumi, "He once went to Europe, where he visited famous painters and sought out especially the works of Millet and Corot."⁵⁹ As we have seen, Tokutomi Roka held that "Corot in his paintings missed nothing of the embrace of moving air and sunlight" and called him "the great forerunner of the Impressionists." It is worth reflecting in that light that even before Miyake Katsumi (an intimate of Iwamura Tōru 岩村透 [1870-1917], the founder of the journal *Bijutsu shinpō* 美術新報) returned in 1902 to Europe, where he admired the works of Camille Pissaro (1830-1903) and Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), he cannot have been completely ignorant of the Impressionist approach to painting, with its concern for vagueness of contour and movement of light. Despite Tōson's interest in Corot and Millet, it is likely that the change he described in his attitude toward observing clouds was influenced by what Miyake Katsumi told him of the Impressionists. Perhaps what Tōson learned inspired him to re-read Ruskin and notice the connection between Ruskin's separate discussions of sky and clouds.

Tōson met Tokutomi Roka when Roka visited Shinano, and later he received from Roka a copy of *Shizen to jinsei*. In November of that year he sent Roka a reply in which he wrote of being overwhelmed by "profound emotion and jealousy." He also wrote that despite being a "rank amateur" he greatly admired Corot.⁶⁰ Tōson had probably understood the significance of "Banshū no kajitsu" and "Tōmei rinzen," for example. No doubt he meant exactly what he said about being consumed by emotion and jealousy. Perhaps that is what turned him more toward Millet than toward Corot.

In *Kindai bungaku ni miru kanjusei* 近代文学にみる感受性, however, Nakajima Kunihiko 中

58 At the start of Chapter 1 ("Of the Open Sky") and in Chapter 2 of *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, John Ruskin discussed clouds of the upper, middle, and lower levels of the sky (*The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn [5 vols.], vol. 1, London: George Allen, 1903).

59 *Shimazaki Tōson zenshū*, vol. 1, p. 198.

60 A detailed discussion of the circumstances can be found in Nakajima Kunihiko, *Kindai bungaku ni miru kanjusei*, Chapter 24.

島国彦 wrote, “Tōson’s ‘sketches’ by then had entered a new phase.” Nakajima argued that Tōson “had begun to turn his attention to the state of the subject’s consciousness that truly underpins a ‘sketch’,” and less toward description of landscape than toward “the people who live and die”⁶¹ in that landscape setting. The former proposition is no doubt correct. Tōson wrote in “Kumo”:

What one takes to be the beauty of nature may seem at times, on closer inspection, to be art; what is called the beauty of art may seem at times, though one knows it is art, to be nature. A German philosopher wrote that. His statement can be taken in all sorts of ways. Depending on the reader’s experience, and the time he has devoted to observation, it may strike him as shallow, deep, naive, wise, narrow, or rich.⁶²

Tōson had probably encountered this famous statement from Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) in Ōnishi Hajime’s 大西祝 *Seiyō tetsugaku shi* 西洋哲学史 (serialized from 1897 on in *Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō kōgiroku* 東京専門学校講義録). The quotation suggests that he was turning his attention to the state of the subject’s consciousness. Moreover,

Since nature can be taken in all sorts of ways, you get a quart’s worth if you dip into it with a quart measure, and a gallon for a gallon.⁶³

This passage conveys Tōson’s recognition of the reciprocal relationship between subject and object.

However, this recognition that a scene changes according to the viewing subject’s mood, or that an impression changes according to whether or not it enters into a comparison, can be experienced by anyone at any time. For example, in Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), the scenery shines when the hero’s mood is light and darkens when he is gloomy. Masaoka Shiki, too, often mentioned the mutual relationship between heart (*kokoro*) and impression. Therefore this idea is not necessarily characteristic of Tōson at this time. Moreover, it is clear from “Aji tsuri” 鱒釣り (one of the pieces in “Shōnan zappitsu,” in *Shizen to jinsei*) that Tokutomi Roka, too, was interested in people living healthy lives in the midst of nature. The difference between Tōson and Roka at this time may well have been, instead, in their views of nature. Tōson wrote in “Kumo”:

Midsummer is when the yang principle is at its height and most vivifies all things. The sun is close, its heat is great, and moisture rises abundantly as vapor from the earth beneath the direct might of its rays. Heaven and earth are the stage for struggle, eagerness, and activity; they form a world of growth and competition.⁶⁴

These lines appear in a passage in which Tōson regrets that, having been captivated by clouds alone, he failed to notice the way the harmony between heaven and earth changes with the seasons. It is

61 Nakajima 1994, p. 424.

62 Shimazaki Tōson *zenshū*, vol. 1, p. 191.

63 Shimazaki Tōson *zenshū*, vol. 1, p. 198.

64 Shimazaki Tōson *zenshū*, vol. 1, pp. 196-97.

probably fair to say that Tōson at this time agreed with Ruskin in taking a scientific and biological approach to observation of nature. When he began writing novels, he took a strong interest in the “inner nature,” i.e., sexual desire, that moves human beings from within.

The Tokutomi Roka of *Shizen to jinsei* believed that “Man melts into nature and is clasped to nature’s breast, lamenting the brevity of life and longing for eternity.” Therefore, despite using terms from the field of physics, such as *onpa* (sound waves), he did not introduce such biological notions as “growth and competition” into his writing. It is not that at the time he had no knowledge of biology. Roka’s conception of observation of nature, like Doppo’s, was (if one may make bold to venture such an opinion) far more religious in nature. Soon Roka would espouse the vitalistic religious views of Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910). In his case, such biological ideas as “growth and competition” or “heredity” were not to enter his view of nature until “Mimizu no tawagoto” *みみずのたわごと* (1913). This was after the coalescence of “vitalism as a world view,” and Roka saw them as the fated sufferings of “life.”⁶⁵

Perhaps this difference between the views of nature then held by Shimazaki Tōson and Tokutomi Roka goes some way toward explaining their parting of the ways thereafter—but perhaps not. Of course, the distance that separated them was none other than the subsequent discrepancy between the understanding of vitalism on either side.

At any rate, by accommodating modern European ideas and expressive modes to so-called traditional ones, both Masaoka Shiki’s *shasei*, identified by Etō Jun as the “source of realism,” and Kunikida Doppo’s *shasei*, identified by Karatani Kōjin as the “source of modern Japanese literature,” constituted an attempt to explore a level of expression far beyond the one familiar in their time. What appears still more clearly, once the *shasei* of Tokutomi Roka and of Shimazaki Tōson are also taken into account, is the variety and contemporary character of their approach to expression and of the ideas supporting it. These writers sensitively absorbed trends in near-contemporary European art as well as in Japanese thought and philosophy, striving meanwhile to advance in an entirely new direction. In them can be discerned a pulse that announces expression in the twentieth century. The criticism that accepted as self-evident both the concepts of “modern literature” and “realism” posited by modernizationist-minded postwar critics, and the view of “literary history” based upon them, and then sought either to refine them or turn them upside-down, deserves to be called far more backward than the mode of expression, the thought, and the culture in general of the period with which it was concerned.

The criticism that accepted the strategy of modernizationism (*kindaikashugi*) as an unspoken premise, and that would see the period between the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars as the source of the “modern” (*kindai*) in literary art, was also far more backward than the criticism characteristic of the period in question. That is so because, as Ochi Haruo observed in *Kindai bungaku no tanjō*, already in 1890 (the year after the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution) writers aligned with Tsubouchi Shōyō were consumed by doubts about the concept of “modern literature,” i.e., Shōyō-style realism, and about “Japan’s modernity” (*Nihon kindai*). (See above, 7.2.3.) The period between those two wars was one during which gaps opened between the state and society, and between the state and the individual, and signs of discord grew increasingly obvious.

65 See Suzuki Sadami 1996b, pp. 112-15, 120.

The doubts just mentioned could only deepen. Tsubouchi Toshinori, then, was quite right when he noted the presence of alienation at the deepest level of Masaoka Shiki's *shasei*, despite Shiki's claim to feel at one with the state.