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Between New Objectivity and Existential Reflection: Reading Murano Shirō's *Taisō shishū*

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This paper focuses on *Taisō shishū* (Poems on physical exercise), a collection of modernist poetry published in 1939 by Murano Shirō (1901–1975). This collection contains nineteen poems on the subject of athletes performing different sports and has been discussed often in connection with Murano's fascination with German New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), a movement that he had actively made known in Japan in the previous years. Murano's poems stand in a complex intertextual relationship with visual texts, such as Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Olympia* and Paul Wolff's photographs of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and also reflect his interest in the philosophical investigation of the modes of human existence. The specificity of this collection resides in an original interplay between New Objectivity, sports, photography, and existential reflection. In this paper, I explore the ambiguities of this collection's poetics and examine its historical significance in the context of interwar Japan.

Keywords: Neue Sachlichkeit, modernist poetry in Japan, sports and literature, phenomenology, Japanese literature of the 1930s

In December 1939, the Japanese poet Murano Shirō 村野四郎 (1901–1975) published his second collection of verse, titled *Taisō shishū* 体操詩集 (Poems on physical exercise). This collection contains nineteen poems on the subject of individuals performing various modern sports, ranging from track and field, gymnastics, diving, and boxing, to mountaineering and skiing. The following is on hammer throwing:

> 鉄鎚投
>
> 御覧
> 鉄が描く世界の中で
> しばらく哀れな電動機（ダイナモ）が喘い
> でゐる
>
> 白い円の中に据ゑられて

Tettsui nage

Goran
Tetsu ga kaku sekai no naka de
Shibaraku aware na dainamo ga aei-
de iru

Shiroi en no naka ni suerarete

Hammer-Throw

Behold!
In a world limned by steel,
The poor dynamo briefly groans

Planted within the white circle.[1]

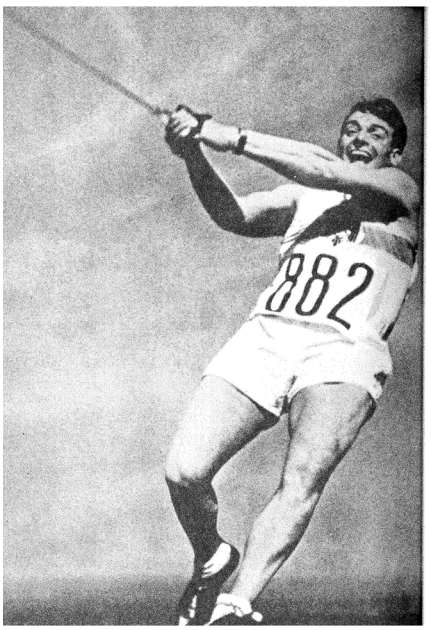
Murano was active in Tokyo from the 1920s onward, participating in a flourishing phase of interwar modernist poetry in Japan epitomized by the influential Tokyo literary journal *Shi to shiron* 詩と詩論 (Poetry and poetics, 1928–1933). By the mid-1930s, he had become a prominent member of the modernist coteries in Tokyo and continued publishing poetry, as well as highly reputed works of literary criticism, until his death in 1975.

Taisō shishū is generally viewed as one of the last works of prewar Japanese modernism, and it was quite an extraordinary one. This was not only on account of its unusual subject matter, but also because it appeared in 1939, well after the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, a period when militaristic nationalism was mounting in Japanese public discourse, and anti-modernist tendencies were gaining momentum in the intellectual field. Another aspect that sets *Taisō shishū* apart from the mainstream of Japanese modernism is that it reflects Murano's interest in German Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), a movement that he actively helped make known in Japan in the 1930s, and whose influence is often invoked as a hermeneutical tool in the readings of this collection.[2]

Taisō shishū has attracted scholars and commentators' interest also because of its intermedial configuration. With the help of fellow modernist poet and typesetter Kitasono Katsue 北園克衛 (1902–1978), Murano juxtaposed his poems with sixteen reproductions of stills picturing sports events, mostly taken from two German works depicting the 1936 Berlin Olympics: the documentary feature film *Olympia* (1938) by Leni Riefenstahl (1925–2002) (and the related photo book *Schönheit im Olympischen Kampf*, 1937) and photos from the same event by Paul Wolff (1887–1951), originally collected in his book *Was Ich bei den*

1 Translation in O'Brien and Murano 1984–1985, p. 49. Throughout this paper, I refer to the original text in Murano 2004, which reproduces the typeset of the 1939 edition, instead of the standard text in Murano 1980. I have corrected only one minor typographical error.

2 I use throughout this paper the established English translation of Neue Sachlichkeit as "New Objectivity." In Japanese, the semantic equivalent *shinsokubutsushugi* 新即物主義 and the *katakana* rendition *Noie Zaharihikaito* ノイエ・ザハリヒカイト were equally used by Murano and are still used today.



鉄鎚投

御覧
鉄が描く世界の中で
しばらく哀れな電動機が喘い
てゐる
白い円の中に据ゑられて

Figure 1. "Tettsui nage" (Hammer-Throw). As reproduced in Murano 2004. Photo depicting the German athlete Karl Hein. Source: Leni Riefenstahl. *Schönheit im Olympischen Kampf*. Deutscher Verlag, 1937.

Olympischen Spielen 1936 sah (What I saw at the 1936 Olympic Games, 1936).[3] The poems in *Taisō shishū* exist in a complex intertextual relationship with such visual texts, as mutual commentary through written text and images.

However, nearly all the poems in the collection were written and originally published in literary journals years before these photos were taken, so they cannot be viewed simplistically as actual descriptions of photos. As noted by Kitasono in his preface to *Taisō shishū*, "These photographs were never sought after as so-called illustrations [of the poems], and the poems were not provided as commentary on the photos. It is the fortuitous encounter between the poems and the photos that provides this collection with a new type of character."[4] The relationship between poems and photos has been one of the privileged foci in previous studies on this collection, which have pointed out the typographical innovativeness of such an operation, as well as its aesthetic implications.[5]

In *Taisō shishū*, poetry and photography interact to produce a space in which human actions (in this case, sports) are invested with new aesthetic and philosophical meanings. This aspect led to some postwar commentators attempting to read *Taisō shishū* based on the existentialism-tinged poetry that Murano explicitly championed in his postwar collections.[6]

3 The editors of *Taisō shishū* did not necessarily take all these photos from the original sources, since secondary sources, including Japanese periodicals and books that carried reproductions of these photos, were also available at the time (see Wada 1990, pp. 49–50).
4 Kitasono 2004, p. 3.
5 Wada 1990; Hikita 2002; Hikita 2004.
6 This is the approach adopted in many sections of Haga 1983.

From a historical standpoint, such readings appear to be slightly biased, since the canon of existentialist philosophy, as exemplified by such thinkers as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, despite the circulation of some information in the previous years, came to be widely known and absorbed by the Japanese world of letters (and by Murano) only after World War II.

This is not to say that no elements of continuity connect Murano's prewar and postwar poetry, such as the "rational lyricism" detected by James A. O'Brien or, in the words of Azusa Omura, his willingness to "be objective."[7] Nor is it to say that *Taisō shishū* completely lacks a philosophical flavor or a reflection on the modes of human existence that resonates with and foreshadows some elements of existentialism, even though it is not exclusively ascribable to that current of thought. However, I would like to avoid a retrospective bias in my analysis of *Taisō shishū* and capture its historical specificity as a text written in the 1930s. This specificity resides in an original interplay between New Objectivity, sports, photography, and existential reflection. In this paper, by mobilizing these elements in a new configuration, I will explore the collection's poetics and examine its historical significance in the context of interwar Japan.

Going Back to Things

> People say of something that it is "white," of something else that it is "distant." But in what way is that white? In what way is that distant? ... Words [*kotoba* 言葉] are cast out, their real meaning obliterated, while things [*jibutsu* 事物] completely fall into neglect. To people, things are *forms* that existed already in a remote past.
>
> We must say what kind of whiteness that is, what kind of distance that is.... In short, before we speak, we go back to things. Experiences are made new, warped subjectivities are rectified.[8]

This passage is often seen as the first announcement of Murano's poetics of rejection of subjective excess and a return to "things." It comes from a short article that Murano published in the December 1930 issue of *Kajiki* 旗魚 (Dorado, or Swordfish), a Tokyo coterie magazine which he ran from 1929 to 1933 with other like-minded young poets.

The scholarship on Murano connects his urge to go back to things with his discovery of German New Objectivity around 1930 by way of translations, Japanese articles of presentation, and to a lesser extent, a direct approach to the original texts. Soon this Weimar-era movement became a point of reference in his writings, in which he described his poetic practice by invoking the beneficial effects of the adoption of its aesthetic tenets. It comes as no surprise, then, that a number of scholars (including Murano himself who, during the postwar period, became a reputed literary critic) have emphasized the role of

7 O'Brien 1977; Omura 2016, p. 80.

8 Murano, "Zatsu: Kotoba wa jibutsu no ue ni" 雑: 言葉は事物の上に (Varia: Words over things), *Kajiki* 旗魚, December 1930 (TMS6, pp. 225–226). Emphasis in the original. Despite the similarity of this passage with Edmund Husserl's famous call to "go back to the 'things themselves'" (Husserl 2001, p. 88), I have not found any evidence suggesting that Murano, at this early stage of his career, was familiar with phenomenology (let alone Heidegger's existential phenomenology) beyond the information he found in his sources on German New Objectivity.

New Objectivity in shaping Murano's poetics, particularly his *Taisō shishū*, Murano's breakthrough collection and the most representative product of his New Objectivist phase. Within the cartography of Japanese modernism that often searches for Japanese equivalents or representatives of European and American modernist currents, Murano is canonized in this field of study, at times somewhat simplistically, as a Japanese (if not *the* Japanese) exponent of New Objectivity in poetry. As an advocate of this Germanophile current, he has come to represent an alternative, minority voice to the Anglophone and French models in the mainstream of Japanese interwar modernism.

However, Murano approached New Objectivity relatively late in his trajectory, when he was in his early thirties. Prior to that, during the 1920s, he had already published experimental haiku as a member of the school of Ogiwara Seisensui 荻原井泉水 (1884–1976). He also published a soon forgotten collection of modern poetry, *Wana* 罠 (The snare), in 1926, when he was under the aegis of Kawaji Ryūkō 川路柳虹 (1888–1959), a former naturalist poet who shared a strong interest in new international poetry trends and was a very influential member of the Tokyo poetry scene.[9] Murano was a relatively obscure poet when he launched *Kajiki* in 1929, but Murano and his co-editors had a number of contacts in the Japanese modernist network, which they expanded during the publication of their journal. Even though Murano never contributed to the first *Shi to shiron* series, he was acquainted with some of its contributors, such as Sasazawa Yoshiaki 笹沢美明 (1898–1984), another upcoming poet and critic who was an early proponent of New Objectivity in Japan. Only later, in the mid-1930s, was Murano recognized as an important figure in the Japanese modernist scene, and he was among the principal contributors to the modernist journals that continued the legacy of *Shi to shiron*, which included *Shi, genjitsu* 詩・現実 (Poetry, reality, 1930–1931), *Bungaku* 文学 (Literature, 1932–1933), *Shihō* 詩法 (Prosody, 1934–1935), and *Shinryōdo* 新領土 (New territory, 1937–1941).

The modality in which the poems collected in *Taisō shishū* were originally published reflects the evolution of Murano's career. A first substantial group of them (seven out of nineteen) appeared early, mostly in *Kajiki* and *Bungaku*, in 1931 and 1932, the years of his early advocacy of New Objectivity, while the other twelve poems appeared at a later stage, which began in August 1934 and culminated in 1939 with the publication of the collection. In fact, it was not until the late 1930s that Murano put into action the idea of publishing a selection of his sports poems from that decade. In sum, *Taisō shishū* is a composite and stratified collection in which, to quote Murano's preface,

> I extracted from my *oeuvre* the sports-related poems and arranged them. In doing so, this group of poems has manifested one particular streak [*hitotsu no shima* 一つの縞] in my poetic world. It is as if one kind of content that was scattered in my poetry, being subsumed under a certain topic, created a chain of its own.[10]

9 Not a single copy of this self-published collection was sold. Murano distributed copies to his friends and fellow poets (chronology in Murano 2004, p. 200). The relationship between Murano's early works and his major modernist production is still understudied. Haga Hidejirō 芳賀秀次郎 (1983, pp. 34–46) detected some elements of continuity between Murano's poetic apprenticeship and his New Objectivist works. On the same topic, see Suzuki 1986, pp. 30–35, and Iwamoto 2017.

10 Murano 2004, p. 2.

In the context of the 1930s Tokyo poetry scene, a volatile literary field that was accustomed to catching up to new vogues rapidly, these poems, written over a span of almost a decade, necessarily reflect different contingencies in the field of literary production and Murano's own career. This difference is generally glossed over in the discussions of the collection, which tend to present it as more consistent and homogeneous than it actually is. I think, rather, that drawing attention to the plurality and disjointedness of the historical-literary circumstances under which Murano wrote can obviate an overly schematic and naïve reading of this collection as a Japanese instantiation of New Objectivity, and thus illuminate new reading perspectives.

"I Disassemble, I Compose": From New Technicalism to New Objectivity

Let us focus initially on the first phase of Murano's interest in New Objectivity, from 1930 to 1932, when he strengthened his position as a new voice in the Japanese modernist scene, with the coterie journal *Kajiki* as the principal showcase for his new ideas and poems. By the beginning of the 1930s, after the iconoclastic phase of Taishō-era avant-garde poetry, Japanese modernism had taken a more moderate and intellectual attitude. A renewed focus on formal research rather than revolutionary poetics emerged, with an attentive eye toward new ideas from abroad, especially French Surrealism and British Modernism. By contrast, the other major literary trend of that period, so-called "proletarian literature," drew inspiration from an increasingly doctrinaire interpretation of socialist and Soviet aesthetics, and aimed to represent the needs and ideas of the working class, with poems written in an accessible language to nurture the class consciousness of these workers. This created friction, if not open opposition, between the proletarians and the modernists who often pursued apolitical research and experiments in the formal and expressive fields. A special emphasis on form marked the ideas of many Japanese modernists. In fact, they came to be designated (often disparagingly by the "proletarians") as "formalists" (*fōmarisuto*). An important debate took place between the "modernists/formalists" and the "proletarians" during 1928–1929, which went down in the history of Japanese literature as the "debate on formalist literature" (*keishikishugi bungaku ronsō* 形式主義文学論争). The formalists took issue with the idea, derived from Marxism and espoused by the proletarians, of a dialectical relationship between form and content in which, in the final analysis, priority was accorded to the latter, or to authorial intention, as the determining agent of the literary work. By contrast, the "formalists" wanted to reappraise the materiality of form and "restore content and form to a single, continuous dimension."[11] Thus, they rejected an ontological hierarchy between content and form, a position that resembled that of the American critic Eugène Jolas (1894–1952), who, in 1929, had declared that "artistic creation is not the mirror of reality, it is reality itself."[12]

Murano's writings from 1929 to 1930 echo this debate, and more generally, the formalists' ideas. In 1929, the year before his discovery of German New Objectivity, Murano sided with the formalists by advocating the importance of literary "technique" (*gikō* 技巧, *gijutsu* 技術), which he defined as the *a posteriori* operation through which the writer

11 Golley 2008, pp. 145–149. See also Usui 1975, vol. 1, pp. 263–286; Lippit 2002, pp. 25–31.

12 I mention Jolas especially because Murano quoted this sentence in the article "Shi no kachi ni tsuite" 詩の価値について (On the value of poetry), *Kajiki*, June 1930 (TMS6, p. 198).

gives form to her or his *a priori* intuitions. Technique, he clarified, is the "new lens" through which the writer can grasp new sides of literary subjects.[13] He elaborated:

> Thought [*shisō* 思想] has nothing whatsoever to do with poetry. It was a big mistake to think that poetry is born out from thought. It was an even bigger mistake to think that poetry can be written through thought. Poetry is not born from thought, but directly from life [*seikatsu* 生活]. And the only thing that produces it is the technique [*gijutsu*] of a poet.[14]

Here, "thought" mainly stands for extra-literary ideology rather than the intellectual component of poetry composition, and Murano probably had in mind Marxism and its "proletarian" variations. However, Murano's emphasis on the need to practically master the material substance of poetic form (that is, technique) somehow foreshadows his later interest in the embodied mode of cognition exemplified by the formalized actions of sports.

Murano advocated a "new technicalism" (*atarashii gikōshugi* 新しい技巧主義), which was different from the old *art pour l'art* idea because "it starts from an objectivist [*sokubutsushugiteki* 即物主義的], clear conscience of the latter's inconsistency and silliness."[15] Murano found a model for this poetics of the materiality of form in Nakagawa Yoichi 中河与一 (1897–1994), an older exponent of the avant-garde New Sensationalist school of the 1920s who also participated in the formalist debate. He applauded Nakagawa's formalist theory and elaborated on how his own "new technicalism" shared some major points with it.[16] Two years later, in 1932, amid his ongoing effort to adapt New Objectivity to the Japanese context, Murano praised the formal control and rejection of subjectivism in the representation of human passions of a recently published collection of Nakagawa's short stories. In Murano's opinion, Nakagawa's approach to literature resembled that of German New Objectivity, which followed the formula of "creating the object internally, putting it in order, and describing it." According to Murano, Nakagawa's stories "set out to write out within clear thingness [*jibutsusei* 事物性] a greater and higher idea."[17]

While Nakagawa's experiments in prose fiction elicited Murano's approval, it was during these early years that Murano developed an enduring critical stance toward the mainstream of Japanese modernist poetry, then influenced by surrealism. Starting in 1930, when he became familiar with German New Objectivity, Murano found in it some tools to expand his ideas on "new technicalism" and to better assert his specificity *vis-à-vis* the contemporary poetry scene.

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13 Murano, "Atarashii gikōshugi ni tsuite" 新しい技巧主義に就いて (On new technicalism), *Kajiki*, November 1929 (TMS6, pp. 84–85).

14 TMS6, p. 84. Also quoted in Omura 2016, pp. 75–76. Another remarkable passage from this article reads: "We are part idealists for the fact that we take into account *a priori* intuition, but we stand in a rather materialist existence as we, in terms of method, place the emphasis of poetry more on technique" (p. 84).

15 Murano, "Gikō no tenkai" 技巧の展開 (The development of technique), *Kajiki*, February 1930 (TMS6, p. 116).

16 Murano, "Atarashii gikōshugi ni tsuite" (TMS6, p. 84); Murano, "Gikō no tenkai" (TMS6, p. 117). Nakagawa collected his ideas in the treatise *Keishikishugi geijutsuron* 形式主義芸術論 (A formalist theory of art, 1930), which also featured a short chapter on New Objectivity (see Nishimura 2003a, p. 35).

17 Murano, "Chisei no taisō: Nakagawa Yoichi-shi cho *Kairo rekitei* ni tsuite" 知性の体操: 中河与一氏著「海路歴程」に就いて (Exercising intellect: On Mr. Nakagawa's *The Sea Route*), *Kajiki*, July 1932 (TMS6, p. 494). *Kairo rekitei* had been published in 1931.

In his early approach, Murano seems to interpret New Objectivity as a way to go beyond two symmetrical excesses: the excess of irrational subjectivism of the early avant-garde (especially expressionism) on the one hand, and contemporary modernism's excess of detachment from reality. In this respect, New Objectivity in its effort to "go back to things" represented for Murano a correction of these two equally unbalanced methods of literary expression. His opposition to what he dubbed elsewhere as the "hysterical" excesses of expressionism accompanied him during the interwar years and even beyond. By contrast, Murano characterizes New Objectivity as an attitude that values "cold order" (*reisei na chitsujo* 冷静な秩序) over sentimental outbursts. Murano uses this term for the first time in December 1930 (in a short contribution titled "Zatsu"; see note 8) and in a February 1931 essay called "Keishiki ni kansuru danpen" 形式に関する断片 (A fragment on form). This keyword echoes *ordre froid*, the expression coined by the French critic Félix Bertaux in a book that was very influential in defining and popularizing in Europe the idea of a German New Objectivity; it was translated into Japanese in 1929.[18] In this respect, Murano's New Objectivity is a kind of *rappel à l'ordre*, as it seeks to "move away from the arbitrary frenzy of the expressionists," and "to pour cold water on the illusions of solipsism."[19] It values "clarity," "solidity," "rigor," "a new awareness of mechanical beauty," and a "rejection of decoration."[20] In a 1932 article, he places at the foundation of New Objectivity an "attitude of philosophical" and "metaphysical passion," a phrasing that suggests a controlled, orderly recourse to human affect, as opposed to expressionist excess and surrealist arbitrariness.[21]

The search for clarity, formal control, and abstraction is reflected in the oldest part of *Taisō shishū*, which he wrote during this period, such as the opening poem in the collection, "Taisō" (Gymnastics), originally published in *Kajiki*, August 1931:

体操

僕には愛がない
僕は権力を持たぬ
白い襯衣の中の個だ
僕は解体し、構成する
地平線がきて僕に交叉(まじは)る

僕は周囲を無視する
しかも外界は整列するのだ
僕の咽喉は笛だ
僕の命令は音だ

僕は柔い掌をひるがへし
深呼吸する

18 Bertaux's book was titled *Panorama de la littérature allemande contemporaine* (A panorama of contemporary German literature, 1928). It was translated as *Gendai no Doitsu bungaku* 現代の独逸文学 (Contemporary German literature, 1929) by Ōno Shun'ichi 大野俊一 (1903–1980).
19 Murano, "Zatsu" (TMS6, p. 226).
20 Murano, "Keishiki ni kansuru danpen," *Kajiki*, February 1931 (TMS6, p. 260).
21 Murano 1932, pp. 18–19.

このとき
僕の形へ挿される一輪の薔薇

Taisō

Boku ni wa ai ga nai
Boku wa kenryoku o motanu
Shiroi shin'i no naka no ko da
Boku wa kaitai shi, kōsei suru
Chiheisen ga kite boku ni majiwaru

Boku wa shūi o mushi suru
Shikamo gaikai wa seiretsu suru no da
Boku no inkō wa fue da
Boku no meirei wa oto da

Boku wa yawai tenohira o hirugaeshi
Shinkokyū suru
Kono toki
Boku no katachi e sasareru ichirin no bara

Gymnastics

In me love is nil;
Nor have I any dominion.
Component within a white gymsuit,
I disassemble, I compose.
The horizon consorts with me.

I neglect the scene,
But order survives;
My throat is a flute,
My command a sound.

I jiggle soft palms,
Breathe deeply;
In that moment
A rose graces my figure.[22]

With its reification of the speaking subject as a "component within a white gymsuit" deprived of feelings and power, this poem is perhaps the most exemplary in its adoption of a New Objectivist poetics. The syntax is essential, the diction is unadorned, with the sole

22 Translation in O'Brien and Murano 1984–1985, p. 47. I have edited the fourth line to emphasize its formalist inspiration.

7 体操詩集

僕は柔い掌をひるがへし
深呼吸する
このとき
僕の形へ挿される一輪の薔薇

僕には愛がない
僕は権力を持たぬ
白い襯衣の中の個だ
僕は解体し、構成する
地平線がきて僕に交叉る
僕は周囲を無視する
しかも外界は整列するのだ
僕の咽喉は笛だ
僕の命令は音だ

6

体操

Figure 2. “Taisō” (Gymnastics). As reproduced in Murano 2004. Photo depicting Walter Steffens of the German gymnastics team. Source: Paul Wolff. *Was Ich bei den Olympischen Spielen 1936 sah*. Karl Specht Verlag, 1936.

exception of the metaphor in the final line. Also typical is the presence of a non-subjective counterpart (here the “horizon”; in other poems, the “world,” or *sekai* 世界) that the subject engages as a body moving in space and time, like in the following poem “Tetsubō (II)” (Horizontal bar [II]), originally published in March 1932:

鉄棒

僕は地平線に飛びつく
僅に指さきが引つかかつた
僕は世界にぶら下つた
筋肉だけが僕の頼みだ
僕は赤くなる　僕は収縮する
足が上つてゆく
おお　僕は何処へ行く
大きく世界が一回転して
僕が上になる
高くからの俯瞰
ああ　両肩に柔軟な雲

Tetsubō

Boku wa chiheisen ni tobitsuku
Wazuka ni yubisaki ga hikkakatta
Boku wa sekai ni burasagatta
Kinniku dake ga boku no tanomi da
Boku wa akaku naru boku wa shūshuku suru
Ashi ga agatte yuku
Oo boku wa doko e iku
Ōkiku sekai ga ikkaiten shite
Boku ga ue ni naru
Takaku kara no fukan
Aa ryōkata ni jūnan na kumo

Horizontal Bar

I jump at the horizon.
My fingertips barely catch it.
I hang on the world.
My muscles are all I can count on.
My color reddens. My body contracts.
My legs go up.
Oh, where am I going?
The world makes a huge turn,
and I am up above.
I look down from high up.
Ah, a soft cloud touches my shoulders.[23]

In his *Kajiki* writings, Murano never mentions Bertaux as the source of his idea for "cold order." In fact, it is striking that he omits foreign sources for his conceptualization of New Objectivity, or the German writers whom he could have had in mind as possible models for this new poetics. However, a closer reading of his later writings clearly suggests the influence of a number of contemporary German scholars who had discussed and critiqued the Neue Sachlichkeit movement: they include Heinz Kindermann, Paul Fechter, Günther Müller, and Alois Bauer. Their studies, which Murano knew either directly or via translations and summaries available in Japanese, remained a constant reference in his elaboration on New Objectivity, even after the war.[24]

Murano, like many other Japanese intellectuals who became interested in New Objectivity, was particularly intrigued by Kindermann's distinction, introduced in his

23 Translation in Koriyama and Lueders 1995, pp. 11–12.

24 Besides Kindermann's book mentioned below, among the most influential works for the Japanese reception of Neue Sachlichkeit were Fechter's *Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart* (German poetry of the present, 1929), Müller's "Neue Sachlichkeit in der Dichtung" (New Objectivity in poetry, 1929), and Bauer's "Vorläufiges zur sogenannten Neuen Sachlichkeit" (Preliminary thoughts on the so-called New Objectivity, 1930). For their Japanese translations and summaries, refer to the chronology in TMS6, pp. 1073–1102.

treatise *Das literarische Antlitz der Gegenwart* (The literary face of the present, 1930), between a "timeless" or "idealistic objectivist poetry" (*Zeitlose* [*chōjidaiteki* 超時代的] or *idealistische Sachlichkeitsdichtung*) and a "time-bound objectivist poetry" (*Zeitgebundene* [*sokujidaiteki* 即時代的] *Sachlichkeitsdichtung*). The former was characterized as focusing on formal and philosophical preoccupations and gesturing toward absoluteness, timelessness, and even mysticism, while the latter was marked more by an attention to social, contemporary, and even ironic and satirical elements.[25] Murano explicitly mentions this distinction for the first time in a 1937 article, but it seems that he had been well aware of it since the early 1930s.[26]

It was important for Murano to differentiate his own New Objectivity not only from the older realism of the naturalists, but also from the newer socialist realism of the proletarians and, at the same time, from other Japanese instantiations of modernism, especially surrealism. He used Kindermann's definition of the double nature of New Objectivity to articulate his own position within the Japanese literary field, a position he summarizes in an oft-quoted passage from the abovementioned "Keishiki ni kansuru danpen":

> The time-bound, socially oriented aspect of New Objectivity (as reportage literature) may provide today's proletarian poetry with a strong, fascinating form.... On the other hand, from the perspective of the school of pure art / school of technique [that is, the modernists], [New Objectivity] can be seen as something that, transcending the current times and society, stresses reverence [*ikei* 畏敬] and affection [*keiai* 敬愛] toward formal beauty, rather than the coverage of current things.[27]

Therefore, the protean nature of New Objectivity could benefit both opposing movements in the Japanese literary field of that era. Murano's New Objectivity could present itself as a synthesis between formalism and realism.

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25 As a matter of fact, the maxims by Nicolai Hartmann, Iwan Goll, Kasimir Edschmid, and others that occasionally appear in Murano's writings during the interwar period (and even afterward) seem to come mostly from this very source. A reference to expressionist "hysteria" is in this book, too (Kindermann 1930, p. 57). In his discussion of Kindermann's book and its impact on Murano, Suzuki (1986, pp. 98–111) hypothesizes that *Taisō shishū* was Murano's attempt at Kindermann's "idealistic Sachlichkeit." On the reception of Kindermann among other Japanese writers interested in New Objectivity, see Nishimura 2003a; Chiba 2003.

26 Murano, "Shinsokubutsushugi no yōgo" 新即物主義の擁護 (A defense of New Objectivity), *Shinryōdo*, October 1937. I refer to the text reprinted in Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, pp. 92–95. Murano elaborates further on this distinction in the 1951 essay "Shinsokubutsushugi no tenkai" 新即物主義の展開 (The development of New Objectivity). Following Kindermann, he clarifies, quite schematically, that authors such as R. M. Rilke (1875–1926), Stefan George (1868–1933), and Klaus Mann (1906–1949) belong to the first category, while Erich Kästner (1899–1974), Erich Maria Remarque (1898–1970), and Ludwig Renn (1889–1979) belong to the second category (Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 90).

27 TMS6, p. 260. The emphasis on "reverence" and "love" toward things is a recurring topic in Murano's interwar writings. One of its sources seems to be a sentence from Nicolai Hartmann's *Ethik* (1926), quoted in Kindermann 1930, p. 55: "Die materiale Wertethik bedeutet eine neue Art Liebe zur Sache, eine neue Hingabe, neue Ehrfurcht vor dem Großen." Murano partially translated this passage in the article "Gendaishi e no shōron": "A new kind of love for things [*jibutsu*], a new devotion, a new reverence [*ikei*] for the great" (Murano 1932, p. 18); and again, in his postwar writings on the subject (Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 89).

This double nature is also reflected in the poems in *Taisō shishū* that Murano wrote during this early phase. While some of these poems, such as the aforementioned "Taisō" and "Tetsubō (II)," emphasize abstraction and formalism, others, such as "Tōhan" 登攀 (Mountaineering) and "Sukī" スキー (Skiing) (both originally published in 1932), indulge in narrative, vignette-like, and perhaps even humorous tones, at least partly attributable to the *Zeitgebundene* (time-bound) variety of *Sachlichkeit* and the influence of the poet Joachim Ringelnatz (1883–1934), one of its best interpreters.[28]

The Touch of the Real: Neue Sachlichkeit in Japan

Murano's use of the New Objectivity category presents a number of personal peculiarities and appropriations, reflecting in part how German Neue Sachlichkeit was received in Japan. Murano was an economics graduate from Keio University who was working in a branch of the Riken conglomerate and not a Germanist academically, and he developed an interest in German poetry only during his twenties.[29] As the lists of publications and contributors available in previous scholarship show, in no way was he the first to write on Neue Sachlichkeit in Japan, nor was he the best expert available on this subject.[30] To better highlight Murano's position within the Japanese literary field, I will now take a little detour and discuss the reception of Neue Sachlichkeit in Shōwa Japan.

Like other avant-garde movements, the works and writers connected to this German movement were introduced to Japan by way of translations and articles in cultural journals. The reception of Neue Sachlichkeit took place through two main outlets. On the one hand, it was received through academia, where an important role was played by *Erunte* エルンテ (1929–1937) and *Kasutanien* カスタニエン (1933–1938), two journals associated with the Germanistics departments of Tokyo and Kyoto imperial universities, respectively. On the other hand, Neue Sachlichkeit was introduced to the literary field through modernist journals. The literary field's interest in the "new" or "young" literature of Germany (as it was often presented) reached its peak from 1930 to 1932, when terms such as "Noie Zaharihikaito" or its Japanese translation "Shinsokubutsushugi" could be spotted in the table of contents of any number of journals and books.

28 "Tōhan" depicts the ascension of a party of mountaineers that also includes a woman whose skirt at some point is blown up by the peak's wind. The "I" in "Sukī" engages in an almost comical display of skiing prowess to impress a female skier.

29 Like other exponents of the modernist scene (one may think of Kanbara Tai 神原泰 (1898–1997), who worked in an oil company, or Nishiwaki Junzaburō 西脇順三郎 (1894–1982), a professor at Keio University), Murano was not a professional writer in the sense that he did not make a living from his writing. The literary journals to which he contributed printed only a few hundred copies per month. The Tokyo publishing house Aoi Shobō printed *Taisō shishū* in a limited edition of five hundred copies. Confirming its circulation in the poetry milieus, the collection was reviewed in *Mita bungaku* 三田文学 (February 1940) and *Nihon shidan* 日本詩壇 (February 1940), with praise for its original combination of photos and poetry, and especially *Shinryōdo* (by Sasazawa Yoshiaki, Kondō Azuma, and Ueda Tamotsu 上田保; February 1940). It also earned the *Bungei hanron* 文芸汎論 prize for poetry collections in 1940.

30 The rich chronology in TMS6 (pp. 1073–1102) is *de rigueur* for anyone interested in the history of Neue Sachlichkeit in Japan. See also, in the same volume, Wada 2010. Other surveys of this topic can be found in Nakano 1975, pp. 177–186; Chiba 1978, pp. 88–91; Ko 1989; Chiba 2003; Nishimura 2003a, pp. 33–38. Albeit extremely rich and complete, these surveys tend to focus mainly on modernist publications. Supplementary research is needed to fully document the impact of New Objectivity in the proletarian literature camp, as well as in general media.

Shi to shiron, confirming its ecumenical and encyclopedic openness toward all modernist movements from abroad, featured articles on the subject such as Sasazawa Yoshiaki's "Noie Zaharihikaito bungaku" ノイエ・ザハリヒカイト文学 (Literature of Neue Sachlichkeit) in the June 1930 issue. Unlike Murano, Sasazawa graduated in German from the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, and it seems that, in the early 1930s, he played an important role for Murano as a conduit of information on the new German literature, not only through translations and articles that he published on a wide array of literary journals, but also, starting in 1931, through their personal acquaintance.[31] It is striking that the only poem by Joachim Ringelnatz that Murano translated in the early 1930s already had been translated by Sasazawa the year before.[32]

Japanese modernists concentrated on the literary aspects of Neue Sachlichkeit and tended to neglect its ramifications in other art forms such as painting. By contrast, they provoked interest within the proletarian camp.[33] In modernists' writings, if any visual artist was linked to the New Objectivity, it was the likes of Le Corbusier (1887–1965), László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), the Bauhaus members, or the stage designer Kurt Richter (1900–1969).

The Japanese literary world had to deal with a current that, unlike surrealism or futurism, had a very loose structure and lacked internal organization. Therefore, despite the wealth of available information, and maybe even because of that, Japanese intellectuals construed New Objectivity and its canon of authors as something not necessarily coextensive with what was considered such in Germany during the interwar period, or even today.[34] Especially in the field of poetry, they generally tended to read the movement in

31 Murano, *Watashi no shiteki henreki*, quoted in Ko 1989, p. 90; Wada 1990, pp. 47–48.

32 The poem is "Fallschirmsprung meiner Begleiterin" (Parachute jump of my travel companion), from the collection *Flugzeuggedanken* (Aircraft thoughts, 1929). Murano's translation was published in the only issue of the journal *Shinsokubutsusei bungaku* 新即物性文学 (New Objectivist literature) in November 1931, while Sasazawa's was published in the August 1930 issue of *Shishin* 詩神 (God of poetry). The journal *Shinsokubutsusei bungaku* deserves a few words here. It started as a joint collaboration between Sasazawa, Murano, and another New Objectivity adherent, Kobayashi Takeshichi 小林武七 (d.u.). Its single issue includes translations of poems by Erich Kästner, the "Idealisierung des Sachlichen" (Idealization of the factual) chapter from Kindermann's *Das literarische Antlitz der Gegenwart* (1930), Joseph Roth (1894–1939)'s article "Schluß mit der Neuen Sachlichkeit!" (Enough of New Objectivity!, 1930) (partial translation), and Hermann Kesten (1900–1996)'s short story *Das verlorene Motiv* (The lost motive, 1929). Among the original works, it features one aero-poem by Sasazawa, a poem on Niels Bukh's gymnastics by Kobayashi, and "Nichibei taikō suiei" 日米対抗水泳 (The Japan v. USA swimming match), one of the rare sports poems by Murano that was not included in *Taisō shishū*. The entire issue is reproduced in TMS6, pp. 557–574. On the fortunes of the aero-poetry subgenre (whose connections with the *aeropoesia* [aeropoetry] of the Italian Futurists are still to be investigated) among the Japanese new objectivists, see Wada 2010.

33 The "proletarians" Yanase Masamu 柳瀬正夢 (1900–1945) and Murayama Tomoyoshi 村山知義 (1901–1977), who came from a militant background in the Taishō avant-garde movement, devoted two publications to George Grosz (1893–1959), which came out in 1929 and 1949, respectively. Murano mentions Grosz and Otto Dix (1891–1969) only in passing (Murano 1938a, pp. 46–47).

34 In poetry, the most discussed and translated authors were Joachim Ringelnatz and Erich Kästner. Interest in the latter continued well into the 1930s, with translations of his children's novels. In a 1937 essay ("Shinsokubutsushugi no yōgo"), Murano calls *Junge deutsche Lyrik*, edited by Otto Heuschele (1928), "a representative Neue Sachlichkeit poetry collection" of the idealistic type (Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 94). In fiction, the names that were most commonly circulated were those of Remarque (especially for his novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*), Renn (especially for his novel *War*), Joseph Roth, Alfred Döblin (1878–1957), and Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958), and in drama, Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) and Erwin Piscator (1893–1966).

merely aesthetic and formal terms, not infrequently generically equating New Objectivity with all the post-expressionist generation of German writers.

In the case of narrative works, Japanese commentators acknowledged the non-fiction, documentary, and even journalistic approaches to prose writing as one of the main features of New Objectivity. As early as his *Kajiki* essays, Murano perceived that New Objectivity could give birth to a genre of reportage literature, or *hōkoku bungaku* 報告文学. Writing in 1937, he lamented that, in the minds of some Japanese commentators, the very idea of New Objectivity corresponded to second-rate, reportage-like literature.[35] In fact, as the 1930s progressed, the emphasis on this aspect made it possible to sporadically use the New Objectivity category, or the adjective *sachlich* (*zaharihi*), even when referring to the war literature that documented the Japanese military operations in China.[36]

From 1933 onward, also reflecting Adolf Hitler's rise to power, the Japanese excitement over German modernist literature began to fade. The discourse over New Objectivity gradually disappeared from literary journals and survived only in more specialized publications that also began to discuss its replacement and absorption by a new German "national literature" (*kokumin bungaku* 国民文学).[37] In February 1934, Sasazawa Yoshiaki wrote that "the Neue Sachlichkeit literature has been chased out" of Germany.[38] Murano, too, temporarily shelved his interest in this movement, as he reportedly did for a complete translation of Kindermann's book on which he had been working.[39]

The influence of New Objectivity as it was construed in the Japanese literary discourse of the interwar era on Murano's work is hardly deniable, but it is just one of the components of his poetry. I would like to de-emphasize this category as an exclusive hermeneutical tool in interpreting *Taisō shishū*, and attempt a reading which takes other elements into account. I have already discussed the indebtedness of the older part of *Taisō shishū* to the discourse on formalism developed within the Japanese modernist scene. In the second part of this paper, I will focus on the later poems in the collection to highlight the role of other elements that are not necessarily attributable to New Objectivity or the domain of modernist poetry.

"Neuer Körper und Neuer Geist": Re-reading the Later Poems of *Taisō shishū*

Background

After a break of more than two years, Murano resumed writing new sports poems in the second half of 1934, publishing nine of the poems that were later included in *Taisō shishū* in the following sixteen months.[40] In the span of time that separates the two main cores of

35 Murano, "Shinsokubutsushugi no yōgo," in Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, pp. 92–93.

36 See Murano himself in *Shinryōdo*, November 1938 (quoted in Nakai 2007, p. 479). Echoes of this usage can be found in Yamagiwa 1959, p. 8, and Chiba 2003, p. 67.

37 Nishimura 2003a, p. 39.

38 Sasazawa 1934.

39 Murano 1936, p. 20.

40 According to the chronology of the *Taisō shishū* poems, prepared by Wada (1990, p. 47), Murano published five poems in 1934, four in 1935, and one in 1938. Two poems seem to have been published for the first time in *Taisō shishū*. In 1936, he published no poetry at all (Hikita 2004, p. 25). These dates refer to the first publication of the poems in literary journals. Some of them were reprinted in other journals in the following months or years, and most were more or less slightly changed on that occasion or before their inclusion in *Taisō shishū*.

the collection, and onward, the Japanese literary field saw significant changes: the repression and disbanding of most of the "proletarian literature," the emergence of *tenkō bungaku* 転向文学, the rise of an aesthetic-centric trend of "literary renaissance" epitomized by the writers of *Bungakukai* 文学界 (Literary world, established in 1933), a revival of the topics of Japanese literary and spiritual identity, and a critical revision of Westernization (commonly subsumed under the "return to Japan" label), championed among others by the Japan Romantic School.[41]

After the persecution of communist and socialist writers, liberal humanists gathered around the journal *Kōdō* 行動 (Action, 1933–1935), and similar moderate groups of progressive and antifascist writers remained active during the decade. Despite the climate of mounting nationalism and repression of dissent, the mid-1930s were marked by debates on the "literature of actionism" (*kōdōshugi bungaku* 行動主義文学), the "defense of culture" (*bunka no yōgo* 文化の擁護), and the figure of the committed intellectual, as exemplified by the British New Country poets and the writers who gathered in Paris for the 1935 "International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture."[42]

After the closing in 1933 of *Shi to shiron* (which had been renamed *Bungaku* the year before), the modernist front dispersed into several groups and journals, with no one ever attaining the same influential status they had earlier enjoyed. Murano followed Haruyama Yukio 春山行夫 (1902–1994), the influential poet and theoretician, who was the principal force behind *Shi to shiron*, and Kondō Azuma 近藤東 (1904–1988) and became a member of the editorial board of two journals, *Shihō* and *Shinryōdo*. The name of this second journal echoes the New Country poets, who had become a model for a politically conscious modernism. Under the pretext of purely artistic discussions, the *Shinryōdo* contributors managed to present works and ideas from the poets of the Auden Group, André Gide, Louis Aragon, and other European antifascist writers, and expressed, though in an increasingly oblique and ambiguous fashion, their reservations about nationalism and militarism.[43] *Shinryōdo* had an internationalist, moderately progressive, and liberal orientation, and even Murano, who was possibly the most cautious of the journal's editors, expressed such sympathies in his contributions.[44] However, as the decade drew to a close amid arrests, intimidation, and co-opting into state-sponsored propaganda, the Japanese intellectual world became irreversibly entangled in the "quicksand of fascism" (to use John Solt's expression).[45] After the beginning of the Pacific War in 1941, almost all Japanese

41 Reflecting the ambivalences of the Japanese reception of New Objectivity, the writers of the Japan Romantic School also developed an interest in the German writers associated with this movement. Heinz Kindermann's full allegiance to the Nazi regime possibly played a role in reorienting the perception of New Objectivity in Japan. See Nishimura 2003a.

42 See Tyler 2008, pp. 395–405; Torrance 2009; Müller 2015. In the article "SACHLICHKEIT henpen" SACHLICHKEIT 片々 (Sachlichkeit miscellanea, *Bungei hanron*, December 1936), Murano briefly discusses the similarities between actionism and New Objectivity, but he concludes that the first lacks the anti-sentimentality and philosophical grounding of the latter.

43 Nakai 2007, chap. 1; Wada 2015.

44 Suzuki 1986, pp. 64–84; Hikita 2004; Nakai 2007, pp. 71–78. In the November 1937 issue of *Shinryōdo*, Murano explicitly warned that the fact that the journal was presenting foreign ideas, such as those of the New Country poets, did not mean a commitment to such ideas. See also Murano 1938b, p. 127.

45 Solt 1999, p. 136.

poets, including Murano and other members of *Shinryōdo*, were recruited into the ranks of patriotic literature.[46]

Takeda Chūya 武田忠哉 (1904–1944), a Tokyo Imperial University graduate in German literature, who had made a substantial contribution by introducing German New Objectivity to literary and academic circles in the 1930s, presented a nationalistic version of it during the early 1940s.[47] He launched a journal called *Noie Zaharihikaito* ノイエ・ザハリヒカイト (1935–1939) in which he expounded on his view of New Objectivity as a modernistic cleanser of the ills of contemporary society, eventually conflating it, in the 1940 book *Kokubō kokka* 国防国家 (The national defense state), with the anti-liberal myths of cultural regeneration that the Japanese regime was sanctioning in those years.[48]

Amid these changes in the literary scene, Murano's perception of New Objectivity was changing, too. In 1933, he started to read Rilke, a poet in whom he saw a precursor of the "timeless" or "idealistic" Sachlichkeit theorized by Kindermann.[49] Another new interest was visual media, especially photography. One of the most enduring legacies of New Objectivity in Japan was its influence on the local evolution of photojournalism and artistic photography. A new movement of modernist photography, called Shinkō Shashin 新興写真 (New Photography), flourished during the 1930s, influenced by German technical and instrumental innovations, and inspired by the functionalist and anti-lyrical aesthetics of Soviet realism, Neue Sachlichkeit, the Bauhaus, Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray, and others. Rejecting the previous schools of pictorial, artistic photography (*geijutsu shashin* 芸術写真), this movement absorbed the techniques of avant-garde photography (including photomontage and typophoto) and reflected a new interest in depicting contemporary reality in new ways, an interest often exemplified by a fascination with close-up, sharp-angled pictures of subjects taken from consumer culture and modern technology.[50]

Murano followed the development of photography in Japan with interest, an interest that materialized into his contributing to one of the major showcases for this movement's ideas, the magazine *Fototaimusu* (Photo times, 1924–1940), where, in February 1938, he published one of his most commonly cited writings on the subject of New Objectivity, "Shashin ni okeru Noie Zaharihikaito" 写真に於ける新即物主義(ノイエ・ザハリヒカイト) (New Objectivity in photography). Here, he singled out "the mechanism of the art of photography" as "the most *sachlich* among all the other arts in that it necessarily makes reality its sole material of expression."[51]

46 In 1942, Murano, Haruyama, and Kitasono joined the poetry branch of the state-sponsored Nihon Bungaku Hōkokukai 日本文学報国会 (Japanese Literature Patriotic Association).

47 For example, he had published the influential monograph *Noie Zaharihikaito bungakuron* ノイエ・ザハリヒカイト文学論 (Literary theory of Neue Sachlichkeit, 1931).

48 Chiba 2003, pp. 74–75, and Wada 2010, p. 1059; see also Nishimura 2003a, pp. 38–40.

49 Chronology in Murano 2004, p. 201. Murano mentions Rilke in a review in the last issue of *Kajiki* from April 1933 (TMS6, p. 554).

50 On the Shinkō Shashin movement and Japanese photography during the 1930s, see Takeba 2003; Weisenfeld 2009; Nishimura 2003b, pp. 65–69.

51 Murano 1938a, p. 49. Also quoted in Wada 1990, p. 49, Hikita 2002, pp. 35–36. In June 1938, he was one of the participants in a symposium on avant-garde photography in Tokyo, sponsored by the same magazine (Takeba 2003, p. 150). Murano published another relevant article on photography in the June 1939 issue of this magazine, "Geijutsu shashin no naimen" 芸術写真の内面 (The inner side of artistic photography). See Wada 1990, p. 49; Murano 2001; Omura 2016, p. 76.

In the second half of the 1930s, Murano also published other short essays on poetic theory.[52] He restated and further clarified his ideas on New Objectivity, and in some of them he stressed the ontological view (*sonzaikan* 存在感) on which it rested.[53] He also showed an increasingly explicit indebtedness to his German sources, such as Kindermann.[54]

Can we then assume that Murano wrote his sports poems from 1934–1935 onward with the same spirit and the same poetic tenets as from 1931–1932? Murano was aware that his view of New Objectivity and poetry had evolved in the time between these two groups of poems. In 1940, referring to *Taisō shishū*, he wrote:

> In fact, I think that those who have read this collection have already noticed that the form of this exercise [*taisō*] shows something quite different between the first and the second part.
>
> The form, all too diligent like a high school student [in the first part], has gradually started to show itself incorrigible, like a college student [in the second]. Aging has certainly something to do with it, but this also shows that the new subject of ethics has trespassed into the regular class of gymnastics [*taisō*].[55]

Behind an analogy that compares the evolution of his poetry to the change in attitude of a disciplined student (who discovers that there is more to life than strict adherence to formal prescriptions), Murano seems to point to the addition of newfound layers of meaning in his poetic practice. Likewise, "ethics" (*shūshin* 修身) is presented as an intruding element in the all-too-formal class of gymnastics carried on so far. This probably is a humorous allusion to the fact that the later poems in *Taisō shishū* show signs of a distinct influence from the style of Murano's series of poems called "Kindai shūshin" 近代修身 (Modern ethics), which he started in 1937 and which formed the core of his subsequent collection.[56] It also suggests that we are no longer supposed to look solely for formal preoccupations in these poems, in

52 They include: "Jūyō na konkyo o" 重要な根拠を (The essential ground, *Aishō*, April 1934), "SACHLICHKEIT henpen" (*Bungei hanron*, December 1936), "Atarashiki chitsujo no tame ni" 新しき秩序のために (For a new order, *Shosō*, April 1937), "Ririshizumu no mondai" リリシズムの問題 (The problem with lyricism, *Shisaku*, June 1937), "Shinsokubutsushugi no yōgo" (*Shinryōdo*, October 1937; see above, note 26), and "Atarashiki shi no tame ni" (For the new poetry, *Shinryōdo*, December 1937). Murano wrote the two *Shinryōdo* articles as a harsh response to the critic Hara Ichirō 原一郎 (1902–1984), who purported that New Objectivity could benefit from the absorption of some elements of surrealism. These two articles were reprinted in Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986. See also Suzuki 1986, pp. 69–70.

53 For instance, in "Shinsokubutsushugi no yōgo" (Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 93), and Murano 1938a, p. 47.

54 Apparently, Murano was not aware of Kindermann's support of the Nazis, or simply chose, even after the war, to focus his attention on the aesthetic ideas of this German critic and ignore their political and historical implications.

55 Murano, "Kansō" 感想 (Thoughts), *Bungei hanron*, May 1940; quoted in Hikita 2004, p. 16.

56 Murano published the poems of the series "Kindai shūshin" from 1937 to 1938, mostly in *Shinryōdo* and *Bungei hanron*. A revealing sign of the overlap between the two styles is the fact that the final poem in *Taisō shishū*, "Rokuboku" 肋木 (Wall bars), was originally published in *Bungei hanron* (January 1938) under the "Kindai shūshin" rubric. These poems were later collected in the collective *Gendai shijin shū* 現代詩人集 (Anthology of contemporary poets, 1940) and in Murano's collection *Jojō hikō* 抒情飛行 (Lyrical flight), published in 1942. The style of these poems is illocutionary and, at times, hortatory, with a distinctly somber vein. In Suzuki's words (1986, pp. 45–48, 71–72), they are imbued with "disappointment, bitterness, and irony," are marked by a "surprising difference" from the previous poems on exercise, and could be ascribed to the time-bound variety of New Objectivity.

that they are also imbued with new existential concerns. While we might consider the oldest group of poems in *Taisō shishū* to be an attempt to create poetry based on "cold order" and the rejection of expressionist frenzy, the second part of the collection, while not rejecting them completely, is also informed by other elements. One of them is a reflection on the modes of human existence.

From "Cold Order" to a Hermeneutics of Human Existence

In the later part of *Taisō shishū*, New Objectivity seems to recede from the spotlight. Murano never alludes to it in his own preface, presumably composed in 1939.[57] Here, we still find a polemic against the "hysteria" of contemporary poetry that would have fit well in Murano's writings of the early 1930s: "If this collection could oppose previous tortured poetry [*yūmonshi* 憂悶詩], that would be an unexpected joy. Today, there is no longer any reason for poets to have hysteria [*hisuterī*] as their essence."[58]

However, there is no mention of "returning to things." "Things" (*jibutsu*) are now replaced by the act of performing (*enjiru* 演じる). He describes the collection itself as an "exercise" (*taisō*):

> In order to further perfect the purpose of this collection, I needed the help of Riefenstahl, Wolff, and Kitasono Katsue. The fact that my exercise can now be performed with the accompaniment of such artists is, for this writer, an extraordinary honor. And I love, without being concerned about age and so on, to possess an eternally flexuous body, a throat that is like a flute.[59]

The exercise metaphor reveals one of the main themes of the collection, which emerges in an increasingly conspicuous fashion in its later poems: an exploration of the heuristic powers of action, an examination of the value of bodily experience, as opposed to analytical thinking.[60]

The oldest part of the collection, though already alluding to the interaction between the subject and the external world, mainly presented sports events as an example of the spatial and dynamic composition of masses and forces, and of the "thingness" of the human body. Physical exercise was a metonymy for anti-expressionist formal precision, order, and self-restraint. In the latter part, sporting events, captured in their temporal isolation, are the playground for Murano's exploration of the interrelation between action and consciousness. In these poems, the formal preoccupation with "cold order" is sidelined by an accrued interest in those moments that reveal something about the modes of human existence. This is not to say that these elements are mutually exclusive, as they coexist to different degrees in most poems of the collection. However, the focus on the existential element appears to increase as the composition date of the poems becomes more recent.

57 Also noticed by Hikita 2002, p. 35.
58 Murano 2004, p. 2.
59 Murano 2004, p. 2.
60 I attempt a reading of these poems that emphasizes the role that contemporary ideas in philosophical anthropology may have played in their conception. This is not an attempt at muting other potentially fruitful readings, such as those that could explore the representation of bodily activity in *Taisō shishū* from the perspectives of gender, ethnicity, age, and able/disabled bodies.

Murano prefigured the accentuation of this element in an article published in March 1932. Appearing in the same month in which he published most of the poems of the first part of *Taisō shishū* in *Kajiki* and *Bungaku* (such as "Tetsubō [II]," quoted above), it also marks an important step in the evolution of his interpretation of New Objectivity, as it gestures toward a less formalistic, more philosophically nurtured version of it. In this article, after quoting Heidegger on the concept that the essence of truth lies in the freedom of engaging with beings as they are let be (*aru mono o arashimeru koto* 在るものを在らしめること), Murano states that "true reality cannot be sought either *before* reality, or *after* it." This is what surrealism, vitalism, and romanticism try to do. Instead, he says, "reality as it is can be sought only *in the middle of it*."[61] To put it in the words of Kasimir Edschmid (1890–1966), who Murano quotes via Kindermann, as usual, "The equation is spirit and blood [*Geist und Blut*], not spirit and spirit."[62] Edschmid's formula appears to resonate with the German subtitle to the 1939 edition of *Taisō shishū*, "Neuer Körper und neuer Geist" (New body and new spirit). In the case of *Taisō shishū*'s poems, we can say that the "blood" that should provide access to "the middle of reality" certainly acquires a literally corporeal nuance.

Only through an attitude that reevaluates the encounter between the world and the self can human beings attain a global understanding of reality. To quote Murano's postwar essays, the method of New Objectivity "drags down the self from the altar of the Cartesian self," and exposes the fact that the self only shares with the things of the world an equal role as a "precondition" (*yoken* 与件) of the human experience of the world.[63] In his critical writings of the 1950s, referencing Heidegger, Sartre, and Hartmann, Murano reread his prewar New Objectivity poems, placing a stronger emphasis on the existentialist elements in them.[64] This reading is somewhat biased, if only because Murano deepened his knowledge of these philosophers only after the war, when existentialism (especially in its French version)

61 Murano 1932, p. 19 (emphasis in the original). This article echoes Heidegger's lecture "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit" (On the essence of truth), delivered in various German cities in 1930 and 1932, and published in 1943; seemingly Murano had access to sources that quoted from its unofficial circulating transcriptions. During the 1930s, Murano was undoubtedly fascinated by Heidegger's philosophy. Quotations and references to Heidegger (mostly via the German studies on New Objectivity mentioned above) appear here and there in his writings of this period. In his review of *Taisō shishū*, *Shinryōdo* colleague Kondō Azuma claims that Murano "has been a longtime admirer of Heidegger" (1940, p. 244). However, despite this fascination, Murano's knowledge of this philosopher before the war appears to have been largely indirect and confined to a limited number of concepts and keywords, among them that of "ground" (*Grund*, *konkyo* 根拠).

62 The quotation is from Edschmid's *Über den Expressionismus in der Literatur und die neue Dichtung* (On expressionism in literature and new poetry, 1919). Murano quotes it in German, but he follows it with an imprecise Japanese translation. Kindermann (1930, p. 42) presents Edschmid as one of the leaders of expressionism who, from 1920 onward, had started to move beyond expressionism.

63 Murano, "Shinsokubutsushugi no saishuppatsu" 新即物主義の再出発 (A new start for New Objectivity), in Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 90. The second concept had already been expressed in Murano 1938a, p. 48.

64 Among Murano's critical writings of the postwar period, the most important in his rereading of his prewar involvement with New Objectivity is "Shinsokubutsushugi no tenkai," originally published in *Shigaku*, October 1951. This essay is also known by the title of "Shinsokubutsushugi no saishuppatsu," under which it was published in the 1952 collection *Konnichi no shiron* 今日の詩論 (Today's poetics; enlarged edition: 1986). Other significant essays in this respect are "Shiteki shikō no henreki" 詩的思考の遍歴 (A journey in poetic thinking), first published in the book *Gendaishi no jikken* 現代詩の実験 (Lived experiences in contemporary poetry, 1952), and Murano's autobiography, *Watashi no shiteki henreki* わたしの詩的遍歴 (My journey in poetry), published posthumously in 1987.

became very popular among the poets of the new generation.[65] Still, a number of poems in *Taisō shishū* (especially in its latter part) do take on an existential-hermeneutic perspective. Renouncing the privilege accorded by Descartes and transcendental philosophy to the *res cogitans*, they can be seen as striving to reflect on the structure of human existence by extracting from the anonymity of everyday gestures a series of moments of comprehension, authenticity, and wholeness.

In the poem "Tsuriwa" (Rings), first published in October 1934, physical exercise seems to disclose to the subject a comprehensive knowledge of his world, something unattainable through intellectual *a priori* categories:

吊環

僕は蝙蝠のやうに逆にぶら下る
空のパラシユートが僕を吊り下げる
僕はしばらくここに安定する
かけよる人達を見ながら
訝し相な人達の顔をみながら
僕は
僕の世界を理解して

Tsuriwa

Boku wa kōmori no yō ni sakasa ni burasagaru
Sora no parashūto ga boku o tsurisageru
Boku wa shibaraku koko ni antei suru
Kakeyoru hitotachi o minagara
Ibukashisō na hitotachi no kao o minagara
Boku wa
Boku no sekai o rikai shite

Rings

I dangle upside down like a bat
The sky's parachute dangles me
I, for one moment, stand still here
Looking at people who come forth
Looking at the faces of people with their suspicious airs
I
Understand my world…[66]

65 A notable use of phenomenological jargon can be found in the collection *Mumei shishū* 無名詩集 (Anonymous poems, 1947) by Abe Kōbō 安部公房 (1924–1993). The essay "Shi no unmei" 詩の運命 (The fate of poetry, dated May 1947), which Abe placed at the end of the collection as its afterword, characteristically opens with the sentence: "As is the case with everything else, in viewing poetry too, it is impossible to escape the opposition between *noesis* and *noema*" (Abe 1997, p. 264).

66 If not stated otherwise, all translations are by the author.

In “Kōshōgai” (Hurdles), originally published in December 1935, the precedence of bodily action over logical thinking is clearly articulated. It is only before or after exercise that the subject can interrogate herself on the possibility of her actions. During the action itself, there is nothing but action:

高障害

花もなく
匂ひもない季節
運動シヤツの処女性は
白いリンネルに過ぎなかつた
彼女は身軽にハードルを超えた
そして考へた
かくも容易(たやす)く
超すことが出来ると

Kōshōgai

Hana mo naku
Nioi mo nai kisetsu
Undō shatsu no shojosei wa
Shiroi rinneru ni suginakatta
Kanojo wa migaru ni hādoru o koeta
Soshite kangaeta
Kakumo tayasuku
Kosu koto ga dekiru to

Hurdles

A season with no flowers
Or scents
The virginity of the sports uniform
It was nothing but white linen
She nimbly crossed the hurdle
Then she thought
So easily
I can pass them

The same happens in “Kyōsō” (Race), a poem published at the end of 1934, but heavily (and rather significantly) revised before its inclusion in *Taisō shishū*:

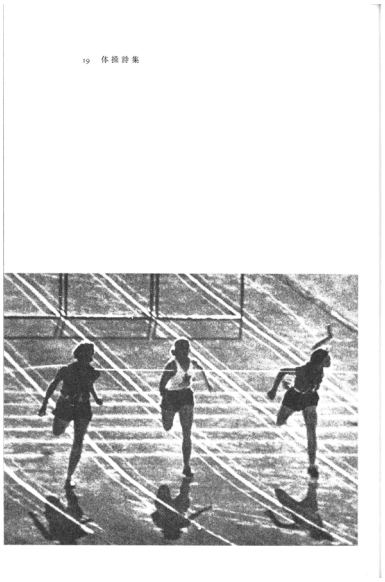

Figure 3. "Kōshōgai" (Hurdles). As reproduced in Murano 2004. Photo depicting the finish of the 80m hurdles race won by the Italian athlete Trebisonda "Ondina" Valla. Source: Leni Riefenstahl. *Schönheit im Olympischen Kampf.* Deutscher Verlag, 1937.

競走

あなたは不思議だ
あなたの胸のナンバーは
すばやく空間を行きすぎた
おお一枚の白い速力だつた

だが　いまあなたは
笑つて僕と握手をする
あなたにはもう速力がなく
言葉は吃(ども)り
思想のタオルを肩から垂らしてゐる

Kyōsō

Anata wa fushigi da
Anata no mune no nanbā wa
Subayaku kūkan o ikisugita
Oo ichimai no shiroi sokuryoku datta

Daga　ima anata wa
Waratte boku to akushu o suru
Anata ni wa mō sokuryoku ga naku

Kotoba wa domori
Shisō no taoru o kata kara tarashite iru

Race

You are formidable
The number on your chest
Swiftly sped through space
Oh, it was a piece of white speed

But now you
Smile and shake hands with me
There's no longer speed in you
Words falter
You dangle from your shoulder the towel of thought

Here, "thought" (*shisō*) is ironically reified as an accessory that, like language, might come in handy, in a completely ancillary way (like a towel), only after the physical performance has taken place. The final line was not in the first version of the poem; its addition reveals Murano's intention to clarify the poem's anti-intellectual message.[67]

Exercise liberates, or even cleanses, the subject from the burden of logical thinking. The "I" in the poem "Tetsubō (I)" (Horizontal bar [I], December 1935), an athlete performing his exercise upside down on the high bar, says, in a half-humorous way: "Thoughts went down / and escaped by my nose."

The sporting act is a moment, impervious to intellectual analysis, in which mind and body transcend their logical opposition in the experience of unity and wholeness, thus providing access to authentic existential knowledge. In later years, Murano defined the theme of these poems as the "shining" and the "beautiful intersection between body and spirit" (*nikutai to seishin no utsukushii kōsaten* 肉体と精神の美しい交叉点).[68] Once they are recontextualized within a collection, these poems can be viewed as a gallery of such shining moments. This offers a further explanation of why Murano decided to link his poems with Riefenstahl and Wolff's visual works. The mechanical eye of photography functions as a model of dispassionate bracketing of the world (something akin to phenomenological reduction), eidetically capturing the essence of these moments. Photography manipulates time to this purpose, as its "pure, fundamental artistic operation," Murano writes in 1939,

67 According to other interpretations, the word *shisō* might be a reference to the ideology of the period (the left-wing ideology of proletarian writers or the right-wing ideology of romantics and other Japanists) and the poem could be deriding the insertion of ideological elements that contaminate pure poetry. See Hikita 2002, pp. 43–44; Omura 2016, p. 75. Hikita notes (2004, pp. 24–25) that this poem is not paired to a photograph and wonders whether Murano wanted to avoid politically sensitive associations that could have emerged had he chosen a picture from the Berlin Olympics documenting this discipline. Contemporary readers of the collection could have been reminded of the case of Son Kijŏng 孫基禎 (1912–2002), the Korean runner hailed as a hero by Japanese propaganda, who reluctantly competed for the Empire of Japan under the name of Son Kitei and won the gold medal in the marathon in Berlin in 1936.

68 Murano 1952, p. 70. Also quoted in Nakazawa 1965, p. 28.

is perfected when the "shutter makes a metallic sound and divides (*bunkatsu* 分割) time precisely."[69]

But why should these particular moments matter in the first place? The answer to this question leads us to the cultural atmosphere of the second half of the 1930s. In fact, the second part of *Taisō shishū* probably has more to do with forms of a "return to reality" in contemporary Japanese literature than with New Objectivity. *Fest der Völker* (*Minzoku no saiten* 民族の祭典, Festival of the Nations), the first part of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, came out in Japanese theaters in June 1940, about six months after the publication of *Taisō shishū*. It was a commercial and critical success.[70] Kobayashi Hideo 小林秀雄 (1902–1983), one of the most influential critics of the period, who helped inspire the "literary renaissance" of the 1930s, reported his impressions on the film in "Orimupia" オリムピア, an essay published in the major literary journal *Bungei shunjū* 文藝春秋 (Literary annals) in August 1940. Watching this film provided Kobayashi with the occasion to reiterate some of his most characteristic ideas, such as individual perspectivism, his rejection of intellectualism in favor of intuition and lived experience, and the special status he accorded to primitive, concrete thinking that privileges the haecceity of things and experiences over intellectual abstraction and conceptualization.[71] In "Orimupia," Kobayashi praises sports as moments during which the subject throws away his or her logical ideas (*shisō*), moments during which the "spirit turns completely into body." He also praises cinema and photography as mechanical means that can capture these moments without the addition of intellectual or sentimental structures. Impressed by the scene showing the "primitive" image of the naked body, "unchanged since ancient Greece," of the torchbearer "who came running from the ruins of Olympia," Kobayashi contrasts it with how much man's intellectual knowledge (*chishiki* 知識) had changed instead. He scorns what he calls the "contemporary sentimentalists who wear the mask of realists" for not understanding the certitude and truth of this "form," which is presented, unadulterated, by Riefenstahl's film.[72]

We do not know Kobayashi's opinions of *Taisō shishū*, but the treatment of the subject of sports in "Orimupia" and Murano's collection presents a number of common traits. Generally, the theme of the conflict between thinking and acting as a source of existential anguish and discomfort, especially the "nagging suspicion that protracted intellectual discourse ultimately alienated humans from the very realities they were attempting to fathom,"[73] can be found in other Japanese writers of this period, such as the fiction writer Nakajima Atsushi 中島敦 (1909–1942). Individual experience and action were to be sought as a method to sublate the contradictions of modernity and understand life at a deeper, more authentic level, instead of abstraction and conceptualization. Action could provide intuitive

69 Murano, "Geijutsu shashin no naimen" 芸術写真の内面, in Murano 2001, p. 368.

70 Hikita 2004, p. 24. The second part, *Fest der Schönheit* (Festival of Beauty), was released in December 1940. After seeing the first part, Murano wryly commented in *Shinryōdo*, August 1940: "It is an interesting irony that Riefenstahl's *Festival of the Nations* has appeared before our eyes in the middle of such international upheavals. Or maybe it is not. In fact, is not the current World War a veritable Festival of the Nations? There is no way to imagine who will climb the white platform with the laurel on their heads" (Murano 1940).

71 On these aspects of Kobayashi's thought, see Ōshima 2004, who also mentions "Orimupia." On Kobayashi's prose writing during the war, also see Dorsey 2009a, chaps. 5 and 6.

72 Kobayashi 1978.

73 Dorsey 2009b, p. 416.

access to reality, "an unmediated engagement with the concrete world."[74] This could take the form of a sudden epiphany or a state of transcendence, a recurring topic in the Japanese fiction of the 1930s. The later poems in *Taisō shishū* seem to reflect the increasing naturalization of these topics in the literary discourse of that decade.

This rhetoric of liberation through action from the contradictions of logical thinking and modern civilization is echoed in "Yarinage" (Javelin throw), perhaps the latest piece in *Taisō shishū*, as it appears to be an original poem. Here, the athlete is described as a "new primitive man" (*atarashii genshi no hito*), and the scene is juxtaposed with a hunting metaphor:

槍投

あなたの狙ふのは何です
新しい原始の人よ
ふるへながら光は飛んだ
その方向で
突然おそろしい喚(わめ)きごゑ
ごらん
脊中に槍をたてられ
一瞬にげのびようと蹌(よろめ)くもの
しかし　それも
ぢきに静かになる

Yarinage

Anata no nerau no wa nan desu
Atarashii genshi no hito yo
Furuenagara hikari wa tonda
Sono hōkō de
Totsuzen osoroshii wamekigoe
Goran
Senaka ni yari o taterare
Isshun nigenobiyō to yoromeku mono
Shikashi　sore mo
Jiki ni shizuka ni naru

Javelin Throw

What is it you are aiming at,
You new primitive man?
Quivering, light took flight—
From the direction it flew in
A sudden horrible scream.

74 Dorsey 2009b, p. 418.

> Look, a being
> With a javelin stuck in his back, trying
> For a moment to escape and tottering—
> However, in a short while, everything
> Calms down again.[75]

Like the athletes described by Kobayashi in "Orimupia," the man in this poem is doubly "primitive" (*genshiteki* 原始的 / *shigenteki* 始元的), in the sense that the performance of sports returns him (however ironically) not only to a premodern historical (or ahistorical) temporality, but also to that pre-categorical, pre-epistemological place of unmediated existence which is a central trope of phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics.[76]

Sports, this poem suggests, have something in common with human beings' pre-civilized condition. Modern sports possess an ambiguous nature, in that they are rationalized and scientifically measurable physical activities that result in a temporary release from civilization, an irony that was not lost on Murano, even after the war.[77] The clash between civilization and barbarism, modernity and return to the origin, was a theme that inflamed the cultural debate in Japan in the 1930s, and the liberal *Shinryōdo* group, of which Murano was a member, supported the idea (as long as they could) that poets should defend culture and reason, especially in an "era in which all forms of thinking [*shikō* 思考] are put under pressure."[78]

It is true, as argued by Hikita Masaaki, that Murano participated in the "last resistance" put up by Japanese liberal modernists against the official ideology. It might also be that *Taisō shishū* concealed a veiled satire (a poetic tactic widely discussed by the *Shinryōdo* poets) of the use of sports in contemporary official discourse.[79] During a period when merely writing about something unrelated to the sacred mission of Japan elicited censors' suspicion, Murano chose to publish a collection on the ludic world of sports. Also, he explicitly preferred to use photos of white athletes taken exclusively by Western photographers rather than, in his words, "*hachimaki*-wearing sportsmen"[80]—even though Japanese athletes did take part in the Berlin Olympics and were even featured in Riefenstahl's *Olympia*. Furthermore, these photos depict exclusively modern Westernized sports instead of domestic martial arts (*budō* 武道), such as judo and kendo, which, in a move to counter the pernicious influence of foreign disciplines, had been enshrined as

75 Translation in Kirkup and Davis 1978, p. 94. I agree with Haga's interpretation (1983, pp. 185–188) that the "being / With a javelin stuck in his back" is a metaphor for the actual sports field.

76 Murano neatly conjures such a trope in his 1935 review of a book of poetry theory by Kawaji Ryūkō: "The theory of New Objectivity literature according to which poetry has its ground [*konkyo*] only in that thingness [*jibutsusei*] that arises in that primordial condition [*shigenteki na baai* 始元的な場合] that precedes the reflection that divides the world between things and self" (Murano 1935, p. 43).

77 Haga 1983, p. 112.

78 Murano 1937.

79 Hikita 2004, pp. 24–29.

80 Murano's words in the postscript (*kōki* 後記) to *Shinryōdo*, December 1939. Quoted and discussed in Suzuki 1986, pp. 25–26; Wada 1990, pp. 51–52; Hikita 2002, p. 42.

compulsory subjects by the authorities in secondary school curricula in 1931.[81] Such a choice in the subject matter can be read as a paradoxical act of opposition to jingoism and a final defense of internationalism. Indeed, even today, *Taisō shishū* strikes its readers with its internationalist flavor and nearly total lack of culturally specific Japanese elements. In its emphasis on individual sports, the collection seems to reflect a "liberal, individualistic, autotelic approach to sport," rather than the "militaristic, collectivist, instrumentalist view"[82] that became predominant in the second half of the 1930s, thus evading the exploitation of the healthy, sporting body as a metaphor for societal sanitization or racial superiority.

In one of the earliest critical assessments of *Taisō shishū*, published in 1951, Andō Ichirō perceptively noticed that one of the objectives of this collection was to perform a "critique of the human being" (*ningen no hihyō* 人間の批評).[83] The existential interrogation carried out through these poems on sports seems to concern the human being *per se*, with no further national or ethnic specifications, thus going against the grain of other contemporary investigations on the specificity of the Japanese mode of existence (more firmly grounded in the phenomenological idiom than Murano's), such as those by Kuki Shūzō 九鬼周造 (1888–1941) and Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960).

On the other hand, Murano's very choice, made as late as 1939, of using photos depicting an event that was strongly linked to the Nazi regime seems ambiguous, to say the least. If Murano wanted to bracket history and emphasize the purely aesthetic and speculative possibilities emerging from the combination of sports, poetry, and photography, his choice of photos appears disingenuous at best.[84] Equally ambiguous, despite its humanistic connotations, is the rhetoric of anti-intellectualism that Murano allowed to emerge, perhaps unwittingly, through these poems. In *Taisō shishū*, it seems that the rational control exerted on the subject of the poems under the method of New Objectivity is undermined increasingly. It is contested by the emergence of fissures in the form of concessions to a hermeneutic paradigm that emphasizes alogical action and intuition (and conversely devalues ideas and rational thinking) as tools to attain existential authenticity and a full comprehension of reality.

These aspects seem to suggest that, from the precarious position in which they found themselves in the second half of the 1930s, liberal modernists such as Murano were unable to remain completely immune to the rhetoric that permeated the official and cultural discourse of those years—a rhetoric that saw aesthetic transcendence, action, and mysticism as answers to the crisis of modernity and the enervated tradition of Western reason. Against the backdrop of such a historical period, it is difficult to read the second part of this collection without sensing some ominous overtones.

81 Abe et al. 1992, pp. 5, 21; Manzenreiter 2014, p. 71. To write this paper, I have examined a number of sources on the history of physical education and sports in Japan. On this subject, one can find useful information in Abe et al. 1992; Guttmann and Thompson 2001, pp. 117–160; Manzenreiter 2014, pp. 66–80. On the appearances of Japanese athletes at the Olympic Games that were held in the interwar years and the Japanese Olympic movement in the 1930s (also in connection to the plans to host the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1940), also see Collins 2007.

82 Guttmann and Thompson 2001, p. 129.

83 Quoted in Murano 1952, p. 73.

84 On the notion that *Taisō shishū*'s "resistance" consisted in its elision of the historical contingency of the war years, see Sakurai 1986, p. 278, and Onchi Terutake, quoted in Murano, Sakurai, and Yamada 1986, p. 292.

Conclusions

Ōoka Makoto once said, in reference to the tensions between his double allegiance to existential investigation and the formal control of New Objectivity, that Murano Shirō is "a poet who hides many ambiguous parts, much more than is generally felt."[85] Murano's engagement with New Objectivity strongly reflected his position in the Japanese literary field. During the first period examined in this paper, his interpretation of New Objectivity was connected to the local debate on "formalism" and driven by the need to differentiate itself from other forms of Japanese modernist literature. The second phase of his *Taisō shishū* presents a focus on the modes of human existence that I contend reflects the influence of the Japanese context during those years and not only his initial commitment to values such as "cold order," clarity, and abstraction.

The political and aesthetic meaning of *Taisō shishū* remains elusive and ambiguous. This very ambiguity is perhaps the most significant aspect of this collection, as it tells us something about what it meant to be a New Objectivist writer in Japan in the late 1930s, a period when reality overwhelmed Japanese subjectivities in the form of mounting militarism, total mobilization, and, ultimately, wartime destruction and suffering.

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Abbreviation

TMS6 Wada Hirofumi 和田博文, ed. *Shinsokubutsushugi* 新即物主義. Vol. 6 of *Korekushon Toshi modanizumu shishi* コレクション・都市モダニズム詩誌. 15 vols. Yumani Shobō, 2010.

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