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# Style, Discourse, and the Completion of the Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature

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Style, Discourse, and the Completion of the Vernacular  
Style in Modern Japanese Literature

Jacob Z. A. Lee

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Style, Discourse, and the Completion of the Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature

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Many histories of modern Japanese literature see the “completion” of the modern vernacular style in the writings of Shiga Naoya (1883–1971), Mushakōji Saneatsu (1885–1976) and Takamura Kōtarō (1883–1956). Why and how this critical-historical perception of stylistic normalcy arose and still continues is better understood, I propose, through a close reading of key texts that identifies instances and patterns of creative manipulation of—as opposed to mere determination by or complicity with—certain philosophical, social, and historical discourses.

How this creative manipulation plays out varies in prose and poetry and from text to text. In Mushakōji’s *Omedetaki hito* (1911; *The Simpleton*), temporal and generic transitions establish a doubled discourse of sincerity that normalizes the *genbun itchi* prose into the background. In Shiga’s *An ’ya kōro* (1921–37; *A Dark Night’s Passing*), certain syntactical and lexical innovations construct a new and rigid model of intuitive interiority. Takamura’s *Dōtei* (1914; *The Journey*) reverses, to its own literary historical advantage, gendered discourses on the Japanese language and Japanese literary history.

Key words: discourse, *genbun itchi*, literary history, Mushakōji Saneatsu, Shiga Naoya, style, Takamura Kōtarō

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## Introduction

The history of modern Japanese literature is in large measure the history of the modern vernacular style of writing known as *genbun itchi* 言文一致. This is not only because literary histories are always reliant on the linguistic histories of cultures and nations but also because the development of the *genbun itchi* style has become an implicit critical norm to evaluate the “progress” of modern Japanese literature—today’s canonically modernist texts are both representative and prescriptive of this stylistic orthodoxy. Conversely, too, linguistic histories of modern Japanese would not be complete without considering the major role of creative writers in developing this style into its institutional maturity. While the various movements to “unite” the written and spoken languages were begun by politicians and intellectuals pushing for cultural modernization and westernization—projects inseparable from East-Asian imperialism and colonialism—the common historiographical perception is that poets and *shōsetsu* writers were the ones who brought *genbun itchi* to its artistic completion and even perfection.

Why and how are histories of modern Japanese literature able to see this completion of the modern vernacular style in certain canonical texts produced during the second and third decades of the twentieth century? To see this event is to invoke at least two literary historical narratives that contextualize and therefore give meaning to the event. The first, perhaps obviously, is the beginning and gradual development of the *genbun itchi* style in prose and poetry: positing a completion or an end requires some sort of narrative, even if the most basically Aristotelian. Thus, the persistence of seeing stylistic completion is due to the insistence of seeing Meiji and Taishō literatures in terms of a closed narrative, an insistence corroborated by

revisionist or alternative historiographies that seek to reclaim texts that standard histories have tended to marginalize.

The second, however, is easier to overlook because in many ways it is an open story. It begins where the first leaves off, seeing in the completion of the *genbun itchi* style the simultaneous establishment of institutionally normalized *écriture* that continues into the present. Understanding the discursive delineations of present-day Japanese literature is therefore contingent on a historical perspective that defamiliarizes the familiar, makes opaque once again the transparency of a standardized national language.

Of course, other narratives are also important to fill in the larger context surrounding this nodal moment: the back story of Japan's imperially-inflected relations with China and the West, the side story of Japan's own imperialist activities in East Asia, the parallel stories of the establishment of national literary languages. How these various narratives interact with and shape each other can also question, modify, or nuance what has come to be the standard *genbun itchi* historical narrative.

Because the locus of this commonly perceived event of completion is textual, however, consideration of individual texts is indispensable in thinking about this literary historical event. My guiding questions for this thesis, therefore, are as follows. Why and how can we see certain texts of Japanese prose and poetry as having *completed* the modern vernacular style of *genbun itchi*? What is it about these texts that makes such a view possible? How justified are we in perceiving this stylistic completion, or what does it mean for us in the twenty-first century to maintain this point of reference? To explore these questions, I focus on three texts from the late Meiji and Taishō eras: Shiga Naoya 志賀直哉's *An'ya kōro* 暗夜行路 (1921–37; *A Dark Night's Passing*) and Mushakōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤's *Omedetaki hito* お目出たき人

(1911; *The Simpleton*) as two culminating shōsetsu and Takamura Kōtarō 高村 光太郎's *Dōtei* 道程 (1914; *The Journey*) as one representative poetry collection. My basic proposal is that these texts make possible the perception of a stylistic literary historical node because they creatively manipulate certain key discourses and literary historical narratives as opposed to merely being complicit with them, thereby establishing new forms of discourse that continue to shape our thinking about modernity. Formal and material textuality, in other words, is another of the “conditions externes de possibilité” (“external conditions of possibility”) that “donne lieu à la série aléatoire de ces événements [historiques] et qui en fixe les bornes” (“gives rise to the chance series of these [historical] events and fixes its limits”; Foucault, *L'Ordre* 55; “The Discourse” 229). In one sense, then, my methodology is a return to stylistics, but one that sees the concept of style as a discursive formation, an institutional convention of linguistics, criticism, and interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

Each of the three texts I focus on comprises a different bundling of discourses, but all share to some extent in the historical narratives that have constituted the Japanese literary identity. I therefore begin with a brief overview of these historical narratives, outlining some of the more important narrative points along the way and identifying how these points relate significantly to this new, stylistic node.

#### THE STORY: BEGINNING AND COMPLETING THE *GENBUN ITCHI* STYLE

##### *Prose: The Rise of the Modern Shōsetsu*

The narrative of the development of the modern shōsetsu occupies a privileged position in the history of Japanese literature. In fact, the bias towards the shōsetsu as the preeminent literary genre is sometimes seen as compromising the significance of other genres like modern



drama in the development of the *genbun itchi* style (Karatani 54–55). If, however, such a bias is seen as a particular discursive practice that has shaped historiography itself, identifying this discourse’s characteristic assertions becomes an important first step in reconsidering the literary history of any related genre or aspect of the period, including that of the *genbun itchi* style. Identifying the narrative elements of this developmental history of the shōsetsu complicates the causal lines that converge into the completion of the modern vernacular style but also demonstrates its rich historicity.

The origins of the *genbun itchi* style, while as elusive as any other historical origin, have generally been attributed to explicitly political causes. Karatani Kōjin 柄谷 行人 for example identifies the 1866 proposal by late-Tokugawa-era scholar Maejima Hisoka 前島 密 (1835–1919) to abolish the use of Chinese characters as the first of its kind (45 ff.). In general, however, more attention is given to the various *genbun itchi* movements of the Meiji era (1868–1912) that arose in connection with public enlightenment reforms of the newly established nation-state. The intellectuals and political ideologues who advocated these various language reforms seemed to be convinced that the cultural and technological achievements of Western nation-states were in part facilitated by a phonetic script that closely approximated the spoken language, and societies such as the Kana Society and the Rōmaji Society sought the “<sup>エコノミー</sup>経済性・直接性・民主性” (“economy, preciseness, and egalitarian nature”; Karatani, *Nihon kindai* 48; Karatani, *Origins* 47) that the native phonetic script and roman letters were thought to be able to provide.

Massimiliano Tomasi similarly contends that Western classical rhetoric, which was influential in the new political sphere, was foundational for the establishment of the *genbun itchi* style as political speeches were transcribed and proliferated for democratic intentions. In trying to communicate ideas in the most effective way to the largest audience possible, certain habits of

usage developed that were in turn institutionalized in official grammars of the new, standardized language and in manuals of speechmaking (150, 153). In fact, Tomasi makes the strong claim that “the extensive employment of *de aru* [である]”—a relatively hierarchically neutral form of the copula that is most commonly used in the stenographic transcriptions of these speeches—“at a time when as yet few authors used this form of the copula in writing indicates that speeches can be considered true forerunners of the modern written language” (153). While certainly more was at work than the frequent use of one particular form of the copula in establishing the *genbun itchi* style, the political dimensions of these linguistic issues are no doubt crucial to consider.

Creative writers, however, also played a major part in the initial development of *genbun itchi* as the first literary theorists and experimental practitioners of the style. Performative arts employing colloquial dialects of course existed prior to and concomitantly with these writers, poets, and dramatists, and the influence of new technologies such as Japanese shorthand and their relationship to literature has been well documented.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps the most important moment in this regard is the collaboration between the literary theorist Tsuboichi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 and the writer Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷, whose *shōsetsu Ukigumo* 浮雲 (1887; *Drifting Clouds*) is widely considered to be the first to employ the *genbun itchi* style. Tsuboichi’s theoretical treatise *Shōsetsu shinzui* 小説神髓 (1885–86; *The Essence of the Novel*) basically advocated for a synthetic blending of various low and high styles that would not overly compromise the rhetorical potential of the traditional literary language but also incorporate the more colloquial local dialects, and Futabatei’s sometimes elaborate turns of phrase certainly demonstrate this hybridity.

Others would follow in the same vein, exploring various styles. Yamada Bimyō 山田

美妙 (1868–1910) pioneered the use of the more polite *desu* です style in contrast to Futabatei's blunter *da* だ copula, and Ozaki Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1867–1903) is known for the more formal *de aru*. In the standard, teleological history of *genbun itchi* prose, however, perhaps the most important immediate predecessors to the completion of the style were the Naturalists (*shizenshugisha* 自然主義者) and the I-novelists (*shishōsetsuka* 私小説家). Moving away from the early-Meiji infatuation with all things Western and modern and taking a cue from French naturalist writers, these writers focused on the isolated realities of their modern existence in the confessional and first-person mode. The *shishōsetsu* 私小説 or I-novel in particular came to be seen as authentic records of individual experience and therefore the literary standard that supposedly transcended literary artifice. Yet as Edward Fowler points out, the I-novel is hardly an objective transcription of daily life but a genre with identifiable structures, such as what he calls the “written reportive style” (37 ff.) that attempts to eliminate the distance between narrator and protagonist. Tomi Suzuki 鈴木登美 goes further to argue that the I-novel is more of a “literary and ideological paradigm” or a “mode of reading that assumes that the I-novel is a single-voiced, ‘direct’ expression of the author’s ‘self’ and that its written language is ‘transparent’” (6). The I-novel discourse was so powerfully inscribed in the cultural consciousness, writes Suzuki, that it even retroactively rewrote Japanese literary history and largely determined the critical norm of “sincerity” that would haunt writers and critics alike for decades. A consideration of this discourse of sincerity in the history of *genbun itchi* is therefore central.

The Shirakaba group (*shirakaba-ha* 白樺派), a coterie of writers, artists, and philosophers known for their humanism and individualism that started with the publication of their eponymous journal, *Shirakaba* 白樺, in 1910, is our last focus of attention in that the two

founding members of the group were Mushakōji and Shiga; Takamura is also sometimes associated with the group due to his humanism. With regard to *genbun itchi*, the assumption is that the group's western humanistic and idealistic subject matter somehow naturally or inevitably dictated the perfection of the new style in a sort of dialectic relation to the pessimistic and confessional credos of the Naturalists and I-novelists who preceded them. According to Sharalyn Orbaugh for example, "unlike famous predecessors such as Futabatei Shimei or Mori Ōgai, the Shirakaba writers did not have to struggle with the transition to the new literary language" because they were confident "in the idea of themselves as modern individuals, worthy of a position in international culture" (121–2). Orbaugh also pits this self-confidence against the naturalists, who "were too narrow and confessional in their focus on the details of their own drab and sordid lives" (122). Also of note is the national confidence inspired by the recent victory in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05), which certainly contributed to the sense of international political and cultural confidence. By this time, too, most textbooks were being written in *genbun itchi*, and the Shirakaba generation was the first to encounter this style as a sort of natural given.

Many other canonical writers could be mentioned as relating to this *genbun itchi* history, but they are generally treated as anomalies that defy easy historical narrativization or as reactionary traditionalists. In the first category are Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 and Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, who are, ironically enough, probably the most canonical writers of their era. Both have produced numerous texts that are often held up as exemplary of the *genbun itchi* style, but their supposedly singular experiences abroad and independent artistic programs tend to lift them above the fray of periodization. Sōseki in particular is heavily institutionalized, his very image carrying both cultural and monetary capital on the 1,000-yen bill printed from 1984 to 2004.

As the recent inclusion of Higuchi Ichiyō 樋口 一葉's (1872–1896) portrait on the 2004 series of 5,000-yen bills indicates, however, more attention is being given to female writers as well as writers who preferred to continue to write in the traditional style. Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* たけくらべ (1895–96; *Teenagers Vying for Tops*) and *Nigorie* にごりえ (1895; *In the Gutter*) are often cited as the first works by a modern female novelist and are written in a flowing *bungo* 文語 'literary language' style. Kōda Rohan 幸田 露伴 (1867–1947), to name just one "traditionalist," is known for his *gazoku setchūtai* 雅俗折衷体 that mixed *bungo* narration with vernacular dialogue.

In sum, the narrative of the history of the *genbun itchi* style is seen as making incremental progress towards the individualistic and humanistic program of the Shirakaba, facilitated in large part by a discourse of sincerity that arose in connection with the I-novel. Initial political expediencies and theoretical experiments yielded a variety of *genbun itchi* styles, but eventual discursive consolidation of the naturalists and the I-novelists in an increasingly modernized imperialist state provided the framework against which to valorize the poetic consciousness of the Japanese male individual. Such is the "content" that has largely produced the "form" of the completed *genbun itchi* style according to traditional literary historiography, but this form-content relationship is far from being closed when the historical narratives of other genres are considered.

### *The New Poetry*

One such important genre is the new poetry, or *shintaiishi* 新体詩, which distinguishes itself from the traditional, metered, and conventionalized generic forms of *waka*, *chōka*, *haikai*, *renga*, and so forth by freeing itself of much of these constraints. While its establishment is just

as seminal as that of the modern *shōsetsu*, the generic complexities of poetry render the tracing of the history of the colloquial free verse style more problematic than that of prose. Movements to use the vernacular in haiku, for example, long preceded poets like Takamura. Nevertheless, certain key moments in the history of modern Japanese poetry are often highlighted on the way to establishing the completion of the vernacular style.

The founding of modern Japanese poetry is usually credited to Masaoka Shiki 正岡 子規 (1867–1902), who is best known for his haiku reforms (he coined the term *haiku*) and his push for objective descriptive sketches he called *shasei* 写生. This latter movement sought to “copy life” in order to establish a literary realism that would break the grip of the highly stylized and conventionalized traditional poetics. While the 写生文 *shaseibun* ‘literary sketches’ would take on a generic life of its own, Shiki’s influence on his many followers and admirers seemed to have extended across genres into a broad rethinking of form, representation, and the place of tradition in modern Japanese poetics.

Such an unsettling of the traditional, conventional poetics is perhaps what opened the way to the enthusiastic reception of literary works and trends from the Western world; indeed, translation literature, as it is called, in many instances inaugurated entire schools and movements for poets and writers who increasingly saw themselves as part of a cosmopolitan, international literary world. Ueda Bin 上田敏’s (1874–1916) compilation of translations he entitled *Kaichōon* 海潮音 (1905; *The Sound of the Waves*), taken largely from the French symbolists, for example, effectively founded the movement in Japan, eventually inspiring the formation of such decadent artistic groups as the *Pan no kai* パンの会 ‘The Society of Pan,’ of which Takamura was famously a part.

Tanaka Seikō 田中 清光 writes in his study of the *seikimatsu* 世紀末 ‘fin-de-siècle’ poets of Japan that the exoticism, ennui, and decadence that characterized the Western cultural phenomenon was displaced by about ten years in Japan (i). While the material flow of literary artifacts and persons, as well as the increasingly prosperous political climate likely account for the timing, Tanaka also speculates that the vernacular style came to stick during this period because the poets had to carve out for themselves a stance in a world where nothing was sure anymore formally and even linguistically:

さしずめこの時期の詩にとって文語定型の形式が解体したというのは大きな事件であったが、それは安定した型、共通の言語行為に対する信頼を失わざるをえない地点に詩人たちが立たされていたということの表われであったともいえる。そうしたなかで、たとえば高村光太郎という巨大な個性が口語自由詩を定着させたが、それは見方によってはもはや共通の型を失ったまま個人のかわざで進むよりほかない前途を、明示してみせたとも考えられることであった。(ii)

At any rate, the dismantling of the fixed *bungo* forms was an enormous scandal to the poetry of this time, but it can also be said that this dismantling was a manifestation of poets being placed in a position where loss of trust in stable forms and in mutually intelligible speech acts was inevitable. In the midst of this, giant personalities like Takamura Kōtarō, for example, firmly established the colloquial free verse style, yet this can be thought of as an attempt to reveal a future path that could be traveled only by dint of an individual force, having already lost the common forms. (My translation)

The assumption here, as elsewhere, also seems to be that the likes of Takamura turned to the vernacular style after exhausting the store of traditional forms, including Western-style decadence, and being reduced to an alienated individuality. And although Takamura's egoistic and humanistic thematic corroborates this sort of historical narrative, the textual dynamics involved in imagining these forceful personalities in literary history seem to merit more investigation.

Overall, the history of the colloquial free verse style, like that of *genbun itchi* prose, is one that develops inversely against the dismantling of traditional forms and genres: the climactic point of the perfection of the colloquial free verse style is also the point of exit for the numerically metered, the seasonal, and the conventionally rhetorical. Yet as was the case with the *shōsetsu*, highlighting this particular trajectory of poetic history can only be done at the expense of its many other facets. Donald Keene for example refers to Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村 (1872–1943) as “the creator of modern Japanese poetry” whose metered *shintaiishi* are “the first of lasting merit” (204), and Tōson's contribution to romanticism in Japan is of central importance. Yosano Akiko 与謝野晶子 (1878–1942) and others who continued working in traditional forms could also be mentioned, yet as with Tōson these poets are generally excluded from the historical narrative of the development of the *kōgo jiyūshi* 口語自由詩 because of their preference for the literary language even while challenging traditional notions of poetic subjects and societal mores. The development and completion of the colloquial verse style is, once again, just one of the many historical narratives of modern Japanese literature that shape each other in manifold ways, but one that relies on specific linguistic features of individual texts.



## THE BACK STORY: JAPAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS EAST AND WEST

*Japan and China: The Advent of Writing*

I wish in this section to provide a short overview of the history of the Japanese language in terms of its ancient and modern cultural relations to imperial powers East and West. As Karatani writes in *Nihon seishin bunseki* 日本精神分析, these historical relations had the effect of not only a formal hybridity of different languages but of also charging the Japanese language with discursive relations of alterity and power within itself. While I would agree with Karatani in not taking too seriously Lacan's assertion in his preface to the Japanese edition of *Écrits* about how “personne qui habite cette langue, n'a besoin d'être psychanalysé” (“no one who inhabits this language [i.e., Japanese] has any need to be psychoanalyzed”; 498; Stone) because of this linguistic psychosis, the discursive statements that highlight this difference within the self nevertheless still carry important cultural and semantic associations.<sup>3</sup>

It is thought that writing, in the form of Chinese characters, was introduced to Japan around the fifth century CE along with Buddhism via the Korean peninsula. While initially these Chinese characters were used as Chinese—that is, for the sake of acquiring classical, Confucian learning—over time, two distinct types of readings came to be associated with the writing system: the *on* 音 reading, the Japanese phonetic approximation of the Chinese reading of a character; and the *kun* 訓 reading, native Japanese words associated with the character by virtue of semantic proximity. The character 安 (peaceful, content, safe; *an* in modern Chinese) for example has the *on* reading of *an* and the modern *kun* reading of *yasu(i)* ‘cheap, easy.’ In the *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 system of the eighth century and earlier, however, 安 became associated phonetically with the sound *a* regardless of its semantic denotations. In the Heian 平安 period that followed, these phonetically associated Chinese characters took on the simplified cursive

form now known as hiragana, e.g., あ. Hiragana is also associated with courtly women's writing and in the "native" genres like monogatari, *zuihitsu* 随筆, and waka, in contrast to the more orthodox genres of Chinese poetry, history, and official documents.

These latter genres, however, were often read and written in a mode called kanbun, a system that used kana markers glossing the Chinese text to modify the Chinese grammar and syntax to better match that of Japanese. Kanbun learning in fact remained the orthodox, samurai-class mode for Confucian learning that persisted up through the Edo 江戸 period, further cementing the discursive association of masculine power with kanji.

In sum, written Japanese is more or less coded according to the discursive binaries of masculine/feminine, foreign/native, and history/literature, and this because its particular relation to the continental imperial power. Lacan's observations in his "Avis au lecteur japonais" are therefore more or less valid insofar as it reflects a commonly perceived discursive phenomenon:

Tout le monde n'a pas le Bonheur de parler chinois dans sa langue, pour qu'elle en soit un dialecte,<sup>4</sup> ni surtout,—point plus fort—d'en avoir pris une écriture à sa langue si étrangère que ça y rende tangible à chaque instant la distance de la pensée, soit de l'inconscient, à la parole. Soit l'écart si scabreux à dégager dans les langues internationales, qui se sont trouvées pertinentes pour la psychanalyse. (498–9)

Not everyone has the good fortune of speaking Chinese in his language, so that it is a dialect of it, nor above all—a stronger point—of having taken a writing into his language so foreign that it renders tangible at every instant the distance of thought, of the unconscious, from speech. Namely, the gap so risky to open up in international languages that are found pertinent for psychoanalysis. (Stone)

Just as the etymologically sensitive poet writing in English differentiates Germanic words from Latinate ones, for example, the Japanese writer too must negotiate a variety of scripts and readings that each carry specific discursive associations. For a stylistic history, then, a consideration of how such discursive associations are manipulated at the most fundamental levels of the text becomes rather significant.

*Japan and the West: The Threat of Empire*

If the relationship to the Chinese empire was what most distinctly characterized Japan's ancient and medieval cultures, then the West is the cultural power that exerts an equal or perhaps greater force on modern Japan. The beginning of this relationship between Japan and the West is often graphically symbolized in the image of the black ships of Commodore Perry that, with their superior firepower, loomed in the Edo bay as an implicitly threatening force that could no longer be ignored.<sup>5</sup> Yet the West also brought with it an irresistible cultural and technological allure that prompted a rapid program of westernization and modernization. Perhaps the companion image of the black ships is the Rokumeikan 鹿鳴館, an elaborate western-style building constructed to host foreign dignitaries that symbolized for many contemporaries the sometimes comical masquerading of the West that betrayed an undercurrent of political and military anxiety. The character Daisuke in Sōseki's *Sorekara* *それから* (1909; *And Then*) describes this anxiety well in a rant when questioned why he refuses to find a job and earn a living:

何故働かないつて、そりや僕が悪いんぢやない。つまり世の中が悪いのだ。

もつと、大袈裟に云ふと、日本対西洋の関係が駄目だから働かないのだ。

第一、日本程借金を拵らへて、貧乏震ひをしてゐる国はありやしない。此

借金が君、何時になつたら返せると思ふか。そりや外債位は返せるだらう。

けれども、それ許りが借金ぢやありやしない。日本は西洋から借金でもしなければ、到底立ち行かない国だ。それでゐて、一等国を以て任じてゐる。さうして、無理にも一等国の仲間入をしようとする。だから、あらゆる方面に向つて、奥行を削つて、一等国丈の間口を張つちまつた。なまじい張れるから、なほ悲惨なものだ。牛と競争をする蛙と同じ事で、もう君、腹が裂けるよ。其影響はみんな我々個人の上に反射してゐるから見給へ。斯う西洋の圧迫を受けてゐる国民は、頭に余裕がないから、碌な仕事は出来ない。悉く切り詰めた教育で、さうして目の廻る程こき使はれるから、揃つて神経衰弱になつちまふ。(402)

Why not?—well, it's not my fault. That is to say, it's the world's fault. Or, to exaggerate a little, it's because the relationship between Japan and the West is no good that I won't work. First of all, there's no other country with such a bad case of beggar's twitch. When do you think all those debts can be paid off? Oh, the foreign currency bonds might get paid. But they aren't the only debts. The point is, Japan can't get along without borrowing from the West. But it poses as a first-class power. And it's straining to join the ranks of the first-class powers. That's why, in every direction, it puts up the façade of a first-class power and cheats on what's behind. It's like the frog that tried to outdo the cow—look, Japan's belly is bursting. And see, the consequences are reflected in each of us as individuals. A people so oppressed by the West have no mental leisure, they can't do anything worthwhile. They get an education that's stripped to the bare bone, and they're

driven with their noses to the grindstone until they're dizzy—that's why they all end up with nervous breakdowns. (72)

Daisuke is hypocritically concerned as well with the moral and spiritual decay that this sort of feigned modernity brings about and continues the rant in a metaphor of health and sickness. Such rhetoric would eventually evolve into the more explicitly imperialist ones of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which promised to bring pan-Asian “安定” (“stability”) against the “東洋制覇ノ非望” (“inordinate ambition to dominate the Orient”; Ōkurashō; Lomas 32), but a similar anxiety surrounded the new *genbun itchi* language as well. Timothy Hoyer, for example, suggests that the very development of the *genbun itchi* style can be attributed to “a sensitivity to ecumenic pressures emanating from the West.” And as Karatani explains, a “「文字」に関する新たな観念” (“new ideology of writing”; 48; 47) that deemed writing secondary and subordinate to speech was what spurred the first *genbun itchi* reforms: “したがって、文字をそのようなものとみなしたとき、前島が話し言葉に注目したのは当然であり、またそこから話し言葉と書き言葉の乖離が問題として出てきたのである。それまで、それは「問題」ではなかった” (“Once Maejima came to look at writing in this way it was a matter of course that he began to give priority to the spoken language and to consider the gap between spoken and written language—never a concern in the past—a ‘problem’”; 49; 47). Uniting the national language under “Western” phonocentrism, in other words, was from the beginning cast in terms of an antagonized relation with the other that nevertheless incorporated this “Western” and “modern” alterity within itself in the form of *genbun itchi* writing. Underlying therefore the literary historical narratives of the development of modern Japanese literature is another narrative of survival through inauthentic imitation.

## THE SIDE STORY: JAPANESE IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

The historical narratives I have tried to outline above to a large extent derive their surviving power from excluding alternative histories that would otherwise compromise the institutional integrity of the official or sanctioned histories. In fact, as Foucault writes, such normative discourses are built upon these very exclusions that limit the sometimes jarring and disruptive coexistence of conflicting statements—such as those of imperialistic and colonialist atrocities—for the sake of a manageable narrative fiction that is “à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée, organisée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures qui ont pour rôle d’en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers” (“at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers”; *L’Ordre* 10–1; “The Discourse” 216). Nevertheless, much recent work has been done to reclaim these marginalized histories, showing the need to go consider Asia, and particularly East Asia, as a larger cultural sphere of literary interaction and influence.

Yeonsuk Lee’s study *The Ideology of Kokugo* (2010), for example, shows how the very creation of a Japanese national language is implicated in the discourses of imperialism and colonialism. Lee attempts to “render visible the ideo-historical foundation for Japan’s colonialism as well as the ‘modernity’ of the Japanese language itself” (5) as intimately connected with one another. That is, the implementation of *genbun itchi* was necessary “as long as *kokugo* was to be liberated from a handful of cultural elites and defined as a linguistic unity to account for linguistic expression by all people in the nation. In the case of Japan, however, such an awakening to *kokugo* was achieved by the exaltation of the consciousness of the nation-state, the empire” (20). Lee’s detailed recovery of the linguistic policies and theories advocated by

state grammarians in, for example, the colonization of Korea and Manchukuo thus serve to displace the imperialist discourse that had silenced other linguistic voices.

Sometimes such alternative histories can also provide new models of literary historiography. Karen Thornber's book *Empire of Texts in Motion* (2009) is landmark in this regard because it is the first thorough documentation of the extensive and complex nature of international and intercultural exchange between Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan. While Japan was in many cases the exporter of literary commodities and the Mecca for students and writers, much flowed in the other direction as well. The need to consider the Japanese imperialist influence in Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese literatures has long been noted, but this also points to the need for Japanese literary studies to examine the implicitly and explicitly imperialist discourses that have shaped modernity. In fact, Thornber's model of "literary contact nebulae"—"active sites both physical and creative of readerly contact, writerly contact, and textual contact, intertwined modes of transculturation that depend to some degree on linguistic contact and often involve travel" (2)—is useful because it is able to account for "the fluidity of textual contact" (4) that "rarely [replicates] either the steep hierarchies presupposed by (post)colonial and (post)semicolonial peoples, or those promoted by imperial discourse" (3). In other words, placing the text at the center of literary historical concerns complicates relations of imperial power because the various agents involved in transculturation "both affirm and deny one another's cultural capital and authority" (4). Thus while external, political contexts remain essential to a history of the *genbun itchi* style, equally important are intratextual discursive manipulations that themselves take on the character of a historical event.

## THE PARALLEL STORIES: FORMING THE LANGUAGES OF MODERNITY

The present literary history of the completion of the *genbun itchi* style is by no means the only such history in world literature. In fact, the development of many, if not most, modern languages is described as centering around canonical literary texts that, once circulated broadly, helped to establish a stylistic uniformity not only in belles lettres but in the national culture at large. Just as the history of standard Italian necessarily includes discussion of Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* and that of modern German Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, much of the institutional establishment of the *genbun itchi* style in Japanese, as I argue in the following chapters, is determined by the intratextual dynamics of canonical texts and canon formation. Yet the political aspect is also a constant in such development, as the very phenomenon of a unitary, national language develops concomitantly with the establishment of the nation-state that needs to define itself not only against its own past but in relation to other nation-states in order to survive culturally and technologically.

The Chinese language, or more specifically Putonghua, is an interesting case: the official state policy explicitly prescribes “以典范的現代白話文著作為語法規範的普通話” (“as its grammatical model the exemplary literary works written in the modern colloquial”; “Guowuyuan”; Ramsey 14). The texts of Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) are commonly held up as the most exemplary in this regard, but it is also interesting to note Lu Xun's close ties with Japanese intellectuals and writers, as well as how China took as its initial model and impetus Japan's *genbun itchi* movement—these “parallel” stories actually converge frequently regardless of cultural or geographical distance.

While the analyses of individual texts that follow cannot represent by any means a complete accounting of the historical causality of the completion of the modern vernacular style,



they do demonstrate how thoroughly certain historiographical discourses permeate the literary text. What this literary history can offer instead is insight into how individual and collective encounters with texts lead to, if not determine, the creation of meaning through the manipulation of these discourses.

## Chapter 1

The Doubled Discourse of Sincerity in Mushakōji Saneatsu's *Omedetaki hito*

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介's evaluation of Mushakōji's literary debut as recorded in Akutagawa's reflective essay "Ano koro no jibun no koto" あの頃の自分の事 (1919) lyrically outlines Mushakōji's role in the developmental history of modern Japanese literature: "その頃は丁度武者小路實篤氏が、將にパルナスの頂上へ立たうとしてゐる頃だつた.... 我々は大抵、武者小路氏が文壇の天窗を開け放つて、爽な空氣を入れた事を愉快に感じてゐるものだつた" (Back then was when Mushakōji Saneatsu was just about to summit Parnassus. . . . Most of us were quite pleased that Mushakōji had managed to burst open the skylight of the *bundan* 文壇<sup>6</sup> and let in some fresh air; 442–3). Akutagawa in fact compares Mushakōji's status as more or less equivalent to that held by Tayama Katai (1872–1930), often seen as the preeminent Naturalist writer thanks to *Futon* (1907), his confessional autobiographical novel of sexual frustration. And although Akutagawa tends to dismiss Mushakōji's style as hurried, eventually even becoming clichéd to the point of losing its original dramatic edge, Akutagawa goes so far as to see the advent of Mushakōji's humanism in terms of a Christ figure:

久しく自然主義の淤泥にまみれて、本來の面目を失してゐた<sup>ユウマニテエ</sup>人道が、あのエマヲのクリストの如く「日<sup>かたぶ</sup> 暁きて暮に及」んだ文壇に再姿を現した時、如何に我々は氏と共に、「われらが心<sup>もろ</sup>熱し」事を感じたらう. . . .

我々は——少くとも自分は氏によつて、「驢馬の子に乗り爾に来る」人道

を迎へる爲に、「その衣を途に布き或は樹の枝を伐りて途に布く」先例を示して貰つたのである。(444)

When the Humanity that had lost its former dignity by long wallowing in the filth of Naturalism appeared once more, like the Christ of Emmaus, on the *bundan* that was “toward evening . . . and far spent,” how we felt our “[hearts] burn within us”! . . . We were—at least I was—shown by him the example of how to “spread . . . garments in the way [and] cut down branches from the trees, and [strew] them in the way” to welcome the Humanity that “cometh [unto thee] sitting on an ass’s colt.” (My translation)

What were the conditions that allowed for Akutagawa and others to hold such a messianic view of Mushakōji’s literary debut? While Akutagawa focuses on the humanistic philosophical content of Mushakōji’s writings as opposed to his formal style, differentiating between Mushakōji the philosopher and Mushakōji the writer, I propose that bearing in mind the formal properties of *Omedetaki hito* is indispensable when considering how a discourse of stylistic completion came to surround the work and the author. That is, *Omedetaki hito* is able to place itself at the developmental pinnacle of the history of *genbun itchi* because it establishes a doubled discourse of sincerity that effaces its origins. First, the temporal transitions from past to present foregrounds the lyrical over the background of the expository, normalizing the unadorned, short *genbun itchi* sentences of the latter. Second, an invasion of this lyricism into several instances of metatextuality (a journal entry, a poem, an excerpt from a novel) makes possible an appeal to cross-generic synonymity through this lyricism, which synonymity—if assumed by the reader—has the effect of pushing back the expository *genbun itchi* prose further into “artless” neutrality, concealing it behind and out of reach of even generic artifice.

This perceived lack of literary artifice is in fact according to Edward Fowler what characterizes the I-novel, a genre that *Omedetaki hito* seems initially to fall under were it not for its lyrical disruptions of overtly humanistic philosophical content. Both writers and critics contributed to building the “mythology of sincerity and authorial presence,” but the ability to do so was because, according to Fowler, “the *shishōsetsu* had so thoroughly established its own legitimacy as a cultural (and not simply as a literary) artifact, weighed down with a large set of conventions to determine meaning” (42). How these conventions “determine” meaning, however, seems largely dependent on the textual dynamics at work in individual texts, which, in the case of *Omedetaki hito*, centers around genre and temporality.

Already in the opening paragraphs of the first chapter we find this privileging of the lyrical over and against the expository that works to normalize the latter stylistically. The first two paragraphs describe how one morning in January as the first-person narrator is heading home from a bookstore he sees two young women dressed in colorful kimono. Although the two are not beautiful, they are not ugly either, and the narrator is drawn to them:

自分は二人のゐる所を過ぎる時に一寸何げなくそつちを見た。さうしてその時心のなかで云つた。

自分は女に餓えてゐる。

誠に自分は女に餓えてゐる。残念ながら美しい女、若い女に餓えてゐる。七年前に自分の十九歳の時恋してゐた月子さんが故郷くにに帰つた以後、若い美しい女と話した事すらない自分は女に餓えてゐる。(79–80)

When I passed by where they were standing, I glanced casually in their direction.  
And as I did, I thought to myself, I need a woman.

I honestly need a woman.

I am sorry to say it, but I need a beautiful woman, a young woman. Since  
Tsukiko whom I loved returned to the country seven years ago when I was 19, I  
haven't been able even to speak to a young beautiful woman, yet I need a woman.

(20-1)

That the incessant refrain “自分は女に餓えてみる” (“I need a woman”) is lyrical seems to be corroborated by the shift in tense to the present. The temporal shift is also apparent in the last paragraph of the above passage, although subtly, as the first-person *jibun* 自分 now speaks retrospectively in self-diagnostic terms (“誠に” [“honestly”], “残念ながら” [“I am sorry to say it, but”]) and gives a chronology of his thirst for feminine contact. While it is arguable that this rhetorical technique of changing tense to create a sense of immediacy does not necessarily disrupt the overall temporality of the narrative, which is in the past, the “actual” temporality of the passage quoted above nevertheless remains ambiguous, and this lyrical ambiguity is what becomes foregrounded against the otherwise straightforward narrative.<sup>7</sup> The paragraph/sentence following this first “lyrical” passage is thus all but matter of fact: “自分は早足で堀にぶつかつて電車道について左に折れて電車にのらずに日比谷にゆき, 日比谷公園をぬけて自家に向かつた” (“I quickly went on foot up till the inner moat, then followed the street car rails, hung a left and went towards Hibiya, and without getting on the street car, passed through Hibiya Park and headed for home”; 80; 21).

The pattern continues in the paragraphs that immediately follow, as the tense shifts once again to the present, the lyrical refrain is repeated, and the prosaic action caps the poetic

sentiment. As indicated in the brackets, I have modified Admire's translation to reflect the shift in tense in the original as underlined below:

日比谷をぬける時、若い夫婦の楽しさうに話してゐるのにあつた。自分は心私かに彼等の幸福を祝するよりも羨ましく思つた。羨ましく思ふよりも呪つた。その気持は貧者が富者に対する気持と同じではないかと思つた。淋しい自分の心の調べの華なる調子で乱される時に、その乱すものを呪はないではみられない。彼等は自分に自分の淋しさを面のあたりに知らせる。痛切に感じさせる。自分の失恋の旧傷をいためる。

自分は彼等を祝しやうと思ふ、しかし面前に見る時やゝもすると呪ひたくなる。

自分は女に餓えてゐるのだ。

自分は鶴のことを考へながら自家に帰つた。(80)

When I passed through Hibiya Park, I ran into young married couples happily talking. Instead of congratulating them on their happiness, I was jealous. No, rather than just being jealous, I cursed them. I wondered if it wasn't the same way the poor felt towards the rich. Whenever the melody of my lonely self [is] disturbed by brilliant notes, I [cannot] help cursing that which [disturbs] me. Before my very eyes they [make] me aware of my loneliness. They [make] me feel it keenly. I [ache] from the old wound of my unrequited love.

I [think] I ought to congratulate them, but when I actually [see] them, I [feel] more like cursing them.

I need a woman.

I returned home thinking about Tsuru. (21)

Even in the English translation it is apparent that the shift to the present tense is accompanied by increased rhetorical density, e.g., the musical metaphor and the parallel construction of the three short sentences.

The second section of the chapter goes on to describe the back story of the narrator's failed marital negotiations with Tsuru's parents, but towards the end the text again shifts to the present, to short paragraphs and sentences, and to the incessant refrain:

其後鶴の話はそのまゝになつてゐる。自分には望みがあるやうにもないやうにも思へる。

自分と鶴の関係はあらまし以上のやうなものだ。

自分はまだ、所謂女を知らない。

夢の中で女の裸を見ることがある。しかしその女は純粹の女ではなく中性である。

自分は今年二十六歳である。

自分は女に餓えている。(81)

From that time on the subject of marriage to Tsuru [is] in a hold status. It [seems] to me that I [have] a fifty-fifty possibility of marrying her.

The relationship between Tsuru and me is approximately as I've mentioned above.

I still haven't known a woman.

I [sometimes see] a woman's nakedness in my dreams. But she [isn't] a real woman, but a sexless one.

I am 26 years old this year.

I need a woman. (24–5)

The third and final section of chapter 1 is entirely in the present tense as the narrator waxes philosophical concerning the relationship of men and women. The ending twist this time is less in style than in content, as the narrator asserts that in the end he loves himself more than even the most ideal woman, even rationalizing his romantic pursuit as a project to develop his selfhood. In fact, the narrator again speaks retrospectively, as one who has already lived the story about to be told in the coming chapters: “女に餓えて女の力を知り，女の力を知つて，自我の力を自分は知ることが出来た” (“To need a woman is to know a woman’s power and knowing a woman’s power, I was able to know the power of the self”; 82; 26). Exposition is again compromised in order to foreground the lyrical, this time in the form of humanistic philosophical pronouncements of the ego. Such a layering of foregrounded lyricism is no doubt what contributed to the “breath of fresh air” that Akutagawa wrote of, in that this sort of humanistic optimism stood in direct contrast to the social realism of the Naturalists, but this layering is also stylistically significant. As the jarring return to narrative in chapter 2 demonstrates—“自家に帰るとまもなく昼飯だつた” (“Soon after returning home it was lunchtime”; 82; 27)—it is the contrasting modes of genre and temporality that allow the reader to separate background and foreground, cool *genbun itchi* prose against impassioned lyrical outbursts: “幸あれ！” (“God bless Tsuru!”; 83; 26). This contrast is what allows a discourse of sincerity to indirectly valorize Mushakōji’s *genbun itchi* prose.

Later on in the text we encounter a series of uncannily non-ironic instances of metatextuality that further normalize Mushakōji’s *genbun itchi* prose by attempting to push it beyond the reach of



generic artifice. That is, compromising the generic integrity of the journal entry, the poem, and the *shōsetsu* excerpt found in chapters 8–9 through incorporating the same sort of non-narrative lyricism that has been invading the story up until now has the effect of collapsing narrative distance, making generic distinctions superficial and even irrelevant to “expressing the self.” This compromising or even dismissal of genre and form only serves to further push the expository *genbun itchi* prose of the main narrative to a sort of Barthesian degree zero in a radical valorization of the lyrical anti-narrative.

To begin in chapter 8 we find the narrator again rebuffed by Tsuru’s parents, who still will not even consider marriage prospects for her daughter before her older brother is married, despite increasing interest from prominent men like doctors and scions of the wealthy. After retiring to bed but succumbing to tears and unable to sleep, the narrator writes in his journal from 1 a.m. to 2:10 a.m.—yet another indicator of an appeal to “sincere” writing. The opening lines are generically typical enough: we begin with the date (“三日” [“The 3<sup>rd</sup>”]) and a concise, non-colloquial style (“一時頃目覚む” [“I woke up around 1 a.m.”]). Yet in the third line the narration switches to the past tense; though apparently descriptive of emotions and events of the day before, the lines remain uncannily poetic in their short parallel sentences and the excessive use of the first person pronoun *jibun*:

自分は悲しく思つた。余りだと思つた。はがゆく思つた。どうかしたいや  
うに思ふ。自分は涙ぐんだ。(97)

I felt sad. “It’s too much” I thought. I felt impatient. I felt I wanted to do something about it.

My eyes glistened with tears. (63)

Although what follows serves as a sort of summary of the events so far, soon the writer switches back to the present tense, even incorporating a refrain that interrupts his meandering thoughts on men and women, humanity, and selfhood: “鶴の心が見たい” (“I want to see into Tsuru’s heart”; 97; 65), “彼女の心が見たい” (“I want to see into her heart”; 98; 65). This journal entry is therefore not only too “poetic” but also uncannily too similar to the text that surrounds it; because it covers much of the same ground as, say, chapter 1, the initial generic markers of metatextuality become trivialized in favor of the genre-transgressive and the “lyrical.”

A short prose interlude after this journal entry explains that the narrator wrote immediately afterwards, in tears, a *shintaiishi* poem. Again, in terms of content, this poem covers much of the same ground, although obviously making more use of poetic conventions such as repeated phrases, the omission of punctuation, the use of lines and stanzas, and a high-flying literary style reminiscent of the Bible. While the writerly style is obviously distinct from the introspective prose of the journal, the content again is so similar that the poetic style seems to become merely a superficial difference. Some parallel passages between poem and journal entry illustrate this similarity that breaks down generic difference. The theme of “giving [her] up” (思ひ切る) in the journal for example is greatly expanded upon in the poem. First from the journal entry:

自分には鶴はこの憐な人間のやうにも思はれる，さう思はれる限り，自分はこのことを思ひ切らない。

かくてこそ思ひ切らないことが男らしく自分には思へ，思ひ切らないことがいゝことのやうに見えるのである。

この思ひ方がまちがつてゐるならば自分は思ひ切つて見せる。(98)

It seems to me that Tsuru is this pitiful human being, and as long as she appears so, I will not resign myself to my fate about this matter.

In this way the very fact that I won't resign myself seems manly to me, the fact that I won't resign myself appears to be a good thing.

If this way of thinking is wrong, I will boldly show it. (65)

A similar waffling occurs throughout the poem, which can now be seen as an adaptation of the journal entry in that it greatly expands the theme of “giving her up” through successive inflectional variations of the verb phrase:

思ひ切れ思ひ切れ思ひ切れ<sup>8</sup>

今となつて彼女の事を思ひ切らざるは

余りに女々し

.....

思ひ切らず思ひ切らず

我思ひ切らず

女々しき汝よ

思ひ切らざるにあらず

思ひ切れざるなるべし

男なる汝よ

男らしく思ひ切れ

汝を愛せず，汝の為をはからぬ

女を思ひ切れ

我を愛せず？

我が為をはからず？

そを我は真に知るまで

思ひ切らず思ひ切らず

思ひ切れざるに非ず

思ひ切らざるなり。

.....

.....

されば我，思ひ切らず

思ひ切らざるを以てほこりとす (98-9)

Definitely give her up, definitely give her up

To not give her up at this time

Is too unmanly

.....

Won't give her up, Won't give her up

I won't give her up

You're not manly

It's not that you won't give her up

It's probably that you can't give her up

You're a man

Give her up like a man

She doesn't love you, she doesn't think about you

Give her up.

She doesn't love me?

She doesn't think about me?

Till I truly know that

I won't give her up, I won't give her up

It's not that I can't give her up

It's that I won't give her up.

.....

.....

Therefore I won't give her up

I am proud that I won't give her up (67)

Thus what started out as a simple imperative (“思ひ切れ” [“definitely give her up”]) moves on to a negative imperfective (“思ひ切らず” / “思ひ切らざる” [“won't give her up”]), a negative potential (“思ひ切れざる” [“can't give her up”]), and combinations of the above (“思ひ切らざ

るにあらず / 思ひ切れざるなるべし” [“It’s not that you won’t give her up / It’s probably that you can’t give her up”]; “思ひ切れざるに非ず / 思ひ切らざるなり” [“It’s not that I can’t give her up / It’s that I won’t give her up”]), expanding on a similar progression found earlier in the journal entry. Also repeated extensively in the poem is “simple” 目出たし, a sentiment introduced earlier in the journal entry as the state of naiveté one must be in to try to win Tsuru for himself no matter what: “それ程お目出度い男になりたくない” (“That simple I don’t want to become”; 97; 65). The final lines of the poem are a reversal of his earlier sentiment: “目出たき故に他人と自分を苦しめる程 / 目出たし” (“Because I’m so simple, no one does things to torment himself / As simply as I”; 99; 68)]. Such similarity of content, especially when juxtaposed so close together in the text, practically demands comparison and synonymous treatment; the difference between *omedetai* お目出度い and *omedetaki* お目出度き, as well as *omoikiranai* 思ひ切らない and *omoikirazu* 思ひ切らず, is merely in the vernacular versus the literary endings. The conventions of genre and even linguistic form are once again relativized as a result.

In chapter 9 there is a third metatextual passage, this time an excerpt from a *shōsetsu* the narrator attempted to write on January 5 of the year before, that repeats many of the same themes and thereby makes generic distinctions superficial. In fact, this time the similarity is so close that asterisks set off the quoted *shōsetsu* and an ellipsis leads into the text. Though admittedly the sentences here are somewhat longer and more convoluted than in the rest of the novel and make use of slightly more sophisticated vocabulary, it is easy to lose sight of the metatextuality. This is especially the case when, once we exit the *shōsetsu* excerpt, the serious style seems to inadvertently continue, in the present tense, no less; the use of かる and 持ち得る are decidedly

non-colloquial: “かゝる迷信を持ち得る自分はいかなる時も鶴と自分とは運命によつて合一されると云ふ希望を持ち得る” (“Being able to have this superstitious belief, I am also able to hold on to the hope that depending on fate, Tsuru and I will at some time be united”; 101; 72). This uncanny instance of metatextual and generic confusion can be accounted for, however, when we see the text as attempting to establish a discursive framework of a sincerity that overcomes the artifice of art.

In contrast with this extended metatextual episode, the opening paragraph of chapter 10 is refreshingly plain and concise: “四月一日の朝、自分は早く起きた、天気がよくつて気持ちいゝ朝だつた。自分は新聞投入函を見に行つた。自分の心は一種の興奮をしてゐる” (“I got up early on the morning of April 1st. It was a fine morning, a morning to feel good about. I went to look at the mailbox where the newspaper was delivered. My feelings were in a kind of agitated state”; 101; 72). The stylistic effect of this passage, however, is heavily dependent on the preceding attack on art and artfulness and contingent to a degree upon the reader’s perception of the *genbun itchi* prose as non-genre, non-writing, even non-art.

The contradiction here is of course that this prose style that supposedly escapes the confines of any generic artifice is in fact constitutive of its own style, a new style that has since been rendered as the “completed” form of the *genbun itchi* experiment dating back to the Meiji. While I have tried to show here that such a perception of stylistic completion and authorial sincerity is contingent upon generic and temporal weavings and layerings, another approach would be to examine the poetics of this normalized prose itself. This is the task of the next chapter, and to do so I turn to the writing of Shiga Naoya.

## Chapter 2

The Style of Interiority: The Zen-Modern Self in Shiga Naoya's *An'ya kōro*

Shiga Naoya is known as the “god of the *shōsetsu*” 小説の神様 for his pristine style and commanding personality, producing disciples on the one hand and outspoken critics on the other. The title is also likely a pun on one of his well-known short stories, “*Kozō no kamisama*” 小僧の神様 (1920; “The Shopboy’s God”), and this and other short stories like “*Kinosaki nite*” 城崎にて (1917; “At Kinosaki”) and “*Takibi*” 焚火 (1920; “Bonfire”) are frequently anthologized in Japanese secondary textbooks, evidencing his canonical status even for the Japanese readership in general. In fact, the noted *genbun itchi* historian Yamamoto Masahide 山本 正秀 goes so far as to say in reference to part 1 of *An'ya kōro* that “志賀直哉の簡潔的確な口語体の出現によって、言文一致文の冗長軟弱性は全く克服され[た]” (the emergence of Shiga Naoya’s clear-cut, spot-on vernacular style completely overcame the frail prolixity of *genbun itchi* prose; 24; my translation), placing him at the pinnacle of the entire history of the *genbun itchi* style.

While his technical achievements in the vernacular prose style is virtually undisputed, some critics have been less reverential when it comes to the ethics implied in his autobiographical I-novel writing. The critic Nakamura Mitsuo 中村 光夫 for example concedes that “その表現自体としては無類の完成に達してゐる” (the expression itself has achieved an unparalleled perfection) but goes on to write that “彼の小説は... 作者自身、或ひは少なくともそのモチーフにあらかじめ同感してゐる同臭の読者をしか動かさぬといふ、私小説が「蒲団」以来免れなかつた弱点を、最も強く持つてゐるのです... 彼の自伝的作品は閉された世界でした” (His *shōsetsu* . . . are strongly characterized by the weakness of the I-novel



that has continued since *Futon*: the inability to move anyone but the author himself, or at the least readers of his ilk who already sympathize with his motifs. . . . His autobiographical works were a closed-off world; 471; my translation). Likewise, although Kenneth Strong distinguishes between *An'ya kōro*'s project of “facing the self” and the commonly imputed “self-centredness” of Shiga's protagonists, Strong finds it “striking” and “egoistic” that the protagonist of *An'ya kōro* leaves his wife and vacations alone for a while as a means of resolving marital difficulties (90). Indeed, Tokitō Kensaku 時任 謙作's departure is even more problematic when we consider that he leaves because he is apparently unable to forgive his wife, whose minor “mistake” of hospitality resulted in her being raped by her cousin during Kensaku's absence.

The relation between Shiga's style and content, however, is questioned less often. Many, including Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, have attributed Shiga's lucid style as a direct product of his sincerity in living life: “志賀直哉氏は僕等のうちでも最も純粋な作家——でなければ最も純粋な作家たちの一人である. . . . 志賀直哉氏の作品は何よりも先にこの人生を立派に生きてゐる作家の作品である” (“Shiga Naoya is the most genuine of writers—more genuine than the rest of us. . . . Shiga's literature is, above all, the work of a writer who leads a respectable and dignified life”; 11; Suzuki 95–6). As Tomi Suzuki explains, however, a similar sentiment pervaded much of the Japanese critical dialogue on the *shishōsetsu* from the 1920s to the 60s—the Japanese I-novel was not only placed at the polar opposite of the Western fictional novel but also favored over it for its greater “truthfulness” as “a factual, direct expression of the author's lived experience” (3). Yet on the other hand, Edward Fowler's claim—“that a writer like Shiga really does sound more sincere than others, then, is a tribute not to his honesty but to his mastery of the rhetoric (the intimate voice, ellipses, allusions, etc.) of authenticity” (66)—

demands further investigation into how such sincerity is performed textually, regardless of whether such sincerity is real or contrived.

The critical divide on Shiga's sincerity is perhaps most apparent in debates on Shiga's magnum opus, *An'ya kōro*, where the thematic and narrative issue of the psychological development of the protagonist is scrutinized. If the papers presented at a conference dedicated to the novel and held at the National University of Singapore in 1994 can be deemed representative of the scholarship at large, then the following two-part question emerges as central: does Kensaku achieve an authentic epiphany after his long journey of self discovery? Or does a domineering solipsism compromise his supposed sincerity? Answering yes to this latter question, Cody Poulton criticizes the book for having “absolutely no sense of Kensaku's internal development” (Tsuruta 23) even while recognizing that as a *shōsetsu* it is not obligated to do so, at least in the traditional Western sense of the novel. He sees, rather, only a stylistic expansion and maturation as the story progresses and no change in the narcissism of Kensaku—or Shiga, for that matter. In contrast, Kin'ya Tsuruta 鶴田 欣也 and Janet Walker seek to validate the protagonist's spiritual journey by applying more traditionally Eastern models, the former in terms of *amae* 甘え ‘dependency wishes’ and *yurushi* 赦し ‘forgiveness’ and the latter using Hindu concepts of pleasure, success, duty, and deliverance as the narrative structure. Walker, in this article and elsewhere, also suggests that Kensaku's spiritual journey that culminates in an epiphanic, mystical union with nature merits consideration within a global Modernist context (Walker). Susan Napier sees Kensaku developing his identity primarily through his interactions with the women of the story, who allow him to explore “various forms of identity” and “get somewhat outside his self-absorption and link himself with the collectivity” (Tsuruta 146) of a mythic past.

But what could be gained if this thematic and narrative debate were to be brought back to the more fundamental elements text and language in an investigation of style? Tokitō Kensaku, after all, is not Shiga Naoya, despite the autobiographical and confessional nature of the I-novel genre, but a textual phenomenon constructed out of language. Examining in more detail how this protagonist's interiority is structured can help the critic move away from merely condemning Kensaku's political and interpersonal naiveté. In fact, I propose that a certain rigidly structured and highly consistent pattern employed throughout the text to represent Kensaku's interiority is largely responsible for the perception of authorial sincerity, which in turn becomes the main force behind the perception of Shiga as the finisher of the modern vernacular prose style in modern Japanese literature. Shiga's "poetics of intuition" and "plotless" plot that arises from it are able to accommodate these "sincere" readings because the formal elements of this poetics construct a new discourse of selfhood as an indirect relating to an ineffable absolute; that is, achieving authentic selfhood is constructed as contingent upon intuiting an ethical absolute that lies beyond language. The integrity of this relational concept of the self, however, is dependent on a particular textual rigidity that consistently tries to point away from itself, or away from language. It is the reader's ability to imagine this ineffable but nevertheless lived experience that has, I propose, validated Shiga's style as the culmination of modern Japanese literature.

The problematic aspect of such a discourse of selfhood is that the ethics that is established is entirely personal and cannot be directly communicated. While in this sense Kensaku could be deemed a sort of Kierkegaardian knight of faith, the nobility of Kensaku's pursuit of authentic selfhood tends to be compromised by the silenced voices of others around him. Nothing is mentioned, for example, about the colonial status of Korea, where Kensaku goes to at one point in the narrative to bring back Oei お榮, his former nurse, who had failed in setting

up a geisha house there.<sup>9</sup> Naoko 直子, Kensaku's wife, is especially victim to such marginalization, and it is only at the very end of the story that she is given a chance to tell things from her perspective. This final shift of narrator to Naoko, in fact, is the only such shift in the story. Once again, the discourses involved in “completing” the *genbun itchi* style at once affirm and deny complex relations of power but take on a specific formal trajectory in the text.

According to Foucault, the “effacement radical de cette dénivellation” (“radical denial of this gradation”) between art and life is essentially utopian when the text strives after the “rêve lyrique d'un discours qui renaît en chacun de ses points absolument nouveau et innocent, et qui reparaît sans cesse, en toute fraîcheur, à partir des choses, des sentiments ou des pensées” (“lyrical dream of (discourse) reborn, utterly afresh and innocent, at each point; continually reborn in all its vigour, stimulated by things, feelings, or thoughts”; 25; 220). I propose that such a utopian system is rather literally at work throughout *An'ya kōro* in what I will call the statements of interiority: the narrator very consistently and almost obsessively tells us exactly what the protagonist feels after almost any given descriptive scene, incident, or interaction. Furthermore, I propose that the most significant aspects of these statements of interiority are 1) what I will call “defamiliarizing” modifiers, such as *nanika* 何か ‘somewhat,’ *myōna* 妙な ‘strange,’ *hen'na* 変な ‘strange,’ and *fushigina* 不思議な ‘mysterious’; and 2) the use of the contrastive conjunctions such as *shikashi* 然し ‘yet’ and *ga* が ‘but.’ The use of these defamiliarizing modifiers and contrastive conjunctions seems, in the text's discursive framework of sincerity and selfhood, to mark moments when the self experiences its own directionality in relation to an absolute other—which, in Shiga's contemporary discourse of Zen, is a paradoxical relation with absolute nothingness. This self can also be characterized as modern in the sense that it provides a longing

directionality in the quest for personal and interpersonal authenticity that, while narratively culminating in Kensaku's apparent enlightenment atop Mount Daisen 大山, leaves many questions unanswered in the denouement. But again, whether or not Kensaku achieves authenticity is not as important as considering the limitations and possibilities of the language in which such authenticity is pursued or imagined.

Each element of the style of interiority in *An'ya kōro* seems to have a consistent function throughout the text. First, the modifiers such as *aru* 或る 'a certain,' *nanika*, *myōna*, *hen'na*, and *fushigina* defamiliarize the protagonist's feelings, impressions, and intuitions, thereby highlighting passages of deep feeling against the merely descriptive or cognitive. These passages of deep interiority offer a kaleidoscopic exploration of the heights and depths of the self, outlining its contours in relation to the absolute (or absolute nothingness). The consistency of these modifiers being used throughout the text suggests a non-linear, non-cumulative narrative progression that nevertheless cuts through peripheral material to reveal the many facets of the self-absolute relation. Second, contrastive conjunctions like *shikashi* and *ga* throughout *An'ya kōro* specify Kensaku's more important interior experiences; by first making a comparatively general statement of interiority and then negating it or qualifying it, the text not only foregrounds the second sentence but also suggests the presence of an intuitive undercurrent by consistently pointing toward it. Though the use of the conjunctions is arguably habitual on the part of Shiga—it occurs quite frequently in all sorts of narrative contexts—*shikashi* and *ga* also serve as a kind of marker to signal an important statement of interiority that, paradoxically, points negatively to the relational nature of the self to the absolute that is otherwise inexpressible.

The first vignette recounted in the Prologue, entitled “Shujinkō no tsumioku” 主人公の追憶 (“The Hero's Reminiscences”), stands out from the other four in that it most clearly

establishes Shiga's descriptive style of Kensaku's interiority that continues throughout the rest of the story. Consider for example the second paragraph: “或る夕方，私は一人，門の前で遊んでみると，見知らぬ老人が其処へ来て立つた。眼の落ち窪んだ，猫背の何となく見すばらしい老人だつた。私は何といふ事なくそれに反感を持つた” (“It was evening, and I was sitting idly outside our front gate. A strange old man came and stood over me. He stooped a little, his eyes were sunken, and there was about him a general air of seediness. I took an instant dislike to him”; Shiga 5; McClellan 15). The reasserted first-person subject, *watashi* 私 ‘I,’ the defamiliarizing adverbial phrase *nantoiukotonaku* 何といふ事なく ‘somehow,’ and the directly stated deep feeling, *hankan* 反感 ‘dislike’—combine to form the prototypical structure of the descriptions of Kensaku's ever-moving interiority.

The narrative pattern of distilling explicitly stated, deeply intuited feelings from passages of detailed objective descriptions continues in the next paragraph, albeit at a faster tempo, as causation is implied by juxtaposition: “釣上がった口元，それを圍んだ深い皺，變に下品な印象を受けた” (“The turned up mouth, the deeply creased skin around it—everything about him was common”; Shiga 5; McClellan 15). Here a more obviously uncanny adverb, *hen'ni* 變に ‘strangely,’ qualifies the determinant *gehin'na* 下品 ‘vulgar’—a polarized term of good/bad, like/dislike—which in turn modifies *inshō* 印象 ‘impression.’ This sequence of adverb, determinant, and noun repeats in the second sentence of the fourth paragraph with *myōni* 妙に ‘strangely,’ *itatamaranai* 居堪らない ‘unbearable,’ and *kimochi* 氣持 ‘feeling’ (Shiga 5). The conjunction *shikashi* debuts in the eighth paragraph and introduces another similar statement of Kensaku's interiority: “然し此うは手な物言ひが變に私を壓迫した” (“The familiarity of his

tone filled me with foreboding”; Shiga 6; McClellan 15). Finally, just before the old man walks away and the scene ends, Shiga summarizes Kensaku’s interior experiences thus far in a couplet of sorts: “此老人が何者であるか、私には解らなかつた。然し或る不思議な本能で、それが近い肉親である事を既に感じてみた” (“I had no idea who this old man was; but already I had the premonition that here was someone closely tied to me by blood”; Shiga 6; McClellan 15). Shiga thus seems to privilege certain signifiers by virtue of their function to point away from themselves and towards alterity, suggesting that authenticity can be approached by intuiting or feeling this sort of alterity within oneself.

Other passages demonstrate the consistency of the pattern. I list only several instances below though in context of the surrounding paragraph, emphasizing the significant “statements of interiority” that cap these passages:

謙作の心に受けた傷は案外に深かつた。それは失戀よりも、人生に對する或る失望を強ひられる點でこたへた。元々愛子は仕方なかつた。それに腹を立てる事は出来なかつた。それから慶太郎も仕方ない。今度のやり方でも腹は立つが如何にも慶太郎のやりさうな事と思はれる點で、段々それ程には思はなくなつた。只一番こたへたのは愛子の母の氣持であつた。日頃其好意を信じ切つて居ただけに、此結果になると、其好意とは全體<sup>どう</sup>如何云ふものだつたかが彼には全く解らなくなつた。斷られるまでも何か好意らしいものを見せられたら彼はまだ満足出来た。所が、それらしいものも<sup>まる</sup>全で見せられずに彼は突き放された。彼は不思議な氣がした。 (73-4)

The episode left a wound in Kensaku deeper than he would have thought possible. It was more than mere disappointment in love; rather, it was the sudden awareness brutally forced on him of his own capacity for disappointment in people. Aiko had been hardly more than a pawn in the entire affair. Her part in it, he could learn to view with resigned acceptance. Even Keitarō's behavior, unforgivable as it had struck him at the time, ceased to gnaw at him, for the fellow had never been any different. What hurt him most, then, was the attitude of Aiko's mother.

He had been so certain of her affection for him. But what could that "affection" have been? What could it have meant to her? If, before the rejection of his suit, she had shown some sign of fondness or concern, he would have found some consolation in it. But . . . she had pushed him away as though no bond had ever existed between them. [*He felt strange.*] (62)

冬にしては珍しく<sup>のどか</sup>長閑な日だった。<sup>けんさく</sup>謙作の乗った船は何時か岸壁を離れて居た。下には群集に混つてお榮と<sup>えい みやもと</sup>宮本とが立つて居た。彼は神戸で降りるのに見送りは仰々しいからと<sup>と</sup>止めたが、船が見たいからとお榮は宮本に頼んで連れて来て貰ったのだ。鐘が鳴つて見送人が船から降りねばならぬ時に、お榮は「身體を大切にね」とか「お便りは始終して下さいよ」とか云つた。謙作は一寸感傷的な氣持になつた。 (149)

It was a remarkably gentle winter day. The ship had already cast off its moorings. Below on the pier, standing among a host of others who had come to see the passengers off, were Oei and Miyamoto. Kensaku had asked Oei not to come,



saying that after all he was going to get off at Kobe and he wanted no fuss made over such a short trip. But Oei had insisted. She wanted to see the ship, she said, and had come along to Yokohama with Miyamoto in tow. “Please take good care of yourself, and please write regularly,” she had said to Kensaku on the ship as the bells started ringing. *Kensaku . . . felt [a bit sentimental]*. (111)

自分が不義の子であつたといふ事に就いても肯定的な明るい考を彼は持つたが、時が経つにつれ、心の緊張が去るにつれ、彼は時々參る事が多くなつた。

彼は妙に落ちつけなくなつた。 (240)

He had tried, with some success, to think of his own birth rationally and positively. But as time passed, and as the initial tension within him began to wear off, he became more apt to let it depress him. *And he came to feel more and more unsettled.* (173)

彼がそれより何となく氣になつて居たのは、赤兒の誕生の日の夜<sup>よる</sup>、前からの約束で末松等と三條の青年會館に演奏會を聴きに行つた、其所で彼はシューバートのエールケーニヒを聴いた、その事だつた。彼は前から曲目をもつとよく見て居たら、此演奏會へ行かなかつたらう。この嵐の夜<sup>よ</sup>に子供を死神にとられる曲は今の場合、聴きたくなかつた。然し彼は何氣なく行

つて、誕生の日に聴くには如何にも縁起の悪い曲を聴くものだと思つた。  
彼は一寸厭な氣持になつた。(439)

What had been worrying him more was the fact that on the evening of the very day his child was born, he had kept his appointment with Suematsu and Mizutani to attend a recital being held at the Young Men's Hall in Sanjō, and there had heard Schubert's "Erlkönig." Had he known that this piece was being performed, he would probably not have gone. And as he listened to the song about the child who was taken by the demon of death on a stormy night, he could not help thinking what an inauspicious thing it was for him to hear on the day of his child's birth. [*He felt somewhat uncomfortable.*] (305)

中の海の<sup>むかう</sup>彼方から海へ突出（つきだ）した連山の頂が色づくとき、美保の關の白い燈臺も陽を受け、はつきりと浮かび出した。間もなく、中の海の<sup>だいこんじま</sup>大根島にも陽が當り、それが<sup>あかえび</sup>赤鱒を伏せたやうに平たく、大きく見えた。村々の電燈は消え、その代りに白い烟が所々に見え始めた。然し麓の村は未だ山の陰で、遠い所より却つて暗く、沈んでゐた。影の輪郭が中の海から陸へ上つて來ると、米子の町が急に明るく見えだしたので初めて氣付いたが、それは停止することなく、恰度（ちやうど）地引網（ぢびきあみ）のやうに<sup>たぐ</sup>手繰られて來た。地を嘗めて過ぎる雲の影にも似てゐた。中國一の高山で、輪郭に張切つた強い線を持つ此山の影を、その儘、平地に眺められるのを<sup>けう</sup>稀有の事とし、それから謙作は或る感動を受けた。(580)

As the mountain range jutting into the water on the other side of the bay began to take on color, the outline of the white lighthouse in the straits became more clearly etched. The sun now reached Daikonjima Island, stretched out like a huge stingray across the bay. The lights in the distant villages went out, and from some of the chimneys smoke began to rise. But there was no sign of activity yet in the villages immediately below, which lay still and dark in the shadow of Daisen. Kensaku then saw for the first time the sharply delineated outline of this shadow in the distance as it retreated from the bay and crept toward him over land, allowing the town of Yonago to emerge in the light. It was like a great dragnet being pulled in; or it was like the caressing shadow of a passing cloud. And so Kensaku watched . . . this rare sight—the shadow of the proud mountain, the greatest in central Japan, etched boldly across the land[; *from this Kensaku was moved to a certain feeling*]. (401–2)<sup>10</sup>

As seen above, the stylistic consistency throughout *An 'ya kōro* establishes a rather rigid discourse of selfhood that subsumes many other more traditional narrative elements such as description, dialogue, and even monologue under “statements of interiority” that privilege extra-lingual experience as the ultimate source of identity. This ineffable and intuitive ethics of feeling creates both a powerful appeal to an absolute sincerity and a problematic solipsism.

Of course, Shiga does not mechanically apply what I call the style of interiority at every juncture of the book. Yet such a pattern or structure that emphasizes the affective and uncannily intuitive does seem to underlie most other narratively significant passages. Late in the narrative, for example, Kensaku finally begins to analyze this structure of interiority during a conversation with a friend:

然し謙作は自身の過去が常に何かとの争闘であつた事を考へ、それが結局外界のものとの争闘ではなく、自身の内にあるさういふものとの争闘であつた事を想はないではみられなかつた....

謙作はこれまで、暴君的な自分のさういふ気分によく引き廻されたが、それを敵とは考へない方だつた。然し過去の数々の事を考へると、多くが結局一人角力になる所を想ふと、つまりは自分の内にあるさういふものを相手に戦つて來たと考へないわけには行かなくなつた.... 知らず知らず解決を矢張り自身の内だけに求めていた事に初めて氣がついた。實際變な事だと思つた。(Shiga 490)

He was nevertheless forced to think that his struggle in the past had indeed been with something inside him, not outside. . . . Kensaku had always allowed his emotions to tyrannize over him; but he had not before thought to describe his own condition quite in these words. Now, as he remembered the various incidents in his life, he had again to grant that more often than not he had been wrestling with himself, that his enemy had been a creature residing within him. . . . All he was saying, he now realized, was that their problem was entirely his to solve. What a strange thing to have said to her, he thought. (McClellan 341)

In a sudden moment of enlightenment, Kensaku realizes that the restless despair of his life thus far has been coming from a misrelation within himself as opposed to various external causes such as the frantic “will of modernity,” his incestuous origins, his first child dying, and his wife being raped by her cousin. Shiga once again seems to suggest the authenticity of this realization

through the use of *shikashi* and *hen'na*, even though he runs the risk of naiveté in using his stylistic pattern to describe his stylistic pattern.

But perhaps where an awareness of this structure of interiority is most crucial is in a reading of the climactic epiphany atop Mount Daisen. In light of this stylistic pattern of pointing to the authentic through words that can only signify a difference and a negativity, what seems to be described is not a mystical union with nature but a dissolution of a concretized concept of the self into a relational one with the absolute or absolute nothingness. The self is no longer set up antagonistically against nature, which is compared to a “limitless body of air” (*mugen no ōkisa de tsutsundeiru kitai* 無限の大きさに包んでゐる氣體) but is “restored” (*kangen sareru* 還元される) to it in some sort of harmonious relation. While the rapturous experience is directly described as a “不思議な陶醉感” (“strange intoxication”) and a “言葉に表現出来ない程の快さ” (“pleasure beyond the power of words to describe”; Shiga 578; McClellan 400), perhaps the most compelling description of this indescribable relationship is in the gradual unfolding of the panorama of the mountainside and the view below as the sun rises *behind* him. That is, Kensaku does not directly see the sun, but sees the “sharply delineated outline of the shadow [of the mountain] as it retreated from the bay and crept toward him over land” (McClellan 402). Shiga’s concluding phrase of the chapter, “それから謙作は或る感動を受けた” (from this, Kensaku was moved to a certain feeling; Shiga 580; my translation), in a similar beauty of linguistic inadequacy, points strongly and longingly towards the ineffable.

In conclusion, the consistency of Shiga’s style of interiority suggests that a knowing naiveté of the limits of language does not hinder the reader from filling in the gaps or imagining the paradoxically indescribable. Just as words such as *hen'na*, *fushigina*, *myōna*, and *shikashi* are characterized by their ability to signify alterity and negativity yet are concrete in their

typographic and prosodic materiality, the self in *An'ya kōro* is rigidly persistent in its internal structure yet ultimately characterized by its relation with the absolute, a relationship that may be inexpressible but nevertheless able to be imagined. The ability, however, of such a discourse of selfhood to overcome its solipsism is only tentatively hinted at in the shift of narration from the point of view of Naoko, and Kensaku's fate remains ambiguous to the end. Yet such an inversion of point of view in the discourse of modernity is, as we will see, precisely what drives the poetics of Takamura Kōtarō.

## Chapter 3

Takamura Kōtarō's *Dōtei* and the Gendered Poetics of Japanese Colloquial Free Verse

Many histories of modern Japanese poetry regard Takamura Kōtarō's first published collection of poems, *Dōtei*, as the first "completion" of the colloquial free verse style (*kōgo jiyū tai* 口語自由体). The collection comprises seventy-five poems of varying lengths and styles and a set of thirty-two *shōkyoku* 小曲 (originally a short musical form) that, by virtue of its position in the book, roughly divides the collection into two thematic halves of self-destructive decadence and humanism through romantic love. While much has been made of the dramatic change in life perspective and poetic theme that Takamura experienced after meeting his future wife, Naganuma Chieko 長沼 智恵子 (1886–1938), this biographical context is not mandatory in perceiving a noticeable stylistic shift in the second half: more poems are in the colloquial, audience-specific voice as opposed to the more neutral literary voice; the tone changes from angry and mocking to gentle and entreating; the flurry of indulgent images come to a harmonious stasis of cinematic juxtaposition. Such "direct" colloquialism, though a radical move at the time, has by now been so thoroughly normalized for the twenty-first century reader and even general speaker of Japanese that the poems seem all but inevitable in their expression and sentiment.

Yet what about these poems continues to produce the uncanny familiarity that rises to the fore against the elegantly wrought literary and mixed-style poems? It cannot be ascribed to form alone, at least in its superficial, architectural sense; Takamura employs the refrain throughout *Dōtei* and across various stylistic voices, for instance. Yet questions of form continue to be central as long as textual—as opposed to strictly historical, biographical, or political—considerations are brought to bear. At the same time, however, even when there is not just one

immanent system of selection and combination but a whole range of linguistic systems that come into play as is the case in *Dōtei*, which straddles a crucial point in the history of modern Japanese language and literature, formal structures mean little if not linked to their larger contexts. The canonizing force of this poetics of colloquial free verse is therefore at once formal and historical, linguistic and institutional.

I therefore propose a poetics of Japanese colloquial free verse based on hierarchically gendered reversals: *Dōtei* establishes the previously lowly-regarded female, colloquial, and unmetered voice as the new aesthetic norm in Japanese poetry by adopting a linguistically feminine voice while retaining a conventionally masculine point of view and by reversing and thereby undermining the traditionally gendered Western division between man and nature. The canonical appeal of *Dōtei* thus arises from its relation to a discourse that feminizes Japanese literary and even linguistic history at large in relation to foreign influences, a relation both quietly complicit and boldly subversive.

Two poems illustrate this poetics especially well: “—ni” —し (1913; “To Someone”) and “Dōtei” 道程 (1914; “The Journey”). While this narrow selection is by no means representative of *Dōtei* as a whole, which is a rather heterogeneous conglomeration of poems in diary style (most poems are dated and a continuous chronology is implied), I justify their selection on the basis of previous critical attention (“Dōtei” is frequently anthologized) and structural importance within the work (“—ni” is the first poem in the second half that lyricizes the feminine voice).

“—ni” is dated July 25, 1913, and is the third poem in the so-called second part of *Dōtei*. Hiroaki Satō 佐藤 紘彰’s translation conveys the desperate pleading of the poet well although, as



I will discuss, the linguistic features of Japanese that impart the uncanny and radical aspects of the poem all but disappear in translation:

いやなんです

あなたのいつてしまふのが——

花よりさきに實のなるやうな

種子よりさきに芽の出るやうな

夏から春のすぐ来るやうな

そんな理屈に合はない不自然を

どうかしないでみて下さい

型のやうな旦那さまと

まるい字をかくそのあなたと

かう考へてさへなぜか私は泣かれます

小鳥のやうに臆病で

大風のやうにわがままな

あなたがお嫁にゆくなんて

いやなんです

あなたのいつてしまふのが——

なぜさう容易く

さあ何といひませう——まあ言はば  
その身を賣る氣になれるんでせう  
あなたはその身を賣るんです  
一人の世界から  
萬人の世界へ  
そして男に負けて  
無意味に負けて  
ああ何といふ醜悪事でせう  
まるでさう  
チシアンの畫いた繪が  
鶴巻町へ買物に出るのです  
私は淋しい，かなしい  
何といふ氣はないけれど  
恰度あなたの下すつた  
あのグロキシニヤの  
大きな花の腐つてゆくのを見る様な  
私を棄てて腐つてゆくのを見る様な  
空を旅してゆく鳥の  
ゆくへをぢつとみてゐる様な  
浪の碎けるあの悲しい自棄のころ  
はかない，淋しい，焼けつく様な

——それでも戀とはちがひます

サンタマリア！

ちがひます，ちがひます

何がどうとはもとより知らねど

いやなんです

あなたのいつてしまふのが——

おまけにお嫁にゆくなんて

よその男のこころのままになるなんて (120-2)

No, no, I don't like it

your going away—

Like fruit coming before blossom

like bud sprouting before seed

like spring immediately following summer,

that's not logical, please don't do

so unnatural a thing.

A husband as if cast in a mold

and you with your smooth round handwriting,

the mere thought makes me cry.

You, who are timid as a bird,

willful as a gale,

you are to be a bride

No, no, I don't like it

your going away—

How can you so easily,

how shall I say, as it were

put yourself on sale?

Because you *are* putting yourself on sale.

From the world of one person

to the world of millions,

and yielding to a man,

yielding to nonsense,

what an ugly thing to do.

It's like a Titian

set out for shoppers in Tsurumaki-chō.

I am lonely, sad.

Though I really don't know what to do,

it's just like watching

the large gloxinia you gave me rot,

like watching it leave me and rot,

like seeing a bird fly off into the sky

not knowing where to,

it's the sad abandon of a wave as it shatters,

brittle, lonely, searing

—But it isn't love

Mother of God

No, it isn't, it isn't.

I don't know what it is

but I don't like it

your going away—

you're going away to be a bride,

offering yourself to the will of a man you don't even know (93–4)

As Hidaka Takao 飛高 隆夫 observes in his notes to “—ni,” the original title as it appeared in the journal *Geki to shi* 劇と詩 (Theater and Poetry) in the September 1912 issue was “N—joshi” N—— 女史 (“Ms. N”), the *N* standing for Naganuma Chieko’s family name. Even without the initial, however, the title of the poem evokes an object of spoken as opposed to epistolary address through its use of the particle *ni* に as opposed to *e* へ. The first two lines of the poem that are repeated twice more later on in the poem to form the refrain also immediately establishes the voice as a feminized subject expressing a degree of politeness to the listener/reader with the *desu* copula: “いやなんです / あなたのいつてしまふのが——” (“No, no, I don't like it / your going away—”; 120, emphasis added; 93). Although it initially seems redundant to gloss *anata* あなた ‘you’ in the notes as referring to Naganuma Chieko given the history of the title, Hidaka apparently felt that enough of even his contemporary readers would be jolted by the use of this second-person pronoun, which is used primarily by feminine speakers in addressing other feminine speakers or an intimate masculine listener (e.g., lover or husband). This gender reversal is further confirmed when in the second stanza the first-person pronoun employed is *watashi* 私,

once again a feminine, polite/humble form that has only since been standardized as the “generic” polite signifier, thanks in major part to the prestige of the Tokyo dialect and the success of the I-novel arising from the literary circles of the area.

The speaker, while clearly masculine (as evidenced in the last line: “よその男のころのままになるなんて” [“offering yourself to the will of a(nother) man you don’t even know”; 122, emphasis added; 94]) nevertheless sets himself apart from other masculine subjects in the poem in order to establish a new, feminized literary voice. The success of such an inversion, in turn, places the feminized voice in the “masculine” or institutionally normative or superior position because such a voice harmonizes with the larger societal and intellectual changes in Takamura’s Japan due to its aggressive cultural absorption of the West. “旦那さま” (“husband”) in the second stanza, for example, is (without the honorific suffix *sama* さま) a term generally used by a wife to refer to her own husband when speaking to a familiar listener or (especially with *sama*) to a familiar listener’s husband. Speaking from this feminine standpoint, the poet draws a line between himself and this “型のやうな旦那さま” (“husband as if cast in a mold”; 93). Likewise, “男” (“man”) in the fourth stanza is associated with the “萬人の世界” (“world of millions”) of conventionally restrictive mores. Even the oath near the end of the poem invokes Saint Mary as opposed to other male divinities, as if appealing to a new, feminine muse—at once Western yet lying outside of its patriarchal orthodoxy.

The gendered reversals continue even in the orthography of the poem. The refrain, for example, is entirely in hiragana, a script readily associated with the feminine, thanks to the Heian literary tradition of Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (973?–1014?) and Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (966?–1025?) and the gendered discourse surrounding the Japanese language at large. Drawing on psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic studies on the topic, Masako Hiraga 平賀正子 explains

in her article “Kanji: The Visual Metaphor” that because “Kanji have a more angular and distinctive shape than hiragana, they have masculine associations such as ‘large,’ ‘heavy,’ and ‘strong’ in comparison with hiragana, which have feminine associations such as ‘small,’ ‘light,’ and ‘weak’” (134). Although I would argue that neurolinguistic evidence is in the end only describing what is a widespread cultural understanding as opposed to anything essential about the shape of Chinese versus Japanese characters, such a gendered, hierarchical understanding of the Japanese language would also seem to have a historical basis. Writing was introduced in Japan from China, after all, which for most of its history was considered to be the culturally superior empire. Even phonetically, kanji compounds using the sinicized *on* readings carry an etymological alterity that is readily differentiated from the native *kun* readings attached to the characters based on semantic correspondence. “Serious” writing has therefore long been the exclusive province of men at least since the Asuka 飛鳥 period, continuing through even the Tokugawa period with its emphasis on Confucian morals and learning for the male samurai intelligentsia. One also thinks of the *Manajo* 真名序 or “True-Name Preface” to the *Kokinwakashū* 古今和歌集 in Chinese as opposed to the *Kanajo* 仮名序 or “Borrowed-Name Preface” in Japanese as evidence of this uneasy yet defiant feminization. The roots run deep when “—ni” accesses these histories through skillful formal manipulation.

The second poem under consideration, “Dōtei,” also makes a bold gender reversal, this time not in the husband-wife relationship but in equivocating (Mother) Nature with the Father:

僕の前に道はない

僕の後ろに道は出来る

ああ、自然よ

父よ

僕を一人立ちにさせた廣大な父よ  
 僕から目を離さないで守る事をせよ  
 常に父の氣魄を僕に充たせよ  
 この遠い道程のために  
 この遠い道程のために (191)

Before me, no road.

Behind me, a road.

O Nature,

Father,

Spacious father who made me stand on my own,

Do not lose sight of me, protect me,

Fill me always with a fatherly spirit,

For this long journey,

For this long journey. (22)

The original version of the poem was much longer at 102 lines and was first published in 1914 in the March issue of *Bi no haikyo* 美の廢墟 (*The Ruins of Beauty*). Its last seven lines were excerpted and modified to form the current version, but in the original the identification of Nature with the Father carries more cosmic associations that draw from Christianity yet in many ways depart from it. To list some of his attributes, for example, Father Nature possesses “廣大ないつくしみ” (vast charity) and “厳格な父の愛” (strict fatherly love), leaves behind a faint smile as he hides himself in the horizon of eternity (“微笑をのこして僕の手から / 永遠の地平線へ姿をかくした”), fills the expanse of space with his spiritual presence (“氣魄”),



commands the poet to walk (“いきなり「歩け」といふ声につらぬかれた”), and creates swarming masses of humans (*ningen* 人間) for the sake of humanity (*jinrui* 人類), the latter which will continue even after the majority of the former “rot” (*sutekusarasu* 棄て腐らす / *kusaru* 腐る in their inauthenticity in rejecting Nature as their Father (442–3; my translation). As Hidaka once again astutely points out in a gloss of the fifth line of the current version of the poem, however, “一人立ちにさせた” (“made me stand on my own”; 191; 22) has a double connotation of empowerment and rejection.

Yet empowerment and rejection are precisely what drive Takamura’s poetics of inversion; by displacing the Christian God with Father Nature, himself a supplanter of Mother Nature, that feminized object of the Western man’s intellectual observation, the poet inherits an independence that may be Western “in spirit” but at the same time inverts the very distinction between man and nature that the West brings to him, thereby alienating the poet from both East and West. The concept of nature (*shizen* 自然) grants man independence from (native) tradition and history, but its vastness brings about a keen sense of isolation: “For this long journey, / For this long journey.” The poet owes both East and West for his newly-found artistic independence, so he must mint a new hybrid currency that will pay them both.

In conclusion, the canonizing force of these poems can be ascribed to an inversion or reversal of a traditional hierarchical structure of gender that underlies Japanese literary history diachronically and synchronically: Japan’s relation to China is replicated in its relation to the West and therefore the same poetics of inversion is necessary to establish or “masculinize” its otherwise “feminine” cultural status. Yet the difficulty of such a transition is evidenced in the rigidity of the resulting structure; the Tokyo dialect is still the prestige dialect, its femininity only perceived when viewed from regions in Japan with stereotypically more masculine dialects such

as Kansai. The same discourse of gender reversal continues in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎 潤一郎 (1886–1965), who is perhaps the next nodal point in such a literary history. Tanizaki's (re)turn to Japanese subjects and marginalized dialects such as is found in *Sasameyuki* 細雪 (1942–48; *The Makioka Sisters*) is a thematic and linguistic turn toward the feminine, but this was in order to displace what he saw as the artificial impersonality of the colloquial prose style and its plotless narratives with the narrative strength of the long monogatari.<sup>11</sup> The poet's *dōtei* therefore continues to forge paths as long as he or she is able to look back—and across—to the many meandering and intersecting paths of a comparative history.

## Conclusion

The present study has explored how a specific historiographical phenomenon—the completion of the *genbun itchi* style in certain key literary texts—can be better accounted for through a critical reading that relates formal, intratextual manipulations with a variety of discourses surrounding language and literary history. In the case of Mushakōji's *Omedetaki hito*, the important discourses were genre, temporality, and sincerity: by disrupting generic and narrative temporal conventions, *Omedetaki hito* appealed to a sense of authorial sincerity that, once assumed by the reader, valorizes a humanistic philosophy diametrically opposed to a pessimistic naturalism. Shiga's *An'ya kōro* also employed the discourse of sincerity that came to surround and even retroactively define the I-novel, but this time the appeal for sincerity took place more at the syntactic and lexical levels. By establishing a consistent pattern of intuitive evaluation that pointed to an ineffable absolute, *An'ya kōro* was able to provide a persuasive appeal to an authorial sincerity through such stylistic consistency. The obsessive consistency of the style is what furnished the supposed integrity of authorial selfhood, but this style was able to become the last word in the *bundan* (almost literally for Shiga, whose creative output all but ceased after the completion of *An'ya kōro*) because it so effectively pointed away from itself and away from the signifying potential of language in the establishment of a relational discourse of selfhood. As with the other texts examined, however, this canonical status could only be attained through subverting certain conventional discourses (e.g., Western, material “progress”) at the expense of complicity to others (e.g., colonialism, egoism). Takamura's *Dōtei*, finally, was able to raise itself to a crucial point in Japanese literary history by a series of deft reversals of conventional gendered language and literary history.

The various interweavings of the above discourses all contribute to a historical perception of stylistic progression and even completion both because of and in spite of textual specificity; the historiographical perception of completion cannot be simplistically related to “stylistic superiority” of now canonical texts—indeed, the *genbun itchi* style of these texts are in some ways slightly removed from current usage—but the loci of the creative turning, reversing, and deconstructing of important literary historical discourses are ultimately textual. The confluence of these many lines of discourse is what acts as the literary historical node of institutional stylistic normalcy that continues into the present.

My focus has been on the many discourses that defined one specific internodal period roughly spanning fifty years, that of the beginning and the completion of the *genbun itchi* style in modern Japanese literature. The discourses at work in the texts I discuss above, however, do not always correspond neatly with or are easily subsumed by the larger historiographical narratives that have shaped this internodal period, such as the back story of Japan’s imperially-inflected relations with China and the West, the side stories of Japanese colonial oppression and resistance, and the parallel stories of other modern nation-states coming into linguistic modernity in connection with key literary texts. While it is impossible to give a totalizing account of how these other historical narratives relate specifically to many of the details of the texts I have discussed, they are nevertheless part of the bigger picture, if at the least as manifestations of discursive power relations. Takamura’s poetics of gendered reversals is perhaps the most readily relatable to the back story of Japan’s imperial relations east and west, in that the conventional discourse of gender that Takamura was reversing was also a hierarchical relation of power. The discourse of sincerity that plays such an important part in *Omedetaki hito* and *An’ya kōro*, as another example, can be seen as stemming from both the discourse of anxiety in the face of

western modernity as well as imperial egoism vis-à-vis other (East) Asian nations in order to legitimize a new discourse of national and personal selfhood.

In the end, a more comprehensive account of the many diverse discourses that have shaped and defined historical trajectories of modern Japanese literature is desirable but regrettably unavailable without, it would seem, a much more sustained, collaborative, and comparative effort. Yet even if such a project were to be pursued eventually, it could still represent only one history written from a particular present that is ever changing, ever distancing itself from a past that needs to be continuously re-related to the here and now. In that sense, this essay can only be considered as a modest first attempt at “une introduction à ce que pourrait être une Histoire de l’Écriture” (“an Introduction to what a History of Writing might be”; Barthes, *Le Degré* 10; Barthes, *Writing* 6).

## Notes

1. The choice of what constitutes a stylistic element in a text is largely arbitrary, similar to how Foucault's "systèmes d'exclusion" ("systems of exclusion"; "L'Ordre" 19; "The Discourse" 219) impose arbitrary limits on the radical multiplicity of discourse. I propose, however, that such interpretive choices are necessary when the aim is to examine the conditions of narrativity in literary historiography. That is, stylistics is not a method of determining textual meaning but a way of acknowledging how even some "lower-level" discourses shape, nuance, and overlap each other and contribute to the historiographical archive (see Hirsch 564–6).

2. See Miller.

3. Karatani insists that Lacan could not have been serious: "もちろん、私はラカンがいつていることに賛成できません。実際、彼は半ば冗談をいつているのだらうと思いつます" (Of course, I cannot agree with what Lacan is saying. In fact, I believe he is half joking; 76; my translation).

4. While Chinese is not, contrary what Lacan writes, a spoken dialect in modern Japanese, it is interesting to note how kanbun functioned historically as a sort of "written" dialect.

5. This is not to say, of course, that Japan had no contact with Western nations and cultures before 1853—the commercial, technological, and religious contact with Spain and Portugal from the sixteenth century onward is one such important example. What Perry's arrival marked was the end of Japan's 200-year isolationist policy, and this can be seen as the catalyst to Japan's entry into the global capitalist market of the colonial age.

6. The literary establishment of Japan.

7. While the first paragraph of the chapter also employs a shift to the present tense, the function here seems to be to explain the narrative event of his first impression of the women as one of habitual association: “その時自分はその女を芸者だらうと思つた。お白粉を濃くぬつた円い顔した，華な着物を着てゐる女を見ると自分は芸者にきめてしまう” (“At the time I thought, ‘Those women are probably *geisha*.’ When I [see women with] round faces thickly covered with white powder and [wearing] brilliant kimonos, I tend to assume that they’re *geisha*”; 79; 20).

8. The original vertical text makes use of the iteration mark < here and throughout the text.

9. As James Fujii writes, Kensaku’s problematically unproblematic visit to Korea was actually “a relatively common experience for the modern Japanese writer—to experience firsthand the Japanese occupational presence in Asia, without letting it touch her/his literary production.” The canonical status of *An’ya kōro*, then, like Soseki’s *Kokoro* こゝろ, “owes much to the fact that it belonged to the discourse of modernism—particularly imperialism—that in modified form continues to order the world that we live in today. No more than we can step ‘outside’ Orientalism of other relations of domination, [Shiga’s] text must be grasped within a nearly century-old practice of appropriation in the discursive identity labeled ‘Japan’” (196).

10. I have had to alter Edwin McClellan’s translations to demonstrate Shiga’s stylistic consistency. In fact, it is interesting to note how in many instances the published English and French translations of *An’ya kōro* actually avoid the persistent use of these statements of interiority by various means: cutting out the final sentences completely (McClellan 62 [cf. Shiga 73–4], 305 [Shiga 439]), combining them with a preceding or following sentence or paragraph

(Mécrcéant 131 [Shiga 149], 212 [Shiga 240]; McClellan 173 [Shiga 240]), changing the wording to something more concrete and specific (Mécrcéant 69 [Shiga 73–4]), or modifying adjacent sentences to hint at the effect of the Japanese original (Mécrcéant 377 [Shiga 439]). Stylistic differences across translations are inevitable, but these changes seem to confirm indirectly the rather obsessive consistency of Shiga's style.

11. See Karatani, *Nihon seishin* 90–2.



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