Resonant Characters: Biographic Writing and Authorship in 1910s Japan

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Ideas about authorship underwent rapid change in early twentieth-century Japan, especially for fiction writers. Until then, prose fiction had been commonly considered mere cheap entertainment, but it quickly gained social prestige when the concept of the novel as the quintessential modern genre became widespread, and the enjoyment of contemporary fiction established itself as part of the cultural capital repertoire of the nascent Japanese middle class. This affected not only the conventional genre hierarchy of literary texts, but also the very idea of who could be an author, and what was supposed to make their work valuable for their growing audiences, be it through serialized newspaper fiction, literary magazines, or mass-market books.

One of the most famous illustrations of these swift changes in the social position of prose fiction might be the case of Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916). Trained as part of the first generation of modern literary scholars in Japan, Sōseki generated a significant social controversy in 1907 when he resigned from his prestigious post as professor of English literature at the Imperial University (the present-day University of Tokyo) to become a full-time writer of serialized novels for the newspaper *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞. His first publication there, "Nyūsha no ji" 入社の辞 (Statement on Joining the Asahi), directly responds to those who had criticized him for leaving a respectable government job for such a "vulgar profession" as writing fiction.[1] Upon his death less than a decade later, however, he was widely celebrated as a distinguished man of culture. Even rival newspapers referred to him as a "great man of letters" (*idai naru bungō* 偉大なる文豪; *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞, 13 December 1916), and as "the bright star of our literary scene" (*bundan no meisei* 文壇の明星; *Mainichi shinbun* 毎日新聞, 10 December 1916). In only ten years, Sōseki went from needing to justify publicly why he would choose to give up the social respectability of a government-appointed academic position for the "vulgar profession" of fiction writing, to being lionized as a national symbol precisely because of his contributions to Japanese culture through his literary works.

In addition to social, economic, and technological changes that affected the material conditions for the production and circulation of literary texts,[2] what I would argue changed significantly in Japan between

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1 Natsume, "Statement on Joining the Asahi," p. 156. The original appeared in the 3 May 1907 issue of *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞.

1907 and the late 1910s was the very conceptualization of what modern literary authors were, and what gave legitimacy to their voices. The question of what could grant this legitimacy to specific authors became a key space of contention in the process of forming the field of modern Japanese literature for, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, "the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer."[3] The "modern author" was in this period an unstable category, continually appropriated and reshaped by writers themselves, critics, the public, and the media, in a contest for the authority to ultimately define the nature and function of literature—and its producers—in contemporary society. Arguments for legitimacy were most often expressed through the language of aesthetic genealogy, as writers claimed their spot in specific lineages or narratives. The main innovation in the 1910s was the opening of a new discursive space that allowed Japanese writers to imagine and present themselves in networks of artistic kinship with other modern authors (both Japanese and foreign) through their shared aesthetic sensibility and character, even if they had never actually experienced the master-disciple relationships these networks had traditionally been based on.

In the Meiji 明治 era (1868–1912), when most fiction reached the public in serialized form through periodical publications like journals and newspapers, there were two main paths to legitimate authorship. One was to become the formal disciple of an established author, sometimes even living with them, as dramatized in the famous novel *Futon* 蒲団 (The Quilt, 1907) by Tayama Katai 田山花袋 (1872–1930), and/or working for them as a personal secretary, as Izumi Kyōka 泉鏡花 (1873–1939) did from 1891 when he was accepted as a disciple by novelist Ozaki Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1867–1903). Masters would not only train their protegees, initiating them in the techniques of fiction writing as a craft, but would also help them find venues for publication by recommending their works to their network of professional contacts. The disciple would then receive not only symbolic but also social recognition as an author by the strength of their relationship with their master, a recognition that would translate into opportunities for economic remuneration through the periodicals that commissioned their works upon their master's recommendation. Many early twentieth-century writers received their first chance to reach a mass audience in the *Asahi shinbun* or other newspapers thanks to Sōseki's mediation, for instance.

The other common path was participation in a coterie group of aspiring writers. These groups were often based at elite educational institutions like the Imperial University and regularly produced journals collecting the works of their members. More than just groupings of distinct individuals with a shared interest, these coterie groups developed a strong group identity to the point that one's claim to authorship was inextricably linked to their pertinence to the group. In contrast to the strong vertical lineages of the master-disciple model, the legitimacy of individual authors came from a more diffuse sense of their collaborative work creating a sense of their particular coterie. Molly Des Jardin calls this model "corporate authorship,"[4] and points out how critics regularly reviewed coterie magazine issues as holistic units, often not even mentioning the names of the authors of individual works included therein.

In the 1910s, while the master-disciple and coterie authorship models remained, a new paradigm of authorship started to take shape. One of its main sources was found in the model of the modern artist championed by the coterie journal *Shirakaba* 白樺 (White Birch, 1910–1923). The reason it reached mainstream status, however, is because it was quickly adopted not only by many other writers, but also, crucially, by book publishers, who were then becoming central players in the literary marketplace. Promotional materials for new authors rapidly incorporated the language of "character" (*jinkaku* 人格) and "spirit" (*seishin* 精神, *kokoro* 心) to argue for the value of their works in terms of the affinity and resonance they showed with the nascent canon of modern world literature.

To trace the configuration of this new paradigm, I examine a set of texts that so far have received almost no scholarly attention: collections of biographies of modern artists, both Japanese and foreign, from the 1910s. Especially in their paratexts (prefaces, advertisements, biographer/biographee pairings), these works

2 For a rich collection of different case studies in these areas, see Kōno, *Tōki to shite no bungaku*; Yamamoto, *Bungakusha wa tsukurareru*; Yamamoto, *Kane to bungaku*.

3 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 42.

4 Des Jardin, "Editing Identity," p. 60.

make explicit a new conception of artistic value. Even more importantly, they show how the authors and publishers of these volumes expected readers to incorporate that value into their own lives.

Shirakaba and the Artist as "Child of the World"

The journal *Shirakaba* was launched in April of 1910 by a group of alumni of the prestigious Gakushūin 学習院 (Peers' School), an elite institution established to educate the sons of the aristocracy, including the imperial family themselves. *Shirakaba* featured the early works of some key authors in modern Japanese fiction, such as Shiga Naoya 志賀直哉 (1883–1971), Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885–1976), and Arishima Takeo 有島武郎 (1878–1923) and his brother Hideo 英夫 (1888–1983), who published under the name Satomi Ton 里見弴. The journal was also key in the development of ideas about visual arts in modern Japan, both because it was one of the first venues for the circulation of full-color photographic reproductions of European Post-Impressionist art (they also sponsored public exhibitions of original paintings and reproductions of contemporary art), and because it was there that Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦 (1889–1961, a.k.a. Yanagi Muneyoshi) first developed the aesthetic ideas that would shape the Mingei 民芸 (folk art) movement he led in the 1920s.[5]

For obvious practical reasons, the members of *Shirakaba* could not build their sense of legitimacy as artists wholly through close personal relations with the European artists and thinkers they admired, although they did highlight those whenever possible, reproducing personal correspondence and prints they received as gifts. The most celebrated example of this was their exchange with French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) who, upon receiving the news that *Shirakaba* was planning to devote a special issue to his work on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, responded with a letter of thanks and three small bronze sculptures. The November 1910 special issue of *Shirakaba* featured his letter and a signed photographic portrait, and Rodin's sculptures were the main highlight in the fourth *Shirakaba*-sponsored art exhibition, held 16–25 February 1912, at the Sankaidō 三会堂 building in Akasaka 赤坂, Tokyo.

A more lasting legacy of the *Shirakaba* is their popularization of a new conception of artistic value and kinship. This was obviously not based on relationships of apprenticeship and lineage, for they never actually met the European artists they admired and claimed as their peers, but also not on any sense of technical prowess or engagement with the traditional language and repertoire of one's chosen medium. Instead, *Shirakaba* writings on art champion the notion that artistic value is based on the character (*jinkaku*) or the self (*jiko* 自己) of its creator. In "Rodan to jinsei" ロダンと人生 (Rodin and Life, November 1910), Mushanokōji Saneatsu describes the French sculptor as "a man of great character" (*jinkakusha* 人格者), comparing him to other nineteenth-century European "giants" like Goethe, Beethoven, Emerson, or Whitman.[6] More explicitly, Mushanokōji finds in Rodin's character the reason why he became an artist, as "he was born with the talent [*tensai* 天才] to infuse his artworks with that character."[7] It is not Rodin's artisanal precision that Mushanokōji values, but his ability to turn his own personal character into the distinctive feature of his artworks.

Yanagi Sōetsu is more explicit in his understanding of the hierarchy of sources and forms of artistic value in his programmatic "Kakumei no gaka" 革命の画家 (The Revolutionary Artist, January 1912):

> The ultimate form of art is art for the self. When art becomes the greatest attribute of the artist, then it will, strictly speaking, deliver essential value and eternal life. . . . Without your own life there is neither truth nor beauty. Beauty is therefore not the purpose of art expressing the self. Beauty is just a necessary consequence arising from the expression of self. But when art is genuinely the expression of the entire being, then that art is itself always truth and beauty.[8]

5 For *Shirakaba*'s specific integration of aesthetic, literary, and artistic concerns, see Yasuda, *Beauty Matters*. For their role in shaping a particular kind of aesthetic spirituality in the Taishō 大正 era (1912–1926), see Rogers, "Enchanted Texts."

6 All translations from other languages into English are by myself unless otherwise indicated.

7 Mushanokōji, "Rodan to jinsei," p. 73.

8 Quoted in Schoneveld, *Shirakaba and Japanese Modernism*, p. 209.

Here Yanagi not only refutes institutional and academic models of artistic value, based on the artwork's fulfillment of an external set of aesthetic or moral standards, but also goes beyond aestheticist ideas of "Art for Art's Sake." For him, artistic "Beauty" is not the highest purpose of art, but a secondary effect "arising from the expression of the self," which is the main source of its value. Privileging this "expression of self" allows for "truth and beauty" to be conceptualized as stemming from a single origin, namely, the "genuine expression of one's entire being."

Following this line of thought, *Shirakaba* regularly introduced new artists' works together with detailed biographical narratives that attempted to match their life circumstances to their artistic expression. The magazine published translated or original biographies of the aforementioned Auguste Rodin, Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Édouard Manet (1832–1883), and Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), among others. The translation of a series of letters by Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) to his brother Theo (1857–1891) in the February, June, and September 1911 issues of *Shirakaba* fulfilled a similar function, providing insights into the "self" of the artist they were introducing. It is important to note that these biographical narratives did not appear after the artist in question had been discussed and assessed in technical terms. They were, together with the reproductions of their works, the starting point from which *Shirakaba* writers engaged with their models. Their artworks were read and valued as an expression of their lives, at the same time as their lives were read and valued as giving meaning to their artworks.

More importantly, this centering of the "character" or "self" as the privileged source for aesthetic value determined how *Shirakaba* authors saw themselves as artists in their relationship with the personalities they admired. In "Jinrui kara kuru jiyōbun" 人類からくる滋養分 (The Nourishment that Comes from Humanity, September 1911) Mushanokōji frames this relationship in terms of an engagement with Humanity (*jinrui* 人類) through his encounter with "great people" (*idai naru hito* 偉大なる人) "beginning with Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus, up to those closer to us like Goethe, Emerson, Whitman, Rodin, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, etc."[9] In Mushanokōji's view, the "self" of these "great people" has "become one" (*gattai* 合体) with Humanity since "when they think of their self they think of Humanity. Their suffering is the suffering of Humanity. When they elevate their self, they elevate Humanity." To venerate and "take nourishment" from these great personalities therefore does not mean to suppress one's "individuality" (*kosei* 個性), but rather to "allow it to truly flourish." This model thus allows Mushanokōji to see himself as participating in the greatness of these men through their shared concern with Humanity. He can think of himself as a universalist humanist and at the same time claim that he is allowing his own unique individuality to flourish. There is no tension for him between the desire for originality and the anxiety of influence, because it is precisely through the "nourishment" provided by these models that he believes one can be truly and originally oneself.

Mushanokōji deploys here the language of cosmopolitanism, claiming that spiritually (*seishinteki* 精神的) *Shirakaba* members are "children of the world," but also of modernity, since he claims that the ability to "sympathize" with this community of great characters is barred from "those older than us." It is thus not an ahistorical, universalizing experience that he is describing, but one firmly rooted in a particularly contemporary kind of sensibility—for modern art, but also for this particular attention to the artists' "self" expressed in their art—that Mushanokōji's generation is able to access, but his forefathers could not. This attitude contrasts sharply with the discourse of progress and civilization popularized by earlier modernizers. It is also markedly different from the pained language of an intellectual like Natsume Sōseki lamenting the psychological toll of "catching up" with modernity in his lecture "Gendai Nihon no kaika" 現代日本の開化 (The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan).[10]

In "Tegami yottsu" 手紙四つ (Four Letters, December 1911), Mushanokōji emphasizes again the modern quality of this experience. After visiting Yanagi Sōetsu to look together at paintings by Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Matisse, Mushanokōji reflects:

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9 Mushanokōji, "Jinrui kara kuru jiyōbun," p. 161. Of course, Mushanokōji's universalizing concept of "Humanity" as presented in his lists of "great people" is tremendously limited in terms of gender and class, but this contradiction is never addressed in these pieces.

10 Given in Wakayama 和歌山 in August 1911 as part of a lecture tour, it was later published in the essay collection *Shakai to jibun* 社会と自分 (Society and Myself, pp. 41–82, Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1913). There is an English translation by Jay Rubin in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer, pp. 154–73 (Columbia University Press, 2005).

> A soul [*kokoro*] wants to embrace another soul. . . . It feels like contemporary art allows me to fulfill this desire. It feels like contemporary art lays my soul naked on the page. . . . When I look at contemporary paintings, it feels like the person who painted them touches my soul. I then feel a deep strength and rapt ecstasy. One cannot measure the value of this art by old standards. Nor by new standards. It is something above measure. It is a person's very soul (character) [*jinkaku*].[11]

Again, art (and contemporary art in particular) is conceptualized as the expression of a person's character, not in the solipsistic sense, but in the cosmopolitan humanist sense that allows Mushanokōji as viewer to feel like it is his own "soul" that lies "naked on the page." Interestingly, the question of artistic value is brought up in connection to the para-religious experience described, but not to propose a new set of properly modern standards (for decorum, technical prowess, encyclopedic knowledge of the appropriate repertoires, etc.) against which to judge the worth of these paintings. Rather, Mushanokōji claims that, since contemporary art expresses "a person's very soul (character)" it is "above measure." That is, its value is derived directly from the artist's self, and it can only be actualized in the viewer's experience of this "embracing another soul."

While highly idiosyncratic, this *Shirakaba* language of modern art as a space of self-discovery that transcended national borders in a communion of modern sensibilities found wide resonance in young aspiring authors of their era, as it allowed them to imagine themselves not only in contact, but almost in spiritual communion, with the artists that they were learning to admire as symbols of their time. One can trace a direct line from these discourses not only to the growth in biographies of modern artists in the 1910s, but directly to the ethos associated with the act of writing these biographical narratives as self-knowledge for the biographer.

Biography in the Meiji Era

Biography as a genre had a long tradition in Japanese culture, but it gained a new dimension in the Meiji era as one of the main venues to encode and disseminate ideas about modern civilization.[12] One of the very first books translated during the Meiji period was Samuel Smiles' (1812–1904) *Self Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (1859), a volume that collected several short moralistic biographies exemplifying the virtues of thrift and hard work, and other tenets of Victorian liberalism. *Saigoku risshihen* 西国立志編 (Stories of Successful Lives in the West, 1870), Nakamura Masanao's 中村正直 translation of Smiles' book, became so popular that it has often been described as the "Bible of Meiji."[13]

The emergence of the People's Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動) in the 1880s gave an important impulse to biographical writing in Japan. Advocates of the movement compiled biographies of peasants who had struggled against oppression during the Edo 江戸 period (1603–1868), like Komuro Shinsuke's 小室信介 (1852–1885) *Tōyō gijin hyakkaden* 東洋義人百家伝 (Biographies of a Hundred Honorable Men of the Orient, 1883–1884). Also in fiction, many of the writers of political novels (*seiji shōsetsu* 政治小説) used biographical narrative models to present the development of the political careers of their young male protagonists. Literary scholar Marvin Marcus mentions the importance of European developmental novels as a model, such as Benjamin Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844), translated into Japanese by Seki Naohiko 関直彦 (1857–1934) as *Shunnōden: Seitō yodan* 春鶯囀：政黨餘談 (Bush Warblers in Spring: A Political Digression, 1884).[14]

During the Meiji period, publications of biographical texts were devoted almost exclusively to two groups.[15] One was religious figures, a holdover of a long tradition of hagiographic literature that had started in the classical period and continued into Meiji with several titles devoted to retellings of the lives of Buddhist figures such as Kūkai 空海 (774–835) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263). The other was modern professionals, the new heroes of the state modernization project. These were well represented in numerous volumes that compiled biographies of personalities in the worlds

11 Mushanokōji, "Tegami yottsu," p. 50.

12 For a good overview, see Marcus, *Paragons of the Ordinary*, pp. 8–29.

13 For an analysis of the spread of narratives of self-advancement through education and salaried employment in Meiji Japan, see Kinmoth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought*.

14 Marcus, *Paragons of the Ordinary*, p. 21.

15 For an overview of the development of biographical literature in Meiji Japan, see Ōkubo, "Meiji jidai ni okeru denki no hattatsu."

of medicine, law, politics, and business. Some typical examples are Kikuchi Kiyotaka's 菊地清隆 (dates unknown) *Gensei Nihon mei'i kōhyōden* 現世日本名医高評伝 (Biographies of Contemporary Famous Japanese Doctors, 1886), *Nihon bengoshi kōhyōden* 日本弁護士高評伝 (Biographies of Japanese Lawyers, ed. Kusaka Nanzanshi 日下南山子, 1891), and the three volumes of *Tōyō jitsugyōka shōden* 東洋実業家詳伝 (Detailed Biographies of Oriental Businessmen, ed. Kubota Kōkichi 久保田高吉, 1893–1894). Publishers seem to have also reacted to public interest in recent events like the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), offering biographies of the main political personalities involved, such as Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909) and Yamagata Aritomo 山縣有朋 (1838–1922).

For a representative series of Meiji-era biographical writing, one may turn to the eighty volumes of *Ijin kenkyū* 偉人研究 (Research on Great Persons, 1905–1913). In the tradition of Thomas Carlyle, whose *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841) had been so popular in Japan it inspired at least three different translations between 1893 and 1900,[16] this series presented the lives and deeds of historically significant "Great Persons" as didactic examples for their readership. The list of personalities included some writers, like Shakespeare and Tolstoy, but was overwhelmingly dominated by politicians, military men, scholars, religious reformers, and scientists, both from Japan and the West.

In the first volume of the series, *Rinkōn genkōroku* リンコーン言行録 (Record of Lincoln's Words and Deeds), editor Azegami Kenzō 畔上賢造 (1884–1938) frames the value of the collection in these terms:

> To know the history of the world one must study Great Persons. The more one understands Great Persons, the more one understands the history of the world. That is the necessity and benefit of the study of Great Persons. . . . The point of studying the actions of Great Persons is not to make others into Great Persons, but to inspire in them good deeds and good conscience [*zenkō zenshin* 善行善心]. That is the necessity and benefit of the study of Great Persons.[17]

In stark contrast to the *Shirakaba* approach, which found in their exploration of artists' lives a path to self-knowledge through "embracing another soul," the biographical narratives of *Ijin kenkyū* are presented as essentially different from their audience. They may be sources of historical knowledge, for these "Great Persons" are supposed to be the main motors of world history, and may provide inspiring exemplaria for a morally upright life, but nobody is supposed to become a "Great Person" themselves from reading about them. Subject and object of this moral edification are clearly separated in a one-directional didactic model that may provide education, but never the epiphanic moments of self-discovery that Mushanokōji would later wax poetic about. When a new slew of biographies of modern artists entered the market in the 1910s, they brought not only a change in their choice of subjects, but also in how their value was conceptualized and presented to their readership, who were implicitly expected, if not necessarily to become artists themselves, at least to recognize themselves in the aesthetic vision and life of the modern artist presented therein.

Kindai hyōden sōsho (1914): Biographical Writing as Self-Discovery

If Meiji-era biographies had been dominated by the heroes of industrial and political modernization lionized as inspirational examples, a new figure dominated the landscape of biographical texts in Japan after 1914: the modern artist, and especially the modern writer.[18] Just like the political novels of Meiji had appropriated the biography as a plot-structuring device, the Taishō 大正 era (1912–1926) also saw the wide success of the *Künstlerroman* (artist novel) as a genre, the most famous of which might be Romain Rolland's (1866–1915) ten-volume fictional biography of a German musician, *Jean-Christophe* (1904–1912), which was available in Japanese translation as early as 1914.[19]

16 The three translations, all titled *Eiyū sūhai ron* 英雄崇拝論, were by Ishida Kōichirō 石田羊一郎 and Ōya Yasohachirō 大屋八十八郎 (1893), Doi Bansui 土井晩翠 (1898), and Sumiya Tenrai 住谷天来 (1900).

17 Azegami, *Rinkōn genkōroku*, p. 2.

18 In the 1920s, the panorama of biographies would again become more diversified. Modern artists still made up a significant part, but a renewed interest in social issues was reflected in the publication of biographies of educators like Alice Freeman Palmer (1855–1902), social reformers like Robert Owen (1771–1858), and revolutionaries like Pyotr Kropotkin (1842–1921) and Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924).

19 *Akebono o yabutte* 闇を破って, trans. Miura Sekizō 三浦関造 (1883–1960).

Biographies of writers born after 1800, almost nonexistent before, dominate the market between 1914 and 1919 in the form of a series of specialized collections that focused on the lives of modern writers.[20] These were, in chronological order: *Kindai hyōden sōsho* 近代評伝叢書 (Library of Modern Biographies, 1914, two volumes); *Kindai bungō hyōden* 近代文豪評伝 (Biographies of Great Modern Writers, 1914–1915, six volumes); *Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho* 最近日本文豪評伝叢書 (Library of Biographies of Recent Great Japanese Writers, 1917–1918, four volumes); and *Taisei bungō hyōden sōsho* 泰西文豪評伝叢書 (Library of Biographies of Great Writers of the West, 1919, three volumes).[21]

The first of these groundbreaking biography collections was *Kindai hyōden sōsho*, launched by the members of the coterie journal *Kamen* 仮面 (Mask). Published originally under the Arthurian-inspired title *Seihai* 聖盃 (Sacred Chalice) from its foundation in December 1912 to August 1913, *Kamen* gathered aspiring authors of poetry, fiction, and criticism mostly connected to Waseda University. *Kindai hyōden sōsho* only managed to publish two volumes, both in July 1914: an original biography of Fyodor Dostoyevsky by Seto Yoshinao 瀬戸義直 (1889–1924), and a translation by Kanō Sakujirō 加能作次郎 (1885–1941) of the portion devoted to August Strindberg in Edwin Björkman's (1855–1954) *Voices of Tomorrow: Critical Studies of the New Spirit in Literature* (1913). The original plan had been much more ambitious, and included additional biographies of Guy de Maupassant (by Yoshie Kogan 吉江孤雁, 1880–1940), Maurice Maeterlinck (by Saijō Yaso 西條八十, 1892–1970), Gabriele D'Annunzio (by Hinatsu Kōnosuke 日夏耿之介, 1890–1971), Oscar Wilde (by Yaguchi Tatsu 矢口達, 1889–1936), George Bernard Shaw (by Oka Sōtarō 丘草太郎, dates unknown), and Anton Chekhov (by Itō Rokurō 伊東六郎, b. 1888).[22]

Kindai hyōden sōsho is not only notable for its focus on modern writers. The manner in which its editors explain the concept behind the collection indicates a change of paradigm along the lines of a *Shirakaba*-inspired approach to the potential of biographical writing to provide not just inspirational models of moral action, but models of being. In his translator's preface, Kanō Sakujirō establishes a direct equation of identity between Strindberg's art and life: "Even in the smallest details, his works are his actual life. . . . Strindberg's inner and outer life is in the end his art."[23] The life of the Swedish playwright is worth studying, Kanō states, because he is a "modern man among modern men, whom one could even call the symbol of modern life [*kindai seikatsu* 近代生活]." The identity of artist, art, and era is present here as well. Kanō's preface does not go into what specific features of his biography or art make Strindberg this "symbol of modern life," but it is clear that his perceived value is located in great part in his ability to embody in his life, ergo in his works, this utmost "modern" quality.

In the August 1914 issue of *Kamen*, the article "*Kindai hyōden sōsho* hakkō no ji"『近代評伝叢書』発行の辞 (On the Publication of *Library of Modern Biographies*), signed simply "Kamen dōjin" 仮面同人 (*Kamen* coterie members), explains the motivation to launch the biographical series as stemming from a shared project to "think of art in an even closer relationship to life [*jinsei* 人生]."[24] This might seem an abstract project, but they experience it as a profoundly personal one, since the final goal is to "think about which philosophy and which art have the most direct connection to our lives [*seimei* 生命]." In order to achieve that, they express their shared wish to know "the background of a work (that is, the person before the artwork appears)," and the wish to know "its creator's character, which must by necessity be a previous natural artwork [*shizen no geijutsuhin* 自然の芸術品]." The *Shirakaba* language identifying art and life is here naturalized to the degree that an artist's character is described as a "natural artwork." The identification is so strong that the circle can be closed. If one can read a creator's art as the expression of their character, one can also read their character as the expression of their innate art. And far from resulting in a solipsistic loop, this quality is what

20 Between 1890 and 1913 there was a biography of the French novelist Victor Hugo (1802–1885) by Hitomi Ichitarō 人見一太郎 (1865–1924; *Yūgō* ユーゴー, 1895), and two of Tolstoy: one by Tokutomi Roka 徳冨蘆花 (1868–1927; *Torusutoi* トルストイ, 1897), and one by Nakazato Kaizan 中里介山 (1885–1944) within the *Ijin kenkyū* collection mentioned above (*Torusutoi genkōroku* トルストイ言行録, 1906).

21 Since I do not analyze this last collection here, I will just note that it comprised a biography of Fyodor Dostoyevsky by Tanizaki Seiji 谷崎清二 (1890–1971), and biographies of Guy de Maupassant and August Strindberg by Hirotsu Kazuo 広津和郎 (1891–1968).

22 Kōno Toshirō, *Taishōki no bungei sōsho*, p. 365.

23 Kanō, "Jo," p. 2.

24 Kamen dōjin, "*Kindai hyōden sōsho* hakkō no ji," p. 118.

allows the *Kamen* coterie members to imagine themselves participating in the lives of their biographees, and recognizing themselves in their subjects:

> In the life [*seimei*] and livelihood [*seikatsu* 生活] of others we can see a glimmer of our own form. My life [*seimei*] can embrace the lives [*inochi* 命] of others. We must face each other stark naked to know ourselves through the knowledge of others. Recognizing a writer in that writer's most natural original form is the best way to comprehend that person's life's art [*seimei no geijutsu* 生命の芸術]. For that original natural form to appear, first we must be in that original natural form ourselves. To research a writer faithfully is, in other words, to face each other stark naked in our most natural original form.
>
> In that sense, the biographical study of writers and thinkers is of the utmost interest for us. This plan involves us, members of this coterie journal, picking our favorite writer or thinker, investigating his life sincerely and faithfully, and publishing the results.[25]

There are obvious echoes here of Mushanokōji's metaphor of visual art as a space in which the soul of the viewer can join in naked embrace with the soul of the artist. In the lives of the modern writers whose lives (ergo, whose art) they study, the members of *Kamen*, all aspiring authors themselves, were looking for more than biographical anecdotes or inspirational quotes. They were looking for models on how to be an artist, hoping to discover in these lives an echo of the artistic identities they were in the process of fashioning and performing themselves.

Kindai bungō hyōden (1914): Biographical Writing as Branding

Launched in October 1914, shortly after the publication of *Kindai hyōden sōsho*, *Kindai bungō hyōden* featured biographies of Henri Bergson (by Nakazawa Rinsen 中沢臨川, 1878–1920), Ivan Turgenev (by Nobori Shomu 昇曙夢, 1878–1958), Henrik Ibsen (by Nakamura Kichizō 中村吉蔵, 1877–1941), Maxim Gorky (by Sōma Gyofū 相馬御風, 1883-1950), Guy de Maupassant (by Nagai Kafū 永井荷風, 1879–1959, and Gotō Sueo 後藤末雄, 1886–1967), and Rudolf Eucken (by Abe Yoshishige 安倍能成, 1883–1966). Advertising materials included at the end of every volume indicate that the original plan for the collection included additional biographies of Leo Tolstoy (by Abe Jirō 阿部次郎, 1883–1959), William James (by Tanaka Ōdō 田中王堂, 1868–1932), Maurice Maeterlinck (by Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月, 1871–1918), Gerhardt Hauptmann (by Osanai Kaoru 小山内薫, 1881–1928), Friedrich Nietzsche (by Komiya Toyotaka 小宮豊隆, 1884–1966), and Fyodor Dostoyevsky (by Morita Sōhei 森田草平, 1881–1949). From the lineup of published and planned titles it is evident that the concept of *bungō* 文豪 ("great writer") was still wide enough in 1914 to include writers that today we would consider philosophers. That flexibility of the category may not have been restricted to Japan, however, if one considers that the Nobel Prize in Literature had been awarded precisely to Rudolf Christoph Eucken (1846–1926) in 1908, and would later go to Bergson (1859–1941) in 1927.

Kindai bungō hyōden is interesting as a sign that Japanese publishers were starting to promote their own authors by emphasizing their shared artistic sensibility with modern Western artists. The collection is introduced as follows in promotional materials:

> We have entrusted to twelve great writers, steadfast members of the present literary world of our country, to choose a great Western writer with whom they felt an affinity and resonance [*dōkan kyōmei* 同感共鳴], and describe their lives, explain their thought, and analyze their character.[26]

The language of "affinity and resonance" points to a *Shirakaba*-like understanding of a shared sensibility among modern artists, beyond geographical or temporal distance. By writing the biography of a "great writer," the Japanese authors involved could participate in their "greatness" by this implied "affinity." This sense of legitimacy would work for both elements in the biographer/biographee set in many of the published or planned volumes of the collection. We will never know how Shimamura Hōgetsu would have written about Maurice Maeterlinck, for that volume was never published, but it is not difficult to imagine that the editors who set up that pairing were expecting both of their reputations as

25 Kamen dōjin, "*Kindai hyōden sōsho* hakkō no ji," p. 118.

26 Nakazawa, *Beruguson*, p. 359.

innovators in the field of theater to enhance each other's standing in the eyes of the public.

It is also easy to see why Nagai Kafū would have been asked to write a biography of Maupassant. Kafū had been outspoken in his own writings about his admiration for the French author, claiming explicitly to use him as a model for his own life in texts like "Mōpassan no sekizō o haisu" モーパッサンの石像を拝す (Worshiping at Maupassant's statue, *Furansu monogatari* ふらんす物語, 1909) where he claims that "Just like you, master, I want to live a life so agonizingly artistic that I go mad and plan my own suicide."[27] Kafū and Gotō's biography is inspired by a similar sentiment, claiming that Maupassant lived by the motto "Sacrifice everything to art. For the artist, life must be considered as a means, nothing more."[28] Telling Maupassant's life as the story of this tragic author that sacrificed his own sanity to his art would work as much to create a specific narrative around the French writer, as to enhance Kafū's public brand by association, without the latter having to go through Maupassant's suicide attempts and eventual death in a mental institution.

It is worth mentioning that the biographical narratives of these authors were being circulated among a mass audience at the same time as the authors' works themselves were being introduced in translation, particularly through collections such as *Kindai seiyō bungei sōsho* 近代西洋文芸叢書 (Library of Modern Western Literature, 12 volumes, 1913–1916), *Taisei kindai meicho bunko* 泰西近代名著文庫 (Library of Modern Great Works, 8 volumes, 1913–1914), and *Seiyō taicho monogatari sōsho* 西洋大著物語叢書 (Library of Great Western Narratives, 5 volumes, 1914).

In the case of Maupassant, for instance, some stories had appeared earlier, translated in magazines, but the earliest collection of short stories translated by Maeda Akira 前田晁 (1879–1961) was published in 1911 by Hakubunkan. Translations of his novels entered the market basically contemporaneously to his *Kindai bungō hyōden* biography: *Une Vie* (A Life, 1883) appeared in three different translations all titled *Onna no isshō* 女の一生 (A Woman's Life) in 1913 and 1914, *Fort comme la mort* (Strong as Death, 1889) appeared as *Shi no gotoku tsuyoshi* 死のごとく強し in 1914, as did *Bel-Ami* (Bel Ami, 1885) and *Pierre et Jean* (Pierre and Jean, 1887).

Translations of Strindberg and Dostoyevsky present a similar pattern. The first of the Swedish playwright's works published in Japanese was *Fröken Julie* (Miss Julie, 1888), translated by Shimamura Tamizō 島村民蔵 (1888–1970) as *Hakushaku reijō* 伯爵令嬢 (The Count's Daughter) in 1913. Six different titles, between drama and fiction, would appear in 1914, and three more in 1915. As for the Russian novelist, except for Uchida Roan's 内田魯庵 (1868–1929) 1892 translation of *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (Crime and Punishment, 1866) as *Tsumi to batsu* 罪と罰, it is not until 1914–1915 that his works are widely available in translation. These writers' biographies were thus being introduced together with their works, both serving to legitimize each other in the process of canonizing a particular repertoire of European literature as properly modern artistic expression.

Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho (1917–1918): Spiritual Disciples and the Artist as Outsider

The last publication I want to look at in detail is *Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho* (1917–1918), the first collection devoted to biographies of modern Japanese authors born in the Meiji era. The lineup of volumes consisted of *Kunikida Doppo* 国木田独歩 (by Ema Shū 江馬修, 1889–1975), *Ozaki Kōyō* (by Honma Hisao 本間久雄, 1886–1981), *Masaoka Shiki* 正岡子規 (by Nishinomiya Tōchō 西宮藤朝, 1891–1960), and *Takayama Chogyū* 高山樗牛 (by Akagi Kōhei 赤木桁平, 1891–1949). All the titles claimed to present their subjects "hito oyobi geijutsuka to shite" 人及び芸術家として (as a person and artist), except Chogyū's volume, which was titled "hito oyobi shisōka to shite" 人及び思想家として (as a person and thinker).[29]

27 Nagai, *Nagai Kafū zenshū*, vol. 5, p. 229.
28 Nagai and Gotō, *Mōpassan*, p. 337.
29 The formula for the title may have been inspired by its use in the translation of Dimitry Merezhkovsky's popular biography of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, translated into Japanese by Morita Sōhei and Abe Yoshishige as *Hito oyobi geijutsuka to shite no Torusutoi narabi ni Dosutoiefusukī* 人及芸術家としてのトルストイ並にドストイエフスキー (1914). The Russian original, titled simply "L. Tolstoy i Dostoyevksy," had been serialized between 1900 and 1902 in the journal *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art), but the Japanese translation was made from the uncredited English version *Tolstoy as Man and Artist, with an Essay on Dostoyevsky* (1902).

Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho was not the first instance of Japanese writers being considered worthy of a self-standing biography. Edo-era literary authors had been included in the earlier collection *12 bungō* 十二文豪 (Min'yūsha, 1893–1903), styled in English as "The Twelve Men of Letters," which featured volumes devoted to Chikamatsu Monzaemon 近松門左衛門 (1653–1725) or Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767–1848). The incipient effort to produce philologically informed modern editions of Japanese classics had also produced biographical narratives of their authors. These biographies, however, tended to approach their subjects as distant historical figures, at most as exemplaria to admire and draw national pride from, but never as fellow artists in which modern creators may have discovered themselves.

The editors of the first modern collection of Ihara Saikaku's 井原西鶴 (1642–1693) works, for instance, lament that "it is difficult to convey a person [to readers], and even more so to really analyze them, . . . but talking about Saikaku from our perspective now should be seen as most difficult, with two hundred years having gone by."[30] The lives of these authors are conceptualized as monuments from the past, made all the more alien by the temporal distance. While their works are understood as valuable, there is no intimation that modern readers might find echoes of themselves in the personal character or sensibility of the Japanese classics. Rather, it is because modern readers are so distant from them that the work of philologists becomes necessary to recover and convey them to the present.

In terms of biographical narratives of authors born in the Meiji era, the closest model for *Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho* would have been the public memorializations of recently deceased writers, especially when they had passed in tragic circumstances or in their youth. There had been volumes of collected writings compiled and published by friends of Kitamura Tōkoku's 北村透谷 (1868–1894)[31] or Higuchi Ichiyō's 樋口一葉 (1872–1896)[32] after their deaths. Some journals also published special issues of recollections and impressions of epoch-making authors, like *Shinchō* 新潮 (New Currents) and *Shumi* 趣味 (Taste) did after the death of Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908), or *Shin shōsetsu* 新小説 (New Novel) did after Sōseki's death in 1917. Briefly examining the kind of biographical narratives circulated by these publications will be helpful to understand what made *Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho* innovative in terms of its conceptualization of authorship.

What all these public memorializations tended to have in common was a focus on remembrances by disciples and colleagues who personally knew the memorialized writer. The August 1908 issue of *Shumi* memorializing Doppo, for instance, collects sixteen short pieces by personal acquaintances that record the writer's life in close detail. There is "Doppo no shōgai" 独歩の生涯 (Doppo's Life) by his younger brother, the journalist Kunikida Shūji 国木田収二 (1878–1931); "Waseda jidai no Doppo" 早稲田時代の独歩 (Doppo When He Was at Waseda) by the philosopher Nakagiri Kakutarō 中桐確太郎 (1872–1944), his former classmate; "Shibuya jidai no Doppo" 渋谷時代の独歩 (Doppo When He Lived in Shibuya) and "Nikkō jidai" 日光時代 (His Times in Nikkō) by fellow writer Tayama Katai; and so forth. These pieces tend to focus on the everyday, highlighting the privileged position of the memorializers as individuals with direct access to the private life of their fellow writer, a side to which general readers would not otherwise have exposure.

The *Shin shōsetsu* special issue on Sōseki in January of 1917 features similar biographical memorials by close personal acquaintances, like aesthetics professor Ōtsuka Yasuji 大塚保治 (1868–1931), who had been his classmate at the Imperial University in the early 1890s, or novelist Morita Sōhei, who had been his direct disciple since 1905, as well as brief appraisals by fellow writers of his generation like Shimamura Hōgetsu, Tayama Katai, Yosano Akiko 与謝野晶子 (1878–1942), Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村 (1872–1943), Izumi Kyōka, and many others. Their memories accentuate episodes of direct personal connection, emphasizing their closeness to Sōseki, and highlighting their private moments with him. There is a sustained stress on the mundane even in the collection of whimsical personal anecdotes (*itsuwa* 逸話), like the time he publicly scolded a pupil for always keeping his left hand in his pocket while listening to Sōseki's lectures at the Imperial University, only to realize that the student was actually an amputee, and the writer turned it into a self-deprecating joke. Uniqueness, rather than a sense of universal shared sensibility, is the focus of anecdotes like this one. It is implied that only Sōseki would be able to both get

30 Quoted in Des Jardin, "Editing Identity," pp. 119-20.
31 *Tōkokushū* 透谷集. Tokyo: Bungakukai Zasshisha, 1894.
32 *Ichiyō zenshū* 一葉全集. Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1897.

himself in that situation, and get out of it gracefully, and also only a close personal acquaintance would have witnessed it and be able to relate it.

In contrast with these memorializations built around the celebration of networks of personal acquaintance and mentorship, a significant feature of *Saikin Nihon bungō hyōden sōsho* is that some of its biographers make it a point of pride to highlight their lack of private contact with their biographees. Introducing his biography, *Masaoka Shiki*, critic Nishinomiya Tōchō defines himself as an "outsider" (*mongaikan* 門外漢) to the world of haiku, but argues that it is precisely this outsider quality that gives value to his perspective on the life of the haiku innovator:

> I am not what is typically considered a "member of the haiku world." I am rather a total outsider to the world of haiku. But there is no reason why only a "member of the haiku world" could interpret a haiku, just as there is no reason why an outsider could not. The key point is that how one interprets a haiku depends on how one interprets art. As an outsider to haiku myself, I felt emboldened by this realization to write a biography of Shiki the haiku master. After all, was not Shiki also an outsider seen from the world of haiku during his time? . . . Isn't the fact that part of today's haiku world wants to remember Shiki's achievements proof of that? . . . Is it not true that Shiki must be observed precisely from the point of view of an outsider to the world of haiku?[33]

By the logic of the memorialization described earlier, Tōchō should have no business penning a biography of Masaoka Shiki. Not only was he never a disciple of the Master, he did not even compose haiku himself. He would not be able to reveal any secret transmission, private anecdote, or any side of the person that had been only known to those in his inner circle. Interestingly, the path that Tōchō chooses to legitimize his position as biographer is to stress that Shiki himself was an outsider to the haiku mainstream of his contemporaries, hence the proper way of explaining his life must be from the point of an outsider to the present haiku world as well. If Shiki's works are now a model, it is because they broke with his contemporary models, hence the stress on the "outsider" quality of his art and persona must be maintained in his biography.

It is important to note here that, for all his claims to "outsiderness," Tōchō was probably not selected at random, or as the person with the least actual connection to Shiki that his publisher could find. Rather, he was picked most likely because he was a central figure in the poetry world of his time. Not only was he in charge of poetry criticism in the journal *Waseda bungaku* 早稲田文学 (Waseda Literature), where he had also translated Tolstoy and introduced the aesthetics of French philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–1888), but Shinchōsha had published his ambitious *Shinshika-ron kōwa* 新詩歌論講話 (Lectures on the New Theory of Poetry) in the same year 1918. By saying that he felt emboldened by the knowledge that one's interpretation of haiku depended mainly on one's interpretation of "art" at large, as opposed to an interpretation built on "insider knowledge," Tōchō is implicitly claiming that he does have the bona fides to tackle a specialized reading of Shiki's work, just not one based on the traditional networks of apprenticeship that ruled the "haiku world." Considered in this context, assigning him a biography of Shiki would serve to legitimize Tōchō's theory of poetry by association, and provide him with a space to demonstrate how haiku could be read productively not from the "insider" perspective, but as a form of poetic art that any modern reader with the right sensibility would be able to interpret.

A similar maneuver can be interpreted behind the commissioning of a biography of Kunikida Doppo to up-and-coming novelist Ema Shū. His biography of Doppo opens as follows:

> I was not a disciple [*deshi* 弟子] of Doppo, nor was I particularly influenced by him. I never met him while he was alive and thus had no personal connection to him. However, I have a deep appreciation and respect for him. If I were asked which of the great authors of the Meiji era I value the most, including Sōseki, I would respond with [Doppo's] name with no hesitation.[34]

Ema then remembers how the first work by Doppo he read was "Koharu" 小春 (December 1900), in a collection of bound issues of the journal *Chūgaku sekai* 中学世界 (Middle School World) that he had borrowed from a friend. He claims to have immediately forgotten the title and never having even been sure of the name of

33 Nishinomiya, *Hito oyobi geijutsuka to shite no Masaoka Shiki*, p. 4.

34 Ema, *Hito oyobi geijutsuka to shite no Kunikida Doppo*, p. 1.

the author, but insists that he could never forget the feeling after reading that piece. Some years later, Ema read some more stories of Doppo in the journal *Seinenkai* 青年界 (Youth World):

> My favorite was "Bajō no tomo" 馬上の友 [A Friend on Horseback, *Seinenkai*, May 1903]. I could not help but cry every time I read it. I resolved to make this story the model for my writing, but I soon figured out that there was no way I could imitate it, no matter how closely I studied its language.[35]

In a similar way to Tōchō, Ema explicitly marks his lack of personal connections to the object of his biography but quickly builds a sense for his legitimacy as biographer through the familiar narrative of the meeting of sensibilities. He may have never met Doppo in person while he was alive, but he can trace a long-standing connection with his writings. Lest anybody accuses him of simply being attracted to Doppo the public figure, he foregrounds his sympathetic artistic reaction to Doppo's style, claiming that he immediately forgot the name of the author, even if he always carried with him the feelings evoked by his words. Stating that Doppo's language was his conscious model as a teenage aspiring writer, and at once asserting that he gave up on that project immediately allows Ema to build a sense of himself as Doppo's spiritual and artistic disciple without giving up on any claims to his own originality.

Ema's position within Shinshichō's portfolio of authors was even more central than Tōchō's. His novel *Junansha* 受難者 (The Sufferers, Shinchōsha, 1916) had been a resounding success, even though he had not gone through the usual path of apprenticeship and serialization, either in a coterie journal or a commercial periodical publication. Indeed, *Junansha* was the first successful case of launching an author unknown to the public with a full-length novel sold directly as a book. Encouraged by the way the public had received Ema's debut novel, Shinchōsha also published his sophomore effort *Anshō* 暗礁 (Reefs) the following year and must have been interested in elevating the profile of the young author through any means possible. His Doppo biography includes advertisements for both novels at the end of the book, making the connection obvious for any reader that picked up the volume.

35 Ibid., p. 2.

Conclusion

One can actually trace a connection between the success of Ema's *Junansha*, and a new tendency by publishers to emphasize the "novelty" of little-known authors, as they were being introduced to the literary marketplace. Shinchōsha's own *Shinshin sakka sōsho* 新進作家叢書 (Library of New Writers, 1917–1925) or Shunyōdō's *Shinkō bungei sōsho* 新興文芸叢書 (Library of New Literature, 1917–1921) are examples of collections of fiction built around this idea of centering the "new author" as a novel form of literary branding. While earlier equivalent Meiji-era collections like *Shincho hyakushu* 新著百種 (A Hundred Kinds of New Works, 1889–1891) emphasize their offer of "new works" to readers, they rarely mention "new authors" in their promotional materials. These late 1910s collections, on the other hand, frequently sketch in their ads scenes of up-and-coming authors competing with each other with their "never-before-seen" novelty for a position in the literary world. The copywriting that accompanies volumes of *Shinshin sakka sōsho*, for instance, claims that the collection "provides a bird's-eye view of the literary scene currently being completely renovated by the competition of newcomers [*shinjin* 新人]." In moving to a model where the "newness" of authors themselves becomes a value, it is not surprising that publishers would attempt to tap onto this idea of the connection of shared sensibility as a source of legitimacy above personal networks of mentorship and favor. Publishers started to see authors as potential brands to be managed and circulated. Authors were signed not only as creators of already existing texts, but as investments in future texts that would keep the attention of the public once the author's brand was established.[36]

Aggressively marketing unknown young authors in search of a new *Junansha*, Shinchōsha's efforts were rewarded very soon, as *Chijō* 地上 (On this Earth, 1919), a long four-volume novel by a complete newcomer named Shimada Seijirō 島田清次郎 (1899–1930), became the biggest bestseller modern Japan had ever seen.[37] In less than a decade, Japanese writers had seen

36 For a description of a very similar process in Europe, see Feltes, *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel*. For the conceptualization of ideas of literary celebrity in Japan from the 1920s on, see Boyd, "Literary Celebrity in Early Twentieth-Century Japan."

37 For the contemporary significance of this now basically forgotten novel, see Yamagishi, "Teiō Shimada Seijirō."

the creation of a new path to literary fame. Shimada's overnight success story proved that it was no longer necessary to follow the conventional route of seeking the protection of an established author, publishing short pieces in small coterie journals, and waiting for the recognition of other writers and critics publishing in similar venues.

Ultimately, I would argue the incorporation of literature into the cultural repertoire of the middle class was also made possible by the process of opening up the practice of literary writing, from a specialized activity based on lineages of patronage or coteries of social peers to an expression of the "self" in which any person with the proper modern aesthetic sensibility might recognize themselves, regardless of nationality. Kaizōsha's *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū* 現代日本文学全集 (Complete Works of Contemporary Japanese Literature), the collection that spearheaded the "one-yen book (*enpon* 円本) boom," was launched in 1926 with the message that literature "is the 'wellspring of life' that symbolizes the highest culture of mankind, enriches each of our lives, and cultivates a beautiful vitality in us."[38] The conceptualization of literary value as providing a particular cultivation of sensibility that "enriches our lives" was a key component in the process of formulating a value for fiction beyond mere entertainment or cold didacticism. Products like Kaizōsha's collection, or the many similar publications that followed it, offering original or translated literature, were successful in the nascent mass cultural marketplace of 1920s Japan because they presented themselves as offering their readers a chance at participating in these networks of modern aesthetic experience.

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