"Jippensha Ikku's *Shank's Mare* (*Tōkaidōchū hizakurige*): Travel, Locale, and the Development of Modern Consciousness"

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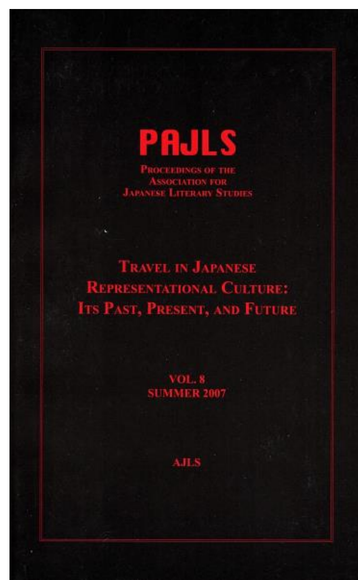

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JIPPENSHA IKKU'S *SHANK'S MARE* (*TŌKAIDŌCHŪ HIZAKURIGE*)—TRAVEL, LOCALE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

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My research on Japanese literature and culture has led me to doubt two widely held notions: first, that Japan's modernity was imported from the West; and second, that this modernity was first felt during the Meiji period (1868–1912). To say the obvious, this pair of claims is supportable only if we assume that modernity is somehow essentially and uniquely Western in nature. As persuasive as this interpretation has sometimes been made to seem, it is not well supported by the semiotic record left behind by Japan's cultural development throughout the Edo period (1600–1868).

In trying to understand the development of modern consciousness, I have focused on the semiotic record for a number of reasons. First of all, it exists. It is largely available for our scholarly scrutiny. Books, paintings, prints, buildings, statues, photographs, films, roads, and so on, are the fossil record of Japan's cultural development. They allow us to consider the interplay of expression, thought, and action that have occurred at various points in the past. A second reason for turning to a social semiotics is that it allows us to move the discussion of Japan's modernity away from the orientalist discourse that often contains it, as well as from corrections to orientalism that tend to perpetuate similar types of interpretive bias.

My assumption going forward is that the relationship between social development and its expression is dynamic: they occur mutually. To be sure, the sorting out of which is cause and which is effect is difficult. But I would argue that we can identify general trends of thought and behavior even if we cannot pin point this or that specific cause, and that we can correlate actions and ideas to observable changes in the semiotic record.

Because expression exists in and over time, we can also identify semiotic trends; and these, in turn, allow us to detect and to test the principle, crucial conceit of modernity: that it unfolds in a linear way—as an improvement, or as an advancement, over the past. Is modernity inherently better than what existed before? Without answering this question straight away, I would hold that what we generally understand to be modern progress coincides with three observable semiotic trends: first, phonocentrism (or a movement toward the colloquial or

vernacular); second, realism; and third, symbolic framing (or the onset of ideologically grounded perspectivalism). The gist of my present research is to show how and why these three trends mark the development of modern consciousness in Japan. Whether they are also common elsewhere has yet to be worked out in detail; but, at this point, it seems that a general pattern is gradually emerging.

To summarize my main findings, what all three of these semiotic configurations have in common is the suppression of what I call *figurality*, or the expressive potential of the grapheme (which is the material, visible aspect of a sign).[1] For some reason, modernity is wary of the grapheme and of its full expression. Modern development consistently suppresses it. What needs to be clarified, then, is why figurality hinders modern consciousness. Why did graphemic expression need to be suppressed? What was lost and what was gained by this suppression?

In this essay, I will focus on a small piece of the larger modern puzzle. What is the significance of travel on the development of modern consciousness? I will argue that modern consciousness develops by way of a confrontation with *locale*, which is by nature concrete and immovable. Being spatial and visible, locale has abundant figurality. It is concrete, a place of stones and trees, water and soil. Yet, like so many other concrete entities of modern life, its material reality comes to be conceptualized and rendered abstract in ways that drain figurality away. This occurs for a purpose that I hope to illuminate.

With some degree of confidence, we can say that modern consciousness develops if and only if an awareness of difference prompts comparisons and, from this, general thoughts about the nature of X. Comparison occurs because the *located* presence of many kinds of different X's raises the general (and generalizing) question: What is X? In other words, the spatial limitations of location can help to establish an awareness of difference. But to know this limitation is to be tempted to do away with it: to think about the similarities that different entities have.

In the case of modernity, confronting alterity happens in a way that stimulates a response other than immediate dismissal, rejection, and destruction. This "peaceful" aspect of modern consciousness explains why both locale and (located) people come to be defined in ways that render both into general abstractions that can then be shared without actually having to experience either. It is possible, for instance, to read an

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[1] Other aspects of the sign would be the phoneme (sound) and the seme (meaning).

article about life in Kanazawa, and to think that one understands the place. By way of this comparative rendering, the concrete realities of land and people come to exist as conceptual "lands" and "peoples." Grouped together, they form aggregates of "race," "culture," and so on. Establishing such categories is the end of modern disciplinary thought. Disciplines such as anthropology, geography, sociology, and so on, all proceed by way of such categorization.

The development of modern consciousness seems to flow from a theorization of the Other that sharpens lines of identity. During Japan's early modern period, this process was accelerated by such social phenomena as city building and travel. In both cases, interactions with strangers (or locals) occurred in ways that placed them into larger, more inclusive groups. At the same time, a sophisticated sense of self also emerged, but it did so in ways that stimulated acquisition of the grand goal of modern thought: to unify reality through the application of a systematic method.

This attempt to be systematic explains why theorization about human identity is inclusive of the theorist even when he steps back from the subject of his study and makes it his object. In this sense, the development of modern consciousness happens as a relatively peaceful, reflexive response. It leads quietly with ideas about reality, and postpones the often violent elimination of the Other, which, as we shall see, is the radical (and logical) extension of this search for truth in a systematic, universal way.

In every case, modern thought requires a variation of locale—whether this means new things coming to an old place, or old things (such as the continuing self) going to a new one. Whether centripetal or centrifugal, this encounter engenders something other than immediate flight or fight. Its distinguishing feature is the desire to learn, which is both a precondition of modern improvement and its fundamental weakness. At its worst, modern learning is aggressive, prejudicial, and even genocidal. But even if it eventually situates itself in a fearful, antagonistic, or even deadly relationship with the Others of another locale, modernity must *begin* with a period of postponement, a delaying of destruction that we call understanding.

Some would also call this delayed understanding science. Science yields an abundance of understanding because it has an eye to the possibility of beneficial interaction, comings and going that yield truth and value. Of course, this is only to say that modernity considers trade a better alternative than pillage. This powerful economic impetus, which sees more value in milk than in meat, tries to keep the cow alive. Thus,

trade is emphasized as a virtue throughout the modern period since an exchange of value, however unequal, is thought to be advantageous. At the very least, it is something for something. And, whatever critical things we can say about modernity, this morality is more defensible than something for nothing. This new economic system of cooperation, then, is an ostensible improvement over enslavement.

The formation of cities follows from this interest in something for something. In Japan, the flourishing of widespread urban life began in the sixteenth century. Cities existed earlier, from at least the Nara period (714–796). Throughout the following Heian era (until 1185), Heian-kyō was a notable urban center. But it was in the sixteenth century that the widespread construction of castle towns (*jōkamachi*) began. Not surprisingly, it was this same period when an increased interest in trade appeared despite the outbreak of incessant civil war.

The presence of cities significantly aided modern development since the resulting increase in contact with the Other occurred in ways that actually did begin to yield general statements about the human condition. In a city, a person from one locale meets another. Their difference is noted, and generalizations begin. What is the generalizable essence of humanity that allows trade rather than murder and enslavement to occur? If we do not grasp this, then we know nothing useful about modern consciousness.

Of course, the destruction or leveling of difference is always at issue even though delayed by the science that promotes understanding of the new. Clearly, this is both the strength and weakness of modern thought. We can say that modern man's position with regard to the Other is always ambiguously both a matter of love and hate, admiration and disapproval, acceptance and rejection. At worst, modern consciousness loves in order to hate. It admires in order to disapprove. It accepts in order to reject; and it accepts in order to make palatable the atomized surrendering of self that Edmund Burke (1729–1797) called, "that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of exalted freedom."[2] The theorizing moment of modern peace, in this sense, is but a prelude to modern warfare, which is total and, to use John Dower's idiom, "without mercy."[3]

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[2] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912).

[3] John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

In sum, modernity is a time of *learning with a purpose*. Having a purpose is desirable. And yet, history shows that modernity's fulfillment is too often a postponed, which is to say, premeditated mass destruction. Why are modern societies so violent? Why did 50 to 70 million people die in World War II? Was it not because the theorized truth of modern phenomena, such as urbanization and travel, tends to be systematic and universal? What this totalizing tendency comes to mean, quite simply, is that no more than one truthful society can exist at the same time. If I have the truth, and I acquired it systematically; and if my truth is universal because my methods are valid; then I cannot tolerate the existence of another truth that makes the same claims of universality *and* is different from mine. This is the deadly logic of modern genocide.

Can we claim that the true society that modernity works to establish is democratic by nature? Is it fundamentally rational or capitalistic? An analysis of ideological dreams is beyond the scope of this essay. But one thing can be said. Whatever the case, there is an –ism attached to any expression of modernity, since modern society is mass society, and social massiveness can never be achieved without overcoming the limitations of locale and localized figurality. That is, something more abstract and conceptual than a cluster of farm houses is needed if nations are to be born. A central organizing concept—such as country, race, people—is required. By way of such notions, land that is concrete and highly figural—paddies of rice and groves of catalpa trees—becomes symbolized and metaphorical, as in the nostalgically abstracted figure of the arched bridge in Yasuda Yojūrō's (1910–1981) *Bridges of Japan* (*Nihon no hashi,* 1936).

> I once saw a small stone bridge through my train window as I passed by Tago no ura along the Tōkaidō. It had several arched spans. I doubt it was that old. In fact, I think it might even have been made out of concrete. As I stared at that small yet noticeable bridge, occupying a desolate strip of land near the ocean, I couldn't help but feel a sense of nostalgia. For a number of years, seeing the bridge during my brief trips up and down the Tōkaidō was a source of great pleasure for me. During that time, I must have passed by the bridge numerous times as I made the round trip to the Kansai Region and back to Tokyo. Each time, I'd think about it, but then, most of the time, I would miss catching a glimpse of it. I rarely saw anybody on the bridge; and I don't think I even saw anyone walking on the road nearby. But whenever I think about bridges, I immediately

> remember that one. It's a kind of sad-looking bridge like you'd see anywhere in Japan.[4]

Why should we care about such a lonely Japanese bridge? Is it not because Yasuda feels that such a bridge is synonymous with Japan, and that anyone who does not grasp its sorrowful beauty does not understand an important truth about his country?

The problem with the kind of conceptualized beauty that modernity offers is that, sooner or later, we are forced to choose to either die with our categories intact, or to live uncomfortably with their deconstruction. When the end of the world comes, will the principle that guides us to ultimate calamity be the peace that comes from uniformity or diversity? My guess is that it will certainly be the former. With its love of purity and its inability to leave the figurality of locale unprocessed, modern thought is dangerous, even deadly. Judging from the development of fascism in modern nations, as inspired by imaginative writers such as Yasuda, the perfection of uniformity eventually becomes a destructive principle.

Narratively speaking, the modern desire for contact with Others comes in two forms. The first is centripetal. It brings difference to one locale. Mirroring the process of urbanization itself, Edo-period texts such as Shikitei Sanba's (1776–1822) *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* (*Ukiyoburo*, 浮世風呂, 1809–1813) and *The Barbershop of the Floating World* (*Ukiyotoko*, 浮世床,1813–14) bring strangers to the bathhouse or barber shop. In such locales, they interact. By way of their interaction, reflection is stimulated as the thinking and observing author moves closer to an answer to the compelling modern question of human nature. "If that person is human, and I am human, then who or what is human?"

The Floating Bathhouse brings us to an answer. It does so by gathering strangers to the same shared space.

> There is, one realizes on careful reflection, no shortcut to moral learning like the public bath. It is, after all, the way of Nature, and of Heaven and Earth, that all are naked when they bathe—the wise and the foolish, the crooked and the straight, the poor and the rich, the high and the low. . . While a man of feeling may have his private thoughts, the unfeeling bath affords no privacy.[5]

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[4] Yasuda Yojūrō, *Nihon no hashi,* Kadokawa sensho 30 (Kadokawa, 1960), p. 33.

[5] Shikitei Sanba, *Ukiyoburo* in Nakamura Yukihiko, Hamada Keisuke, eds.,

As Herbert Plutschow has recently argued, the salons (*za*) of eighteenth-century Japan were also important to modernization.[6] They likewise allowed strangers to meet and to mingle. They made possible the exchange of information and ideas. They stimulated the formation of what we might call "united strangers," a new prototype for modern societies that form with increasing massiveness as the spatial limitations of locale are overcome by the propagation of concepts that theorize and shape locale into something else. Again, city, country, nation, empire—what all these places have in common is their increasingly abstract, generalizing mode of definition. Importantly, they lack locale. Indeed, they become so successful as general concepts that they eventually come to render all space conceptual. As this happens, the figurality of dirt becomes the abstractness of soil. Soil becomes land. Land becomes country. Country becomes nation. Nation becomes empire. Empire becomes world. World becomes universe, and so on. The world-class size of Louis XIV's palace at Versailles or of the mausoleum for Tokugawa Ieyasu at Nikkō follows from this trend away from the figurality of specific locale and toward the abstract nature of universal space.

During the modern period, travel made the world too vast to be held together by anything but truth. Within the expanded context of the modern world, the soil or space of Japan progressed towards its conceptualized definition. Thus, twentieth-century expressions such as *kokutai*—the "nation body" 国体—and *hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇—"all the world under one roof"—gained wide currency. The simple though important point that needs to be made here is that the figurality of the "world as locale" was severely depleted by ideological formation. Thus, the enormous roof that supposedly protects the world family can only exist rhetorically and imaginatively. In fact, it is not a concrete figure any longer. It exists only as a *figure of speech*.

Why does figurality come to be rendered into speech? Is this not because the phoneme (or phonetic aspect of the sign) is a much more natural ally to the seme (which is the semantic aspect of the sign) than the grapheme? Both phoneme and seme are invisible. Both have no figurality and are, therefore, natural partners in this attempt to render the materiality of locale into an immaterial abstraction. In other words, of

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Sharebon, kibyōshi, kokkeibon, Kanshō Nihon koten bungaku 34, (Kadokawa shoten, 1978), p. 209. Robert Leutner, trans., *Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 137.

[6] Herbert Plutschow, *A Reader in Edo Period Travel* (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2006), pp. 10–11.

these three aspects of the sign, the grapheme (or material, visible aspect) is the odd man out. By nature, the grapheme generates figurality; and figurality is too much like dirt in an era of soil, land, and nation.

That said, the grapheme is still a necessary partner to the other two aspects of the sign, since no expression however grand would last a day without the materiality of the grapheme to give it a relative permanence. The grapheme is the ink on a page, or the paint on a canvass. In a modern semiotic configuration, neither ink nor paint is supposed to draw attention to itself. Yet without the located part of the sign that we can see, expressions such as writing and drawing and building are impossible. Thus, in a modern context, the grapheme's assigned role is show up for work, to contribute to the larger effort, but to avoid making a fuss and standing out in any way.

In a modern world, graphemic expression must discipline itself enough to serve the larger goal of expressing the big, comprehensive picture. The need for the grapheme to be a needed though perfunctory team player explains why the linearity of architectural shape, or the unadorned documentary realism of painting and early photography, coincides with modern development and its tendency toward system and universality. The low figurality of both concentration camps (with their spare, straight lines) and the straight-forwardness of documentary photography explain why they go well together.

Modern consciousness requires realism because the grapheme's useful concreteness is also a constant threat. Left undisciplined, figurality could be overly suggestive, too full of possible meanings, too encouraging of multiple readings and interpretations, too honest about our natural *inability* to understand any sign in the prescribed way that mass society requires. For all these reasons, the connotative richness of the grapheme is carefully controlled in a modern context. It is this control, this discipline that is common to phonocentrism, realism, and symbolic perspective.

Of course, with discipline there comes rebellion. The push back against this erasing of figurality comes first as monstrosity, then later as modernism, with its renewed interest in the materiality of art. Still later, it appears as a deconstructive critique, a postmodern exposé of the true *how* of Truth. There are many reasons to explain why we have moved from the age of discovery to the age of uncovery, but one factor is the development of modern technology that has conditioned us to appreciate the possible plenitude of visual expression. If radio helped modernity, television has greatly aided postmodernity and its critique of the modern.

A second modern narrative model is centrifugal. It sends the thinking self away from the familiar locale and into the general unknown. Think of Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Robinson Crusoe*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Instead of strangers coming to the city—to the bathhouse, barbershop, or teahouse—the thinking, self-interested, and therefore "peaceful" self goes wandering. Like a good capitalist, the modern hero ventures. He violates the logic of the village shrine as a source of spatial identity. He replaces it with a more generalized, theorized, and therefore more abstract, conceptual, and moveable form of identity.

The modern mind likes to travel. It abhors staying put, unless it is to study the squiggle of life under a microscope, or to read of adventures in a book, or watch moving pictures on a silver screen. This motility is the source of modernity's tremendous dynamism and appeal. It expresses itself as a meeting of many desires—to build cities, to trade, to manufacture. It travels in an increasingly theorized way that stimulates the development of both the sciences and the arts. For this very reason, Japan's sixteenth century was both one of the bloodiest and most creative periods in Japan's history. The long and culturally productive Edo period that followed was in many ways a consolidation of the creative forces that were unleashed during this earlier era of city building, mass mobilization, and increased trade that we call the Warring States.

Japan did not need the West to show it how to consolidate wealth and political power. Invasion was an ancient practice that only required more theory, a clearer vision, better maps, and more efficient weapons to make it modern. No doubt, the purchase of muzzle loaders from the Jesuits helped Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) realize his desire to make another daimyō's locale his own. Yet it is questionable whether Nobunaga's modern impulse to "unify Japan" or Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536–1598) attempt to subjugate Korea came to Japan from Europe by way of Goa and Macao. Certainly, the presence of the "southern barbarians" who brought navigation maps and globes to Hideyoshi's castle probably did stimulate thoughts of a bigger, unified world. Yet we must situate Hideyoshi's will for overseas expansion within its context of decades of domestic unification—the long and bloody process of joining one locale to another that began with Nobunaga's early successes in 1560.

In comparison to conquerors, travelers are peaceful. During the peace imposed by the Tokugawa Regime, travel outside of Japan was largely restricted; yet both travel and narratives of travel flourished domestically. Plutschow has shown how travel influenced the

development of the observing, critical subject; and how it fostered a sense of positivism, science, and enlightenment.[7] By way of this process of encountering difference while on the road, the modern question was continuously posed in ways that produced a sense of theorized Japaneseness, such as was accomplished by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), another Edo-period traveler, who by the eighteenth century conceptualized Japanese identity as an appreciation of *mono no aware* or the "sadness of things."[8] Thus it was that Motoori Norinaga anticipated Yasuda Yojūrō by hundreds of years.

According to Plutschow, numerous travel journals were written by both men and women during the Edo period. Many of them, such as Kaibara Ekiken's, were written for the consumption of others. My point here is that this documentary mode of writing eventually encouraged the development of a fictive one; and that this movement from observation to imagination, as directed by positivism, was crucial to the development of modern consciousness.

A representative example of this more imaginative yet still realistic centrifugal narrative type is Jippensha Ikku's (1765–1831) *Shank's Mare* (*Tōkaidōchū hizakurige*, 東海道中膝栗毛, 1802–1814). After the example of earlier travelers, including Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) or even the much earlier poet Saigyō (1118–1190), Ikku also took to the road in order to learn something that was both valuable and tradable. Unlike Bashō and unlike the travel writers of Plutchow's study, he wrote in the third person, as a story-telling author rather than as a chronicle-producing poet. A scribbler of "frivolous works" (*gesaku*), he sent surrogates, two bungling heroes named Yaji and Kita, to journey through the series of locales that made up the narrow corridor of lively commercialism that flanked the Tōkaidō, the main thoroughfare that connected Edo in the east with Kyoto in the west.

As Jilly Traganou explains, the Tōkaidō, was, and still is, Japan's most important road.[9] It was part of a system of arteries, the Gokaidō, that was reestablished during the Edo period in order to connect the provinces with Edo and, as a secondary result, to connect an emergent "Japan" with itself. As an expression of modern consciousness, this system of five central highways expressed the need to bring together many locales, and served to foster the kind of increased interaction that

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[7] Plutschow, especially pp. 310–21.

[8] For a sample of Motoori Norinaga's travel writings, see Plutschow, pp. 54–68.

[9] Jilly Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

produced an answer to the modern problem of personal identity. If only in passing, I should mention that this system of roads was one of many systems that developed in order to make inter-locale interaction easier. There were also networks of water transportation, of communication, of governance, currency, and so forth. All these attempts had the effect of standardizing diversity, and began well before the "opening" of Japan by Commodore Perry in 1854.

Connecting Edo with Kyoto, the Tōkaidō might be thought of as a linear extension of urban space. It was not unlike the riverbeds that became flooded in springtime and dried up during the summer months, exposing a swath of public no-man's land that was made available for the showing of kabuki plays or the staging of carnivals with their *misemono* of visual oddities.[10] Like the city and the riverbed, the road similarly fulfilled the function of freeing people from the strictures of locale and, therefore, allowed them to define themselves in a more abstract, generalized, conceptual way. What the riverbank and road provided was what the city also supplied: a sense of anonymity that freed up the development of the modern self.

Ikku notes the attraction of anonymity to this formation of modern identity.

> There's a saying. 'When on the road, do as you damned well please.' And yet, travelers scribble their names and addresses on the railings of bridges everywhere, bringing a moment of comfort to the eyes of their fellow countrymen. Some prefer to be left alone. They write the words 'Hearing impaired' on their traveling hats. Some are friendly, others are not. But all are similarly partners on this road of affairs. At night, they lodge together. They share the same wooden pillows even if all their unions are not properly registered in the good book at the Izumo Shrine. Passengers who find themselves riding double on the same horse are not bound by the same rules that row house neighbors keep. Whatever comes to mind, they just say it! When on the road, you eat your fill. Since you didn't bring any salesmen along with you, you don't have to put up with the grief of collectors coming around at the end of the month. You didn't

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[10] For more on the importance of the riverbed, see my "Public Space and the Nature of Modern Fiction: Izumi Kyōka's *Noble Blood, Heroic Blood,"* in Nara Hiroshi, ed., *Inexorable Modernity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 2007), pp. 217–228.

> drag your rice tub along either, so that takes care of the rat problem.
>
> On the road, even the proud sons of Edo stroke their beards with sweet potatoes; and the blossom-like ladies of Kyoto scratch their heads with dumpling skewers. Some have fled by night. Scorched by the flames of life's many difficulties, they literally run down the road. Others take their time. They enjoy the mountain scenery, and leisurely chew the grass along Heaven's cloud-grown way. Some rest among the pine trees that line the road, and drink a wine that was intended for the gods. And right there in the middle of the road, they relieve themselves, flapping their foreskins like bell-ringing pilgrims.
>
> Such is the life of travel. So cleanse your life of its many stains, and put on whatever clean clothes you have. Armed with straw sandals and leggings, let shank's mare take you wherever it may, to the indescribable pleasures of drifting clouds and flowing seas.
>
> Book 6, Part 1[11]

Like the nakedness of the bathhouse, travel on the Tōkaidō also had a leveling effect. It put the wealthy and the poor together on the same horse. It put strangers in the same bed. And, once again, it forced the modern question, "If I'm a person, and that person is a person, then what is a person?"

Anonymity also invited the reader's identification with the characters of the story. This particular formation of the imagination is called fiction, a particularly modern mode of cognition that, in a way fraught with many contradictions, takes what is patently false and proceeds to make it as true as possible. As make believe, fiction greatly aids the development of modern institutions by offering (as one's own) the privilege of a third person's experience to the reader. To the extent that this sharing is made available by way of the imagination of a writer, we can see how, in the end, it is actually the privileged identity of the author, not that of the characters, that the reader shares most deeply and enthusiastically.

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[11] Jippensha Ikku, *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū 49 (Shōgakkan, 1975), p. 352. A lively if not always accurate translation of *Hizakurige* is available in Thomas Satchell, trans., *Hizakurige or Shank's Mare* (Tokyo: Charles Tuttle, 1960).

What seems to make this perspective decisively modern is that it is and is not at the same time. The perspective *is* nominally that of the characters. But they are the writer's creations, even if their point of view is said to be separate from the author's. What is this curious is/isn't relationship? What does it mean to be and not be at the same moment? And why should we want this deception (one that is false by nature) to be as "true to life" as possible? One way to arrive at an answer to this question would be to probe the nature of realism and verisimilitude. Again, what kind of consciousness is being expressed by something "made up" that is true?

This is not the place to exhaust the possibilities of these important questions. But one point that is particularly relevant to this brief analysis of travel is the suppression of figurality that is common to travel and travel literature. Limiting our focus to *Shank's Mare* in particular, we might ask what fiction is accomplishing in this text by being a lie that is true. Given the impressive readership that Ikku's serially generated narrative enjoyed, we can not help but wonder why Ikku's story was so well appreciated by those who took to the road by way of its many printed pages. What was accomplished by this act of enthusiastic reading?

Obviously, allowing the reader to share a prurient interest with Kita and Yaji was a significant accomplishment. These two characters never fail to try to engage sexually whenever the opportunity affords itself, and sometimes even if it does not. True to the already mentioned leveling effect of this text, Kita and Yaji are less than discriminating when it comes to physical desire. As Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) shows us, sexual attraction, like the road itself, leads the modern self to many strange places and situations. For Kita and Yaji, the subject of interest is sometimes a maid at an inn, sometimes someone's wife or daughter. In some cases, physical intimacy is commercialized for the reader's consumption. In this way, *Shank's Mare* displays its pornographic characteristics as writing (*graphien*) about prostitutes (*porne*).[12]

We might understand this prurient interest as yet another variation on our chosen subject of modernity as it emerges by way of locale. If we think of the body itself as a locale, we can understand the sexual linking

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[12] For more on the way in which male identity forms by way of pornographic expression, see "In the Scopic Regime of Discovery: Ishikawa Takuboku's *Diary in Roman Script* and the Gendered Premise of Self Identity," *positions: East Asian Cultures Critique* 2:3, pp. 542–569

of bodies as yet another expression of the adventurousness of the modern spirit. If modernity forms by way of theorized interactions with the Other, sexual desire is powerful enough as a force to make theorization happen when little else will. Travel and sexual adventure, then, share a common logic and goal—to see that which is usually impossible to see. Promiscuity, like exploration (and tourism), comes to be a well practiced modern form of experimentation. As fiction has it, promiscuity is a contemplation of difference that, excluding rape and other forms of violence, is a peaceful postponement of aggression. It is an exchange. It is imagined intercourse.

A second accomplishment of this text follows from this sexual interest, especially when the union is also a commercial interaction. One curious characteristic of Ikku's heroes is their financial status. On the one hand, Kita and Yaji are impecunious—always short on funds, always looking for a good deal, always counting their change. And yet, like characters in a Dostoevsky novel, they neither work nor run out of money. Somehow, they magically have enough to stay alive, to keep enjoying their seemingly endless trip of steady consumption. This economic fantasy was most certainly another attractive quality of the novel for its many readers.

On both scores, *Shank's Mare* delivers abundantly on the modern need for everyone to feel empowered. Being poor, Kita and Yaji are easy to relate to. They are common in the positive, modern sense of this term. That is to say, they are *commonly empowered*. Thus, Ikku makes sure that his heroes have the financial wherewithal to keep traveling, to keep consuming this and that item of local cuisine as if they were living in a world of endless resources. Travel is costly, of course. So to be realistic, Kita and Yaji must walk more than they ride. Their mode is shank's mare—privileged yet common. As such it is perfectly modern. By way of their sometimes difficult yet unstoppable consumptive fantasy, the trope of shared discovery is played out to its radical, modern degree. The goal is, simply and revolutionarily, to make the privileges of the few into the privileges of the many. Modern consciousness makes this possibility happen.

In the case of Japan, visiting significant places already had a long history by the time Ikku began to write installments of his popular novel. This is because the formation of identity had been a highly spatial and visual matter in Japan. Proper movement through space had long been a grounding principle of Japanese identity.[13] Whether travel is to poetically

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[13] One way to understand etiquette, for instance, is as a set of rules about how one

or religiously important places, the visiting of various *meisho* (or famous locales) gave to those who visited them a sense of who they are. This process of worshipful approach (*mairi*, 参り) is still a factor in Bashō's poetic journeys. What is new about *Shank's Mare* is the way this traditional and highly figured form of personal identity has become increasingly abstract and commercial even though the shrines at Ise are included on the itinerary. Thus we understand the de-poeticization of locale that is, once again, precisely the sort of suppression of figurality that modernization requires. To put Plutschow's observation in slightly different terms, the Edo travelers began to see more than the poetic figuration of space (*uta makura*). They started seeing Japan in a new, modern, realistic way—and the expression of this new vision strained the limitations of an entrenched poetic vocabulary, forcing the development of a less figural and more colloquial, prosaic language that enabled the discovery of landscape.[14]

As third-person characters, Kita and Yaji are personal in their availability to the reader; and yet, it is this very availability that requires them to be impersonal enough to be shared by many. Their function, in other words, was to become empty place holders for the modern imagination. Their moveable existence invites a uniformity of understanding that is at the same time seen as both individual and public. By way of this imaginative feat, the modern character—as an expression of universal personality—was born in prosaic glory.

This second paradox reveals a third accomplishment: the creation of the author as authority, and the reader's identification with third persons that is, in fact, nothing other than a masked identification with the author himself. Walter Benjamin raised an important point in his analysis of mechanically reproduced art when he held that it was the movie camera and the director who commanded its movements that the audience most readily and deeply identified with.[15] A similar argument could be made for the modern novel, where the reader's sympathies for fictional

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should properly move through space. This is one of the main points of *Evanescence and Form: An Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Palgrave, 2007).

[14] Karatani Kōjin's thesis—that landscape was first discovered in the Meiji period—is, I believe, mistaken. See "The Discovery of Landscape" in Brett de Bary, ed., *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 11-44.

[15] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Hannah Arendt, ed., Harry Zorn, trans., *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1969), pp. 217–51.

characters are, at the deepest level, an identification with the author who created them.

An author might deny this conflation of writer and character. After all, the nominal separation between the author and his created personalities is an important distinction to maintain since it establishes the possibility of multiple perspectives, which is an enactment of the encounter with Others that modernization requires. But, surely, from one mind comes these many ways to see the world. This multiplication of selves is an essential property of fiction and perhaps modernity's greatest contribution to human consciousness. By accomplishing this feat, the modern imagination, which is fictive and prosaic, establishes the singularly authoritative identity of the author as an accomplished creator of many, as a genius, as someone who can transport us from the realm of sight to the world of insight. This centrality is also supported by the thematic elements of the narrative—seduction, discovery, and so forth—that have the effect of flattening and generalizing the poetic, nameable particularity of locale.

I would argue that this process of one-becoming-many is also what establishes the reader's identity. From multiple persons with their various perspectives comes an improved singularity, a modernized person who has progressed beyond the limitations of first person and one's home locale to become a part of the massiveness that marks modern consciousness as formed by a removed, wandering, third-person imagination.

To boldly embrace this privilege of authorship requires a particular kind of imagination, one that is highly presumptuous. What else can we call this aggressive kind of thinking that claims to understand the minds of many? This boldness comes by way of significant interactions with numerous Others, the patience that trade and learning require. But it also requires the kind of arrogance that makes this sort of intercourse insightful, generally relevant, and an expression of what naturalism will eventually define and justify as the stark laws of human nature. It is, as the tendency toward first-person fiction writing in Japan shows, a distanced mode of imagination that the Japanese had a hard time cultivating, probably because the traditional pull of locale and figurality remained strong enough to make the emerging modern author wonder if the truth of visible locale is still not more obvious than the truth of a generalized, theorized, and massively shared universe of true scientific principles.

It is probably safe to say that this difficulty is related to the similar problem that Japan's painters had in shifting to single-point perspective,

this totalizing and distanced way of viewing reality that was so foreign to the lyrical, animistic tendencies that had firmly grounded Japanese tradition for so many centuries. This is only to say that modern travel developed as a fundamental violation of *uchi* (内), which had long been the localized as the lyrically poetic source of one's identity.[16] The embracing of a more abstract and prosaic conception of space meant nothing less than an abandonment of the concreteness of home and of the traditional ethic of knowing one's place. Aizawa Seishisai's (1782–1863) critique of the barbarous Westerners who came to threaten Japan's integrity focused on precisely this point. He likened the people of the world to a figure, to the human body, and held that Japan's place as its head was supreme. Europeans and American, by contrast, were the legs and the ass of the world because they were not civilized enough in order to stay put.[17] Of course, staying put was precisely what modern times could not allow anyone to do. And the rest is history.

When does the desire to leave home overcome the desire to stay put? At what point does modern consciousness develop to the point that it is possible to "be at home" when not actually at home? To accomplish this impossibility was to conceptualize tourism and colonialism. What is imperialism if not the need to be at home wherever one is? Such a desire required the draining away of locale so that every destination would become inevitably and uncomplainingly available and welcoming. This, of course, is an absurd expectation. But in the age of fiction, it could be made true. If visitors are not always welcome, this assertion of locale was not allowed to last in the face of what Nara Hiroshi has called "inexorable modernity."[18]

Ikku's novel marks an important moment in the development of this attempt to be at home in all places. While the modern self is singular, it is also massive. While individual, it is many. While diverse, it is uniform. While alone, it is in a state of constant sharing. Grounded in these numerous contradictions, selfhood must be compelling enough to conquer the limitations of locale by inventing the concept of *unlimited locale*, or what we call "vastness." It does this by way of a distortion that defines reality in a way that both gives it unlimited scope and imposes highly structured limitations at the same time.

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[16] *Uchi* has many meanings, among them "inner" and "one's own." It is that which is not "outer" and "Other."

[17] Aizawa Seishisai, *Shinron*, in *Mitogaku taikei* volume 2 (Ida shoten, 1941), p. 2. Bob Wakabayashi, trans., *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-modern Japan: The New Thesis of 1825* (Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 149.

[18] For Nara's discussion of Japan's modernity, pp. 1–13.

This explains why the visual form of this paradox is perspectivalism—where the big picture forms by way of the strict limitations imposed by a single yet powerfully ordering point of view. From this radically limited pinhole, perspectivalism makes the impossibility of seeing the entire world seem possible. To the extent that it is able to do so without seeming like the distortion that it must necessarily be—a singularity that is massive, an individuality that is multiple, a diversity that is uniform—a scopic regime of realism develops. In other words, only with the advent of realism is it possible to create a distortion that is vast enough to seem natural and, therefore, *not* a distortion. As the handmaid of hegemony, realism is also a mode of consciousness that puts us at home no matter where we are. It does this by giving us the Truth that travels well—the details that confirm the general principles. In the same breath, it inspires us with science and fiction.

The specific point I wish to emphasize is that this trick of realism can only occur if figurality is suppressed, only if concrete details of locale are made to affirm a particular constellation of abstract values that form a universal world. If reality is to be framed by and made seamlessly accountable to ideology, figurality must be carefully disciplined. Consequently, one thing we can say about perspectivalism, which is the systematic expression of this ideological framing, is that it tends to form the concrete by way of certain abstract principles—as much as it supports certain abstract values by way of concrete examples. Note, for instance, how perspectival vision gives principle and order to *everything within its frame* no matter what this everything actually is. It is the very creation of example and category. In Erwin Panofsky's words, perspective rationalizes space and makes all things accountable.[19] In the case of *Shank's Mare*, the framed reality is the Tōkaidō, a long concatenation of commercially oriented locales—eating shops, tea houses, inns, and so on—that becomes an idea made real not only by Ikku's informative novel but also by Kitagawa Hiroshige's famous print series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (*Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi*, 1834–42) which similarly allowed the viewer to see the hard-to-see by way of the mediating powers of a singular, all-seeing imagination.

Modern consciousness is perspectival in the sense that it is concerned with who we are because of where we are, and because the frame of our reference is both clear and inescapable. It establishes not

[19] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Christopher Wood, trans., (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

only a powerful center to progress toward, but also a powerless margin to distance ourselves from. Proximity to one necessarily means estrangement from the other. Thus, the category of the Other locale is actually established (as a frontier) for the purpose of its eventual development or demise as a marginal frame. These are the two options given to new strangers: unite with us or be cut off. Regrettably, the uncomfortable truth of modernity is that locale cannot be left untouched; figurality cannot be respected; and the primitive cannot be left alone. The wilderness will be discovered and, when the end of the world comes, all things will be developed.

The semiotic expression of this will to move forward is a deteriorating figurality that is, once again, known as realism. For political and social development to happen, the potential of the grapheme to express itself must be disciplined to become a cooperative part of the generalized, global whole. Everything must have a place, and every place must blend harmoniously with its conceptualized meaning as a whole. Thus, Burke's willingness to surrender proudly to the modern system that has atomized the self.

Part of the novel's realism is the capturing of local conversation. *Shank's Mare* often reads like a script for a play, with dialogue and stage directions, and little else. This interest in real language might seem to go against the generalizing trend of modern narrative method, but, in fact, the inclusion of real speech is nothing more than a stage of the phonocentric process of development that will eventually render colloquialism into a standardized, universal idiom. Just as locale becomes universalized, so must local language. The new language of modern fiction that eventually emerges comes about as melding of spoken and written (*genbun itchi*). What we must not overlook, however, is that both the spoken (*gen*) and the written (*bun*) are similarly aspects of a centuries-old phonocentric shift that, like realism and ideological framing, consistently suppressed figurality. This is no where more evident than in the way calligraphic writing becomes replaced by printed text, with its simplified fonts, or in the manner by which the highly illustrated text comes to be replaced by the visual monotony of the type-set page.

Notice, too, how *gen* and *bun* parallel the phonocentric bias implicit in the orality/literacy model that has dominated modernization theory to this point. My dissatisfaction with how Walter Ong and Maeda Ai have emphasized reading and speaking is that it ignores drawing, calligraphy, and other types of graphemic expression. Trying to understand modernity from within this phonocentric bias, that is, without bringing the

grapheme back to our awareness, will always be problematic because the attempt will inevitably hide modernity's essential distortions from us—including the far-reaching distortions of phonocentrism, realism, and perspectivalism. We will never understand the nature of modernity if we do not grasp how and why the development of modern consciousness needed to suppress figurality in the first place.

In conclusion, I hope I have shown how a work such as *Hizakurige* was a part of the modern neutralization of Otherness and locale that occurred through trade, travel, and a new kind of writing that both documented and imagined these activities as progress. The concrete particularities of locale, as expressed by the high figurality of visible space, were encountered and gradually theorized and rendered abstract by novels such as *Shank's Mare.* The semiotic features of this work belie the process by which the figurality of locale was suppressed by way of a developing prosaic, descriptive, and discursive expression that was, at the same time, phonocentric, realistic, and broadly ideological. This more explanatory or articulated mode of expressing reality helped orient the modern process of increased travel and its attendant privilege of seeing more and more. Paradoxically, the novelistic imagination that developed over the course of the Edo period was both distancing and personal at the same time. The distanced authority of authorship was established by way of popular third-person characters, such as Yaji and Kita, who both are and are not expressions of the author's consciousness, and who both are and are not articulations of the reader's mind, as well.

This paradox of modern consciousness is best revealed in the way that fame emerges from anonymity. This is why Ikku's characters often play games of make believe. They pretend to be this or that person. They make the most of their status as strangers in a given locale. Note how many times Kita and Yaji pretend to be master and slave, for instance, or how many times they pretend to fool the people they meet along the way by pretending to be people they really are not. This pretentiousness is their very *likeable* essence: it is also their essence as exemplary people in the process of becoming modern.

The single most revealing moment of their function as pretenders—who have been sent out on this mission to travel to new locales in order to render space into a common, shared experience—is the manner in which they come to pose as the author himself. In Book Five, Part Two, Ikku belies his masked and masking function as a writer of lies-that-are-true by succumbing to the desire to name himself, to be known as the creator of this expansive new world.

And so they laughed all the way to Ueno, where they met a local man dressed in loose-fitting trousers gathered at the knee. Along with a young apprentice, he approached Kita and Yaji from behind.

"Forgive my impudence, but might you gentlemen be from Edo?"

"That's right," said Yaji.

"I've been following you since just before Shiroko. I couldn't help but overhear the poems you've been reciting along the way. Most interesting."

"That's nothing. We made those up on the spot."

"How impressive! You know, the master poet Shōsadō Shunman just paid a visit to our humble area."

"You don't say."

"May I ask your *nom de plume*?"

"Who, me? I'm Jippensha Ikku."

"Indeed," the man exclaimed. "A most honorable name, indeed. So you are Jippensha Ikku. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm known as Squash and Sesame Soup; and I am most honored to meet you. I suppose you're on your way to Ise?"

"That's right. I'm making this trip so I can write my book, *Shank's Mare*."

"Truly. What a captivating work! I suppose your acquaintances from Yoshida, Okazaki, and Nagoya will all be coming to join you."

"Well, since I'm obliged to make every stop along the way, it would be hard to get together. So they've all gone straight ahead to Ise. That's why, as you can see, I'm dressed in these simple clothes. Like a commoner making my visit to the shrine. Taking it easy, letting my nose lead me where it will. That's how poetry gets made, you know."

"How very interesting."[20]

This interaction between the well-traveled Yaji, who rarely stops lying, and the all-too-sincere local bumpkin, who calls himself Squash and Sesame Soup, is telling. What emerges from this anonymous encounter is that which the theorizing of locale makes possible: fame. As a professional writer, Ikku made it to the top of a system he helped create. He understood that in order to be known in every locale he would have to overcome locale by rendering local, poetic space into one of

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[20] Jippensha Ikku, pp. 285–86.

many components of an inclusive, imagined-yet-veritable prosaic world. This is the kind of world we encounter in *Hizakurige*; and fame is precisely the expression of this condition, where the one-that-is-many asserts an authoritative perspective that renders everything into parts of a believable (and purchasable) whole. More specifically, Ikku's authority as author derives from his ability to speak for all. He becomes, in other words, *the* Speaker. His success paves the way for the modern leader who will someday emerge—aided with automated printing presses, public address systems, radio broadcasts, and cinematic presentations. Today, Ikku is the Speaker who will tomorrow be the Dictator.

His modern authorial status in the early nineteenth century (well before Perry's intrusion) becomes possible because of the massive (Japanese) society that was forming. What gives Japanese identity coherence is no longer locale. More and more, it is a matter of an imagination that has learned to appreciate the deployment of modern semiotic configurations. One prime example of such a deployment is *Shank's Mare*, a text that needed to be false yet true, an example of the phonocentric, realistic, and symbolically framed reality-creating mechanism that we call the modern novel. One of its functions is to render the figured significance of locale into defigured components of a vast fictional world that is held together by certain powerful though poorly understood ideas. Whether fully comprehended or not, the abstract nature of this massive construction enabled modern consciousness to expand aggressively toward new destinations and new political destinies. Travel, tourism, and colonialism are three examples of the privileges of the few that become the privileges of the many. For the masses, obtaining such privileges was a principle attraction of modern life.