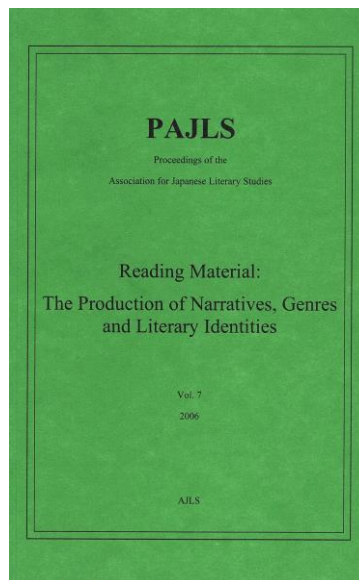


“Reading Tokuda Shūsei in the provinces: regional newspapers and writers of the imperial capital”

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Reading Tokuda Shūsei in the Provinces: Regional Newspapers and Writers of the Imperial Capital

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Known for the serialized novels *Arakure* and *Shukuzu*, Tokuda Shūsei (1872-1943) is often compared to Natsume Sōseki. However in contrast to Sōseki whose literary reputation soared (especially among the urban classes) after the 1960s, Shūsei, who depicted the working poor, the men and women of the floating world, and writers and intellectuals of uncertain means, was slowly forgotten. This fall, seven years after initiating it, Yagi Shoten will release the last of the 42 volumes that make up the *Tokuda Shūsei zenshū* [Collected Works], which I have been helping to edit. The print run has been only 600 sets and even considering the limited market for collected literary works in Japan this is a rather paltry figure. Compared to *Natsume Sōseki zenshū*, which are often re-released when just a little new relevant material is found, this is the first time that a nearly complete collection of Shūsei's works has been published. Still, this figure of 600 represents Shūsei's current value in the literary marketplace.

Even at 42 volumes there was insufficient space to include all of Shūsei's extant works, most of which were done for newspapers and magazines, and unfortunately some material had to be left out. Simply put, the sheer volume of his writing exceeded that which could feasibly be included in a *zenshū* released by a private publishing house. But we must also acknowledge that the quality of Shūsei's fiction is quite uneven and at least some of it was just dashed off for money. On top of this, some of the writing published under his name has been judged to be written by others. With these problems to contend with it was necessary for the editorial team to resign itself to leaving out certain works from the *zenshū*.

If we judge literary works by the criteria of originality and craftsmanship, then there may be few authors who are as uneven as Shūsei. Of course in addition to *Arakure* and *Shukuzu*, he has many other highly praised novels including *Kabi*, *Tadare*, and *Kasō jinbutsu*. Shūsei's influence on other authors has been wide and those voicing their great respect for him include Hirotsu Kazuo, Hayashi Fumiko, Wada Yoshie, Noguchi Fujio, Furui Yoshikichi, and Nakagami Kenji among others. However, from the perspective of a modern literary canon that has placed authors like Natsume Sōseki, Shiga Naoya, and Akutagawa Ryunosuke as representatives of its center, this author is at the periphery. He is a writer at the margins.

But because of this very fact Shūsei has a great archival value for tracing the development of modern Japanese literature. From his first publication in 1893 to his death in 1943 he was active as a professional author for 50 years. Compared to the 10 years that Sōseki

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was active or the 15 years for Akutagawa this is truly an impressive span of time. Towards the end of his life, Shiga Naoya withdrew from writing for a long time, but this was not the case with Shūsei. From around 1900 when his reputation came together until the time of his death he was on the literary front lines. Asking what, where, and how much he wrote becomes one measure of the development of modern Japanese literature. Participating in this panel on “The Reach of Hegemony” I will focus on Shūsei’s newspaper writing and at the same time I will explore newspapers as a platform for literary production, also looking at how they changed over time.

In the process of editing the *Tokuda Shūsei zenshū*, several of us put together a list (included in the final volume) of his works and publications. From this data, I made a list of only his works published in newspapers. Working from this, the total number of his fictional series published in newspapers is 120, if we include a few stories that were only single installments. Out of these, serialized publications that spanned ten or more installments account for 90 stories. It is easy to see how great the amount he published was.

First of all, let’s focus on the names of the newspapers. Osaka Mainichi Shimbun, Osaka Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, Jiji Shimpō, Yomiuri Shimbun, Yorozu Chōhō. In addition to these newspapers in Tokyo and Osaka he also published in regional newspapers including Sanyō Shimpō, Fukushima Nichinichi Shimbun, Kyushu Nichinichi Shimbun, Kainan Shimbun, Kyoto Shimbun, Akita Sakigake Shimpō, Iwate Nippō, Hokkoku Shimbun, Manshū Nippō, Chosen Shimpō, Kyushu Nippō, Hokkaido Times, Kyoto Hinode Shimbun, Hakodate Nichinichi Shimbun, Shinano Mainichi Shimbun. Shūsei published in each of these papers and it is worth noting here that all of them, located in large cities or in the provinces, were devoting energy to publishing serialized fiction. In some cases Shūsei changed stories only a little, gave them new titles, and then republished them in other newspapers. Considering these cases, we have to admit that he broke ethical standards, but these kind of ethical lapses are also important for understanding how modern Japanese literature interacted with newspapers.

Let us consider the data for some other authors for comparison. Hirano Seisuke has compiled the *Image of Natsume Sōseki in Newspapers* (1979-1984), a great resource which lists not only publication information for the fiction and essays Sōseki published in newspapers, but also all the references to him in articles, columns and even advertisements. I have included this information as Appendix 2. Many of these newspapers coincide with the ones that Shūsei published in. However, these are the newspapers that included references to and advertisements about Sōseki, not the ones that he published in. For example when Sōseki visited the Japanese empire in mainland Asia records of his visit were carried in the Keijo Shimbun and other Korean or Manchurian newspapers, but Sōseki did not publish anything in them himself. Under contract with the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, he almost never published in regional papers in Japan either.

We could also compare Shūsei to Shimzaki Tōson, who lived at the same time and also wrote across decades. During his life Tōson published only 18 serialized stories in newspapers. Three of these were novel length, *Haru, Ie, Shinsei*, and 15 were shorter works. His main venues of publication were the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Jiji Shimpō. Aside from these he published one work in the Fukuoka Nichinichi Shimbun. There are other authors who published serialized fiction in newspapers, but considering the length of time he worked and the absolute amount he published Shūsei is in a class by himself.

Why was Shūsei able to attract so many requests from regional papers to write for them? And why did he choose to write for regional papers? We do not really know for sure. However, from the end of the Meiji period through the Taisho period Tokuda Shūsei was a highly popular author. These days, Shūsei is seen as representative of Japanese naturalism and is remembered as having a rather unadorned but appealing style; but this is only the image that was formed after 1930. It may have been that Shūsei's name value represented a great and easily used drawing card for regional newspapers. Looking at Shūsei's history, he came from Kanazawa to Tokyo and until he was accepted as an apprentice to Ozaki Kōyō he served as a newspaper reporter for several regional newspapers. Knowing the inside information of regional newspapers may have influenced him as he got calls to publish for them, but this is only speculation on my part. And we should not forget his friend from the Fourth Kanazawa Higher Middle School, Kiryū Yūyū (1873-1941) with whom he formed a close friendship. Yūyū, who later worked mainly as a journalist, reporter and chief editor at several different regional newspapers, went up to Tokyo with Shūsei, who had just dropped out of school, and they visited Kōyō, asking him to take them on as apprentices. They were brushed off by Kōyō and left Tokyo in disappointment as Shūsei recalls this friendship with the newspaper man in his *My Literary Pal, Kiryū Yūyū* (in Shūsei's "Hikari wo oute", or "Chasing the Light"). Their relationship was important to Shūsei's career as he often published serialized fiction in newspapers where Yūyū was serving as chief editor, including *Tsumi to kokoro* in the Shinano Mainichi Shimbun in 1911, *Himitsu* in the Shin Aichi in 1917, and *Akai hana* in 1928 in the Shinano Mainichi Shimbun, to which Yūyū had returned. These kinds of human networks also helped to guide Shūsei's creation of newspaper fiction.

Now I would like to begin a re-examination of regional newspapers. The "regional" [*chihō*] of regional newspapers was of course in reference to the center of the big newspapers in Tokyo. But when was this relationship of center and regions formed?

The first daily newspaper printed in Japan was the Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun from 1871. After this the founding of newspapers occurred not only in the new capital of Tokyo, but also in cities that had been political-economic centers from the time of the Bakufu, including Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Kanazawa and so on spreading along with the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement. At least at this point it was not a case of spreading from the center to the margins, but of simultaneous development of the center and the periphery through increasing numbers of newspapers being founded. So at least in the early stages it is not correct to paint a picture of the center and periphery. But then the number of regional papers decreased due to the suppression of the Rights Movement. And then the direction reversed again with a rush of founding of regional newspapers after the end of the Sino-Japanese War. After the war the number of regional newspapers was several times that of what it was before, and newspapers that were around from before the war, like the Fukuoka Nichinichi Shimbun, Shin Aichi, and Hokkaido Times, greatly increased their circulation figures.

Of course the number of papers headquartered in Tokyo, like the Jiji Shinpō, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Yorozu Chōhō also expanded, and it is true that they lead the way in revolutionizing newspapers, but they had not yet grabbed readers from all over the country. As is well known, the beginning of the Asahi Shimbun was the Osaka Asahi Shimbun, and the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun that Sōseki was contracted under was also an affiliate of the Osaka company. The Tokyo Asahi Shimbun and Osaka Asahi Shimbun were not united as the Asahi Shimbun until 1940. After 1900, the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun was another Osaka based paper that grew

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rapidly, but while competing with this paper the Osaka Asahi Shimbun maintained its dominance as the major paper in the Kansai market. The newspaper trade journal *Nihon shimbun nenkan* (originally published from 1921 as the *Shimbun oyobi shimbun kisha*) gives us an idea of the market at the time. According to statistics given in the *Nenkan* for 1922, the metropolitan circulation of the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun was 151,260 and the Osaka Asahi Shimbun was 120,550. In contrast to this the greatest circulation within Osaka by Tokyo newspapers only came to 3,200 for the Yorozu Chōhō, 2,760 for the Jiji Shimpō, and 2,320 for the Yomiuri Shimbun. Tokyo and Osaka newspapers were found in regional markets as well, but the respective regional papers dominated their home markets. (For example, in Kanazawa the local Hokkoku Shimbun sold 25,000 copies per issue compared to the Osaka Asahi and Osaka Mainichi, both with around 3,500; the Shin Aichi had around 3,000 and Tokyo papers had less than that.) That is to say that regional readers of Tokyo newspapers were few and far between. The event that would lead to the dramatic difference between regional and metropolitan newspapers was the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1921. Tokyo newspapers received a brutal blow and in the aftermath they completely reorganized themselves. After the quake, the Osaka Asahi Shimbun and the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun and other major newspapers outside of Tokyo absorbed the Tokyo affiliated regional newspapers within themselves and grew into truly national newspapers. And then they moved from Osaka to the newly restored imperial capital of Tokyo.

One more interesting reference to consider is Miyatake Gaikotsu's *Inaka Shimbun no Demo Shōsetsu*, which is mentioned in Takagi Takeo's *Shimbun Shōsetsu shi Meiji hen* (1974). In this work, Gaikotsu introduces a letter from an author from around the late 1890s addressed to a newspaper company in Saga prefecture. It recounted a case in which a set of carved wooden plates for the illustrations to a serialized story in a Tokyo newspaper were sold to a regional newspaper. The regional newspaper then hired a new author to write a story based on the plates.

From this information, I surmise the following. The regional newspaper could reuse these illustrations because Tokyo newspapers were not sufficiently widely read in that local area for the illustrations to be recognized. Until the 1920s, the relationship between Tokyo papers and regional papers was not the same thing as the relationship between national papers and regional papers. Tokyo papers were economically stronger than regional papers, but Tokyo papers were really just another regional paper. It is true that Tokyo newspapers pioneered installment fiction which later became known as newspaper fiction, and regional newspapers strove to copy Tokyo papers in this move. And by the time that Shūsei began serializing fiction in newspapers deceptions like reusing newspaper illustrations were unheard of. At least as far as newspaper fiction was concerned, for quite awhile the regional newspapers and Tokyo newspapers developed in tandem. But in the aftermath of the earthquake, certain newspapers grew into truly national newspapers, and then in 1940 the newspaper reorganization occurred and greatly thinned the number of remaining newspapers. At this time, most prefectures had several newspapers but these were combined or closed until only one per prefecture remained. Of course Tokyo is also only a prefecture, but many newspapers were cut into local and capital newspapers, and in each prefecture only one newspaper was allowed to remain, meaning that this completed the centralization and increasing hierarchical quality of the newspaper media.

Let's look once more at the list of Shūsei's newspaper fiction. Shūsei began to be involved with regional newspapers from around 1900 with the Sanyo Shimbun. After this he was

publishing fiction yearly in both regional and Tokyo newspapers. The *Manshu Nippō* and *Chosen Jiho* appear on the list from after 1906 and the end of the Russo-Japanese War, and from around this time to around the first half of the Taisho era is the time of greatest activity for Shūsei's publishing in regional newspapers. *Manshu Nippō* was the first Japanese-language newspaper in Manchuria and was published from July 1905 to October 1907 in the city of Ying Ko [營口]. This paper was published for Japanese residents living there in this city, which came under Japanese military control after the Russo-Japanese War. Of course this paper was published with the support of the Japanese military, but it was in this newspaper that Shūsei serially published *Otoshi dane*.

Looking at the last half of the list, we see in 1923 the Nagoya Mainichi Shimbun. This was right after the earthquake. And in 1931 we see the Shinano Mainichi Shimbun. But except for these two, the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun and other Tokyo newspapers had become his sole venues for newspaper publication. From 1926 Shūsei entered into something of a writer's slump and was vexed until 1932 and his publication of the short story "Machi no Odoriba". When national newspapers were born and later regulation forced a reorganization of the newspaper business, Shūsei drifted away from writing newspaper fiction.

It is difficult to convey the huge body of Shūsei's work in such a short presentation. And we could not get quite a lot of it into the collected works. As I said at the beginning, compared to Shūsei's representative works many of his works have a rather rough, workmanlike quality about them. We can be certain that Shūsei considered orders from regional newspapers very important, but we may look askew at the artistic quality of some of these works. But in 1917 writing about *tsuzoku shōsetsu* he offered the following appraisal of his work *Yuwaku*.

Yuwaku is of a low level when considered as a work of art, but when presenting works of art to the people that kind of energy is required. The genre of *katei shōsetsu* (family fiction) has been around for awhile now, but much of this is rather unpleasant stuff. The main aim is just to draw forth maudlin tears, and the character depictions are quite unrealistic. There is a tendency toward melodrama. And so I thought couldn't this form be made more realistic, more artistic? I thought we need something new to be added to *tsuzoku shōsetsu*.

Before the terms *taishū bungaku* and *taishū shōsetsu* were used to describe popular literature, *tsuzoku shōsetsu* was used and Kikuchi Kan's *Shinju fujin* is often given as the classic example of it. However, *Shinju fujin* was carried in the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun in 1920. Before that, it was Shūsei who was intent on spreading the horizons of literature and readers. Of course we cannot overlook Sōseki as an author who raised the literary level of newspaper fiction. However, because of contractual obligations to the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun and the Osaka Asahi Shimbun, Sōseki's venues for publication were limited and it was Shūsei who extended this type of fiction to the provinces. Later, Shūsei associated with Kikuchi Kan and it seems likely that part of the reason for this association was their mutual interest in the promotion of literature to a wider audience. When considering newspaper fiction, we have to take into account this unlikely trio of Sōseki, Shūsei and Kikuchi.

Of course even if we say that the difference between major metropolitan newspapers and regional papers had still not arisen, just the very act of having a major literary name write for a

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paper demonstrated the hegemony of the Tokyo *bundan* (literary coterie). Shūsei's goal of improving the level of *tsuzoku shōsetsu* was an enlightened one and made him a writer caught between worlds: Tokyo and the provinces, literature as art and consumer product. But while he was in the capital, he wrote fiction that could not be read in the capital and viewed his contacts with journalists of regional papers as quite important. Most of Shūsei's fiction depicted the struggles and troubles of people caught drifting back and forth between the provinces and the capital. We could say that he showed the cultural and political gaps between the provinces and Tokyo so they could be seen in the pages of newspaper fiction. But as information about the Tokyo center filled the regional papers these gaps and cultural differences were pushed out of the newspapers and the depiction of this gap disappeared.

Shūsei serially published his work *Shukuzu* in the Miyako Shimbun, which as the name suggests was a newspaper of the capital. But this newspaper's nickname was the Karyū Shimbun, as it centered on stories about entertainment news and the licensed districts. Although it was published in the capital it would be better to view this newspaper as just another regional paper, although with the region being Tokyo. At the end of his career Shūsei had come full circle, returning to a "local" newspaper.

(Translated by David Henry)