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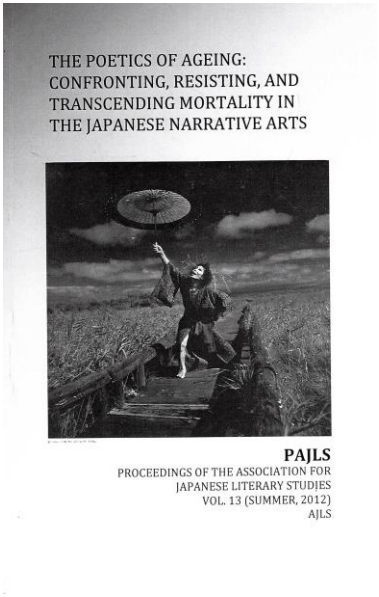

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Wisdom of Aging: Modernity and Animism in Yasuoka Shōtarō's Later Works

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Yasuoka Shōtarō 安岡章太郎 (1920-2013) is primarily known as a skilled short story writer, whose I-narrator often humorously talks about his failed student and soldier days as well as his dysfunctional family life during the immediate postwar days. In short, he writes about episodes in his daily life from a small and limited perspective. Unlike typical I-novelists, he always stresses humor, with which he critically detaches himself from the story as it unfolds.

As he ages, Yasuoka remarkably develops his critical perspective, from which he narrates the history of his family in locating them within the context of Japan's struggling modernization as an entire nation. He recurrently pictures his family as an example of the majority of modern Japanese, who are wanderers exiled from their original birth places. He also stresses the hybrid desires lived by these Japanese, who desire to survive modernization/Westernization, while at the same time they desire to reconnect with tradition, a tradition, in particular, attached to Mother Nature in a manner that Yasuoka calls "animistic."

In 1995, Yasuoka published a long critical essay in Nakazato Kaizan's *Daibosatsu tōge* (Daibosatsu Pass) as a two-volume book titled *Hatemonai dōchūki* (A Record of Endless Travel). In volume one of this book, Yasuoka refers to Kuwabara Takeo's theory of modern Japanese cultural consciousness. According to Kuwabara in his short essay on *Daibosatsu tōge*, published in 1957, there are three levels of consciousness that are at work in modern Japanese minds: 1) a modern consciousness, a surface level consciousness influenced by the West; 2) a feudal samurai consciousness, which works right below the modern one; and 3) an obscure, primitive, and shamanistic drive, which works

at the deepest level of Japanese minds even today.[1] By naming the third level of consciousness as "the layer of animism," Yasuoka agrees with Kuwabara's interpretation of *Daibosatsu tōge* as a work richly connected with the deepest level of the Japanese cultural unconscious.[2] As we will examine later, Yasuoka describes his rural family in Tosa by stressing their intuitively animistic drive to connect with their land.

Yasuoka develops his picture of modern Japanese hybrid subjectivity, together with the theme of animistic sensibilities, through two major topics–first, the topic of his mother and later, the topic of home in Tosa. He is the only child of parents both from Tosa. Because of his father's occupation as a military veterinarian, which had frequent transfers, the family moved a lot and Shōtarō changed schools quite often. His attachment to his mother characterized his childhood and prolonged adolescence. From middle school through his college student days, Yasuoka lived alone with his mother while his father was with his military troops during Japan's long war time years. Yasuoka thus experienced a long and dense emotional relationship with his mother, negotiating between a reliance on this bond with his mother and a desire to grow independent from her.

His father's return home after the war shook the mother-son pair's bond. His father's inability or resistance to adjust himself into postwar society, together with Shōtarō's inability to work because of serious bone caries, quickly created a financial crisis at home. Both emotionally and financially, they failed to function as a family and soon they decided to live separately. The parents went back to their home of Tosa and Shōtarō moved to an apartment in Tokyo and lived alone. His mother, who had

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[1] Kuwabara Takeo 桑原武夫. "*Daibosatsu tōge* 『大菩薩峠』, in *Kuwabara Takeo shū* vol. 5 『桑原武夫集 5』(Iwanami shoten, 1980), 116-19:17-18.

[2] The book also fascinates Yasuoka, because the hero, Tsukue Ryūnosuke, a masterless samurai consumed by his killer instinct, along with most of the outcast people surrounding him, behave on the basis of their instinctively animistic drive in such a way as to defy all authorities and social conventions.

struggled with mental instability before the family's separation, quickly declined in her mental and physical health and died a few years after her return to Tosa. Her death marked the end of the youthful stage of Yasuoka's life as a writer.

His novella, *Kaihen no kōkei* (A View by the Sea), first published in 1959, is the initial turning point of his writings. He describes in detail what he saw and felt during the days he spent time by the bed of his dying mother. I would like to only note here that Yasuoka views his mother's death in relationship with nature. See the famous final description of the novella, in which the sea accepts his mother's death as if forcefully burying her body at its bottom. This is the first time Yasuoka indicates his interest in the topic of nature.

> The wind fell, the salt smell vanished, everything seemed to recede before this eerie view that had risen from under the sea. As he looked at the rows of stakes standing like the teeth of an upturned comb, like tombstones, it was a death he held in his own hands that he saw.[3]

A calm summer sea in Tosa Bay suddenly transforms, reveals an awe-inspiring, menacing face of death. Yasuoka's protagonist seems to be deeply humbled by this scenery to the extent of accepting his mother's death as an inevitable return to Mother Nature.

The topic of Mother Earth is examined in further depth in *Maku ga orite kara* (After the Curtain is Closed), published in 1967. The story talks about a male protagonist's midlife crisis, which manifests itself in the form of his affair with an older, married woman. The woman, Mutsuko, and her husband move in and live with the family of the protagonist, Kensuke, and the affair takes place during the days after the Kensuke and his family have decided to move out of the house. After leaving the house, he doesn't see her. But five years later, Kensuke happens to see Mutsuko and realizes that he still has strong feelings toward her.

[3] Yasuoka Shōtarō, "A View by the Sea," in *A View by the Sea*, trans. Kären Wigen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 196.

Note that he feels confused because he finds her rather unattractive — she is an unsophisticated country bumpkin and displays a dull personality.

Kensuke is by this point married to a woman, who is an articulate communicator and an organized manager of family affairs. In short, she is a "modern" woman and Kensuke relies on her and seems basically happy with her. At the same time, he complains about her obsessive organization and cleanliness and claims that he finds an unclean and messy space more comfortable. His claim is indicative of his thirst for an "un-modern" quality to relationships and lifestyles, a thirst that also seems to explain his attraction to Mutsuko. Note, in particular, that his inexplicably strong sexual arousal toward Mutsuko is described as something in sync with his attraction to nature's primitive force: See the following lines, which connect nature's wild life energy with his erotic emotion towards her.

> (…) あたりの樹や土のにおいが、突如としてナマナマしいほどに甘く柔らかく身のまわりを取り囲み、(…) このまま泥の中に魅きこまれ沈んでしまいたいような、陶酔と恐怖とが交るがわる襲ってきた。…..何だろう、この陶酔は？それは蒸れたコタツの蒲団のにおい、 (…) 絡み合った手足や指の汗ばむにおい …….[4]

> Suddenly, the raw smell of the trees and soil around him wrapped him sweetly and softly. The desire to be drawn into and buried under the muddy soil aggressively occupied him with ecstatic and terrifying sensations. . . Why, such ecstasy? With it [the smell], he also smelled the blanket of a warmed kotatsu, the smell of the sweat coming from these entangled legs, hands, and fingers. . .

Mutsuko thus seems to excite Kensuke's hidden call for a sort of Earth Mother. This novel's in-depth examination of the

[4] *Maku ga orite kara* , 250.

male protagonist's self seems to allow Yasuoka to articulate his double-layered desire: at the conscious level, he desires "modern" urban relationships and lifestyles; and at the same time at the subconscious level, he keeps wanting to satisfy his suppressed yet un-erasable thirst for a connection with a "primitive" life and source of spiritual energy. It seems then quite natural that after this tenacious soul search, this writer is led to examine the significance of "home" or kokyō 故郷 for him. In fact, his writings in his later years are characterized by the dominant focus on the topic of his family home in Tosa. *Ryūritan* (A Tale of Wanderings), an over 900-page novel published in two volumes in 1981, is an epoch making achievement of his later writings. The novel talks about the history of his father's side of the family.

Chronologically, Yasuoka has touched on the topic of home in his earlier works like "Kokyō" ("Home," 1955) and *Kaihen no kōkei*. For a young Shōtarō, his fear of Kōchi is like the fear of a foreign land, because he has never lived in Kōchi. Later, his fear is amplified by his mother's intense fear of going back to Kōchi. In *Kaihen no kōkei*, the protagonist's mother reveals her problem through two threatening images. On the day she departs for Kōchi with her husband, she suddenly insists that she will stay in Tokyo with her son. When this proposal is ignored, she claims that she has left her suitcase somewhere and that it contains money and important papers. After the departure of his parents, the son goes back to their old home and finds the suitcase. He opens it and finds nothing but a shining sickle: "The saw-toothed blade still had bits of yellow twine caught in it, and it glistened blue-black like some frightful reptile. The sharp tip had cut through the lining. Shintarō was terrified…" [5]

Later, he receives a deranged letter from his mother from Kōchi. The characters on the envelope are crooked and irregular and the stamp is pasted on the back instead of the front. The content of the letter is confusing, too. It includes lines like, "Your aunt is a bad bad person she hits me with sticks she tells me to take off my clothes..." and claims, "Let's live together in Tokyo right away…"[6]

[5] Yasuoka, *View by the Sea*, 174.
[6] Ibid., 175.

The separation makes his mother aware of the dichotomy between modern Tokyo and rural Tosa, and she reacts to this dichotomy in an intensely mad and obscure fashion. Her fear is not simply a fear of separation from her beloved son or a sign of a snobbish desire to live and be viewed as a modern, urban woman. Rather, it seems like she senses a heterogeneous gap between the two poles of this dichotomy and fears she can never come back to Tokyo once sinking into the depth of Kōchi. The two objects—the sickle in the suitcase and the deranged letter—sharply symbolize the depth of her fear.[7] The topic of home is thus dealt with negatively in stressing the derangement of Yasuoka's mother.

The topic starts to be examined drastically differently in *Hōhishō* (An Abstract on Farting), a compilation of short stories written in the 1970s and published in 1979.[8] One of the book's short stories, "Chibokuro" (A Blood-colored Mole, 1979), articulates the idea of home in Tosa in a dichotomous opposition to "modernity." By quoting his father's diary when he is a high school student, Yasuoka focuses on Ryō, often referred to in his father's diary as his favorite cousin. Ryō is a Tokyo University student who is close to thirty years old, and refuses to attend school due to mental stress. Terada Torahiko, a well-known scientist and essayist, is Ryō's young uncle, who is close to him and has a strong influence. Concerned about Ryō's problem, Terada repeatedly lectures him about the importance of finishing his college education. In his essay, Terada quotes several lines from Ryō's diary, in which he expresses his responses to one of Terada's lectures to him.

> 私は学校のはうへは一歩も向かふ勇気はもうない。(…) 私はかうしていても、つひには田舎で貧しくとも静かに生活するといふ、私が自分を省みて

[7] The episode of the sickle is also included in "Kokyō" and *Maku ga orite kara*.

[8] Yoshida Haruo discusses the importance of this book, which marks the beginning of Yasuoka's later stage. See *Yasuoka Shōtarō: Tonsō suru hyōgensha* 『安岡章太郎・遁走する表現者』(Sairyūsha. 1993), 151-64.

> のただ一つの望みが満たさるる時が来る事はないやうに思はれる。[9]
>
> I no longer have the courage to take even one step toward the school. With such distress, I don't feel like my desire to quietly live a modest life in my country home, my sole and true desire in life, will ever have the chance to be realized.

Terada continues quoting from Ryō's diary:

> こいつはもうだめだと思ひながら、そのものに対する責任は尽くして行くといつたやうな態度や弱き者に対する軽侮の笑ひに対しては、生きている私は屈辱を感ぜずにはいられなかった。[10]
>
> Because of his attitude—that I would never amount to anything—and his determination to behave dutifully as a responsible uncle, I could not help but feeling insulted by his slight smile of pity for the weak.

Terada responds to these words of Ryō's: 「私はここまで読んだ時に、当時の自分のどこかに知らぬ間に潜んでいた弱点を見抜かれたやうな気がして冷や汗が流れた。」[11] "While reading this passage, I broke out into a cold sweat. I felt like he saw through the weakness I had, a weakness that secretly sat inside me without my knowledge"

Touched by these words of Terada, Yasuoka comments on the implications of what Terada calls his weakness.

> […弱点]というのが何であるか、寅彦自身は何の説明も加えていない。（…）

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[9] Yasuoka Shōtarō, "Chibokuro 「血ぼくろ」 in *Hōhishō* 『放屁抄』, (Iwanami shoten, 1979), 51-78: 76.
[10] Ibid., 75-76.
[11] Ibid., 76.

> 子供の頃から何度も住む土地を変わり、学校を変わり、あちらこちらを転々とするうちにやしなわれた一種の近代的な性格、そういうものがこの自分の＜軽侮の笑ひ＞の背後にあることを突然、寅彦は意識したのではないか。[12]
>
> Torahiko gave no explanation about what his weakness was. (…) Didn't he suddenly become aware of some characteristic behind his expression of "subtle disdain," a quality associated with modernity, which was secretly cultured within him through, for instance, the repeated transfers he had experienced in his childhood days—moving from one place to the next, changing from one school to another?

Because of his "modernity," Terada subconsciously looks down on his nephew as a rural person and allows himself to remain ignorant of the truth of Ryō's struggle: he truly and solely wants a "quiet life" in rural Kōchi, instead of competing for cutting-edge success in Japan's modern center. By reading Terada's reflection that way and by sharing his own modernity with Terada, Yasuoka articulates his vision of the home in Tosa as a particular ruralism that has been suppressed and forgotten by modern sensibilities. Note that Ryō's fear goes in the opposite direction of the fear expressed by Yasuoka's mother in his earlier works. By reading Ryō's fear sympathetically, Yasuoka now finds a more positive interest in Tosa as a part of his own home, instead of seeing it as a place with no relation to himself.

The topic of home in Tosa is fully examined in *Ryūritan,* a complex work, which is filled with rich records and critical comments on the dramatic historical moments of Japan's modernization. Let me, however, limit my discussion to the lives of the Yasuoka family during the Bakumatsu and Meiji Ishin periods.

First of all, it is important to note that the Yasuoka family long held a hybrid sense of identity as gōshi 郷士, a samurai-

[12] Ibid., 76.

farmer family. As farmers, the Yasuokas were a large, established propertied family who served as the heads (庄屋) of the farming village named Yamakita (outside of the city of Kōchi). The family consists of a *honke* 本家 and three *bunke* 分家, and the family maintains strong blood relations through marriages and adoptions among different branch members. The family is literally bound to their land and by blood in forming a specific ruralist foundation.

As for the samurai element of the Yasuoka identity, it is crucial to know the particular context of the Tosa gōshi within the larger Tosa han, or clan, in the Edo period. This han 藩 was ruled by the Yamauchi, who were tozama daimyō from Kakegawa. The troops of samurai that the Yamauchi brought with them form a higher ranking group (*jōshi* 上士) , while the gōshi are native samurai and form the main body of a lower-ranking group (kashi 下士). The two groups are in a conflicting relationship, and the gōshi samurai are often frustrated by the higher-ranking group's lack of respect for them.

During the Bakumatsu period, the conflict between the two groups in the Tosa clan intensified. The Yamauchi maintained a pro-Tokugawa position, while the gōshi group formed an active pro-Emperor group called Tosa Kin'nō tō 土佐勤王党. By opposing their lord's political position, the loyalists to the Emperor became aware of their gekokujō 下克上 (lit. the low overcomes the high) spirit, with which they naturally joined the nation-wide movement at the time to challenge the ruling Tokugawa government. In sum, as a low-ranking samurai group proud of their local origin, many of the Yasuoka defy the existing social order and go on to accept and embody modernity when they go through the huge historical transition.

Let me take a closer look at some cases in *Ryūritan* that involve various members of the Yasuoka family. Volume One extensively develops the story of Kasuke, who is one of the three assassins who killed Yoshida Tōyō, a leading pro-Tokugawa reformer of the Tosa clan. Kasuke escapes from Tosa right after the assassination and never comes back home. He lives in Kyoto and later joins the Tenchūgumi 天誅組 and its failed uprising. This small group consists of armed loyalists from Tosa and other regions. After a long resistance, most of the members are arrested

or killed. Kasuke is injured, arrested, and sent to Kyoto to be beheaded.

Volume Two extensively deals with Kakunosuke, Kasuke's older brother and also a Tosa loyalist member. He is jailed in Tosa for a period but survives the Bakumatsu period. He then joins the pro-Emperor allies during the Boshin War 戊辰戦争 at the beginning of the Meiji period. He is a superintendent, given responsibility to lead his military faction, but is shot to death during the battle in Tōhoku. His numerous and lengthy letters to his father are the major source of the novel's description of his activities, as well as of the Boshin War. Kasuke and Kakunosuke are the heroes of the Yasuoka family and the examples of the gōshi's gekokujō spirit, with which they pursue political causes as pro-reformers in an outgoing and spirited fashion.

After the establishment of the Meiji government (mainly consisting of members from Chōshū and Satsuma), Tosa's gekokujō spirit transformed itself in such a way as to fiercely fight for the minken 民権 (people's rights) movement. Interestingly, Christianity is also brought in to Tosa. Christianity becomes explosively popular among minken activists and their family members. Michitarō, the youngest brother of Kakunosuke and Kasuke, becomes a journalist of the Kōchi Shinbun, a local pro-minken movement newspaper, and a number of his family members become Christian.

Note here that the gōshi's gekokujō spirit, which looks for equality among samurai, can almost naturally welcome and accept major modern Western ideas such as democracy and Christianity, in the sense that they encourage people to pursue equality on political and spiritual levels. Thus, the conservative ruralist spirit of the farming Yasuoka family has coexisted with modernity since the early days of the Meiji period. At the age of sixty, Yasuoka critically cultivated his historical perspective and finally discovered in this novel the prototype of his own hybrid self image among his Bakumatsu ancestors.

The nation-wide reforms of the time brought serious changes to the Yasuoka family. The father of these three brothers, Bunsuke, was the leader of the Yasuoka in Yamakita village for quite a while and his diary is the major inspiration for the author to develop his novel. This founder of the Onishike (お西家) left home

in Yamikita in the early Meiji period and died in poverty. His tombstone, which has been missing for years, is found near the end of the novel. The author visits his tomb and is stunned by how utterly abandoned it looks. The family's main house in Yamakita is maintained by the author's grandmother's branch (Oshitake お下家) and is still maintained by the author's uncle, Hidehiko, when the novel ends. However, as the title of the book suggests, most of the Yasuoka family members are drifting and scattering.

Symbolically, the *honke*, or the main branch of the Yasuoka, does not live in Tosa any longer. The *honke* moves to Tōhoku during the Meiji period and takes care of the cemetery of Kakunosuke, who died there. This lengthy novel pays special attention to the Yasuoka in Tōhoku. The book opens with an episode where a Yasuoka from Tōhoku makes an unexpected visit to a young Shōtarō, and the second volume ends by quoting a letter from Masahiro (an aging first generation Yasuoka in Tōhoku) to the author's uncle, Hidehiko. It is a touching letter expressing a deep longing for his home of Tosa.

> ドーカシテ今生ニテ今一度、故郷の方々に御目ニ懸リタイト思ツテ涙ニ暮レテ居マス。仮例此身体ハ死シテモ、魂ハ故郷ニ帰ツテ皆様ニ逢ヒタイト思ツテ居マス。(…)
>
> 古里に吾まつ人もなからまし　何愁しくて袖ぬるる蘭
>
> 幾代へぬらんふるさとは　人づてならで問ふよしもなし
>
> 古里に吾レまつ人もなからまし　なに恋しくてぬらす袖かな [13]

> I really wish I could go back home one more time and see people from my family home while I am still alive. Thinking of this wish always brings me to tears. Even after my body dies, I believe my

[13] Yasuoka Shōtarō, *Ryūritan* vol. 2 『流離譚　下』, in YSS, vol. 9, 1-494: 458.

soul will keep wanting to go home and see all of you folks.

At the home of my birth, perhaps no one is waiting for me.
Yet, with how much sadness should I keep wetting my sleeves?
How many years have passed since I left my home?
I don't even have anyone to ask this question.
At the home of my birth, perhaps no one is waiting for me.
Yet, with how much love, should I keep wetting my sleeves?

Another touching episode that comes at the end of this novel revolves around Masahiro's first wife, Minae, and her mother, Masu, who is a daughter of Kasuke. Minae's husband, Masahiro, is adopted so as to maintain the *honke*. The mother and daughter both move to Tōhoku to live with Masahiro. However, Minae becomes ill and dies in Tōhoku due to tuberculosis. Minae sings a hymn at her dying bed; and when she is out of breath and can no longer sing, Masu sings the rest of the hymn. (Masu's mother is an older sister of Michitarō's wife, and these women, together with Minae, all converted to Christianity in Tosa). Yasuoka comments that the words of the hymn seem to give this tragic situation an unbearably sad air.

(…) その讃美歌の、
亡ぶるこの世
くちゆく我が身
何をかたのまん (…)
という言葉は、とくに臨終の床にある人の口からもれることを想像すると、まことに悽愴なものがあり、傍に坐っている人は居た堪れぬ思いがしたかもしれない。それにはキリスト信徒というより、この世に何かを求めながら、ついにそれを得られ

> なかった人の無念の想いがこもっているように感ぜられるからである。[14]
>
> The hymn reads, “Earthly lapse/ My self decaying/ What can I rely on…” Imagine these words pronounced by the dying woman’s mouth. The scene was so intensely desolate that people might have felt like they could not stay there any longer. The words seem to contain the full regret of those who (Christian or not) had sought something fulfilling in their lives and were unable to find it.

With the death of Minae, the bloodline of the Onishi branch has disappeared completely. This westernized picture of the Yasuoka singing prayers for the Christian God somewhat ironically indicates what has been brought to the Yasuoka by Japan’s historical transition. The ruralist tradition of the Yasuoka is deeply injured. In fact, all of the members of the Yasuoka family highlighted in this novel move out of their original birthplace of Yamakita village, and many of them die elsewhere.

In a short story, “Oji no bochi” (My Uncle’s Graveyard) in *Yūhi no kashi* (The River Side at Dusk), a compilation of his later short stories, published in 1991, Yasuoka recounts memories of his late uncle, Hidehiko. The story starts with Bashō’s poem on a winter open-air crematory fire:「影法のあかつきさむく火を焼て」(”A silhouette/ in the early dawn cold/ lighting a fire”[15])[16] He then quotes an annotation by an essayist from Niigata, who identifies Bashō’s image of the dawn fire as a scene of a funeral of his old farming family. Yasuoka as the narrator then talks about his own uncle, who is also a landlord of an old farm on the outskirts of Kōchi city. When Yasuoka is drafted for the war, he visits his father’s family from Tokyo. One evening, his uncle invites him to a seafood restaurant in the city and gets very drunk. He then insists

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[14] Ibid., 439-40.

[15] See Shirane Haruo, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: an Anthology, 1600-1900*, Abridged (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 97.

[16] Yasuoka Shōtarō, “Oji no bochi” 「伯父の墓地」(My Uncle’s Grave), in *Yūhi no kashi*, (Shinchōbunko, 1991), 7-30 : 11.

that he return on his bicycle and starts his shaky ride home. To Yasuoka's surprise, his uncle returns home safely after an over two-hour ride in complete darkness. Yasuoka comments on this uncle's obsessive attachment to his home.

> [自転車で村までついた後] その時初めて伯父の中に或る執念のようなものを見た。(…) それは祖母や伯母に対する遠慮などのせいではない。もっと本能的な、いわば土に対する執念のようなものから、家を明けて他で寝泊まりする気にはなれなかったようだ。[17]

> (After he arrived home on bicycle,) I realized, for the first time, a certain obsession of my uncle. He didn't think of staying overnight elsewhere instead of coming home. It was not because he didn't want to make his mother and wife worry; rather, it was because of his intuitive attachment to the earth, so to speak.

Yasuoka then talks about his visit to the recently built graveyard of this uncle. His cousin tells him that his father insisted that he not be cremated but buried. In this story, Yasuoka indicates in a generalized way the survival of Japanese sensibilities, which accept death in the literal form of the return to Mother Earth. The context extending the history of the Yasuoka family, described in *Ryūritan*, leads me to think of the particular quality of this uncle's obsession. The family has a long tradition of maintaining their original land, and yet their members have been moving out since the beginning of modernity. As the head of this landlord's family, the uncle is driven by the obstinate subconscious longing to be physically identified with his land.

In the beginning of this essay, I referred to Yasuoka's usage of the term "animism" in his critical reading of *Daibosatsu Tōge*. The term seems to define precisely this uncle's ruralist obsession, as well. In fact, in all of his later stories, Yasuoka seems to portray his family members in Tosa in basically the same

[17] Ibid., 25.

way. Each family member struggles to find a comfortable balance between his or her modernity-bound consciousness and an intuitive drive coming from his or her animistic sense of connection with the type of home bound by blood to a specific place.

Yasuoka published *Kagamigawa* (Kagami River) when he was 80 years old. This novel deals with the history of his mother's side of the family and highlights one of his relatives, Nishiyama Fumoto. Among the Yasuoka members, he was known as an example of failure. He was a lazy man who never worked and drank constantly. After researching his life, Yasuoka found out that, in fact, Fumoto never had any full-time jobs and loved to drink sake. He also realized that he was a skilled and serious writer of Chinese poetry.

While the mainstream purpose of writing Chinese poetry during his time was to express an author's political idealism or criticism against actual power, Fumoto wrote of his ideal of a traditional life in harmony with nature. Consider one of his earlier poems.[18]

> 「山荘避暑」
> 水清く、山は緑に、幽荘をめぐる。
> 手ずから霊泉を掬すれば、茶味香ばし。
> 苔蘚庭に満ちて、塵着せず。
> 松風六月、小仙境。
>
> "A Summer Mountain Villa"
> Clean water and green hills surround this elegant villa.
> Made from the water scooped by my own hands, the tea smells fragrant.
> The garden is filled with moss, which has no dust attached.
> The June breeze travels through pine trees in this small paradise.[19]

[18] For simplification and easier reading, I only quote the wabun 和文 version instead of the original kanbun 漢文 version.
[19] Yasuoka Shōtarō, *Kagamigawa* 『鏡川』(Shinchōbunko, 2000), 123.

The gōshi samurai's gekokujō spirit in Fumoto does not lead him to protest actual politics in his writings. Instead, he talks about his love of nature. At the same time, however, this poet is driven towards a more radically modern search for equality at the daily level of his life. When his friend found him a job as a Chinese poetry tutor for a wealthy doctor, Fumoto decided not to take the job, insisting that he refused to call anybody a "sensei 先生." He thus stubbornly resisted any hierarchy in relationships. As a faithful student of Chinese poetry, he trained himself outside the modern education system and became an alternative model of a modern intellectual. With his love of nature and leisurely life, he expresses his, say, ecological idealism in the above poem. But at the same time, he remains an acute and critical observer of contemporary society.

Fumoto's father died when he was young, and he lived with his mother until she died. After her death, he lived for twenty more years in extreme poverty, but his poetry skills drastically matured during that time. He was a homeless man, who spent time with his friends in the daytime and spent his nights at a nursing home. He died at the age of seventy in Shōwa 3, 1928. His last poem reads:

「読電報」
夢に屍山血河を見たが、
政府の方針はどうなるものか。
心は赤く燃えるが、青服をまとった書生っぽの
私は一片の涙を浮かべるよりない。
ただ、ひまさえあれば新聞はよく読む。

"Reading telegrams"
I saw in my dream heaps of bodies and streams of blood.
I wonder how the government might change its policies.
My heart is burning red (in worrying about the welfare of my loved ones), but I, who am just a student in blue uniform, can have but a single tear in my eyes.

> I just read the newspaper carefully whenever I have time.[20]

A critic of actuality surfaces in Fumoto in this last poem. Of interest is how his fear of contemporary politics seems inspirationally amplified by such a picture of bloodied mountains and rivers, an idiomatic expression of Chinese poetry, which visualizes war through images of damaged nature. The poem thus proves the constant existence of the source for his creative inspirations—his dual interest in and concern about nature and his contemporary reality. I see in Fumoto an unusual strength to survive extreme poverty and long solitude, and to maintain a lively curiosity about the world around him. The belief in his connection with nature may be the source for such strength.

This portrayal of Fumoto as a radical model of the Yasuoka family's animistic consciousness seems to give a finishing touch to this aging author's long examination of his relatives in Tosa. Consistently, Yasuoka traces the hybrid desire in the samurai-farmer tradition of the Yasuoka family—the desire for modern survival and the desire for a connection with nature.

Before closing this essay, let me add another aspect of the maturity brought to this author by his aging. After the examination of his own complex interiority throughout his midlife years in the form of inner monologue, this author displays in his later works more interest in dialogue with other people. He used a style of writing that freely included a variety of quotations and references. In short, Yasuoka revived the tradition of poetic literary writing, which consisted of the poet's intertextual dialogues with older poetic voices. His later stories consist of the author/narrator's responses to the words and expressions of a variety of people, who touch and inspire him. He talked about the differences and connections between people—such as between Terada Torahiko and Ryō, between Kakunosuke and Kasuke, and between Nishiyama Fumoto and Yasuoka himself. Consider, also, this author's delicate dialogue in his later writings with his favorite locational elements such as rivers. More precisely, these are imaginary conversations Yasuoka develops with different people

[20] Ibid., 199.

in connection with particular rivers such as Kafū's Sumida River,[21] Buson's Yodo River,[22] and even Kobayashi Hideo's Neva River in Russia.[23] From the early stage of his writing career, Yasuoka consistently expresses his belief in literature through such phrases as the "lyrical truth of literature,"[24] "faith in [literary] sentences,"[25] and the "[poetic] taste of sentences."[26] The power of subtle expressiveness in language is the charm of literature, itself, for him. Aging leads this student of elaborate writing to this remarkable maturity. With his endless intertextual conversations with the voices of others, he came to write in such a way as to exercise literally his very faith in literature.

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[21] See Yasuoka Shōtarō, *Watashi no bokutō kitan* 『私の墨東綺譚』 (Shinchōbunko, 1999).

[22] See Yasuoka Shōtarō, *Kagamigawa* 『鏡川』(Shinchōbunko, 2000), 5-15, in particular.

[23] See "Ayaui kioku," in Yasuoka Shōtarō, *Kārairu no ie* 『カーライルの家』(Kōdansha, 2006), 5-130.

[24] He defines "lyricism" as to "give sensitive and touching expressions to the crucial moments of one's life." See Yasuoka Shōtarō, "Tanpen no miryoku"「短編の魅力」, 375.

[25] He states, "I have a [religious] faith in sentences" 「僕は文章を信仰しているんです」 and stresses that "without that faith, I wouldn't get involved with literature at all." See Yasuoka Shōtarō, "Fuan no jidai ni" 「不安の時代に」, 218-21.

[26] He states "Literature for me resides in the [poetic] taste of sentences" 「私にとって文学とは (…) 文章のうま味に在ると思われる」. See "Afterword" of Yasuoka Shōtarō, "Atogaki" 「あとがき」, in *Yūhi no kashi* 『夕陽の河岸』. Shinchōbunko, 1991, 166-68: 168.

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