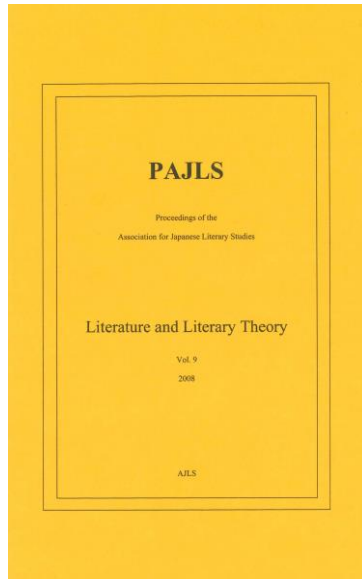


# “Detecting the Unconscious: Edogawa Ranpo and Narratives of Modern Experience”

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## Detecting the Unconscious: Edogawa Ranpo and Narratives of Modern Experience

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In his 1929 essay “Gakuya banashi” (Inside Story), Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965), often considered the father of original detective fiction in Japan, speaks of the difficulties of producing genre fiction in a later developing country like Japan. But befitting a writer who had by this time solidified his position as one of the premier writers of mystery and fantasy in Japan, his comments are more about how he overcame such difficulties. After lamenting that “tricks of detective stories have been exhausted almost completely by foreign writers,” he continues: “So I came up with one way to avoid this; namely, to use famous tricks that are known to many people as a foil by turning them upside down.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Ranpo’s early detective stories, including “Ni-sen dōka” (Two-sen Copper Coin, April 1923) and “Ichimai no kippu” (One Ticket, July 1923) exhibit his direct engagement with the Western detective story genre, incorporating the weight of its tradition as a fundamental part of the creative process. And in “turning” the famous tricks of Western detective stories “upside down,” these stories served to criticize what might be called the positivistic paradigm of Western detective stories, as Ranpo utilized the characters’ analysis of and faith in physical evidence as the foil for his surprise endings. But Ranpo did not end there. That is, he developed such a parodic and parasitic perspective into the foundations for a new type of detective, beginning with “D-zaka no satsujin jiken” (The Murder in D-hill, January 1925), the first of the Akechi Kogorō series. After solving a murder, the detective-hero Akechi—well-versed in the psychological theories and issues of abnormal sexuality that were quickly gaining currency among Japanese intellectuals in the 1920s—makes clear what the new paradigm for the detective’s method entails: “[P]hysical evidence can mean anything depending on the interpretation. The best detective method is to penetrate psychologically the deepest part of a person’s soul.”<sup>2</sup>

This essay examines Edogawa Ranpo’s “Yaneura no sanposha” (The Wanderer in the Attic, August 1925), a pivotal work in the development of his prewar detective stories and the last of the Akechi Kogorō series to employ the short-story format.<sup>3</sup> As I hope to show, Ranpo utilizes the concept of the unconscious in this story not only to provide a detailed articulation of Akechi’s psychological method but also to offer a meditation on the experiences and conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Edogawa Ranpo, “Gakuya banashi,” in *Nazo to mahō no monogatari: jisaku ni kansuru kaisetsu* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1995), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Edogawa Ranpo, “D-zaka no satsujin jiken,” in *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978), 112.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (1892-1931), one of the leading social and literary critics of interwar Japan who was also one of the earliest and most insightful critics of detective fiction, praised the scientific nature of Ranpo’s detective stories in a 1925 essay which appeared prior to the publication of “Yaneura no sanposha,” but criticized Ranpo as a representative author of “unhealthy” and unscientific detective stories, citing in particular his “Yaneura no sanposha,” in his 1926 essay. For details, see Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, “Nihon no kindai-teki tantei shōsetsu: toku ni Edogawa Ranpo shi ni tsuite,” in Nakajima Kawatarō, ed., *Edogawa Ranpo: hyōron to kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980) and “Tantei shōsetsu dan no shokeikō,” in *Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke bungei hyōron zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Bunsendō shoten, 1975).

of modernity, exhibiting remarkable similarities with and significant contrasts to the writings of two theorists of modern experience, Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880-1923). The former was one of the earliest to offer an extensive criticism of modern experience and Japan's modernization process. The latter was perhaps most influential in spreading Freudian psychoanalysis to a wider audience during the 1920s through his "Kumon no shōchō" (Symbol of Anguish, 1924).<sup>4</sup>

"Yaneura no sanposha" tells the story of the death of a dental student Endō and the ensuing investigation. Because Endō died from an overdose of morphine and a bottle of morphine was discovered in his room, the police quickly conclude that his death was a case of suicide. However, Akechi, who happens to have a friend named Saburō in the deceased's building (Tōei-kan), starts investigating the case. Soon, Akechi discovers that Saburō had been crawling around the attic space of the recently constructed Western-style Tōei-kan, peeping into the private lives of his neighbors. Akechi interrogates Saburō regarding this discovery, ultimately inducing Saburō's confession of Endō's murder. Saburō had killed Endō by dripping morphine into his mouth from a peephole in the ceiling.

Written in the third person, "Yaneura no sanposha" employs what Ranpo calls the inverted detective story format in which the story is told from the perspective of the criminal. Such a narrative structure eliminates the biggest mystery of the classic detective story—the identity of the criminal—and, in so doing, shifts the focus from the identity of the criminal (the "who") to the ways in which the criminal is discovered by the detective (the "how"). And in the case of "Yaneura no sanposha," Ranpo makes how the detective finds the suspect a non-issue (since Saburō is Akechi's friend who lives in the victim's apartment complex), focusing instead on how the former comes to determine that the latter is indeed the criminal. As the plot summary of this story indicates, this determination takes the form of confession and is not directly related to the issue of psychological evidence, but the process through which Akechi solves the crime is a fitting one for a detective who seeks to "penetrate psychologically the deepest part of a person's soul."

Noticing that Saburō, an avid smoker, has quit smoking since the murder, Akechi, who knows that the morphine used to kill Endō had spilled on a pack of cigarettes next to his bedding, surmises that Saburō must have somehow made a psychological connection between cigarettes and poison or death. Of course, this is only possible if Saburō was Endō's killer and witnessed the morphine spilling onto the cigarettes. But this connection upon which Akechi builds his analysis is unknown to Saburō as a conscious subject. The last lines of the story tell of the importance that Ranpo placed on the unconscious nature of this connection: "Although he [Saburō] thought that he did not see where the poison bottle landed when he dropped it through the peephole, he did in fact see the poison pour onto the cigarettes. And this was pushed beneath his consciousness, and this had the psychological effect of making him dislike cigarettes."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Originally published in the journal *Kaizō* in 1922, this essay became a bestseller when it was published in book form in February 1924, going through fifty printings in two months. This is not to say, however, that Kuriyagawa was one of the first to introduce psychoanalytic theories and works of Freud to Japan. As early as 1913, Kraft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a work known for its influence on the writings of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, was translated into Japanese. In 1917, Nakamura Kokyō, a former disciple of Natsume Sōseki, founded the journal *Hentai shinri* (Abnormal Psychology), which took up issues of abnormal sexuality, criminal psychology, and Freudian psychoanalysis. In "Gakuya banashi," Ranpo states that he had been interested in Freudian psychoanalysis for quite some time. Edogawa, "Gakuya banashi," 40.

<sup>5</sup> Edogawa Ranpo, "Yaneura no sanposha," in *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978), 274. From hereon, I will denote the page numbers from "Yaneura no sanposha" in parentheses.

If “Yaneura no sanposha” ends with the above lines befitting an inverted detective story that underscores the method (a psychological method, in the case of Akechi), then the story’s opening lines reflect the other characteristic of the inverted detective story format, namely, the shift in focus from the detective to the thoughts and actions of the criminal: “Most likely, it was a type of mental illness (*seishinbyō*). This world was not fun at all to Gōda Saburō although he tried out various hobbies and jobs” (249). With these lines, the story begins the exploration of Saburō’s peculiar life, setting Saburō up as an anomaly by classifying his condition as an “illness.” And while the lengths to which he goes to remedy this condition are extraordinary to say the least, it is at the same time true that Saburō reeks of modernity, presenting himself, in particular, as a product and an embodiment of the modern condition articulated by Natsume Sōseki.

For example, Saburō is financially independent with no steady job, and thus can be classified as *kōtō yūmin* (affluent person of leisure)—the primary subject of Sōseki’s fictional works—and it is because of his economic condition that he can switch from job to job, hobby to hobby, and one lodging to another in his search for pleasure in life.<sup>6</sup> And the relentless search itself can be considered the logical—albeit extreme—result of a modern condition that provides its denizens with time to “waste,” according to Sōseki’s 1911 lecture “Gendai Nihon no kaika” (Enlightenment of Contemporary Japan). In this lecture, Sōseki presents responsibilities (*gimu*) and hobbies (*dōraku*) as two primary activities of human life, with the time required for the former being shortened in modern times thanks to the power of technology (as well as financial independence), leaving individuals with ample time to spend pursuing the latter.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, Sōseki’s essay echoes Saburō’s dissatisfaction with modern life and offers the following metaphor as an explanation: “[I]t is the same as having numerous dishes on the table, but even before you can clearly see them to decipher what sort of delicacies they are, they are withdrawn only to be replaced by new dishes.”<sup>8</sup> What Sōseki describes in this visual metaphor is the sense of rapid change taking place due to the externally-forced nature of Japan’s modernization process and the lack of sufficient time to ‘digest’ these new “dishes.” To the extent that these changes are described as “dishes” which are believed to be “delicacies,” however, they exist as possibilities for a ‘satisfying’ experience, and the general feeling of “discontentment” and “emptiness” that afflicts the Japanese people can be understood to stem ultimately from the sense that these opportunities are missed and lost in the rapid—and seemingly random—flow of history.<sup>9</sup>

As can be discerned from “Rondon tō” (Tower of London, 1905), this condition facing the modern individual had been preoccupying Sōseki from the beginning of his writing career, although its treatment in “Rondon tō” differs in focus from that in “Gendai Nihon no kaika.” A displaced individual who finds himself in an unknown land, the Japanese narrator of “Rondon tō” is apprehensive of twentieth-century London, an ever-changing metropolis unlike anything he has experienced. The conveniences of a technologically advanced nation, such as the railway

<sup>6</sup> “Able to receive some allowance from his parents, he did not have to worry particularly about his life even when he left his job” (249).

<sup>7</sup> Natsume Sōseki, “Gendai Nihon no kaika,” in *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 328. Here, it is important to note that Saburō (literally, the third man), as the third male in the family, does not have familial responsibilities to succeed the family name. And while there is no space to pursue the issue here, Saburō’s condition is also intricately tied to the rise of the urban consumer class in the 1920s.

<sup>8</sup> Natsume, “Gendai Nihon no kaika,” 339.

<sup>9</sup> Natsume, “Gendai Nihon no kaika,” 339.

train, the tram, and even a hansom cab, confront him only as suspicious forces that might do him harm. And this feeling continues even in his lodgings: "Out on the street I felt I would be carried away by the surging crowd, and in my lodgings I suspected that a railway train might come crashing into my room; night and day I was left without peace of mind."<sup>10</sup> Thoroughly overwhelmed by his new surroundings and excessive external stimuli, the narrator likens himself to "a hare from Gotenba [countryside at the foot of Mt. Fuji] who finds himself suddenly in Nihonbashi [the center of Tokyo]."<sup>11</sup> Transplanted to the capital of the center of modernity, the narrator of "Rondon tō" experiences a catastrophic change to his external environment, and, as such, his experience can be considered an extreme case. Yet, at the same time, bearing a striking resemblance to an observation that Walter Benjamin would make several decades later when he described the urban life of mid-1800s Paris as "a series of shocks and collisions," Sōseki's description of the modern experience suggests his keen awareness of the ills of modernization, an awareness that became more salient as the 1910s progressed.

With the outbreak of WWI in 1914, Japan saw a period of rapid industrialization to meet the material demands of the warring nations. The economy boomed in larger cities, and people flooded into these cities from the country in the hopes of obtaining work and better wages. Tokyo, whose population's growth rate had never exceeded one percent in the first five years of Taishō, saw a sudden 14.5 percent increase in population (around 421,900 people) in its sixth year (1917).<sup>12</sup> Many of the Tokyo "urbanites" then faced the double task of adapting to a wholly different environment and lifestyle, given the ever-growing disparity between the country and the city, and of adjusting to ever-changing urban life.<sup>13</sup> And this situation only grew worse with the Great Kantō Earthquake and the complete overhaul of the city's landscape that followed, which literally transformed the external environment of Tokyo's denizens overnight.

Significantly enough, as the literary critic Matsuyama Iwao notes, many if not all prominent characters of Ranpo's early detective stories, including Akechi Kogorō, are young men who have come to Tokyo from the country.<sup>14</sup> They are among the many youths who flocked to the city in the late 1910s. They are literally hares from Gotenba who find themselves suddenly in Nihonbashi to be confronted with "numerous dishes" that are constantly being "replaced by new dishes." But what is interesting and important is that "Yaneura no sanposha" does not present Saburō as such. Rather, it presents Saburō as a person who has the opportunity to try numerous jobs and hobbies. That is, "Yaneura no sanposha" presents him as a jaded

<sup>10</sup> Natsume Sōseki, "Rondon tō," in *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Natsume, "Rondon tō," 5.

<sup>12</sup> This figure is astounding considering that Japan's population only increased by about 384,000 people (0.7 percent rate of increase and less than the increase in Tokyo's population) during the same year. As can be surmised from the rate of population increase in Tokyo during the Taishō period, moreover, many of those living in Tokyo had not been "urban dwellers" for long. Indeed, the 1920 (Taishō 9) survey indicated that only 42.5 percent of the Tokyo population was born in Tokyo. The figures are from Tokyo hyakunen shi henshū inkai, ed., *Tokyo hyakunen shi: Taishō*, vol. 4 (Tokyo Prefecture, 1972), 61. Matsuyama Iwao also cites these figures in Matsuyama Iwao, *Ranpo to Tokyo* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1994), 21.

<sup>13</sup> The historian Harry Harootunian describes the situation as follows: "[B]y 1920 and the succeeding years, the sharply silhouetted contrast was widely observed in the uneven relationship between the large metropolitan sites like Tokyo/Yokohama and Osaka/Kobe, which literally had been transformed overnight, and a countryside that supplied the cities with a labor force and capital." Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Matsuyama, *Ranpo to Tokyo*, 22.

individual—rather than the traumatized one whom we saw in Sōseki's "Rondon tō"—who seeks out "numerous dishes" but constantly replaces them with "new dishes" of his own accord, because he finds none to be "delicacies."

Ironically or perhaps fittingly, it is another *kōtō yūmin* from the country, Akechi Kogorō, who introduces Saburō to the fascinating world of crime through various court case accounts and detective stories, leading the latter to feel that he has finally discovered the "delicacies" of life. But this discovery, too, leads to disappointment, because "despite all consideration, even Saburō did not want to become a criminal by law. He did not yet have the courage to indulge in pleasure by going as far as ignoring the grief and contempt of his parents, siblings, relatives, and acquaintances" (251). To alleviate his discontent, Saburō graduates from imagining being a criminal and begins his escapades around town where he pretends to be a criminal. Of his activities, cross-dressing is his favorite, which is fitting for Saburō, who desires to act but is incapable of committing actual crimes for the fear of being caught. If committing a crime is the transgression of the law as explicitly articulated in the rules drafted by the government, cross-dressing is the transgression of sociocultural norms that expect the matching of sex and gender. And when we juxtapose this choice of activity with his qualms about his fellow lodgers, we see that his desire to break with social norms is intimately connected with the breaking of habits and routines of everyday life. Saburō comments: "What boring creatures human beings are. Wherever it is, they do nothing but present over and over to each other similar thoughts with similar expressions using similar words" (252).

And it is precisely this view of human beings that is shattered when Saburō begins his walks in the attic space of his lodging, for what he finds there is access to the private lives of fellow lodgers, "the inner, rather than outer, colors, the true sentiments of human beings without artifice that come out when they are alone."<sup>15</sup> Importantly, here the expression of "true sentiments" is facilitated by the Western construction of Tōei-kan, where a clear distinction between private and public space is maintained through "rigid partitions of the walls" and doors with "metal latches" (255). But at the same time, the Western construction brings into existence the attic space for Saburō to wander, peeping and eavesdropping through small holes and cracks in the ceiling.

The modern/Western construction of Tōei-kan provides its denizens with a seemingly-clear demarcation between private and public spheres, thereby making it more "enticing" for Saburō to transgress the barrier between the two spheres, precisely because the denizens can feel free to do as they please without being seen or heard by others. Here again, then, Saburō derives pleasure from transgression of a boundary, but, unlike the case of cross-dressing, which incorporated the risk of being found out as part of the thrill, the walks in the attic do the opposite: the thrill in them comes from being completely invisible and occupying the position of a pure observer who can discern the most private affairs and behavior of others.<sup>16</sup> Thus, despite the fact

<sup>15</sup> Matsuyama, *Ranpo to Tokyo*, 59.

<sup>16</sup> I would argue here that Saburō, through his discovery of the attic space, succeeds in becoming the modern novelist—and, by extension, the narrator—as articulated by Tsubouchi Shōyō in his *Shōsetsu shinzui* (The Essence of the Novel, 1885-86). For example, Shōyō writes: "To freely dissect people's hearts, which would be impossible in reality, to enter the bedroom of a dignitary's wife . . . and write her behavior and actions, or to depict the situations inside [a house] without considering whether the gates or sliding doors are closed—these are the freedoms of a novelist." Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Shōsetsu shinzui*, in *Tsubouchi Shōyō shū*, *Nihon kindai bungaku taikēi*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1974), 149-150.

that he takes care to dress up like a criminal, he soon realizes that he is a wearer of an “invisible cloak” who can “clearly discern the true intentions” of his neighbors (257).

To the extent that Saburō's walks in the attic involve his becoming an “invisible” observer, or adopting this perspective, it makes sense that the moment he comes out of his shell to become an actor (murdering Endō), he becomes uncertain of the body's actions, and we witness a split between consciousness and the body. Returning to his room after killing Endō, Saburō thinks that he has left behind the string used in the murder only to find it in his shirt pocket. In the process, however, he discovers the cork for the morphine bottle, which he had planned to drop through the peephole after murdering Endō. And most importantly, Saburō—the conscious subject—does not realize that he witnessed the morphine spill onto the cigarettes lying next to Endō when he dropped the poison bottle through the peephole. It is, as previously mentioned, the fact that this visual information had the effect of connecting cigarettes with poison or death that allows Akechi to discover the psychological evidence against Saburō.

For Ranpo, the subject—even the criminal himself—is an unreliable “witness” who is not fully aware of what his eyes have seen. But rather than rejecting the subject as the proper source of “truth,” Ranpo posits the unconscious as a psychical storage place for external information that is unregistered or misrecognized by the conscious mind. Akechi's method of detection bases itself not only on the understanding of the dichotomy between the conscious as unreliable and the unconscious as the reliable source of “truth” but also on the power of the unconscious to constitute the subject on the observable level of behavior. And here again, a Japanese text of modern experience exhibits a striking resemblance to the writings of Walter Benjamin. If we were to borrow the formulation of modern experience in his seminal essay “Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” then “Yaneura no sanposha” can be seen as a story of how a transgression of the law (murder)—as a traumatic event that fails to be registered and, thus, is deflected by the consciousness and enters the unconscious—affords an opportunity for habit-breaking and is thus a constitutive experience for a subject.<sup>17</sup>

To the extent that this breaking of habit leads Akechi to grow suspicious of Saburō, moreover, Saburō's unconscious betrays his intention to hide his identity as the culprit, sending clues to Akechi to decipher: in direct opposition to the criminal as a conscious agent, the unconsciousness is marked by its desire to confess. Ultimately, Akechi, by making the criminal confess to his crime, aligns him with the desire of the unconscious. By turning the criminal into a confessor, Akechi unites the conscious with the unconscious and with the constitutive but unrecognized realities of the external world by which the subject is constituted. And here, the concept of the unconscious allows for a more optimistic—although still bleak—take on the modern experience than that presented by Sōseki. Precisely because the unconscious has the power to dictate the actions and behavior of a conscious subject, Ranpo rearticulates the “lost” experiences as described by Sōseki as “stored” experiences that retain the possibility of their recovery at a future time, and offers the detective as the “retriever” who makes this possibility into reality.

As the above discussion hoped to show, Akechi, who employs the psychological method, seems to be a detective suitable for the rapidly changing urban landscape of the 1920s. But at the same time, as a detective whose sole concern is the discovery of the criminal, Akechi does

<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Harry Zohn trans. (New York: Verso, 1973), esp. 109-20. Within this framework, moreover, Saburō's jaded nature can be considered a result of an overactive consciousness working hard to protect against external stimuli of a rapidly changing world.

not need to retrieve the “lost” experiences of the unconscious at all; he merely has to decipher a single bit of information that pertains to the criminal case at hand (in this case, the connection between the cigarettes and the morphine). As can be surmised from the emphasis on the description of Saburō’s perverse hobby in “Yaneura no sanposha”—crawling around the attic space of his apartment building and peeping into the private lives of its inhabitants—Ranpo was keenly aware of this limitation of detective fiction, especially in a short-story format, and this was perhaps the reason for the short-lived nature of his detective fiction that was marked by its epistemological concern for psychological evidence.<sup>18</sup>

Soon after “Yaneura no sanposha,” Ranpo became known as the premier writer of the *ero guro nansensu* (erotic, grotesque, nonsense) movement by publishing detective stories that relied on topics dealing with transgressions of sociocultural norms in a similar vein to Saburō’s hobbies.<sup>19</sup> But while the post-“Yaneura no sanposha” stories may share some characteristics with Ranpo’s earlier stories, the example of his full-length novel *Kumo otoko* (Spider Man, 1929-1930) makes clear the contrasting shift in their focus. Not only is the story about a madman who dreams of constructing a three-dimensional exhibition of his perverse fantasy, including corpses of 49 girls used as mannequins, but Akechi, who rescues the girls before they are killed, actually helps reproduce the madman’s fantasy using actual mannequins and undercover police officers, despite the fact that he could have easily arrested the madman prior to the time of the exhibition.

And here, I believe that the thrust of Kuriyagawa Hakuson’s “Kumon no shōchō,” which functioned to spread Freudian psychoanalysis and the notion of the unconscious in post-Great Kantō earthquake Japan, is quite telling. Reflecting Kuriyagawa’s background in English literature, his essay, rather than being an introduction to Freud’s theories as a scientific examination of human psychology, was an application of Freud’s theories to develop his own theory on literature. Stating that “the root of literary arts is the agony and anguish that arise when the life force (*seimeiryoku*) is oppressed” and that “the psychological trauma, which arises from the conflict and collision between the power that attempts at any cost to satisfy desire and the oppressive force that operates against this, lurks in the back of the unconscious,” Kuriyagawa posits the arts in general and literature in particular as the “only form of living that liberates us

<sup>18</sup> While I discuss the shift in Ranpo’s detective stories as a result of this limitation, there was another literary trend developing in the 1920s which also attempted to address the ills of modernization. This was the I-novel or *shishōsetsu*, which was a hot topic of literary debate in the mid-1920s. As Tomi Suzuki has argued in her *Narrating the Self*, these debates had the function of institutionalizing the I-novel as a reading practice in which readers understood a work to be a faithful recounting of the details of the author’s own experiences. While there is not sufficient space here to go into detail, I would argue that the I-novel phenomenon of the mid-1920s reflects a growing need on the part of the readers to be able to have faith in their immediate perceptions. Read as a faithful and unmediated chronicling of author’s everyday life, a novel read in the I-novel mode reiterates the ability of the subject as a reliable observer and recorder of his or her everyday experiences. If Ranpo’s early detective stories, by criticizing the subject’s capacity to accurately observe and digest his external world, probed the painful symptom itself and posited the detective as the cure, then the I-novel functioned to legitimate the fleeting and meaningless everyday experiences of its readers like an anesthesia that masks the symptom.

<sup>19</sup> The growing popularity of Ranpo can be seen in the fact that the *Asahi shinbun*, the largest newspaper in Japan, serialized his *Issun bōshi* (One-sun Boy) from December 1926 to March 1927. This story was also adapted for film in the year of the story’s completion.



from the internal and external oppression that we are always facing in our lives [besides in our dreams].”<sup>20</sup>

In this way, Kuriyagawa utilizes Freud’s notions of repression and the unconscious to legitimize fiction writing as a critical endeavor that has the potential to liberate the individual from oppressive forces, both external and internal. For him, art is like a dream, that is, unconscious in coded, symbolic form, a connection that finds its source in the Freudian notion of phantasy, which Freud viewed as the purest manifestation of the unconscious in consciousness. Ranpo’s fiction from “Yaneura no sanposha” onwards—inundated with various portrayals of sexual perversions and exemplified by his *Kumo otoko*—can be considered as a conscious attempt on the part of Ranpo to represent fantasy and, thereby, the unconscious. In extending his description of the unconscious, Ranpo abandons it as an object of knowledge and instead represents it through its manifestation in the “real” world as fantasy-come-true: the unconscious no longer exists at an observable level as a secret message to be deciphered but as unbridled desire that explodes in the external world.

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<sup>20</sup> Kuriyagawa Hakuson, “Kumon no shōchō,” in *Kuriyagawa Hakuson zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1929), 154, 157, and 167. In the privileging the role of art and the artist, Kuriyagawa’s theory was strikingly similar to another literary theory that exercised much influence on the development of modern Japanese literature, namely, Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu shinzui*. If Kuriyagawa defined the novel as a manifestation of the repressed, inaccessible contents of the unconscious, then Shōyō’s novel was a conscious depiction of internal thoughts and feelings, which had become illegible through external appearance with the advent of what he calls the age of reason. In this sense, their literary theories both operate on the dichotomy between surface and depth. But in both instances, they are not interested in constructing a code that will make the depth legible as effects on the surface, but rather in presenting the novel and the novelist as having access to depths that ordinary people or activities do not have. In this sense, the notion of the novel presented by both theorists on the one hand strongly invokes detective fiction. On the other hand, they exist in opposition to detective fiction, because it was precisely the task of the detective to present a code that made the depths legible as effects on the surface.