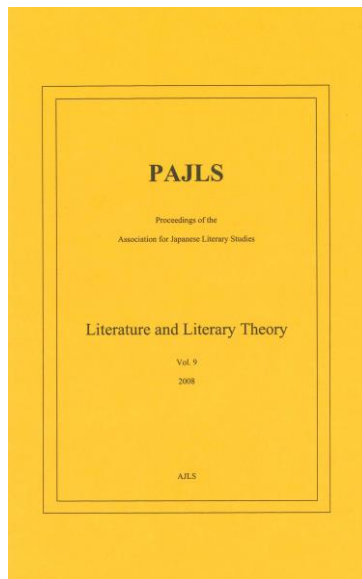


“Stumbling Past the Threshold of Languages:
Natsume Kinnosuke’s Contiguous Space of
Language, Literature, and Theory”

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Stumbling Past the Threshold of Languages: Natsume Kinnosuke's Contiguous Space of Language, Literature, and Theory

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I had buried all the books of literature in the depths of my suitcase. That was because I was convinced that trying to understand what literature is by reading literature is like trying to clean blood with blood. I vowed to myself that I would get to the bottom of how literature—in psychological terms—needs to be born in this world, to develop, and to degenerate; I vowed that I would get to the bottom of how literature—in social terms—exists, prospers, and declines.

Natsume Sōseki¹

By the author's own admission, *Bungakuron* (Theory of Literature, 1907) is meant to theorize literature with the introduction of non-literary theories. One of the few Japanese canonical authors who taught foreign literature at a university in Japan,² Natsume Kinnosuke (1867-1916)³ had reasons to be theoretical. As a teacher of English at what is now the University of Tokyo, he did not exude the perceived natural physical authenticity that his predecessor, Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), was said to bring to the teaching of English.⁴ Neither was he inclined to show off the privilege of having studied English in England, as other "returnees from the West" (*yōkō gaeri*) might have, being skeptical about the command of

¹ Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, vol. 9 of *Sōseki zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 10-11. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

² Among the others are Nagai Kafū (1876-1959), who taught French literature at Keiō University after his return from Paris, and Nishiwaki Junzaburō (1894-1982), who studied medieval English literature at Oxford and taught at his alma mater Keiō. These writers/teachers form a contrast with contemporary Japanese authors who teach Japanese literature outside Japan, where they are more or less explicitly considered to embody an authentic Japanese essence and thus can claim authority whether or not they so choose.

³ I shall refer to the writer in question by his legal name, Natsume Kinnosuke, rather than by his famous penname Sōseki in this paper that focuses on his scholarly and educational endeavors, taking a cue from Komori Yōichi, unless his literary output is an issue at stake.

⁴ "English people do not necessarily know much about English literature" Hiraoka Toshio, ed., *Sōseki nikki* (Tokyo: Iwanami bunko, 1990), 28 (01/12/1901). Hereafter cited as *Sōseki nikki*; references will be made parenthetically in the text. "It is not uncommon that ordinary English people misplace accents and mispronounce words (*Sōseki nikki*, 30 (01/18/1902)); "cockney that you know about is very hard to follow. Educated people are not supposed to speak in it. Well-educated people's speech is much more comprehensible." Letter to Kanō Kyōkichi, Ōtsuka Yasuji, Kan Torao, and Yamakawa Shinjirō, 02/09/1901; in *Sōseki shokanshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami bunko, 1990), 86. Rather than interpreting those remarks as displaying Natsume's nationalistic pride as a Japanese or his competitiveness with the English, it seems less reductive to highlight the fact that Natsume does not attribute competence to nativity but to class, as defined by educational/cultural refinement as Pierre Bourdieu would understand it. London as seen by Natsume was hybrid, not only by ethnicity but also by class, which did not escape Natsume's attention. However, London appeared to be complacent with its own superiority, as opposed to St. Petersburg, where the city's marginality was ever-confirmed as French was spoken by its aristocracy.

English achieved by conversing with so-called native speakers of the language.⁵ Being denied authenticity in English by birth and renouncing (approximate) authenticity by acquisition, Natsume negotiated with English literature as a Japanese reader, accepting, though not without a grudge, the irrevocable distance between himself and his object of study.

While Natsume taught English literature in Japan, a fact that locates his attempt at theorization of literature primarily within the Japanese system of foreign language and literature education, he was compelled to propose a literary theory that he hoped would be universally applicable. His circumstances may seem remote and yet are comparable in many ways to ours as we teach Japanese literature, a foreign literature (whether or not it qualifies for the title of "minority literature") in North America, where Japanese literary theory has been integrated into our curricula only relatively recently. Whether or not Japanese literature has formed any existential threat to the hegemony of majority literatures such as English in North America, the way Japanese literary studies have been envisioned and conducted here is still largely thematic rather than theoretical. In the wake of recent translations of groundbreaking Japanese critical texts, such as Karatani Kōjin's *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Kamei Hideo's *Transformation of Sensibility*, and selections from Maeda Ai's essays collected in *Text and the City*, the existence of Japanese literary criticism has become known, effectively dispelling the myth that Japanese literature serves for emotional engagement and aesthetic appreciation only.⁶ Yet, there may still be many years needed before Japanese literary criticism forms an integral part of the curriculum of literature and comparative literature, institutional units that are predicated upon the hypothesis of universal value in literature. Instead of indulging ourselves in pessimism over the marginality of Japanese in the Eurocentric academia of North America, I would suggest that we turn our attention to the fact that the mutually compromising qualities of universality and cultural identity have been plaguing us at least since Natsume's lifetime. These parallels with and twists of Natsume's challenges and opportunities should help us make his theory relevant to our own concerns.

Literature, Literary Language, Rhetoric, and Linguistics

Despite the stated intent that the author would engage psychology and sociology in his theorization of literature, which we examined at the beginning of this paper, it appears that *Bungakuron* was more tentative and less successful as a showcase of social theories in literary studies than another book-length study of literature by the same author; namely, *Bungaku hyōron* (Critical Review of Literature, 1909).⁷ Not only does Natsume admit in the latter essay, albeit conditionally, that seen from a critical perspective (as opposed to an aesthetic viewpoint), "literature is a social phenomenon" (*Bungaku hyōron*, 35), but he also offers what might be

⁵ To date, it is still recommended to students of literature in foreign languages that they should spend some time in the areas where the respective languages are spoken. Essentialism continues to prevail in language pedagogy, if not in the study of literature.

⁶ Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translated and edited by Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Kamei Hideo, *Transformation of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, translation edited and with an introduction by Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002); and Maeda Ai, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, edited with an introduction by James A. Fujii (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁷ *Bungaku hyōron* also states more straightforwardly that literary criticism is a scientific enterprise. Natsume Sōseki, *Bungaku hyōron*, in Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966). Hereafter references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

deemed in contemporary terms a sociological study of the environment in which literature was produced and consumed. The emergence of urban culture—represented by coffee shops, taverns and clubs, architectural elements, the everyday life of the citizens, and their entertainment—is described in such detail and perspective that readers cannot help but situate the eighteenth-century English literature that is the subject of the book in relation to social conditions at the time and place of the writing.

By comparison, *Bungakuron* appears to be a work of poetics, cataloguing tropes employed in high literary texts, whose “literariness” has been legitimized to create sensual effects. Since the contents of the main body of *Bungakuron* are deemed irrelevant to most of us who do not read texts for the sake of the texts any longer without apology, critical attention has been paid mostly to the author’s preface, in which Natsume reminisces about how he encountered English literature and how he came to terms with it as a subject of scientific study and institutional education—two of the author’s former vocations, which he had abandoned before publishing *Bungakuron*. A typical interpretation of the preface is biographical, or comparative, accentuating the author’s personal strife in London and the foreignness of English literature to him as opposed to the familiarity of Chinese classics.

To release *Bungakuron* from the constraint of narrowly envisioned literature, or to make “poetics” relevant to social theories, we might turn to other texts by Natsume and others who are similarly concerned with reconfiguration of categories in the history of literary criticism, which places poetics and tropics in a larger context than those terms commonly evoke. By doing so, we will find that Natsume was grappling with conflicts that cannot be reduced to the conventionally validated contrasts drawn between language as technical and literature as aesthetic, between English literature and Chinese classics, between science as logical and literature as emotive, and between non-literature as factual and literature as fictive.

In that spirit, I have found the chapter “Literature After Theory” from John Guillory’s book *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* to be intimately resonant of some of the issues that Natsume had to bear in mind. Guillory illustrates problems with conflating and equating categories from literature to literary language to rhetoric to linguistics to tropics, which determined the course of literature and theory education in the eighteenth century and the 1960s. He explicates what he calls a “symptom of theory,” in which erroneous definitions become infectious and ineluctable; thus, theory comes to mean deconstruction. Extending observations made by Paul de Man, Guillory reinforces the discrepancy between Europe and the United States in terms of the location of theory education.

From this statement we may infer that while the texts that constitute the canon of theory are not ordinarily literary texts, it is in relation to the literary syllabus that they can be constructed as the syllabus of “theory.” This fact is indisputable, but its significance has been missed because that significance is, precisely, symptomatic. The Continental (mostly French) provenance of theory in the several discourses of anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, criticism, or political analysis restricts the practice of theory to no single discipline, and that circumstance has made the signifier “theory” perhaps less institutionally significant in the country of theory’s origin than in the United States. On the Continent, moreover, particular movements (structuralism, poststructuralism) tended to produce interdisciplinary coalitions which never really emerged on this side of the Atlantic. The syllabus of theory has even now conquered only minor

territories in disciplines other than literary criticism, and the agency for the dissemination of theory has remained departments of literature; for that reason the emergence of theory remains indissolubly linked to the discipline of literary criticism, and thus to the literary curriculum. Theory is last, if not first, literary theory.⁸

Guillory thus describes a condition in the United States that seems contrary to the one that faced Natsume. While Natsume struggled to wield a scientific study of literature, by ostensibly applying theories devised in other disciplines that had been construed as more scientific, theories that have originated in areas of discourse that we may not deem literary have been canonized only in relation to literature and taught in school under the rubric of “literary theory” as a subfield of literature, according to Guillory.

Guillory further observes that in the 1960s, an extensive introduction of linguistic terms (most significantly, “metaphor” and “metonymy”) into the study of literature and the integration of minority literature into the canon coincided with each other. Half a century earlier, Natsume was struggling to enter theory into literature and disseminate a hegemonic literature (English) in Japan.

The importance of languages is addressed in *Bungaku hyōron* as follows:

When it comes to criticism of foreign literature, there is an additional obstacle, that is, language. What I mean by language is not syntax or grammar that is different between Japanese and English, but rather a “delicate shade of meaning” [as put in English in the original] that also has a certain rhythm attached to it. (*Bungaku hyōron*, 45)

This reads like an apology for classical rhetoric, where literariness is found and founded in the tradition of connotation and sonority of the texts, and a renunciation of linguistics, the field that studies syntax and grammar, as a category relevant to literature. It deserves our attention that Natsume is speaking of English literature rather than Chinese literature here. His oft-cited statement in the preface to *Bungakuron*—that “what is called literature in Chinese and what is so called in English could not help but be two distinct entities, with no possibility whatsoever to be united under the same label”—is usually taken to evidence his struggle with the West as a system of culture incommensurable with the East.⁹ However, his observations elsewhere do not necessarily corroborate this interpretation. I would like to highlight that the history of English literature was not without an equivalent to Chinese classics, the existence of which Natsume could have acknowledged. As Terry Eagleton tells us in “What Is Literature?” in his *Literary Theory*, the range of contents that literature could cover was much wider in (the first half of) the eighteenth century than it has been thought since then.¹⁰ Thus the difference that Natsume observes in the quotation should be qualified as historical rather than cultural; the distinction he

⁸ John Guillory, “Literature After Theory: The Lesson of Paul de Man,” in *The Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 177.

⁹ Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, in Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 10. Hereafter, references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

¹⁰ Terry Eagleton, “The Rise of English,” in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 17-53.

recognized should be located between classical and modern literature, rather than Chinese and English literature.

If Natsume had been specialized in medieval English literature or premodern European literature, as Nishiwaki Junzaburō was many years later, in which the definition of literature is closer to that of *wen* (Jp. *bun*)—i.e., a range of texts written in (high) literary language—English literature may not have appeared so uncanny to him as it did.¹¹ Then, ironically, he may not have had an incentive to negotiate with the conundrum that involves various approaches to and engagements with language (rhetoric, linguistics, etc.); he might not have realized the possibility of inquiring into literariness in English literature. What appears to be an undesirable, inappropriate, and contradictory decision became productive of the engagement with an aporia that haunts the entirety of research and education.

Language and Literature: Before, During, and After the Age of Nationalism

Natsume's preoccupation with the distinction between a national language (English) and a national literature (English), as expressed in yet another famous sentence from *Bungakuron*—"The subject of the study I was ordered to pursue was not English literature but English language"¹²—should be considered in the historical context in which the distinction was both compromised and highlighted in the age of nationalism (*Bungakuron*, 5). It was blurred to the effect of creating an illusion that acquisition of a national language, a homogeneous and shared property of all citizens of the nation, qualifies any citizen for writing literature, now stripped of its elitist requirement that one should master literary language and its rhetoric. Yet the distinction was also highlighted as linguistics, a field in social sciences, was being established as autonomous of literature, and as language was no longer under the exclusive dictate of literature.¹³ Natsume's personal fixation on the distinction, charged with such quintessentially modern implications, reveals his awareness of the shifting stakes in literariness: modern literature written in vernacular language, as opposed to classical literature as texts written in a literary language, or literature as rhetoric. Language and literature were considered inseparable in classical and in modern, but for different reasons. While in classical literature, whether English or Chinese, literature was equated with the use of literary language, in modern times, national language and national literature were packaged together to function as a unit representing national identity.

Language, however, remains an issue in the age beyond nationalism. While a given language's autonomy, homogeneity, and transparency imagined in the case of modern vernacular language might have been invalidated in contemporary thought, it does not mean it has lost relevance to text written in it. A question that haunts me and that I hope is interesting enough to you as well is that of which language it was in which Natsume "mentally wrote" the text of

¹¹ Deguchi Yasuo estimates Natsume's grasp of medieval English was negligible. Deguchi Yasuo, *Rondon Sōseki bungaku sanpo* (Tokyo: Ōbunsha, 1986), 22.

¹² Natsume adorns "eigo" (English language) and "eibungaku" (English literature) with *bōten*, a punctuation mark on the side for emphasis, to make sure the readers will take notice.

¹³ Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909; born Hasegawa Tatsunosuke) studied Russian at Tokyo Foreign Languages School (the present-day Tokyo College of Foreign Languages) by way of immersion in native speakers' lectures on a variety of subjects, ranging from science to literature. Thus literature was not a discipline with a privileged claim to language, while education was multidisciplinary. This seems to correspond to Natsume's penchant for application of theories in other disciplines to the study of literature, and for differentiation of (practical) language from literature.

Bungakuron. Laborious and fruitful studies have been conducted and publicized as to the making of the text, in terms of the role of his disciple who first restored Natsume's lectures from his notes and the extensive editing done by Natsume.¹⁴ My concern, however, is not with the actual process toward publication of *Bungakuron* but with the prehistory of the text, wherein Natsume envisioned and elaborated his theory of literature in his mind. Thus, when I ask why he did not write *Bungakuron* in English, it is not a praise for his achievement tainted with lamentation over the lack of recognition outside Japan—a gesture put forward by Masao Miyoshi, another scholar in English literature who, unlike Natsume, made his way successfully into academia in the English-speaking environment, disseminating his work primarily in English.¹⁵ The question I ask is a loaded one that implies two further questions: how different might the outcome have been if he had written or thought in Russian or French, and why did he not translate quotations from English into Japanese in *Bungakuron*?

While we are safely out of the spell of the nineteenth-century agenda of “one language, one nation,” we should not fall back on the imagined universality beyond lingual barriers, either. We cannot ignore the presence of disjuncture within the globalized world.¹⁶ Language continues to control fluxes of thought, not as a purported marker of national essence or tradition, but as a system of linguistic and rhetorical conditions that can delimit the range of issues to be raised.

As long as language remains formative of thought, it is meaningful to consider the languages acquired by critics of Natsume to varied degrees of proficiency. There are Gotō Meisei (1932-1999), Komori Yōichi (b. 1953), and Shimada Masahiko (b. 1961), who are Russian literate, and thus, at least potentially, are granted an entry into Russian Formalism, Bakhtinian narrative theories, or Eisensteinian film theories via a route other than their Japanese translations. There are Hasumi Shigehiko (b. 1936) and Yoshikawa Yasuhisa (b. 1951), who are proficient in cinematic register and phenomenology. And then there is Karatani Kōjin (b. 1941), who breathed the air of academia in English many years later than Natsume.¹⁷ Language (defined either linguistically or disciplinarily) determines, to an extent, the rhetorical

¹⁴ See Satō Yūko, *Sōseki no seorī: Bungakuron kaidoku* (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2005) among many others as to the making of *Bungakuron*.

¹⁵ “The sad part was that while his quasi-scientific theorizing failed to establish the possibility of a universal response—which, in transcending cultural and linguistic differences, might justify Sōseki's claim to scholarship in English literature, neither was there any good English critic around who could read his work in Japanese and tell him just how good—very good indeed—his practical criticism was.” Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 60. Miyoshi continues to point out that the author's own admission of the limited effect of a work on foreign literature (whether it is a non-English scholar's on English literature or a non-Japanese scholar's on Japanese literature) “undermines the premise of his elaborate system: universality of literature” a statement which encapsulates the conundrum Natsume finds himself entrapped in—a conundrum that we might call “disjuncture.”

¹⁶ Daisuke in *Sorekara* (And Then, 1909) attributes anxiety evident in European literature—Russian, French, and Italian—to respective natural and social conditions that affect such lingual communities. *Sorekara*, vol. 4 of *Sōseki zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 389.

¹⁷ Here are some works on Sōseki by these writers and critics: Komori Yōichi, *Seikimatsu no yogensha Natsume Sōseki* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999); Komori Yōichi, *Sōseki o yominaosu* (Tokyo: Chikuma shinsho, 1995); Komori Yōichi, ed., *Natsume Sōseki*, vol. 5 of *Sakka no zuisō* (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1996); Shimada Masahiko, *Sōseki o kaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shinsho, 1993); Yoshikawa Yasuhisa, *Sōseki-ron: Kagami aruiwa yume no shohō* (Tokyo: Kawade shōbō shinsha, 1994); Hasumi Shigehiko, *Natsume Sōseki ron* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1978); Karatani Kōjin, *In'yu to shite no kenchiku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha gakujuutsu bunko, 1989); Karatani Kōjin, *Sōseki ron shūsei* (Tokyo: Daisan bunmeisha, 1992).

environment in which specific issues are raised or obliterated with a varied degree of expectation and surprise, and in which specific manners as to how to grapple with the issues raised are formed. One can only speculate about how the fact that Natsume's primary foreign language in professional use was English—rather than Russian, French, or German, the languages privileged in Japanese literary and critical circles—affected his theorization of literature in Japanese. The only means to confirm the “Englishness” of his thought might be for us to translate his critical work into various languages and measure the extent to which his argument comes through in each of them.

Lost Without Translation?

Now to the other question: why are the quotations from English literary texts made in *Bungakuron* given without translation and mostly even without paraphrasing, which would help readers who do not read English to comprehend his point? Almost all the quotations from literary texts were originally written in English and are quoted in English, with the few exceptions of passages from Chinese classics or poetry and Japanese Noh plays (both highly oral and rhetorical genres that Natsume practiced to perform, a fact that resonates with their sonority and rhetoricity as markers of literariness as discussed earlier). A possible answer to my question, that he seeks to alienate average Japanese readers with pedantry and insolence, is a point of lesser relevance here. The question does not seek a practical reason for the lack of translation but instead leads us to an insight into Natsume's take on language.

Natsume's method of persuasion is more of showing than telling: “once you read this passage, it should be obvious how colorful it is” (*Bungakuron*, 42). Gesturing to his students in the classroom and readers across the pages as if to say, “Look at the following quotation, then you shall see my point,” Natsume's refusal to interpret, while probably affecting the students and the readers' comprehension of his points significantly, sends a significant message about his view of translation and its (deceptive) premise: languages are distinct entities and are more or less on an equal footing that allows semantic exchange between them.¹⁸

The fact that he rejects neither Japanese nor English as a distinct linguistic entity but rejects translation between the two languages warrants critical attention. He does not write exclusively either in Japanese or in English. He writes hybrid texts, choosing not to translate. It warrants attention that Natsume does not resort to comparative poetics but rather adheres to one literary tradition (English) while attempting at devising universal literary theory. The texts in the two languages are placed adjacent to one another but are not to be contrasted or compared. Natsume made an important decision in the enterprise of devising a universal theory, and his stance is an ambiguous one. He does not commit himself to semantic equation between English and Japanese, the two languages in which his text is written. To him, the two languages are neither equal nor interchangeable, but they exist together.

Natsume, as the author, expects his privileged readers (university students or those who have acquired a keen interest in English literature) to follow him in his trans-lingual trips between Japanese and English. Without providing Japanese equivalents for English insertions, he seems to assume that his readers can follow him across the language threshold. The “sudden contiguities” (to use Deleuzian terminology) could be accounted for by a hypothesis that

¹⁸ Naoki Sakai relates, “In translation, symmetry is usually between two national languages,” Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 62.

Natsume might have mentally written *Bungakuron* in English. An alternative reason for the format (or the seeming lack of it) is his critical view of translation, documented in other texts by him.

Natsume is among those Japanese who, while competent in European languages and versed in European literature, hardly translated. This lapse is rather striking, considering on one hand his versatility, evident in the range of genres into which his texts fall (as Karatani has noted), and on the other the abundance of Japanese translations of European literature.¹⁹ Many novelists, scholars, and teachers of foreign languages in Japan were also translators. Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) was an accomplished and published translator as well as being a writer and debater of literature; Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), his debating opponent and perhaps a closer parallel to Natsume, given his specialty in English literature, translated all the plays by William Shakespeare while pursuing a double career as an academic and a novelist; the Turgenev translations of Futabatei Shimei, a one-time colleague of Natsume at *Asahi shinbun*, are to this day considered the earliest and most groundbreaking contributions to the formation of modern Japanese literary discourse; and even later, canonical writers and stellar scholars such as Ueda Bin (1874-1916), Nagai Kafū, and Nishiwaki Junzaburō translated European texts while delivering lectures about them at universities. It seems as though the lack of translations by Natsume of Walter Scott, Jane Austen, or George Meredith—some of the authors he read intently, as is evident in his literary output inspired by them—was not incidental but consequential of his apathy toward translation. The task of a translator would have been an effective antidote to Natsume's preoccupation with the distinction between English language, which he was officially commissioned to study, and English literature, which he thought he would rather study—a distinction that haunted him. Why, then, did Natsume so firmly refuse to translate, as appears to be the case?

In an essay entitled "Tsubouchi Hakushi to *Hamuretto*" (Dr. Tsubouchi and *Hamlet*, 1912), which is a review of a theatrical performance of the said Shakespearean play using Tsubouchi Shōyō's rendition of it, Natsume disapproves of Shōyō's decision to translate the Shakespearean text literally and in colloquial Japanese, as the attempt's outcome forfeited its intent and in effect made it inaccessible rather than accessible to the Japanese audience.²⁰ Natsume's criticism counts the rhetorical gap between the original and its translation among other reasons for the audience's alienation from this version of *Hamlet*. More specifically, Natsume points out that the oral (perhaps even oratorical) quality is compromised to disastrous effect in Shōyō's translation as well as in its theatrical performance. Natsume is known to have attended many poetry readings and theatrical performances while in London, and, as I noted earlier, to have studied Noh chanting (*utai*) as well as Chinese poetry reading (*sodoku*). It is thus not surprising that to him aural effects are not a natural aspect of vernacular language but can only be achieved by rhetorical elaboration and appreciated through training. Natsume defines literariness at least partly in terms of aural effects that are lost when the text is deprived of oratorical rhetoric. He discusses immediate, sensual effects not as physical but cultural, acquired through an education in traditional arts.

While Natsume blames geographical, historical, and rhetorical distance for the play's failure to appeal to the audience, his criticism does not fault Shōyō for failing to represent authenticity but rather for attempting to treat the text as though its value were universal and

¹⁹ Karatani, *Sōsekiron shūsei*, 315.

²⁰ Natsume Sōseki, "Tsubouchi hakushi to Hamuretto," in *Hyōron zappen*, Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 286-291.

could be shared by contemporary Japanese viewers. Natsume argues that the original text's distance is a given, and that Japanese viewers of the play have to assume an analytical approach rather than an aesthetic, appreciative one, a distinction that he expounds upon in *Bungaku hyōron*.

Natsume is not declaring that the autonomy of a given language should not be compromised by the act of translation. He neither stays within the boundaries of a "native" language nor tries to remove the barriers between domestic and foreign languages. Instead, he braves the world of disjuncture: he traverses the hybrid text of *Bungakuron* with seeming complacency, if not nonchalance, suggesting that one has to live with and endure interlingual distance as is. One can experience the text only by rapidly traversing the textual space without explanation or semantic equation, which to him would be disingenuous to the heterogeneity of literature. He did not reject the confluence of languages; he endured it, without actively stridenting it.

Structural Suddenness in *Bungakuron*

"Where do I begin?"—I suspect that would have been a question that faced the editor of *Bungakuron*, and perhaps one that occurred to Natsume as well. Or perhaps he did not ask the question at all, which may be the problem with the beginning, often cited as baffling: "In general, the form of the literary content needs to consist of F and f. F signifies the focal impression or idea, while f represents the sentiment accompanying it" (*Bungakuron*, 27). Beginning *in media res* and without any justification for the way it begins, *Bungakuron* reveals its structural feature just as it sets out; it does not account for itself chronologically or causally. Except for enumeration of categories, I fail to see any map or blueprint to help organize textual space. The lack of an obvious structural design means the absence of an omniscient observer with a bird's-eye view. Even though Natsume aspired to become an architect while young, he does not seem to build this text with an architect's vision, in the sense that *Bungakuron* does not strike us as a product of omniscience or a three-dimensional imagination. There is no visible hand that manipulates strings of causality over the contents of the text. There is no obvious reasoning for the structure of the text. It appears to be rhizomic.

Natsume seems to prefer displaying text to accounting for it; it's a choice of metonymy over metaphor. These two linguistic terms are often equated with contiguity and causality, respectively. Contiguity rather than causality dictates the line of his argument in *Bungakuron*. Instead of hypothesizing, let alone defending the reasons that such and such categories need to be identified as autonomous from one another and collectively to constitute the entirety, categories extend from each other as though to complement each other. Rather than asking "why" and justifying the reasons, Natsume seems driven by "what's next." The categories placed next to each other are complementary to each other, filling the space allocated to them as neighbors, but there is no apparent drive for the three-dimensional depth that these categories might dialectically constitute. There is only a desire for exhaustion of space, not one for making sense of it. There is no apparent reason that the textual space has to be explored the way it is in *Bungakuron*.

Natsume articulates the basis for the preference of this type of coordination in "Bungaku no tetsugakuteki kiso" (Philosophical Foundation of Literature, 1907). This lecture-turned-serialized essay seems to articulate Natsume's methodological stance more intelligibly than *Bungakuron*. His mission would be compared to phenomenology as engaged by Henri Bergson

in *Matter and Memory*, in that sensual effects predate the existence of the body, with subjectivity hypothesized only retroactively:

I am standing here and you are sitting there, and between us is distance. . . . This extension is called space. . . . Then, my speech today was set to begin at 1 o'clock. I don't know when it will be over, but it should be over sometime—probably before sunset. I speak at random like this and then Mr. Ueda will take my place and give an interesting talk. Then the meeting will be adjourned. Both my speech and Mr. Ueda's are events that pass, and the passing cannot happen without the thing called time. . . . Finally, the reason that I have come out here and moved my mouth is not just out of spontaneity or curiosity (if you think so that would trouble me a little), but out of a certain degree of cause . . . this relationship is called causality.²¹

Natsume then expounds upon the contingency of these concepts; spatiality, temporality, and causality are all only hypothetical artifacts without any substance in reality, which one needs nonetheless to facilitate one's social life. It is thus in keeping with his recognition of contingency of these dictates that he chooses not to account for any principle behind the sequence of classifications. What might appear to be a lack of order in *Bungakuron* evidences his theoretical consistency with which he invalidates causality as principle by default.

Urban Planning as a Metonymy

For the balance of this paper, I would like to demonstrate that Natsume's management of textual space corroborates the way he grapples with environment. By environment, I mean not *fido*, a notion that purports to be natural and yet is in fact geopolitically charged, but physically experienced space as an index of material conditions of writing. Rather than simply cataloguing places he went to or things he saw there, as often done in *bungaku sanpo* (literally meaning a random walk among literary sites—the virtual meaning is closer to literary pilgrimage), I would like to question how places are registered in his mind beyond their locations in a geographical sense, and how his physical exercise (walking, cycling, getting lost in the city, getting soaked in the rain, sitting on a bench in a park, shopping or browsing at bookstores, visiting historical sites, theatres, and other places of interest, visiting friends and their acquaintances, running errands at banks, tailor shops, the Japanese embassy, etc.) parallels his mental exercise (reading, thinking, and writing).

Natsume's interest in curbs and pavements is prominent in *Bungaku hyōron*, which suggests that he was concerned with how to divide space into adjacent areas, as he was in the textual space of *Bungakuron*. What comes next, rather than what lies beneath, seems to be his major spatial concern. He is also an aficionado of Impressionist paintings—most notably Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851)—and thus color makes a strong impact on his mind. Lack of clear delineation, a notable feature of these paintings, might account for his attention to areas (e.g., a park) rather than lines (e.g., streets).

The question that would parallel an earlier one I raised, "what if he wrote *Bungakuron* in another language?" would be how would it have affected his literary theory if he had lived in

²¹ "Bungei no tetsugakuteki kiso," in *Hyōron zappen*, in Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 34-35.

Paris instead of London? Nakai Yoshiyuki stresses the fact that Mori Ōgai visited Paris before he arrived in Berlin, which must have altered the impression of the latter city, described in his story “Maihime” (The Dancing Girl, 1890), as having taken to the Parisian fashion mode (“Pari manebi”).²² Natsume, too, spent a few nights in Paris before he arrived in London and petitioned for an extended stay in Paris, which the ministry of education declined.

Wakayama Shigeru, an architect himself who published a book on Sōseki and architecture, with an encouragement from Etō Jun, one of the most important Sōseki biographers, is the one who has asked the hypothetical question of what if Natsume had stayed in Paris instead of London.²³ As is documented in his diary, Natsume seemed to be fascinated with the “splendor and decadence” of Paris (*Sōseki nikki*, 19, 10/23/1900). London is not as geometrically organized as Paris after Haussmann’s restructuring eliminated alleys and backstreets and created radial boulevards for spectacular vistas. Of the two, Paris is more manufactured, exploiting streets and bridges to manage space more strategically. Natsume did not fail to observe the fact: “Even today, London is much more irregular in comparison with other cities such as Paris” (*Bungaku hyōron*, 103). For better or worse, Natsume found himself in London, the city of less accountability, which seems to have presented him with more opportunities to grope around urban space that did not make any sense to him.

The following entry in his diary, which was made famous by Komori Yōichi as a showcase of Sōseki’s geopolitical position in the world that anticipated the demise of the British Empire, reveals another aspect of his spatial sensibility:

October 29 (Monday)

Because of Mr. Okada’s errands, we walked in the city of London. I was completely disoriented. In addition, we were utterly troubled by the excessive congestion caused by the welcoming of the volunteers returning from South Africa. In the evening, I took a walk with Mr. Minobe in the midst of the mass in the city. (*Sōseki nikki*, 20)

Komori eliminates the first clause and the last sentence of the above entry and suggests that the incident of running into the Boer War volunteers’ return to the homeland determines Natsume’s geopolitical location, namely the centre of imperialism in decline. Enter the funeral procession for the late Queen Victoria, which he observed a few days later, and we have another marker of the specific historical and geographic location that Natsume was caught up in. Though he may not have anticipated these incidents, his encounter with them was not entirely incidental, according to Komori. The very fact that Natsume was sent to study English in England, wherein English was yet to be firmly established as a subject deserving of university education, evidences that Japan was a part of the Anglophone colonialist world; only subordinate, non-English areas (Scotland, Ireland, British colonies, and countries like Japan) privileged English in institutional education.²⁴

²² Nakai Yoshiyuki, *Ōgai ryūgaku shimatsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999), 34-45.

²³ Wakayama Shigeru, *Sōseki machi o yuku: Kenchikuka ni narō to shita sakka* (Tokyo: Shokokusha, 2002).

²⁴ Komori, *Sōseki o yominaosu*, 39-52. See Homi Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), 102-122, and Eagleton, “The Rise of English,” 17-53 for similar observations of the marginality of English (both in the sense that it was marginal as a field of study in the humanities and in the sense that it was studied in the geopolitical margins of the British Empire).

While I do not disagree with Komori on the account of the specific historical and geopolitical location that Natsume happened to come across, I also take Natsume's account of this incident rhetorically, as definitive of the structure of *Bungakuron*. The text of literary theory was written by someone who tried to organize his thought while knowing it is ultimately impossible to logically organize the study of literature.

Let us restore the first clause. A Mr. Okada, an individual who remains un-annotated in the edition I have looked at, had some errands to run in London and Natsume accompanied him (It is not clear from the context whether it was the city of London in general, or "The City," a financial district thereof. One wonders if Natsume knew the difference between the two; he may have known it semantically but must not have known it geographically). His itinerary was thus contingent upon Mr. Okada's business; Natsume's trip was neither a leisurely walk of a *flâneur* nor a trip that he had planned himself. Assuming Mr. Okada had lived in London longer than Natsume, he might perhaps have known the routes and walked as fast and efficiently as possible from one place to another that he needed to visit, while Natsume tried to keep up with him, not knowing the locations of the places or the order in which they should be visited. In other words, urban space, an assembly of lines preordained by Mr. Okada, appeared a grid-less extension to Natsume. The congestion caused by the people welcoming the Boer War volunteers was only an additional (and circumstantial) reason that made the walk difficult and disorienting to him.

Now it is time to restore the last sentence in the entry. Despite the "utter trouble" he experienced during the daytime, Natsume went out into the crowds yet again in the evening. Though he walked with "Mr. Minobe," it does not seem as though Natsume had been at the mercy of his companion this time. Natsume's choice of action (as well as that of the word *sampo* or "leisurely walk," "sauntering") does not suggest scopophobia and rather reveals scopophilia. It appears as though he had switched his role from a dependent newcomer to an inquisitive *flâneur* within a matter of a few hours. It is not as though he had mastered the geographic orientation of London so soon, but he had acquired the means by which to go about the city without exactly knowing where he was or where he was going. He may have still been disoriented, but he was grounded and was at home with the fact that he was not at home.

In the interface of temporality represented by the moments that arrived abruptly and yet, retrospectively speaking, decisively, and spatiality represented by the locations that were cartographically registered and yet phenomenologically elusive, Natsume struggles to visualize text. He uses geometrical metaphors and graphic designs liberally to encapsulate concepts and patterns in *Bungakuron*. Whether or not to the desired effect, the device of such formulae seems predominant. Given that Natsume was made aware that maps may fail to create a sense of direction when one is not intimate with the city, and that incidents and events can intersect with preordained geographical schemes, the degree of preoccupation with geometry may be attributed to his negotiation with the collapsing and yet persisting geometrically articulated space.

Another piece that Komori brilliantly analyzes as a slice of colonial subordination that Natsume had to endure, "Jitensha nikki" (The Bicycle Diary, 1903), also opens our eyes to Natsume's spatial sensibility. Cycling grants the rider a degree of speed, though not necessarily versatility, as its movement tends to be unidirectional and irrevocable, especially with a beginner on the saddle. The accelerated movement of the machine does not let the rider see the landscape element by element. Instead, bicyclists cast momentary glances at things along their path, which either lodge in their minds out of context, to make lasting and disproportionate impressions, or blend into the background and are obliterated. Traversing space and time, the cyclist has no means to restore order—spatial, temporal, or causal—to place every element in right perspective.

The bicycle ride is an effective metaphor for the practice of theorization that Natsume was engaged in: the recognition of the complex and contingent world in which one nonetheless identifies a few things incidentally and tries to make up a coherent account for them.

Conclusion

If Natsume had studied medieval English literature, he might have embraced its rhetoricity the way he embraced that of Chinese literature. If he had embarked on the translation of English novels, he might have resolved the dilemma between studying the English language and studying English literature. If he had stayed in Paris rather than London, he might have celebrated the orderliness of urban planning and strived for comparable structural perfection in literary theory. But instead his career, a part of which was determined by the nation and a part chosen by him, took a different path, which compelled him to face contradictions and conflicts that presented him with challenges and opportunities to squarely face the aporia of literary theory.

Natsume lived through contingency and symptomatic persistence of categories in opposition, some of which he voluntarily inflicted upon himself: literature and science, literature and theory, literature and language, rhetoric and linguistics, and English and Chinese. Placing himself on these thresholds, which can be slippery and contingent and yet sticky and haunting, he was compelled to write fast, quickly turning away from one genre, whose premises dissolve with intense and sustained attention, to another, if only to encounter yet another problem of definition that would in time erode his integrity. His work of criticism was charged with conundrums that were often hypothetical and yet productive of serious consequences in the history of literature and theory. The aporia that drove him to write critically is still relevant to those of us who feel the urge to articulate the location of theory in research and education of literature.