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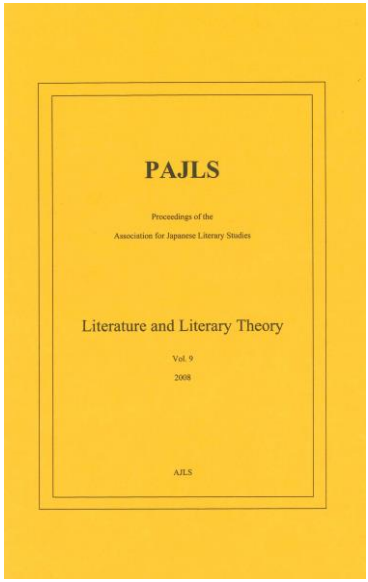

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The Literary Theory of Shimamura Hōgetsu and the Construction of Japanese Naturalism

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Shimamura Hōgetsu was one of the most influential literary critics of Japan's modern period. Born in January 1871 in a small village near the town of Kanagi in present Shimane prefecture, Hōgetsu graduated from Tōkyō senmon gakkō (later Waseda University) in September 1894. He immediately began to write for the journal *Waseda bungaku*, engaging other important critics in some of the most crucial literary debates of his time.[1] In 1898 he became a lecturer at Waseda University, where he taught rhetoric and Chinese literature, and joined the staff of the *Yomiuri shinbun*, gaining an important new platform for his deliberations on current literary issues. He also published a number of short stories and began to work on his *Shin bijigaku* (New Rhetoric), a treatise that would appear in 1902 and that would make a substantial contribution to the field of rhetorical investigation in Japan.[2] By the beginning of the twentieth century, at the age of thirty, Hōgetsu was thus already an established critic and scholar. Waseda University's decision to send him to Europe with a grant was not therefore made randomly: Hōgetsu showed promise that he would become a leading educator at the institution in the years to come.

In March 1902 the maturing scholar left for Europe. He spent three fulfilling years in England and Germany where he observed a number of social and literary transformations that deeply affected the evolution of his thought. His return to Japan in September 1905 was greatly anticipated, because it took place at a time when developments signaled a transition toward a new vision of literature. During his absence authors like Kosugi Tengai (1865-1952), Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), and Tayama Katai (1872-1930) had published works that dealt with heredity and environment, themes that were reminiscent of the type of European naturalism dear to Emile Zola. The emergence of these themes was also accompanied by a clear change in the perception of the relevance of style and form in writing, a kind of anti-rhetorical feeling that seemed to permeate all areas of early twentieth century literary discourse. These changes in the content and form of Japanese narrative became representative of a new trend in literature that sought to break away from the linguistic and thematic canons of the past.

The treatment of themes like heredity and environment led to the exposure of many of the darkest and most troubling aspects of human existence. The unveiling of such aspects was deemed possible only through a faithful description of characters and events, which by extension signified a complete rejection of deception and the concurrent embracing of nature in its crudest form. Tengai's preface to his novel *Hayari uta* (Popular Songs) of 1902 exemplified the compelling materialization of this new viewpoint.

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[1] One of the most notable of these debates was the exchanges he had with Takayama Chogyū on the creation of a new form of poetry. See Shimamura Hōgetsu, "Shintaishi no katachi ni tsuite," *Waseda bungaku*, nos. 99-102 (November-December 1895); in Shimamura Hōgetsu, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1994), 52-75.

[2] See Shimamura Hōgetsu, *Shin bijigaku* (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 1902).

> Nature is nature. It is not good [*zen*] or evil [*aku*]; neither is it beautiful nor ugly. It is simply that a particular people in a particular nation in a particular period selects a particular aspect of nature and calls it good or evil, beautiful or ugly. The novel is nature in the world of ideas. Whether it be good, evil, beautiful, or ugly, there is no reason why the novelist should be restricted in the range of his depiction. The novel should let the reader imagine the phenomena in the novel as if the reader were encountering those phenomena in the natural world.[3]

Nagai Kafū echoed these ideas, going one step further, by putting an increased emphasis on the animalistic, bestial side of man. At the end of his work *Jigoku no hana* (The Flowers of Hell), also of 1902, he stated that

> One aspect of man cannot but be animalistic. . . . In human society as it exists today, the human mind has long been shaped by religion and ethics, both of which are products of particular customs and circumstances. This dark side of man has come to be considered completely evil. What is going to happen to the animality that has been condemned in this fashion? If we want to create a perfect, ideal human life, I believe that we must start by making a special study of this dark side. . . . Therefore, I would like to concentrate on boldly and vividly depicting the various dark desires of man, the physical power, the violence, all of which derive from the environment and from the hereditary elements transmitted from our ancestors.[4]

This same type of concern was voiced in *Jūemon no saigo* (The End of Jūemon), a work by Tayama Katai that also appeared that year. The main protagonist of this story, Jūemon, was a victim of heredity and environment. His abnormal scrotum was among the reasons that caused him to be discriminated by the other villagers. Jūemon epitomized the figure of the character whose redemption was not possible. His death was, for Katai, a return to nature.

Strongly influenced by European naturalism in the manner of Zola, Tengai, Kafū, and Katai had thus sought to introduce a new thematic dimension to Japanese narrative, while pushing forward a stylistic agenda that shunned affectation and rhetorical sophistication. It is in the midst of these unfolding literary events that in the fall of 1905 Hōgetsu returned from Europe and resumed his duties at Waseda University. Raising high expectations among students, faculty and administrators alike over the future direction of his leadership, Hōgetsu immediately resuscitated the journal *Waseda bungaku*, which had ceased publication years earlier, and published several important essays, among which was "Torawaretaru bungei" (Literature in Shackles).

"Torawaretaru bungei" was a long essay that appeared in the first issue of the newly revived *Waseda bungaku*.[5] In this piece Hōgetsu imagined himself to be on a ship anchored in the Gulf of Naples when he was suddenly stirred by the appearance of Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who offered to guide him through Europe's cultural past. After a lengthy monologue

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[3] English translation provided in Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 80.

[4] English translation provided in Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 80.

[5] Shimamura Hōgetsu, "Torawaretaru bungei," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 1 (January 1906); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 1, 176-210.

in which he spoke of the great contributions of figures like Plato, Aristotle, Raphael, Shakespeare and Descartes, Dante began to discuss naturalism and the current state of contemporary art and literature. He argued against knowledge and science, claiming that they destroyed sentiment, and that it was only in the transition from a literature based on logic and science to one based on symbols and emotion that the artist could experience the ultimate dimension of the religious. Because of this, Hōgetsu's Dante concluded, naturalism would soon be replaced by symbolism.

"Torawaretaru bungei" was widely read. The editors at *Waseda bungaku* had to reprint the journal three times in order to satisfy readers' demand.[6] Yet, its true impact on contemporary critical discourse is not clear. Author and Hōgetsu's former student Masamune Hakuchō (1879-1962), for example, recalled his disappointment with the content of the essay, because it seemed to say something completely different from what most wanted to hear.[7]

The core of the problem lay in Hōgetsu's alleged attack on naturalism. In "Torawaretaru bungei," Dante, as voiced by Hōgetsu, predicted the imminent arrival of symbolism, dismissing an approach to literature based on knowledge rather than emotion. This was interpreted as a rejection of naturalism on the part of Hōgetsu at a time when many saw in him one of the few scholars capable of granting a legitimate theoretical framework to the movement.

A careful reading of "Torawaretaru bungei" shows however that this was not necessarily the case. Hōgetsu's Dante, in fact, acknowledged the important role played by naturalism in the literary developments of late nineteenth century Europe:

> I am not one to abuse or belittle Naturalism. Most of the major works of nineteenth-century literature were created under its influence. The only really objectionable feature is its extremism, which is not surprising, considering that Naturalism came into being only after first having been enslaved to knowledge. But if Naturalism could return once again to nature, and be faithful to the sources of natural emotions that are neither ornamented nor falsified, there would be a whole flotilla of Naturalist works whose sails would range together as they traveled together over the sea of passions.[8]

Notwithstanding, the notion that Hōgetsu had attacked naturalism became prevalent in the *bundan*. Thus, when in May 1906 Hōgetsu hailed the freshness of Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment), and when in 1907 he declared his full support of naturalism after Tayama Katai's "Futon" (The Quilt) appeared, he was fiercely criticized for his sudden change of mind. The questions that some critics had concerning Hōgetsu's true support and understanding of the naturalist movement were legitimate. Hōgetsu found himself needing to reconcile the basic tenets of the rising naturalist school with his own symbolist and neo-romantic literary quest.

This study discusses how Hōgetsu constructed a naturalist literary theory that addressed these critics' concerns but that, more importantly, was also consistent with his own theoretical

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[6] See Oka Yasuo and Inagaki Tatsurō, eds., *Zadankai Shimamura Hōgetsu kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kindai bunka kenkyūjo, 1980), 142.

[7] See Oka and Inagaki, *Zadankai Shimamura Hōgetsu kenkyū*, 141-142.

[8] English translation provided in Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*, vol. 2 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1984), 536.

agenda. He did so by means of three articles that appeared between June 1907 and May 1908. The first of these articles was "Ima no bundan to shin shizenshugi" (Neo-Naturalism and the Present Literary World).[9]

Rejection of Artistry and the Choice for Objectivity: Self-Effacement, Contemplation, and the Experience of the True Life of Nature

Hōgetsu began this first essay noting that a call against artistry, or affectation, had recently become particularly strong in Japan, especially in the domain of narrative. This call against artistry was in his view a type of naturalism.

Naturalism, Hōgetsu stated, was often defined as a faithful reproduction of reality. Whether such reproduction was truly faithful or not, depended on the intellectual posture of the author when approaching such reality. Hōgetsu observed that when a writer selected and arranged certain facts and events in a specifically logical fashion, he actually produced a type of artistry. This same thing could be said whenever he sought to be effective with the appropriate choice of sounds, words and expressions. Artistry was therefore a positive aspect of literary signification and was inevitable, because, he concluded, it reflected the effort of the author to appeal to the reader both from a point of view of plot and of artistic expression.

Nevertheless, artistry could also be negatively linked to romanticism. In fact, if the author's artistic impulse fell under the spell of affectation, his emotional involvement would become so deep that it could negatively influence both the selection and the expression of the facts and events being observed. From this point of view, he affirmed, naturalism was antithetical to both artistry and romanticism; while the latter two were mainly concerned with the formal aspects and emotional elements that preceded and followed the phenomenon being observed, naturalism's main goal was the phenomenon itself.

Next, Hōgetsu moved to briefly reconstruct the historical evolution of the naturalist school. Naturalism, he explained, had developed as the result of a three-phase progression. The first phase, called "realistic naturalism," was characterized by authors' effort to reproduce phenomena as close as possible to reality. The second phase, called "philosophical naturalism," was by contrast characterized by their attempt to draw a philosophical principle from the phenomena being observed. And finally, the third phase, which he labeled "pure naturalism," corresponded to the stage where authors sought to contemplate as the target of their observation a fusion of the objective with the subjective. At this third stage, phenomena were no longer a cold and objective reality, but rather the locus of the spiritual, the ephemeral, and life. Only at this point, he argued, would nature appear as if reflected in a mirror. Only after becoming totally passive, when one's egotism and self-assurance had been completely swept away, could one experience the taste of newer and fresher emotions. Only at this stage, he claimed, was the elimination of one's will possible. This elimination of one's will was for Hōgetsu the true self-effacement of naturalism.

A few months later Tayama Katai published "Futon." Hōgetsu reviewed this novel and declared his full support for naturalism. He also affirmed that naturalism was not only "present tense," but possibly also "future tense," a statement that reflected his belief in the enduring influence the movement would have, for better or worse, in the narrative of the following decades.

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[9] Shimamura Hōgetsu, "Ima no bundan to shin shizenshugi," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 19 (June 1907); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 2, 28-32.

> I accept Naturalism. At the very least, it is the newest trend in Japanese literary circles. . . . Only recently, twenty or more years later than the French, has the Japanese reading public belatedly come to want to savor for itself, in a deeply personal manner, the flavor of what the Europeans call Naturalism. These are the plain facts, and nothing can alter them: our literary world still has a long way to go, but every step forward, no matter how small, is to the good. . . .[10]

"Futon," Hōgetsu believed, displayed characteristics that were typical of naturalist literature. From this point of view, he argued, it "fitted naturalism's discourse perfectly."

> This work is a bold and outspoken confession of a man of flesh. In this regard this work has clearly and consciously explored what had been initiated earlier—ever since the "novel" first emerged in the Meiji era—by such writers as Futabatei, Fūyō, and Tōson. This work has advanced the aspect of the Naturalist movement that advocates "description without falsification in regard to both beauty and ugliness" and that tends to concentrate on depicting ugliness. Although what is represented is ugly, it is the undeniable voice of nature. Contrasting this natural aspect with that of reason, this work boldly presents to the public a self-conscious, modern character who is difficult for the reader to bear witness to. Herein lies the life of this work as well as its value. Had this work been published in an earlier period, those concerned with morality would have attacked it by now. However, we have yet to hear those voices. Is this due to a change in time or to some other reason? This is not to say that no one, aside from the writers mentioned above, has attempted to deal with this problem. Most of these writers, however, only depicted ugly actions [*shūnaru koto*] and not ugly minds [*shūnaru kokoro*]. By contrast, the author of "Futon" described not ugly actions but ugly minds.[11]

Hōgetsu's words likely reinforced the link between naturalism as a movement and the exposure of the ugliness of the human mind, a link that others had also emphasized in the writings of those years.

Meanwhile, at the very end of 1907, Sōma Gyofū (1883-1950) published "Bungeijō shukyaku ryōtai no yūkai" (The Fusion of the Objective and the Subjective from the Point of View of Literature), thus contributing in a substantial fashion to the divulgence of his mentor's theory. Gyofū saw modern art as a conflict between knowledge and emotions that translated into a clash between "the objective" and "the subjective." The emphasis of realism on the importance of factuality had led to the rise of hostile feelings toward knowledge, causing writers to reclaim the emotional elements that had been removed from literature in the name of science. Naturalism, Gyofū claimed, aimed at a fusion of these two dimensions, an insight that was reflective of Hōgetsu's arguments.[12]

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[10] Hoshizukuyo (Shimamura Hōgetsu), "'Futon' o gōhyō," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 23 (October 1907); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 2, 46-49. English translation provided in Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 539.
[11] Hoshizukuyo, "'Futon'o gōhyō," 46-49. English translation provided in Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 79-80.
[12] Sōma Gyofū, "Bungeijō shukyaku ryōtai no yūkai," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 23 (October 1907); in Yoshida Seiichi and Wada Kingo, eds., *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1972), 58-61.

In December 1907 Hōgetsu published a short review of Futabatei's *Sono omokage* (In His Image), after which he delivered the second of the three essays, "Bungeijō no shizenshugi" (Naturalism from the Viewpoint of Literature). Published in January 1908, this subsequent article formalized the important distinction between early and late naturalism, a distinction that soon became a pillar of Meiji literary criticism.

Historical Legitimization of Naturalism: The Development of a New Goal in Narrative

In "Bungeijō no shizenshugi" Hōgetsu traced the origins of the naturalist movement in Japan.[13] Who had written the first example of naturalist literature, he asked rhetorically. His answer was: Kosugi Tengai. But although Tengai's works did contain traits such as objectivity of description and willingness to portray the ugly without affectation, his naturalism had been nothing more than a type of realism, a call for the representation of reality as it was, without embellishments. For this reason, Hōgetsu stated, his literary production belonged to what could be called early naturalism, whereas the works that had very recently appeared belonged to late naturalism. This distinction, as is known, would become a standard classification in Japanese literary history.

For Hōgetsu, late naturalism had begun with the appearance of such works as Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* and Kunikida Doppo's short stories. These authors had never declared themselves naturalists, yet, the fact that the literary world had discerned in their novels elements of innovation and originality signaled a significant change in the field. It was appropriate, then, for the time being, to group their literary production under one label, that of naturalism.

Hōgetsu also identified the presence of a type of *Sturm und Drang* between Tengai's naturalism and the naturalist literary school that had begun to emerge in 1906. The Nietzsche fever and the debate over the aesthetic life that had taken place between 1901 and 1905, showed that Japan too had experienced the same romantic phase that had preceded the European expansion of naturalism and that the links between romanticism and naturalism were so deep that one could claim the latter to be essentially the theoretical extension of the former.

Next, Hōgetsu moved to examine what he called "the structure" of naturalism. He argued that from the point of view of description, two types of intellectual postures could be distinguished: the purely objective type, known as "naturalism proper" or *honrai shizenshugi*, and the subjective type, called "impressionist naturalism" or *inshōhateki shizenshugi*. "Naturalism proper" strove to adhere to the purest form of objective representation and was as such characterized by the elimination of the personality of the writer and the total annihilation of his feelings as epitomized by the scientific, report-like style of Zola's experimental novels. "Impressionist naturalism," on the other hand, was explicative in nature, and was characterized by the reclamation of the previously removed subjectivity of the writer. An example of this method of description could be found in the works of Gerhart Hauptmann or in the theory of German poet Arno Holz.

For Hōgetsu, "naturalism proper" was passive because it aimed at mere reproduction, whereas "impressionist naturalism" was active, because of the participatory role played by the

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Young critic and author Katagami Tengen (1884-1928) similarly drew from his teacher's thought. See his "Jinseikanjō no shizenshugi," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 25 (December 1907); in Yoshida and Wada, eds., *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei*, vol. 3, 92-95.

[13] Shimamura Hōgetsu, "Bungeijō no shizenshugi," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 26 (January 1908); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 2, 56-79.

subjective element. If the existence of an active naturalism, that is, a naturalism that retained the subjectivity of the writer in the process of artistic creation, were to be accepted, then it became necessary, he observed, to define the boundaries of this subjectivity. The boundaries were in his opinion dictated by the goal. While realism had the aim of reproducing reality, and idealism strove to represent an ideal, the goal of naturalism was simply and profoundly the reproduction of truth. Truth was, for Hōgetsu, the life and the motto of the movement.

The relationship between truth and the actual subject matter of naturalism, Hōgetsu stated, became clear at this point. Truth could be found in a variety of areas. Since naturalism was a current of thought that was modern and opposed to the chains of tradition, it was obligated by definition to deal with topics such as individualism, morality, social heredity, carnalism, and sexual desire. Naturalism took its subject matter from the ordinary. The observation and description of the individual, his most internal desires, including the most carnal and animalistic traits of his character, he concluded, were essential to the attainment of truth.

Having declared truth to be the goal of naturalist literature, an analysis of the movement's value was the missing element in the exposition of his theory. Hōgetsu took up the task in the last of the three essays, "Shizenshugi no kachi" (The Value of Naturalism).

The Value of Naturalist Literature: Truth, Beauty, and the Pursuit of the Absolute

Hōgetsu opened this piece with a comparative analysis between the literary production of mid-Meiji literary icon Ozaki Kōyō (1868-1903) and that of relatively young authors Masamune Hakuchō and Mayama Seika (1878-1948).[14] He acknowledged the artistic value of Kōyō's famous novels *Tajō takon* (Passions and Griefs) and *Konjiki yasha* (The Golden Demon), but argued that the superficiality of their lyrical and intellectual aspects considerably limited the scale of these works. The use of a bombastic style and the employment of old rhetorical artifices added to this deficiency, rendering them fake and artificial. By contrast, the fiction recently published by Masamune Hakuchō and Mayama Seika, while perhaps not stylistically extraordinary, contained a type of deep realistic description that gave a tone of seriousness to the purpose of these writers' narrative. Their novels went beyond the entertaining dimension of literature, opening a window to the contemplation of life and its meaning.

Hōgetsu then addressed one of the most recurrent criticisms of the naturalist school: whether it was truly possible that a naturalist author could reach the level of self-effacement necessary to prevent his subjectivity from affecting a faithful reproduction of truth. In order to discuss this point, the critic imagined a situation where one was suddenly startled by the discovery of a stranger lying on the ground. He described the various emotional states that would follow such a discovery and that would illustrate the types of conflict occurring between the subjective feelings of the observer and the objectivity of the event being observed. He identified a three-step process that ranged from a first, self-centered phase in which the observer was primarily concerned with the possible consequences he might have to face because of his discovery, on through to a third, compassionate phase, in which the previous egotistic dimension was completely removed, and the observer was allowed to reach a sympathetic fusion with the pitiful condition of the stranger. It was at this third stage, Hōgetsu stated, that a fusion between the objective and the subjective occurred and that an additional fourth stage, the locus of the artistic experience, took place. This fourth phase was the stage of the "aesthetic mood," a

[14] Shimamura Hōgetsu, "Shizenshugi no kachi," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 30 (May 1908); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 2, 106-127.

condition in which a sequence of aesthetic emotions could be experienced in a sort of ephemeral continuum.

The aesthetic dimension in which the subjective and the objective found themselves fused into one entity was ideal. Any aspect of subjectivity, whether lyric or sentimental, that could negatively affect, through artistry or exaggeration, the representation of truth, had to be removed. This fourth and final stage of aesthetic mood coincided with the domain of what he called "impressionist naturalism." The experience of this ultimate stage led directly to the realm of the mystic and the symbolic.

Naturalism, then, made the elimination of sentimentalism and lyricism one of the pillars of its literary theory. This was because the interference of such elements worked to the detriment of truth, the accurate expression of which was the ultimate goal of the movement. But what was truth for naturalism, Hōgetsu wondered. In order to answer this question, he considered the typical themes of naturalist literature, asking why authors like Ibsen, Hauptmann and Sudermann had chosen to write about society and the individual in their works. Why, he questioned, had Zola and others decided to write about social environment and other darker aspects of human existence, including carnality and sexual desire? Because, he stated, they believed that by delving deeply into such areas, they would be able to search out and reveal the truth of human existence. But if naturalism was concerned with the truth of its content, he continued, why did the process of interpreting truth through science, society and the darkest aspects of human nature have to be known as naturalism?

For two reasons, he explained. First, because the movement rejected the canon of traditional customs and morality. Second, because it favored a philosophical approach that opposed idealism. For Hōgetsu, naturalism was opposed to anything already preexisting, be it a custom, a rule, or a moral value. Naturalism was the defiance and obliteration of traditional beliefs and a return to nature and a primordial state. But this return to a primordial condition, with the consequent rejection of any preexisting system of values, was not the final goal of the movement. Naturalism in fact yearned to bring something new, a kind of relatively idealistic dimension that would replace the one just rejected. The pursuit of this somewhat idealistic dimension should not occur though in absolute terms. Never should the writer suggest a definite solution, and under no circumstances should he interfere and produce a form of judgment. There never was, for Hōgetsu, a solution in art.

Why then were reality, nature, and the material world required topics of naturalism? Because, he asserted, they were necessary for portraying that obscure side of human existence that had been overshadowed by idealism. But naturalism was purely an artistic movement, and it was a mistake to believe, as many did, that naturalism dealt exclusively with the description of sexual instincts. For Hōgetsu the naturalist school dealt with such topics only when necessary in order to achieve truth. The choice was legitimate and justified only when a more profound and deeper meaning was pursued. Naturalism remained completely separated from the call for carnal gratification, this being rather a problem of a moral nature. Naturalism was purely an artistic movement.

Did then the motivations and intentions of naturalism lie only within the realm of art or did they extend to life too? Hōgetsu noted that art had traditionally had both an entertaining and a functional value. These two values however were mere components of a higher entity, namely beauty. Beauty was for him the ultimate goal of art, and therefore any work created around only one of these two components—entertainment or functionality—could not be thought to have any artistic value. It was in beauty, he concluded, that the two components found harmonic unity.

Thus, even truth, the ultimate goal of naturalism, was nothing but a mere ingredient of beauty. Beauty was, after all, the real purpose of art.

Conclusion

By May 1908, Hōgetsu had delivered the core of his naturalist literary theory. In retrospect, the most challenging task for the chief editor of *Waseda bungaku* was to prove that his praise of *Hakai* and "Futon" and the declaration of support for naturalism that had come with it, were not the result of an erratic change of mind, but rather the natural outcome of a theoretically motivated evolution of his thought. In order to achieve this goal, in the first of the three essays analyzed in this study, Hōgetsu characterized the naturalist school as a literary current that embraced the call against artistry and affectation made by progressive writers in the literary world. By doing so, he managed to forge an important alliance between this school and those forces that sought to break with the linguistic and thematic canons of the past. He also managed to forge an important alliance between the movement and the search for a new literary language, a search that was implicit in the call against affectation and that was itself a key aspect of his own scholarly agenda.

But the confirmation of naturalism's legitimate evolution in Hōgetsu's thinking lay in the progressive development of naturalism itself. As will be recalled, Hōgetsu distinguished three types of naturalism, namely realist, philosophical, and pure. This distinction implied that pure naturalism, as he understood it, had begun only at a later time and that because of this factual realization, his earlier critique of the movement was fundamentally justified. While separating pure naturalism from the generally realistic literary approach of the earlier years, Hōgetsu maintained the existence of fundamental logical ties between the two trends. For him, the realistic stage of the pre-*Hakai* period had been an essential phase in the evolution towards pure naturalism, an important transitional stage in a process that had led to the first "Japanese creative work [capable of] conveying with an equivalent degree of significance the vitality transmitted by the European Naturalists in their controversial works of recent years."[15]

In the second piece, Hōgetsu strove to reinforce the idea that the type of naturalism seen before the appearance of *Hakai* and the naturalism experienced in this seminal novel were two very different entities. He formalized this concept through his famous distinction between early and late naturalism. But in addition to that, he also perceptively identified a romantic period between the two phases that characterized pure naturalism as the product of the same type of development that had already taken place in European literary history. That is to say, a truly naturalist school could not have emerged without a transitional romantic phase, and the world of Japanese literature was simply re-experiencing the events already seen in the West.

The revisitation of recent European literary history was one of Hōgetsu's most strategic moves in his effort to legitimize naturalism according to his literary theory. He argued that in Europe the movement had drawn deeply from romanticism, and therefore the presence of some romantic elements in Japanese naturalist literary theory should not come as a surprise. Similarly, he claimed that naturalism was still very much part of contemporary mainstream European literature and that the movement had particularly strong ties to symbolism, as seen in authors like Ibsen and Hauptmann, who had drawn from both schools in their works. The logical outcome of these deliberations was the argument that Japanese naturalism should not be regarded as devoid

[15] Shimamura Hōgetsu, "*Hakai* o hyōsu," *Waseda bungaku*, no. 5 (May 1906); in Shimamura, *Hōgetsu zenshū*, vol. 2, 15-17. English translation provided in Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 538.

of emotional elements and that it was not necessarily opposed to symbolism, as may have been thought by some. In this second essay, he also re-emphasized the primary goal of naturalist literature—truth—creating an important theoretical link between the attainment of verity and the description of the ordinary, the ugly, and human beings' most intimate thoughts and desires. He additionally envisioned a type of naturalism, which he called impressionist, that went beyond the merely objective representation of reality and aspired to achieve a complete and accurate expression of truth.

In his third article, Hōgetsu addressed the remaining piece of the model he was attempting to create: the reiteration of naturalism's commitment to the pursuit of truth and the reclamation of the aesthetic value of naturalist literature. The employment of the concept of beauty in his argument was his response to a widespread opinion in society that did not recognize the movement's artistic value. Beauty was for the critic a necessary prerequisite for the experience of the religious and the absolute.

Hōgetsu's writings spurred a heated debate, leading in some cases to passionate attacks against the validity of his theory. As critic and former colleague Gotō Chūgai (1866-1938) shrewdly observed in one of his writings, Hōgetsu had the ambitious plan to deliver a naturalist literary theory capable of including, under one –ism, a wide range of theoretical stances and ideas.[16] This implied the creation of a model that would take into account, more than anything else, the critic's own aesthetic and literary ideals, and that would grant the naturalist movement a viable configuration capable of consolidating the differences and withstanding the criticism of detractors. Hōgetsu's theory was only on the surface an attempt to interpret and explain naturalism: it was rather a skilled manifestation of critical discourse that sought above all to legitimize his personal view of literature and to authenticate his own evolving acceptance of the naturalist movement.

[16] Gotō Chūgai, "Shizenshugi no mutokushoku," *Shin shōsetsu* (July 1908); see Gotō Chūgai, *Hishizenshugi* (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1990), 1-32.