The Uniqueness of the Japanese Novel and Its Contribution to the Theory of the Novel

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Abstract: The Japanese novel has been viewed either as derivative of the Western novel or as a uniquely indigenous form with little or no relationship to the Western novel. In this paper I view it as both a unique Japanese form and as part of a global current of subjective fiction linked to modernization and expressing the ideal of the modern self. As the representative Japanese form of the novel I choose the *shishō-setsu* (I-novel, fiction of the self), which emerged around 1907 and dominated Japanese critical discourse until the 1960s. In the paper I juxtapose the Japanese novel with three versions of the European novel with the goal of ascertaining the differences between the Japanese and the European novel and arriving at a sense of the unique features of the Japanese novel. These are the *roman personnel* of the Romantic period, the realist novel, and the modernist novel. The *shishōsetsu* turns out to demonstrate some similarities with the Romantic subjective novel and also with the modernist novel: an emphasis on subjectivity in the context of different stages of modernity. It thwarts the expectations of the European realist novel, the standard novel form during much of the twentieth century and the one to which it was most often compared, in its avoidance of a depiction of society, its lyricism, and its preference for subjectivity and sincerity. As a form insisting on a radical lyricism and subjectivity, it reflects Japan's position as a modern nation that was simultaneously on the periphery in relation to Europe and part of the center of political power. It is a unique novel form which together with a body of theoretical writings provides an alternative form and theory of the novel.

By the early twenty-first century every country in the world that has been touched deeply by Europe, whether in the Americas or in the non-Western world, can be said to have a novel form. Mary Layoun sheds important light on the peregrinations of the novel to Greece, Japan, and Arabic-language countries, in particular, in her *Travels of a Genre* (1990). The novel has joined whatever poetic and fictional traditions were already there in its new country and has brought forth hybrid progeny that have claims to both sides of the family and yet, from a eurocentric standpoint, are called novels. It has been argued, then, that the novel is a modern global form, with numerous regional variations; the novel, wherever it arises, can be viewed as "a vast historical narrative of global modernization" (Moses 1995: X). The advantages of viewing the novel as a global form are obvious. On one hand, including the non-European versions of the novel allows an otherwise parochial West to enlarge its vision of the novel; on the other, for the non-European nations in question, viewing their novel form

as participating in a global enterprise can mean for local people "the source of the liberation of local culture from hidebound state and national forms" (Jameson 1998: XIII). The viewing of the novel as a global form has largely practical advantages, and it is justifiable in terms of the agendas of the literary systems in both European and non-European localities (Walker 1988: 61).

But to use the term "novel" in reference to the literary productions of non-European nations can also have quite different implications. To speak of "the Japanese novel" or "the African novel" suggests the centrality and originary power of the European novel and seems to reify a view of the non-European novel as "a franchise, one whose export reaffirms the greatness and identity of its source" (Lynch and Warner 1996: 5). The use of the term "novel" in reference to modern non-European fictional forms that share characteristics with and look like the European novel seems to deny their equally important imbeddedness in their own historical circumstances and their debt to their indigenous poetics. Furthermore, since the development of the non-European novel occurred within the historical situation of colonialism or quasi-colonialism, in a context of unequal power relations, bringing the non-European novel into a comparative context with the European novel threatens to draw that novel into a context in which difference is read as "contingent and marginal" (Yokota-Murakami 1998: 15). In such a context, where the distinctiveness of the non-European form threatens to be swallowed up in the generality and universality of "the novel," read as European, what I will call the discourse of uniqueness, or the discourse of the particular, has emerged to validate the regional novel.

The argument of Benedict Anderson (1991) that the novel, wherever it emerges, plays an important role in the construction of the nation as an imagined community has enabled a recognition of the power of the novel as both reflective of and shaping its own culture and nationhood, which are unique. Concomitantly, it has enabled a validation of traditions of the novel in nations which, under colonialism, were considered on the periphery in relation to the European center. Now, thanks to postcolonial criticism and theory, it is recognized that "novels' capacity for representing nations and peoples has enabled the novel to become a relay for transnational exchange, in a way that challenges the monopolies on representation sometimes claimed at the metropolitan center" (Lynch and Warner 1996: 5). In this climate, the specificity of local traditions is recovered after years of devaluation at the hands of metropolitan centers of power. Given the theorized tie of the novel to the nation, and to a national culture and reality, the novel of a particular country can be validated because of the uniqueness of the national reality that it represents. A theorist of African literature, Chidi

Amuta, for example, asserts that the specificity of the African reality gives the African novel its uniqueness, just as the specificities of England, Germany, France, and America give the novels of those countries their uniqueness, and that, given the specificity of Western novel traditions, "it would be the height of academic oversight to deny the African novel its distinctive historical specificity" (Amuta 1989: 127) – and its validity.

In today's climate, among the plethora of novel forms arising in various parts of the world, each novel form can be viewed as unique, in the sense that it arises out of and reflects a reality specific to that region. I would add that each novel form is unique in that its poetics results from a unique process of transculturation of the European novel. It is understandable, and, indeed, justifiable that nations should "articulate themselves on the model of 'national identities'" (Jameson 1998: XII) and that national novel forms should claim their separate identities. The discourse of uniqueness is beneficial in that it argues for the "culturally specific" nature of "referents as well as signifieds;" it reveals Western terms such as novel as "untranslatable" and therefore parochial rather than universal in nature; and it insists on the absolute historical and cultural contingency and the "differently segmented" nature of literary categories, as well as literary productions and literary institutions (Yokota-Murakami 1998: 68, 77, 99). By means of these strategies it attempts to accomplish the important cultural task of removing the non-Western national novel from the hegemony of Europe. But viewing the novel of each nation as unique has disadvantages. Arguing that the novel represents a unique national reality and has a unique poetics seems to deny it any possibility of being compared to novels representing other national realities. In its isolation of the national novel from other national novels and from any tradition of "the novel" as a whole, the insistence on uniqueness also makes it difficult if not impossible to consider how the novel of an individual nation, in developing its own poetics of the novel, might have contributed to the theory of the novel as a form.

Criticism of the Japanese novel in Japan and the West has been generated on one or the other of the polarized assumptions delineated above. On the one hand, the Japanese novel has been viewed as a global form. Traced to its alleged origins in the European novel, it was expected to look like the European novel and was castigated for not attaining the standards formulated in Europe. On the other hand, the Japanese novel has been viewed as unique, in Amuta's sense of the word, in that it has both reflected and shaped a specific Japanese reality. Both Japanese and Western critics have also viewed it as unique, in the sense that it originated in the specific linguistic, philosophical, social, and cultural matrix of Japan. As a sign of the Japanization of the modern novel in Japan, in fact, recent theorists of the

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Japanese novel such as Masao Miyoshi and Edward Fowler use the native term *shōsetsu* instead of the translated term "novel." Lydia H. Liu has shown the fallacy of the assumption, typical of "translingual practice" between European and Chinese cultures in the modern period, that "equivalence of meaning can readily be established between different languages" (Liu 1995: 7). In the Japanese context, then, by refusing to translate the indigenous term *shōsetsu* as "novel," Miyoshi and Fowler resist Western linguistic, philosophical, social, and cultural hegemony.

In what follows I want to steer a course between the Scylla of globalism and universalism and the Charybdis of nationalism and localism in regard to the novel. Frederic Jameson argues that there "exist relations of antagonism and tension between these two poles" in "mostly nations, but also regions and groups" within the world system of the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries. In them, "each term struggles to define itself against the binary other" (Jameson 1998: XII). Within the field of the study of the Japanese novel, then, I view the local and particular term "*shōsetsu*" as struggling to define itself against the universalizing Western term "novel," seen as the "binary other." If the parts of the world system were equal, the Western novel would be struggling to hold its own against the onslaught of novel forms, which imply alternative theories of the novel, coming from the periphery – forms such as *shōsetsu*, *riwāya* (Arabic – Allen 1982: 93), *nawaniyǎi* (Thai – Senanan 1975: 1), *kadambari* (Marathi – Mukherjee 1985: 12), and *upanyas* (Bengali and Hindi – Mukherjee 1985: 12). But in the world that we live in, this is not the case. In what follows I shall offer a modest contribution to the enterprise of de-centering the theory of the novel, read as Western, from the peripheral viewpoint of the Japanese novel.

For the purposes of this essay on the uniqueness of the Japanese novel and its contribution to theoretical discussions of the novel, I will discuss the Japanese novel both in its uniqueness and in comparison to the European novel. I assume that Japan has a novel form which came into existence in the mid-1880s under the influence of Western literature. I assume that the Japanese novel is a genre, that it has a kind of solidity as an institution in modern Japan, and that, as a genre, it plays a specific role or roles in the cultural and social imaginary. I make these assumptions so that I can link it to the European genre of the novel, which was one of its sources, and compare it to forms of the European novel preceding and contemporary to it that have similar institutional status and that play equivalent roles in the cultural and social imaginary. But I also assume that this Japanese novel form derived from a uniquely Japanese cultural-historical matrix and developed out of uniquely Japanese literary assumptions and forms. By defining the Japanese novel as both a form akin to the European novel and as

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its own unique form, I shall attempt, in this brief and necessarily schematic analysis, to demonstrate how the Japanese novel, as a specific and unique kind of novel, not only constructs the European novel "from the outside in" (Pratt 1992: 6) but also, in the course of that process, changes the theory of the novel.

THE JAPANESE NOVEL JUXTAPOSED TO THE EUROPEAN NOVEL

When I write about "the Japanese novel," my intent is not to give a diachronic view of the development of the Japanese novel, a form that, like forms of civilization, "took shape in and through historical processes and remained open to further historical shifts" (Arnason 1997: 1). Rather, I shall look at the Japanese novel synchronically, stopping the flow of time in order to focus on one moment in the development of the Japanese novel: the period of roughly 1907 to the 1930s. I shall view the Japanese novel of this period in an artificial manner as a monolithic and static form; I shall assume, for the sake of analysis, that this form has essential characteristics with an "ontology which stands outside the sphere of cultural influence and historical change" (Fuss 1989: 3). I will temporarily posit the characteristics of this novel as essential and unique so that I can describe them and compare them to the essential characteristics of the Western novel.

But the Western novel is also continually changing. I have selected three periods in the development of the Western novel and I shall view them synchronically, as monolithic and static, with characteristics that are essential and unique. The novel types, in the periods they are characteristic of, are the mid-nineteenth-century realist novel, the subjective novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (roughly, the Romantic period), and the modernist novel. The first two are the Western novel forms that the Japanese novel has in fact often been compared to and contrasted with. The third is a form contemporary to the Japanese novel. By comparing the Japanese novel to the European novel contemporary to it, I will best be able to shed light on the ways in which the Japanese novel differs from the European novel, the ways in which it presents an "alternative form of novel" (Miyoshi 1991: 45). By comparing the form of the European novel that is contemporary to the Japanese novel, I will best be able to demonstrate how Japan has constructed a unique modern novel form, one that changes the way the novel is theorized.

"The Japanese novel" for the purposes of this essay is the one that has been often postulated as uniquely Japanese: the *shishōsetsu*, or I-novel. The form was retroactively determined to have originated around 1907; from the mid-1920s it was defined and theorized by Japanese critics and writers.

The *shishōsetsu* dominated Japanese criticism from the 1920s well into the 1960s, and eventually, from the 1970s on, came to play a central role also in American japanologists' discussions of modern Japanese fiction. At least one critic writing on the Japanese novel, Masao Miyoshi, in resistance to the dominant European form, has proposed the Japanese *shōsetsu*, the modern Japanese novel, as an "alternative form of the novel" (Miyoshi 1991: 45). He goes on to define the *shishōsetsu* as the main current of the Japanese *shōsetsu* when he writes that, within modern Japanese fiction, the "orthodoxy (…) is 'I-fiction' that records the life of the author" (Miyoshi 1991: 48). Thus, the *shishōsetsu*, among a number of modern forms of the Japanese novel, is the one that can best claim to represent the Japanese novel and is therefore the best to focus on when searching for a Japanese "alternative form of the novel." The *shishōsetsu* is the form of the Japanese novel that can best validate the local Japanese tradition of modern fictional narrative in opposition to the form of the center, the European novel.

But "the novel," a term used to translate *shōsetsu*, and "I-fiction" or "I-novel," terms used to translate *shishōsetsu*, are slippery. The native Japanese term *shōsetsu*, carrying its own trunk full of meanings from both the Chinese and the Japanese traditions of fiction, was used from the 1880s or so onward to translate the European term "novel" or "*roman*," with some inevitable slippage occurring between the meanings of the terms in the several languages. The term *shishōsetsu*, coined in the 1920s, is a similarly vague term. In the Japanese context its referents can be defined historically, but when bringing the term in juxtaposition to non-Japanese literary forms one needs to choose how to translate it. The translation "I-novel," which is the term most frequently used, suggests a formally well-defined genre, and one in congruence with the European novel in terms of external form and internal themes and objectives. The term used by Miyoshi, which is much less frequently used in English," I-fiction," is much more general, suggesting only a preoccupation with "I." Paul Anderer, in translating the famous 1935 essay by Kobayashi Hideo entitled "*Shishōsetsu ron*," chooses to translate the title "Discourse on Fiction of the Self" (Anderer 1995: 67). This seems at first surprising because of the dominance of the translation "I-novel." But Anderer rightly chooses the broader term, I think, because Kobayashi himself in this essay sometimes uses the term *shishōsetsu* in the larger sense of "subjective fiction" or "fiction of the self." He does this when he compares the Japanese *shishōsetsu* to the French *roman personnel* of the Romantic period and the late Naturalist period. Since he was attempting to bring the Japanese form into a comparative context, he needed to lift both forms temporarily out of their national matrices and place them under a broader, non-nationalistic heading such as "subjective fiction" or "fiction of the self." For this reason I feel that Anderer is respect-

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ing Kobayashi's interpretation of the term *shishōsetsu* when he translates it as "fiction of the self." In my analysis I wish to keep in mind the Japanese genre both in the limited sense of "the I-novel," a Japanese genre with unique formal characteristics and rooted in a specific period, and in the broader sense of "fiction of the self" or "subjective fiction" – terms which allow for comparison across cultures.

I assume that the *shishōsetsu* is a genre that can be described objectively. In terms of form, the *shishōsetsu* shows extreme variation in length: it can be as short as a few pages, but the normal length is that of a Western short story or novella. A seeming contradiction is that the most famous *shishō-setsu*, Shiga Naoya's *An'ya kōro* (1921–1937 – translated as *A Dark Night's Passing*), is over 400 pages long. The *shishōsetsu*'s "content" is the life and subjectivity of its author; *shishōsetsu* revolve around events in their authors' lives, and/or express their authors' feelings, sensations, perceptions, and ideas. Whether written in the first or the third person, the *shishō-setsu* is narrated from the viewpoint of the author, avoids a well-defined plot in favor of a portrayal of occasions of emotional intensity, and depicts only the social world of the author and his family and/or associates. In her *Selbstentblößungsrituale* (1981, transl. *Rituals of Self-Revelation*), the first systematic study of the *shishōsetsu* as a literary form by a Western or Japanese japanologist, Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, basing her arguments on decades of Japanese criticism of individual *shishōsetsu* and theories of the genre, posits "two basic, dialectically related elements" that she calls "factuality" and "focus figure" (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 173). By "factuality" she means that "the reader assumes a direct correspondence between what is portrayed and actual reality – he reads the novel as an autobiographical document" (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 176). The term "focus figure" is a complex one; "presupposed by factuality," it is the melding of "first-person narrator, hero, and author" that brings with it a predominant "with-perspective" of narration (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 179). This provides a temporal structure in which there is the "illusion that the work has been created parallel to the events described," a plot characterized by a "rigorous restriction of the breadth of authorial vision," and a subjective tone and "poetic" quality (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 182, 185, 189).

In another study of the form by a Western japanologist, *The Rhetoric of Confession* (1988), Edward Fowler describes the *shishōsetsu* as a form "narrated in the first or third person in such a way as to represent with utter conviction the author's personal experience" (Fowler 1988: XVI). Most importantly, he validates the *shishōsetsu* as an "alternative form of the novel" (Miyoshi 1991: 45) by characterizing it as a uniquely national form of the novel firmly grounded in "traditional ways of thinking about literature" (Fowler 1988: XVII). One of these is what Fowler characterizes as the "ul-

timate distrust of western-style realistic representation" (Fowler 1988: XVI). The main characteristic of the *shishōsetsu*, according to Fowler, is its sincerity. The *shishōsetsu*, with its supposedly unmediated language, satisfies the Japanese yearning for the "authenticity – however illusory – of an unmediated transcription of consciousness, in the language of an ever-present speaker" (Fowler 1988: 39). Fowler analyzes in depth the vaunted sincerity of the *shishōsetsu*, which he deconstructs as an ideology and a "strategy of discourse, motivated by the desire of writers to legitimize or at least strengthen their position" within the small world of the *bundan*, or literary world of the 1920s and 1930s (Fowler 1988: 69).

Tony Bennett, in critiquing theories of the sociology of the novel, argues that "there is no reason to suppose that genres can be constituted as definite literary structures underpinned by similar sets of social conditions" (Bennett 1990: 98). But I feel that, in the interests of both arriving at a hermeneutic understanding of a genre and comparing genres cross-culturally, one can profitably argue that there are meaningful links between a genre and its historical and social context. My own 1979 study, *The Modern Japanese Novel and the Ideal of Individualism*, attempted to establish a firm link between the emergence of subjective literature in Japan from the 1880s to about 1920, including the *shishōsetsu*, and the ideal of individualism generated by modernizing political and literary currents of the time. Along these lines, Hijiya-Kirschnereit and Fowler both suggest the reasons for the I-novel's importance, Hijiya-Kirschnereit for the first half of the twentieth century and Fowler for the more limited period of the 1920s and 1930s. Both critics situate the form within the context of historical and political modernization, characterized by a striving for selfhood at the beginning of the century on the part of intellectuals and later, from the 1920s onward, on the part of a larger middle-class audience.

Tomi Suzuki's *Narrating the Self* (1996) broadens and deepens the argument that the *shishōsetsu* is linked to political and social modernization. She argues that what she calls the "I-novel reading mode was part of a larger historical process (generally referred to as Japan's modernization)," but she also stresses that this "larger historical process" involved "fundamental changes in assumptions about literature, the novel (*shōsetsu*), language, representation, and views of the 'self'" (Suzuki 1996: 7). Suzuki, in the process of inserting the I-novel into Japanese modernity, dispenses with the notion that it is a specific genre, arguing that any fiction of the period could be and was read within "the *shi-shōsetsu* mode of reading." Still, similarly to all the Western studies on the *shishōsetsu*, she places this mode of reading within the particular historical and political context of modernization. All the Western studies of the *shishōsetsu*, then, link the emergence and dominance of the form to the modern Japanese coming-to-terms with

the self, a concept derived from the West but which was taken up by the Japanese as a supreme ideal of Japanese modernity. The *shishōsetsu* thus came into being because it had important cultural work to carry out in the Japan of that time: the articulation of a modern Japanese literary and cultural subject in the context of modernization.

But in addition to this role, the *shishōsetsu* developed an existence within the Japanese imaginary; it was constructed by critics into an institution of modern Japanese letters, just as the novel has become an institution within Western literatures. As it was theorized, from the 1910s onward, the form became a "contact zone" (Pratt 1992: 6) of Japanese and Western ideas of the novel, a site at which Japanese and Western ideas of the novel confronted each other. In the charged quasi-colonial climate in which the Japanese novel developed, the *shishōsetsu* was the site where the metropolitan, universal idea of the novel from the West and the peripheral, local idea of the novel from Japan fought for hegemony. Seiji M. Lippit, approaching the problem of the role of the *shishōsetsu* from a different point of view, argues that "the attempt to define the novel's proper boundaries in discourse on the I-novel was also an attempt to define the proper boundaries of a specifically Japanese literature" (Lippit 2002: 26). Not only that – the *shishōsetsu* was also the site where Japanese and Western ideas of modernity and of the self, as well as those of literature competed for power. That is why the *shishōsetsu* has been theorized, excoriated, and praised over a period of forty-odd years by some of the best literary and cultural critics of modern Japan – Kume Masao (1956 [1924]), Yokomitsu Ri'ichi (1972 [1935]), Kobayashi Hideo (1987 [1935]), Nakamura Mitsuo (1958 [1950]), Itō Sei (1957 [1948], 1956 [1955]), Hirano Ken (1964 [1958], and Karatani Kōjin (1978). In the West, an unusual amount of attention has been expended on describing and theorizing the *shishōsetsu*: more book-length studies have been written on it than on any other aspect of modern Japanese literature. For the Western critics who have taken on the *shishōsetsu*, it has perhaps been a site at which to test dominant Western assumptions about the novel and Western ideas of literature in general.

Now I want to consider the ways in which Japanese writers of the *shishōsetsu* form have constructed the European novel "from the outside in" (Pratt 1992: 6). I am not suggesting that Japanese writers consciously went about reconstructing the Japanese novel but, rather, arguing that while Japanese writers attempted to write European novels and sometimes proclaimed themselves to have been influenced by European writers, the Japanese novel nevertheless developed into a different form. One of the ways in which the Japanese novel is different from the European novel is in its attitude toward realism and fictionality. During its formative years, from the mid-1880s to the 1910s, the *shōsetsu* was juxtaposed unfavorably to the

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then hegemonic European realist novel in terms of these two aspects, but today in a climate dominated by the discourse of uniqueness it is possible to describe the relationship of the Japanese novel to the European realist novel from its own standpoint. Edward Fowler characterizes the *shishō-setsu* as marked by an "ultimate distrust of western-style realistic representation" (Fowler: 1988: XVI). Unlike the Western realist novel, the *shishō-setsu* does not divorce the human being from society, and it does not depict the human being interacting with society, preferring a realism of the individual self.

An early apologist of the *shishōsetsu*, Kume Masao, wrote in 1924 with disdain for European realistic novelists, whom he saw as erroneously believing that they could create "someone else's life;" to Kume, a novel could only arouse trust in the reader if it were the "'recreation' of a life, of an experience, that actually took place" (Kume 1924, quoted in Fowler 1988: 46) – an experience in the life of the author. A present-day writer of *shishōsetsu*, Yasuoka Shōtarō, continues this line of thinking when he argues that, for the writer of *shishōsetsu*, "truly creative writing involves that kind of searching for and discovering something in yourself, not dreaming up some formally satisfying story" (quoted in Fowler 1988: 25). By the late 1920s the *shishōsetsu* had become the embodiment of *junbungaku* (pure literature) – pure in that it was "purged of 'objective' passages having nothing to do with lived experience;" and *junbungaku* "became the touchstone" not only for *shishōsetsu* but also "for critical judgment of all Japanese prose fiction (…)" (Fowler 1988: 50). The Japanese novel, then, critiqued the Western notions of objective realism and fictionality and expressed suspicion of the Western goal of objectively depicting society; it reconstructed the European realist novel, reshaping it into a novel based on the genuine experience of the author.

Let us look more closely at the particular Japanese focus on subjectivity in the novel; it is the second way in which the Japanese novel was seen as differing from the European novel. In this case, the version of the European novel that has been compared with the *shishōsetsu* is the *roman personnel*. This French form of the subjective novel is the one that Kobayashi Hideo, in his famous essay "*Shishōsetsu ron*" (Fiction of the Self, 1935), compared to the Japanese *shishōsetsu*, theorizing both forms as examples of "fiction of the self." The *roman personnel*, a genre of the Romantic period defined and theorized retrospectively by Joachim Merlant in his 1905 study of the same name, emerged in the late eighteenth century and flourished into the 1860s. Though Merlant cites Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sufferings of Young Werther, 1774) as an example of the genre, all of the others are French, and range from Rousseau's *Confessions* (1781, 1788) through Chateaubriand's *René* (1802) and Benjamin Con-

stant's *Adolphe* (1816) to Eugène Fromentin's *Dominique* (1863). Both Merlant, and Jean Hytier, who has defined a similar subjective genre of the French novel flourishing during roughly the same period, which he calls *le roman de l'individu*, emphasize that the prime criterion of the French subjective novel is its treatment of the individual divorced from the social world. Merlant argues that the *roman personnel*, a French genre that was heir to eighteenth-century French traditions of moral self-analysis, appeared at a time when the ego, proud of itself and of its uniqueness, came into contact with social reality; he goes on to argue that the autobiographical novel was the form in the French society of the time that attempted to solve the disagreements between the lyrical ego and the social ego (Merlant 1905: XXII–XXV).

The French subjective novel of the Romantic period, then, demonstrates a radical subjectivity in its content. And the subjective focus determines or at least shapes its form. In length the subjective novels analyzed by Merlant and Hytier differ remarkably, from the forty-page *René* to the novel-length *Dominique*, but most of them are novella-length – short, compared to the length of novels both of the eighteenth century and of the realist period. Compared to the *roman personnel*, the Japanese *shishōsetsu*, like the *roman personnel*, presents a radical subjectivity; but whereas the French form presents individuals almost divorced from the social world, except for a lover, in the Japanese form society is present in the form of relatives, lovers, and colleagues. In the French form, subjectivity is most often shaped by the long French tradition of moral introspection and self-analysis, as seen in the forms of the maxim and the novel of manners, and focuses less on the expression of emotion. In the *shishōsetsu*, the combination of "author and novel" in the genre creates a lyrical mood "close to the world of *tanka* and *haiku*" (Yoshida 1964 [1962], quoted in Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 301). The *shishōsetsu* is also frequently linked to the classical forms of *nikki* (personal memoir) and *zuihitsu* (personal sketch) (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 300), both of which have a partly subjective and autobiographical purpose. In the *shishōsetsu*, then, subjectivity is expressed in the form of the author's experiences, perceptions, and emotions.

As to its length, the *roman personnel* is normally the length of a novella but can be much shorter (Chateaubriand's *René*) or, at 300-some pages, much longer (Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* [The Confession of a Child of the Century], 1836). The relative brevity of the form is appropriate to a novel form shaped by an expressive aesthetics more similar to the aesthetics of lyric poetry or the moral aphorism than to the poetics of the realist novel. Compared to the *roman personnel*, the normal *shishōsetsu* demonstrates a similar acceptance of narratives of varied lengths, though the shortest examples, the *shishōsetsu* of Chikamatsu Shūkō and Kasai

Zenzō, are even shorter than *René*'s forty pages. That the length of the *shishōsetsu* depends entirely on the purpose of the author and does not attempt to achieve a norm or standard suggests that the Japanese genre aims at an even more radical subjectivity than does the *roman personnel*. Writing of the structure of the Japanese novel, Miyoshi Masao notes the "anecdotal aggregativeness of the *shōsetsu* form," its indifference to length (no distinction is made between a short and a long fiction) suggesting "a readerly desire for a sequence of affects, rather than a cumulative construction of a structure and textuality" (Miyoshi 1991: 48–49). Furthermore, the *shishō-setsu* does not aim at "structural coherence" and does not lead events "toward a climax or denouement" (Miyoshi 1991: 46, 47), but rather derives its organization from the individual self.

Kobayashi Hideo, in his 1935 juxtaposition of Japanese fiction of the self to the European *roman personnel*, implied that both forms of fiction of the self did not appear until "[a sense of] the individual took on major significance for human beings" (Kobayashi 1987 [1935]: 53). Based on Kobayashi's comparison of the *shishōsetsu* to the European Romantic form of the *roman personnel*, one can infer that the Japanese *shishōsetsu*, which had originated in Japanese Naturalism around 1907, played a role in Japanese modernity similar to that which the European form had played in European modernity in the first half of the nineteenth century: to allow the individual, who had for the first time "taken on major significance for human beings," to have a voice. But the *shishōsetsu* developed in the years of European modernism, and by comparing it to the European modernist novel one can best discern the contribution the *shishōsetsu* makes to the theory of the novel.

Kobayashi, in his 1935 essay, goes on to discuss the French *roman personnel* of the period following Naturalism – a period for which one might use the term "modernism." As Kobayashi astutely argues, French "modernist" novelists of the period following Naturalism such as Maurice Barrès and, later, André Gide and Marcel Proust, "were eager to rebuild a human nature made formalistic by the pressures of nineteenth-century Naturalist thought" (Kobayashi 1935: 54). Present-day theorists of European modernism generally agree with Kobayashi's view that the rigidity of Naturalist thought eventually stifled human nature and imagination. One theorist, for example, describes modernism as beginning in the wake of the disillusionment with Naturalism and characterizes it as a period shaped by the "destruction of the belief in large general laws to which all life and conduct could claim to be subject" (McFarlane 1991: 80). The period following Naturalism was an age that created new, subjective laws to replace the rigid ones of Naturalist thought, an age when "subjectivity was truth to speak with vision and authority" (McFarlane 1991: 80). New philosoph-

ical currents, in particular the thought of Bergson, and a confidence in subjectivity engendered by the writings of Nietzsche and others, enabled the construction of a viable form that replaced the nineteenth-century realist novel. In this cultural climate, then, the objective realist novel typical of the mid-nineteenth century yielded to "a new realism of interiority" (McKeon 2000: 736), to an experimental novel centered around the subjectivity of the author (Raimond 1985).

Though critics as diverse as Leon Edel, in his *The Psychological Novel, 1900–1950* (1955), and Peter Axthelm, in his *The Modern Confessional Novel* (1967), have attempted a generic treatment of the modernist novel centered around subjectivity, the most compelling theory advanced so far and the only systematic theory of any kind of modernist novel is Ralph Freedman's *The Lyrical Novel* (1971). For Ralph Freedman, it was the "assault of the twentieth century on inner experience" (Freedman 1963: 18) that brought with it a new type of novel centered on subjectivity. Though Freedman identifies a tradition of the "lyrical novel" running from the early Romantic period to the 1910s, including Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Hölderlin's *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* (Hyperion, or the Hermit in Greece, 1797), Sénancour's *Obermann* (1804), Gide's *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* (The Notebooks of André Walter, 1891), and Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (The Sketches of Malte Laurids Brigge, 1910), he devotes his study to the lyrical novels of three modernist figures: Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf, implying that the lyrical novel is a modernist form. For Freedman, "the hero in the modern novel has abandoned his traditional role, substituting perception for action and, for external reality, a formal portrait of himself" (Freedman 1971: 18). He singles out "the identity of narrator and subject (…) as a hallmark of lyrical design" (Freedman 1971: 12) and notes as a further necessary element of the genre "the analogy between the lyrical 'I' of verse poetry and the hero of fiction." In addition, "most lyrical novels (…) seem to require a single point of view" (Freedman 1971: 15). Structurally, "lyrical novels (…) exploit the expectation of narrative by turning it into its opposite: a lyrical process" (Freedman 1971: 7).

The lyrical novel and the *shishōsetsu* demonstrate some similarities: the identity of narrator and subject, the banishing of an objective view of external reality in favor of a subjective point of view as well as a focus on subjective reality, and a structure that tends toward process rather than culmination or climax. Both kinds of novel privilege a "spatial form" (Frank 1963 [1945]) which emphasizes the synchronic, "the context in which a given event in the plot is perceived," rather than the diachronic, "the forward progression of narrative" (Smitten 1981: 26). Lyrical novels are novella-length or longer, with no examples of short-story length of the sort that the

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shishōsetsu offers. At the other end of the spectrum in terms of length, at over 1,000 pages, is Proust's monumental lyrical novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927). Freedman does not discuss this work as a lyrical novel, though I feel that the novel largely fits his description of the genre. Proust's novel presents an anomaly perhaps equivalent to that of Shiga's 400-page *An'ya kōro* in relation to the usually much briefer *shishōsetsu*. But major aspects differentiate the *shishōsetsu* from the lyrical novel and demonstrate its uniqueness as a Japanese genre of its time. Though the European lyrical novel can in some examples, such as *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (The Counterfeiters, 1926), give up the "single point of view" in favor of a concatenation of "formal soliloquies" (Freedman 1963: 15), and the narrators are not necessarily the authors, the *shishō-setsu* always has only one point of view – that of its author. Also, in the lyrical novel, sincerity is not important, while it is theorized as crucial to the genre of the *shishōsetsu*. Sincerity, in fact, turns out to be the factor that makes the *shishōsetsu* a uniquely Japanese subjective novel form, and one quite different from the lyrical novel of European modernism.

That the *shishōsetsu* is a sincere confession of the author has from the beginning been a major theoretical axiom of the genre. A typical example of this argument is the statement made by Nakamura Murao, an early theorist of the *shishōsetsu*, in an essay of 1935, namely that "the author reveals himself directly" in a *shishōsetsu* (Nakamura 1956 [1935], quoted in Fowler 1988: 49). Edward Fowler deconstructs this supposed identity between literature and life, however, as the "myth of sincerity" of the *shishōsetsu* (Fowler 1988: 43–70), and Seiji M. Lippit revises the notion of sincerity in the *shishōsetsu* as "a faith in the transparency of language and unmediated expression" (Lippit 2002: 26). A view of the *shishōsetsu* genre as a system of communication within a particular society allows one to view the sincerity performed in the *shishōsetsu* in its own terms – as a "ritual of self-revelation" that plays a particular role in Japanese society (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 265). While some other theories of the *shishōsetsu* barely mention the reader, Hijiya-Kirschnereit's theory of the *shishōsetsu* as a communication process contributed to by both the reader and the author allows one to understand the genre as one typical of a society-within-a-society, the *bundan*, or literary world, in which there existed a close relationship between author and reader. The reader of the *shishōsetsu* eavesdropped on the author as a kind of voyeur, identified with the author, enjoyed the author's work as an expression of genuine experience, gaining moral support and even instruction from it, and was led through the author's words to a deeper sense of the human condition (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 285–292).

Andreas Huyssen discusses the sharp division between high literature and literature for the growing masses that emerged in Europe from the

1890s onward (Huyssen 1986). The lyrical novel, which began to develop from this time, may be viewed as a high literature that in the 1910s and 1920s became even higher, so to speak, as literature for the middle-class masses increasingly dominated the publishing scene. Similarly, the *shishō-setsu* emerged in the 1910s within the tightly knit group of authors and readers that constituted the *bundan*, but, in contrast to the writers and audience of the lyrical novel, the *shishōsetsu* writers and readers were at first separated from the Japanese masses through their Western education and European ideals, such as the ideal of the modern self. Even when the readership of the *shishōsetsu* widened in the 1920s, however, and Taishō democratic ideals, including the ideal of the modern self, percolated down to middle-class readers, the form retained its elitist, "pure" focus on subjectivity and continued to adhere to the ideal (or myth, in Fowler's view) of sincerity in opposition to fictional literature, literature of the masses, and eventually, in the 1930s, propagandistic writing fashioned to exalt the Japanese state. As such, the *shishōsetsu* defended the ideal of the self and a kind of lyrical, unsocial subjectivity in the face of the onslaught of both mass culture and state power.

To a certain extent, European writers of lyrical novels in the 1920s and 1930s could be said to have been defending subjectivity and the inner life against the incursions of mass culture and politics. For the German writer Hermann Hesse, this was certainly the case in his series of semi-autobiographical novels from *Demian* (1919) through *Die Morgenlandfahrt* (The Journey to the East, 1932). But there is an element in the socio-political realm of the *shishōsetsu* that differentiates it from that of the European lyrical novel: the ambiguous status of Japan as a nation on the periphery. Seiji M. Lippit argues that as the mass dissemination of popular and Western literature threatened to overwhelm the *bundan*, the *bundan* defended itself by projecting the *shishōsetsu* as a national, traditional form (Lippit 2002: 27). He is referring to the tendency of defenders of the *shishōsetsu* to associate aspects of its assumptions, structure, or world view with Japanese forms and viewpoints preceding the wholesale importation of Western literary forms beginning in the 1870s. But Lippit also argues that "discourse on the I-novel" in the 1920s was part of a strategy to "define the essence" of the Japanese novel against the "standard form of the genre represented by the nineteenth-century European novel" (Lippit 2002: 26). This strategy could be seen as Japanese writers' attempt, from a position of cultural inferiority, to "construct the novel from the outside in" (Pratt 1992: 6).

But Japan was defining the novel not only from a position on the periphery. At this time Japan saw itself in a marginal position with reference to Europe. To escape this position, from the 1890s Japan had sought to become an imperial power like England, France, and America, and had

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fought and won wars with China in 1894–95 and Russia in 1904–05. It had also annexed Korea by 1910, and in the 1920s, precisely at the time of the *shishōsetsu*'s rise to dominance on the literary scene, Japan was developing colonial settlements in Manchuria and had designs on China. The attempts on the part of both writers and critics of *shishōsetsu* to rewrite the novel and novel theory from the Japanese periphery should thus be seen also in the context of Japan's imperialist mission of the time. To some extent, then, Japanese writers were writing from a political position at the center, a position won through imperialism and colonialism, following the European model, but newly defined in Japanese terms. Aijaz Ahmad has argued, in reference to postcolonial countries in an age when capital has been globalized, that "various groups can at one time be part" of both center and periphery (Moore-Gilbert 1997: 194). The Japan of the period of *shishōsetsu* dominance, when Japan was already part of a global network of capital, was in the ambiguous position of being at the same time part of the periphery and part of the center.

CONCLUSION

Let us now consider how Japan has "constructed the novel from the outside in" (Pratt 1992: 6) and how the Japanese genre *shishōsetsu* has changed the theory of the novel. Saree Makdisi has argued convincingly that the period during which the novel came to be the dominant form in Europe, the early to the mid-nineteenth century, was already part of a "*cultural* process" of modernization that is now referred to as "globalization," so that developments in "India, Africa, the Arab world" (Makdisi 1998: XII) had an impact on cultural production in Europe. As Edward W. Said has pointed out in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), numerous nineteenth-century novels and other cultural forms show the traces of European connections to the non-Western, particularly the colonized world. Nevertheless, the theory of the novel was until recently defined only in reference to Europe, and to European intellectual historical and philosophical issues. What Michael McKeon in his *Theory of the Novel* (2000) calls the "grand theories" of the novel, propounded by Lukács, Ortega y Gasset, and Bakhtin between the 1910s and the 1940s, were firmly based on European realities and took into account neither the links that were developing between Europe, and American and non-Western countries nor the novels that were already being written in the Americas and in the non-Western world from the nineteenth century onward. These grand theories yielded to those put forward from the 1950s to the 1980s by Ian Watt, McKeon himself, Frederic Jameson, and Benedict Anderson, which took up concretely the question

of the origins and the historical development of the form in various European and non-European nations. Once attention was paid to the trajectory of the novel in various specific situations, the groundwork was laid for the recognition of unique forms and traditions of the novel, and for the elaboration of local theories of the novel, whether in reference to European countries or to non-European countries.

McKeon's anthology of writings on the theory of the novel, published at the beginning of the twenty-first century, now includes writings in reference to the colonial and the postcolonial novel, acknowledging the contribution made by some areas of the non-Western world to both the novel form and to the theory of the novel. The anthology assumes that, in contrast to the earlier situation in which the novel was viewed as a form of the center and novels of non-Western nations as forms of the periphery, "the 'centre' has been to a considerable degree decentred" (Moore-Gilbert 1997: 194). The shift in the way the novel is defined and theorized has been made possible by a change in the way critics and theorists view modernity. In the early 1980s the term modernity began to be viewed in "a broader, sociohistorical, cultural, and political arena" (Sheppard 2000: 4), and theorists started to focus "more sharply on modernity as an overarching concept that contextualizes and connects individual aspects of modernization and cultural modernism" (Sheppard 2000: 7). This focus in turn enabled a recognition that the concept of modernity was relevant not only to Europe but also to countries outside of Europe and formed the basis for the comparison of Western with non-Western modernities.

McKeon puts forward the premise, based on this recent sense of modernity as a concept with global meaning and import, "that the novel, the quintessentially modern genre, is deeply intertwined with the historicity of the modern period, of modernity itself" (McKeon 2000: XV). McKeon characterizes the central "epistemological and psychological" issues of the novel as its "association with the modern excavation of interiority as subjectivity, of character as personality and selfhood, and of plot as the progressive development of the integral individual" (McKeon 2000: XVI). Considering the representative Japanese novel, the *shishōsetsu*, in this light, I would argue that the Japanese novel is deeply entwined with Japanese modernity, one of the major concerns of which is the striving to attain *kindai jiga*, or the modern self. James A. Fujii (1993) has discussed the search for ways of formulating and depicting a modern narrative subject on the part of Japanese novelists from the 1900s to the 1920s, including Shimazaki Tōson and Tokuda Shūsei, both writers linked to the genre of *shishōsetsu*, and Natsume Sōseki, whose work is not connected with *shishōsetsu* but who was certainly concerned with problems of the modern self. And Karatani Kōjin (1980; transl. 1993) has discussed the discovery of in-

teriority and its introduction into modern Japanese fiction by Kunikida Doppo, a writer of lyrical short stories. In this regard the Japanese novel to a certain extent grappled with the same problems as did the Western novel, problems that arose due to modernization and the quest for modernity in the area of selfhood. A major difference between Europe and Japan, however, is that whereas the modernity and the individual that McKeon postulates in reference to Europe were achieved over a period of perhaps four hundred years, depending on when one calculates the beginnings of the striving for modernity, in Japan similar developments took place over a period of perhaps fifty years. In this regard, Japanese and Western modernities are comparable but ultimately different from one another (Schaberg 1999: 186).

Furthermore, the concept of *kindai jiga*, or the modern self, was a European concept, or at least a concept of European origin that Japanese attempted to transplant to and realize on their own soil. The situation of colonial and postcolonial writers provides a useful comparison. Like colonial and postcolonial writers, Japanese writers were attempting to negotiate modern identities in reference to Europe, in a situation where "'Europe' belong[ed] irrevocably to the 'play' of power, to the lines of force and consent, to the role of the *dominant*" (Hall 1994: 399). Similarly, while postcolonial writers and theorists today are aware that "the novel is still the genre in which struggles over cultural and political identities and authority are most acute" (Orr 1996: 79), Japanese novelists of the modern period were among the earliest non-Western novelists, predated only by novelists of the Indian sub-continent (Walker 1988: 51), to discover the potential of the novel form as a vehicle for the negotiation of modern identities vis-à-vis the West. Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (The Floating Cloud, 1886–89), written during the first period of Japanese confrontation with Western culture when Japanese writers began their attempt to negotiate modern identities in reference to Europe, was a novel that openly depicted the process of negotiation of personal and cultural identities vis-à-vis Europe (Walker 2002). Like the postcolonial novel, this novel of the late 1880s exhibited the anxiety involved in negotiating a personal and cultural identity "in a European presence" (Hall 1994: 399) – particularly in the character of Bunzō, the young man of samurai descent finding himself out of step with a society gearing itself up to achieve financial and political success in a modern world dominated by the West.

Unlike the postcolonial novel, however, the Japanese novel was spared the task of negotiating an identity from a position of political subserviency, the position of colonized vis-à-vis colonizer, for when the *shishōsetsu* emerged, Japan was already well on the way toward becoming an imperial power equal to Western nations. In addition, the *shishōsetsu*, which

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originated in the early 1900s during the second generation of Japanese contact with Western culture, negotiated personal and cultural identities in a context where it was no longer a question of "the West" and "Europe" but rather of "the modern." Seiji M. Lippit has identified this cosmopolitan view of a number of modern Japanese writers in the late 1910s and the early 1920s and defined it as "participation in a universalized realm of modernity, one in which Japanese and European civilization are perceived to coexist in the same shared space" (Lippit 2002: 12). By this time, "the modern," though its origins perhaps lay in Europe, was already Japanese when Japanese novelists encountered or created it; the modern was "the European already transculturated by Japan." For that reason, one does not encounter in the *shishōsetsu* the anxiety experienced in negotiating cultural identity vis-à-vis Europe that was characteristic of *Ukigumo*.

The situation of modern Chinese writers who were contemporary to the Japanese writers of *shishōsetsu* provides a profitable comparison. At the time the *shishōsetsu* originated and rose to dominance in Japan, from the early 1900s to the 1920s, a subjective novel also arose in China in which attempts were made to negotiate modern identities in reference to Europe, from a position of unequal power, however. The Chinese novel was influenced by the Japanese *shishōsetsu*, which Chinese studying in Japan, including the great Lu Xun, had become aware of in the early 1900s. Two other influences were late-Ching *biji* (personal writings of the literati class) and European Romantic subjective fiction such as Goethe's *Werther*. If one compares the situation of the Japanese novel, the *shishōsetsu* in particular, vis-à-vis Europe, with that of the Chinese subjective novel contemporary to it, one finds important differences based on the very different political situations of the two nations. As Jaroslav Průšek points out, the Chinese subjective novel, often of short story or novella length, concentrated "attention on the writer's own life," reflecting "the author's inner life and comprising descriptions or analysis of his own feelings, moods, visions and even dreams" (Průšek 1980: 1). So far Chinese subjective fiction seems similar to the *shishōsetsu*. But Průšek theorizes that writers expressed those aspects of their personality which in real life were "somehow suppressed or not given full play" (Průšek 1980: 1), linking this comment to his argument that the modern revolution in China was chiefly "a revolution of the individual and of individualism in opposition to traditional dogmas" (Průšek 1980: 2) – Confucian moral and political thought.

But China was a partially colonized country, the dominated in reference to the European "dominant" (Hall 1994: 399). Chinese subjective fiction suggests the links between the negotiation of individual identity and the negotiation of cultural identity in reference to a more powerful Europe, for example, in the subjective fiction of Lu Xun of the early 1920s and in Yu

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Dafu's story "*Chenlun*" (Sinking, 1921), where the sexual impotence of the Chinese hero, a student studying in imperialist Japan after the defeat of China in 1895, is linked to the political weakness of China. Furthermore, Chinese subjective fiction depicts characters thrown into what Homi Bhabha calls "the third space" of hybrid identity between China and Europe – a space, viewed positively, "which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha 1990: 211), which posits a future beyond present misery. "*Chenlun*," for example, closes with the hero's words: "O China, my China, you are the cause of my death (…) I wish you could become rich and strong soon!" (Hsia 1971 [1921]: 33). In contrast to the Chinese subjective novel, the Japanese *shishōsetsu* avoids mention of political realities and ideas in favor of a concentration on what might be called the domestic sphere of life: the writer in his relations with family, lovers, and associates. Writing at a time when the state, engrossed in international commerce and empire-building, ignored or tolerated them, Japanese writers of *shishō-setsu*, themselves evading questions of Japanese imperialism in Asia (Lippit 2002: 15), were writing in a situation similar in some respects to what Thomas Mann, in reference to the situation of German writers and intellectuals in imperialist Germany around the time of World War One, called *machtgeschützte Innerlichkeit*, or power-protected inwardness. In comparison to the subjective novel of China, which because of China's political misery operated in a compensatory "third space," projecting a future China that was rich and strong, the *shishōsetsu* could afford to avoid politics and concentrate on the present.

Japanese writers constructed a novel form that emerged from, reflected, and validated, in Amuta's sense of the word, the unique historical and political context described above. While the heir, to some extent, to European Romantic forms and preoccupations with subjectivity and sincerity, and to the Naturalist preference for the *document humain* over the fabricated plot, and the *confrère* of European modernists in its portrayal of inwardness in a modern, imperialist world, the Japanese novelist transculturated these elements, constructing a novel that was uniquely Japanese. The *shishōsetsu* challenged European preferences for a teleological plot through its avoidance of "formal coherence" (Miyoshi 1991: 46) in favor of a mood-directed structure and a "with-perspective" of narration (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996: 179). It confounded European expectations of appropriate generic length by grouping under the same heading fictional works of a few pages and works of 400 pages. Above all, it spoke to a type of audience that had no parallel in Europe: a small circle of readers that demonstrated a "desire for a sequence of affects, rather than a cumulative construction of a structure and textuality" (Miyoshi 1991: 46–47); a "yearning for the authenticity – however illusory – of an unmediated transcription of consciousness, in the

language of an ever-present speaker" (Fowler 1988: 39); and an appreciation of the communications of a writer who gave the impression that his words were actions steeped in truth. As Edward Fowler puts it, simply and forcefully, "it does not seem at all strange that modern Japanese prose fiction (and the *shishōsetsu* in particular), with a centuries-old history antedating all contact with the west, should have taken on an entirely different character from that of the novel" (Fowler 1988: 58). Thus with its *shishō-setsu*, Japan has contributed its own kind of novel to the literary world and an indigenous alternative theory of the novel.

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