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**In a *Senchimentaru* Mood:  
Japanese Sentimentalism in Modern Poetry and Art**

**Jon Holt**

Woman! Café Woman!  
Be Strong! Be strong like winter!  
Don't let your fragile body fall prey to the hands of sly playboys  
Hold high your intuition  
Root out worthless *sentimentalisme* (*sanchimentarizumu*), meaningless  
smiles,  
the charms that show subservience, and any effeminacy  
And work hard!<sup>1</sup>

Sentimentalism (*senchimentarizumu*) for Meiji poet Takamura Kōtarō 高村光太郎, and others of his generation, was not a practice to be cultivated—not in one's personal life, where it connoted emotional weakness, and certainly not in one's artistic creations, where the concept suggested a sycophantic appropriation of Western trends. By the Taishō period (1912–1926), however, the term *senchimentarizumu* appeared with greater and greater regularity in the works of such luminaries as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Hagiwara Sakutarō. What did they mean by it? And why had the term taken on such noticeable cachet? In the article that follows I trace the formation and development of the notion of sentimentalism in Japanese literature and art—primarily poetry—in the first half of the Taishō period, proposing a new definition of this term for Japanese literary history that ties together a diverse set of canonical Taishō writers and changes what is known of excessive emotionalism in the Japanese literature of the 1910s.

First, I examine how writers at the end of the Meiji era, such as Takamura Kōtarō, commonly understood the foreign term *senchimentarizumu* (センチメンタリズム) before the next generation of writers opened it up and exploited its ambiguity. Second, I trace how the

aesthetic concept of sentimentalism took root in the Japanese literature of this time through the poetry of Hagiwara Sakutarō 萩原朔太郎.<sup>2</sup> Third, I examine the interplay of sentimentalism in Sakutarō's literature with that of the visual arts. Fourth, I consider coterie and amateur writings as possible indicators of the spatial and temporal boundaries of the phenomenon I call Japanese Sentimentalism. In particular, I consider the way that Miyazawa Kenji 宮澤賢治 and his agricultural-school colleagues, who lived and wrote in Iwate prefecture, far away from Tokyo, demonstrated the reach of Sakutarō's unique blend of Japanese Sentimentalism. By exploring the way these writers or their critics used the term *senchimentarizumu* (and its variants), it is possible to discover what kind of vogue the term had in the realm of poetry and the arts in the 1910s.

### Takamura Kōtarō and Anti-sentimentalism

In perhaps one of his greatest and most characteristic poems, “Fuyu no shi” 冬の詩 (“Winter Poem,” cited in the epigraph above), poet and sculptor Takamura Kōtarō sings of the strengthening effect winter has on people, even city-dwellers. This is the only time the word *sanchimentarizumu* appears in his first poetry collection, *Dōtei* 道程 (The Journey, 1914). Used here in reference to café hostesses, it indicates emotional weakness. He urges these young working women to become emotionally resilient and not to succumb to the temptations of their playboy customers. In “Winter Poem,” sentimentalism for Kōtarō is anathema to a person's life force, something alien to the poet's combined sense of soundness and industriousness. Falling under the spell of *sanchimentarizumu*, or having too much emotion, weakens a person. Instead of giving in to sentiment, these café girls should work harder and be stoic. According to Makoto Ueda, Kōtarō “wanted to see strength, rather than gentleness, at the core of man's existence.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1912 and 1913, as Japan transitioned from the Meiji to the Taishō era, Kōtarō advised against the incorporation of sentimentalism in literature and the arts. He demonstrated a limited use of the term *senchimentarizumu* and its lexical variants in both his poetry and his criticism. However, the “sentimentalism” that he certainly disliked in literature differs from the *senchimentarizumu* of later Taishō-period writers, like Sakutarō and Kenji. For Kōtarō, such imported terms clearly carried negative connotations, best seen in his essay “Senchimentarizumu no maryoku” センチメンタリズムの魔力 (“The

Allure of Sentimentalism,” 1912). Here, Kōtarō reveals the reasons for his antagonism toward sentimentalism, referring to it as little more than “excessive emotion.” Thus, his use of the term is conventional. Kōtarō’s “sentimentalism” lacks the specific new and Japanese qualities one sees within just a few years in the early Taishō period.<sup>4</sup> Having returned from France in 1909, Kōtarō, unlike many of his artistic compatriots who avidly read Baudelaire or Verlaine in translation, felt that not all influence from the French was good, especially in the area of excessive sentiment. Noting that sentimentalism had caught on by 1912, he states: “every time I was reading a book or a piece of criticism I noticed ... people have a weakness for *senchimentarizumu*” and, as a phenomenon, “the sentimental aspect (*senchimentaru na koto*) was treated like the truth (*hontō*). When a person reads such a work, one is assailed by its pathos (*awareppoi kanjō*) somehow and is pulled into a sentimental mood (*senchimentaru na kibun*).”<sup>5</sup> Writers who indulge in the sentimentalist mode take their fictional feelings too far, and this is a result of simply revamping older, traditional aesthetics (like *mono no aware*) in a modern way. “It’s as though everything has an exclamation point (*ekisukuramēshon māku*),” Kōtarō writes, bemoaning this tendency among Japanese writers who, he feels, have completely misinterpreted Verlaine because they blindly read European verse with antiquated Japanese aesthetic ideals. Kōtarō worries about the ever-growing tendency among writers of the day to use this mode, which he finds unbecoming:

I could give you name after name of Japanese writers today [doing this], and were I to pursue this thought I think you would understand, but I will stop here as to go any further is unpleasant. There are those [writers] who dress up [their art] like there are different modes of the sentimental (*senchimentaru*) when there is just one kind of sentiment (*senchimento*), but these writers bore me. What we can say about their works is that it is easy for any reader to get drawn into them, but that does not mean of course that their writing has any value.<sup>6</sup>

According to Ueda, Kōtarō’s esteem for “a lack of sentimentality” in poetry should be understood as one of the poet’s four main aesthetic principles. Ueda suggests that Kōtarō’s identification of and criticism of sentimentality, as articulated in his essay “The Allure of Sentimentalism,” is in line with the poet’s promotion of a fresh, modern quality of “soundness” in poetry over “*aware* and *yūgen*, the ideals traditionally most admired in Japanese literature, [which] epitomized for Kōtarō the

‘aesthetic that prizes fragile, perishable beauty,’” but were no longer applicable in modern Japanese poetry.<sup>7</sup> In defending Kōtarō’s distaste for the traditional Japanese literary valuation of excessive feelings Ueda writes: “Everyone has a tendency to indulge in excessive emotion ... Kōtarō’s real target, however, was contemporary Japanese literature, which he believed contained more sentimentalism than Verlaine’s diaries.”<sup>8</sup>

Kōtarō’s poem and his criticism illustrate the meaning that the borrowed term *senchimentarizumu* and its variants (sentimentalist [*senchimentarisuto*], sentimental [*senchimentaru*], and sentiment [*senchimento*]) initially held in the Japanese language. In the *Kadokawa gairaigo jiten*, there are many instances of *senchimentarizumu* in literary texts dating to 1912 or a few years shortly thereafter that also indicate that the standard use of the term was “excessively emotional.”<sup>9</sup> Other dictionaries generally yield a Japanese analogue, *kanshō-shugi* 感傷主義, or a short definition of “sensitive” (*kanshō-teki* 感傷的), either of which would be entirely appropriate for twentieth-century and contemporary use, but that definition is not that helpful to understand the briefly developed nuance it gained in poetry and art circles of the 1910s. Dictionaries like the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, which treat the term with more depth and provide textual citations, include secondary entries on the connection to European literature. The same dictionary cites a 1912 *Hakuraigo binran* (*Foreign Word Manual*) for its use of *kanshō-shugi* for European Sentimentalism. The entry in *Kadokawa gairaigo jiten* suggests that the Japanese term is derived from “sentimental” in English. Notwithstanding its initial simplistic meaning in Japanese, the term will eventually add some of the aesthetic nuances of its European origins.

Sentimentalism in the European literary tradition is rooted in eighteenth-century works like Lawrence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), where it came to mean the excessively emotional pose an artist takes in order to establish his credentials as the bearer of a refined, modern sensibility.<sup>10</sup> B. Sprague Allen traced the earliest appearance of the English word to the year 1746 in a letter Horace Walpole wrote to a friend.<sup>11</sup> For Allen, the derivative “sentimentalist” evolved through “various phases of emotionalism.” He cites a letter from a periodical in 1785 in which the word implies a certain level of hypocrisy yet still reminds us of the word we think of now in English (and Japanese): “In morals as in religion there are not wanting instances of refined sentimentalists who are contented with talking of virtues which they

never practice, who pay in words what they owe in actions.”<sup>12</sup> When Jacques Barzun compared Classicism and Romanticism in Europe, he expanded on the definition to include the connection between sensitivity and inactivity in sentimentalism:

I submit that sentimentality is not the mere display of feeling, nor the possession of excessive feeling—who shall say what amount is right?—but *the cultivation of the feelings without action*. Habitually to enjoy feelings without acting upon them is to be a sentimentalist. If this is so, it would appear that sentimentality belongs to the late classicist period, the eighteenth century, rather than later, when the French Revolution had translated feelings into deeds. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>13</sup>

Barzun’s definition seems congruent with what later Japanese writers and poets in the 1910s, such as Akutagawa and Sakutarō, perceived it to be, as I will show.

Certainly before 1912 and Kōtarō’s essay warning of the dangers of Western sentimentalism, there was no lack of overly emotional literature in Japan. Two recent studies on the Meiji-period (1868–1912) melodrama novel indicate the strong interest the turn-of-the-century Japanese had for both earlier homegrown Edo-period books of feeling (*ninjōbon*) and modern works influenced by Western notions of sentimentality. Jonathan Zwicker describes how Ozaki Kōyō enthralled his audience with his *Konjiki yasha* 金色夜叉 (*The Golden Demon*; 1896–1903), one of the two bestselling novels of Meiji period, with a heightened emotional pitch by combining two incongruous impulses to maintain “the *endless present* of the novel” and “to *construct a past for the future*” (emphasis in the original).<sup>14</sup> Ken Ito also argues that Meiji melodrama is constituted of competing ideologies such as money and love, or family and the individual, which produces illogical behavior or the “hyperbolic emotion” of melodramatic characters. Ito observes that far from alienating the novel’s readership, the lack of logic in these works only compelled them to read further. As he notes readers relished the overwrought emotions of such unbelievably, effusively sentimental characters, because “melodramatic fiction is an ethical or moral narrative rather than a psychological one.”<sup>15</sup> Both Ito and Zwicker describe the sentimental excesses of Meiji novels as symptoms of the characters’ desire to reconcile two impossible dreams, mutually exclusive desires their reading public similarly held for worldly success and emotional fulfillment. In turn, by the beginning of the 1910s, Japanese writers seemed to be coming to a consensus that excessive emotion could be

described with the foreign term *senchimento* and its variants, although that would change as younger writers would soon wield the term in their poems and art in order to challenge the then-accepted notion of what it meant to be excessively emotional.

Within a few short years after the publication of Kōtarō's works, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 used the term—in Roman letters no less—for a more powerful effect in one of his earliest and most important short stories. In “Rashōmon” 羅生門 (“Rashōmon Gate,” 1915) the narrator describes the way in which the falling rain contributes to the *sentimentalism* of the Heian-period menial, the protagonist of the story, when he first appears brooding under the story's eponymous gate:

Rather than say that the servant was “waiting for the rain to end,” it would have been more appropriate to write that “a lowly servant trapped by the rain had no place to go and no idea what to do.” The weather, too, contributed to the *sentimentalism*<sup>16</sup> of this Heian Period menial. The rain had been falling since late afternoon and showed no sign of ending. He went on half-listening to the rain as it poured down on Suzaku Avenue. He was determined to find a way to keep himself alive for one more day—that is, a way to do something about a situation for which there was nothing to be done.<sup>17</sup>

Akutagawa used the term *sentimentalism* in his short story with irony to mean more than just a hyperbolically emotional state.<sup>18</sup> Akutagawa's mentor Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 used *senchimentaru* to connote a romantic and “excessively emotional” state in his novel *Kōjin* 行人 (The Wayfarer) in 1912, incidentally the same year as Kōtarō's rant against sentimentalism.<sup>19</sup> However, after 1912, writers such as Akutagawa gradually begin to use such terms differently. There is a clear distinction between Kōtarō's and Sōseki's use of *senchimentaru* and Akutagawa's use of *sentimentalism*. Unlike a very limited effect in the texts of Kōtarō and Sōseki, for Akutagawa the foreign term grows into a concept, describing a state of mind or even a state of being, one which his readers might find profound. Writers from the 1910s present us with a new range of usage of *senchimentaru* and its variants previously unseen in Japanese literature, indicating an ambiguity in what these writers understood was “sentimental.” Akutagawa's conspicuous use of the term illustrates how being sentimental began to change for some writers in the 1910s. More than Akutagawa, Sakutarō fully pioneered a new, hyperbolically emotional territory of Japanese literature.

### The Power of Self-Pity

Although Kōtarō urged café waitresses to be strong and, more importantly, young writers to avoid sentimentality in their verse and prose, poets working with a different aesthetic sensibility would take the opposite approach and would fully display sentimental excessiveness in their poetry. Far from being strong and stoic, those sentimentalists who possessed such intense sensitivity would turn inward and indulge in self-pity. Sakutarō, the most eminent Japanese Sentimentalist, chose the path of sentimentality in poetry and so his poetic speakers are figures so enervated from their oversensitive natures that they can no longer act. However, Sakutarō revels in his useless and atrophied poetic figures. Not only does Sakutarō's use of "sentimentalism" in 1914 predate Akutagawa's "Rashōmon," Sakutarō is perhaps the originator the literary sense of the term *senchimentaru* that means an excessively emotional state of self-pity stemming from an awareness of one's lack of power. Quite contrary to Kōtarō's faith in strength and stoicism as the appropriate tone for modern verse, Sakutarō renounced personal agency and chose to transform poetry by following a path of sickly, sentimental self-pity.

Sakutarō must be viewed as the earliest promulgator of the concept not only in terms of the scope of the definition but also by providing the earliest usages of this foreign term with a distinctly Japanese literary twist. Published in coterie magazines from 1914 and finally in collected form in 1917, Sakutarō's *Tsuki ni hoeru* 月に吠える (Howling at the Moon), his first collection of free verse, forever changed the tone of modern lyric verse. *Senchimentarizumu* was its rallying cry. The term can be found in Sakutarō's poetry from late 1914. Both the *shi* "Kanshō no te" 感傷の手 ("Hands of Sentiment") and the prose poem "SENTIMENTALISM," published in the September and October issues of *Shiika* 詩歌 (Poetry) that year, respectively, contain "sentiment" in their titles albeit in different scripts, kanji and *rōmaji*. Sakutarō's usage of the non-Japanese term after 1914 would mark a divergence from the way it was previously used in Japanese poetry. Now *senchimentarizumu* would have a distinctly different nuance from that of the original European term.

In "Hands of Sentiment," Sakutarō uses the term in the first line. Rather than writing it with Roman letters as Akutagawa did, Sakutarō nativizes the foreign term by writing it in hiragana. Moreover, the poem is doubly sentimental in the description of the poetic speaker's hands being made of "sentiment" (*kanshō*). Kubo Tadao 久保忠夫, the



commentator of the *Nihon kindai bungaku taikai* edition of Sakutarō's works, suggests that the poet synonymously used the term *senchimentarizumu* for regular Japanese terms of sentiment and grief: *aishō* 哀傷 and *kanshō* 感傷.<sup>20</sup> One should not forget that Sakutarō also frequently used the word *kanjō* 感情, which became the title of the poetic journal he and Murō Saisei edited. They often embellished the cover title with the English or French word "SENTIMENT" in large letters.<sup>21</sup> In this poem, Sakutarō used *kanshō* and *senchimentaru*—the Japanese word for sentiment as well as the foreign term written in the hiragana script—in order to amplify the importance of an overwhelmingly "excessive feeling" in the poet.

I am sentimental [*senchimentaru* センチメンタル] by nature,  
 I am saddened at these excessive hands,  
 hands that normally dance above my head,  
 or on my chest, where they seem to give off a lonely glow,  
 in time, the summer wanes,  
 when I return, the swallows have flown away to build their nests,  
 and the barley has chilled.  
 Ah! Forget the Capital,  
 I have yet to play the fiddle,  
 but now these hands have become steel,  
 with speed, they dig the earth,  
 hands of sad sentiment [*kanshō* 感傷], hands dig the earth.<sup>22</sup>

The connection between sentimentalism and sensitive hands in Sakutarō's poetry is further reinforced in his prose poem entitled "SENTIMENTALISM." From this long poem, one aphoristic expression seems central: "The culmination of sentimentalism (*senchimentarizumu no kyokuchi* センチメンタリズムの極地) is in Gauguin, in Van Gogh, in Beardsley, in Grieg; in madness, in radium, in the firefly; in the sun; in the miracle; in Yaso [Jesus]; in Death."<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, Sakutarō seems to be tracing the successors of Western sentimentalism in European art, but he then adds to the list aspects of life, energy, and death with which he, as a Japanese Sentimentalist, can identify. Later, in the fourth section of the prose poem, the triple connection among sensitivity, sentimentalism, and hands is made apparent: "Hone your hands, hone your hands; the hand is the human body's unique electric conductor. This would be a lie except that electric bolts do shoot from my hands."<sup>24</sup> Thus, perhaps in the same way that painters attempt to

translate onto the canvas the ephemeral play of light on objects they see outside themselves, the sentimentalist poet turns introspectively and digs (writes) with his hands to transmute the equally intangible electricity of his body into poetry. Furthermore, his “digging” is not like the physical labor of a miner. He hones his hands not to produce anything useful. Only by this metaphorical perfection of his mind and body may he uncover the energy around him; he uses his powerfully sensitive hands to channel the rare forms of energy of the world (i.e., radium, the light of the firefly, the sun, the love of Jesus, etc.) into poetry.

By 1917, when Sakutarō included “Sensitive Hands” in his seminal *Howling at the Moon*, his mentor Kitahara Hakushū cited *senchimentarizumu* in the preface to the collection in order to showcase that aspect of Sakutarō’s poetic sensitivity. For Hakushū, the word *senchimentarizumu* embodied aspects of Sakutarō’s poetic mood: self-awareness, the need to proclaim one’s self-awareness, and, the grief that comes from becoming self-aware. In Hakushū’s loving encomium to Sakutarō, he writes of the latter’s poetic sensitivity:

Your sensitivity, your electric-energy body, surely coalesces all liquid forms into solids ... your creed of sentimentalism is the strength of your skepticism that can truly condense into the blink of an eye what it takes eons to do, the long, long time it takes a piece of coal to become a diamond. Only a poet can know the mystery of the mantras [i.e., true words] that are a Great Wonder.<sup>25</sup>

Hakushū’s use of traditional Buddhist terms, such as *maka-fushigi* 摩訶不思議 (Great Wonder) and *shingon* 真言 (mantras), further domesticate the Western term sentimentalism. Hakushū weds Western aesthetics and esoteric Buddhism in order to explain how Sakutarō invigorates Japanese poetry. Hakushū uses the term sentimentalism to describe the supernatural level of awareness of the poet, a supreme kind of sensitivity that encompasses the wisdom of both Western and Eastern cultures. Hakushū puts Sakutarō’s *senchimentarizumu* in the context of traditional Buddhist epistemology—and therefore the term also reflects Asian philosophy—yet ultimately, Hakushū sees that Sakutarō’s sentimentalism is shaped and even warped by “skepticism.” Fukunaga Takehiko 福永武彦 reminds us that in Sakutarō’s poetry, expressions of religion often represent the poet’s yearning for a metaphysical truth rather than faith in a specific creed.<sup>26</sup> Sakutarō’s poetic sentimentalism is paradigmatic of his early poetic expression of the desire for truth not tied

to one specific religious view, Western or Eastern. Sakutarō, the supreme Japanese Sentimentalist, has synthesized the knowledge of the East and the West, but that accomplishment has ultimately depleted his vital energy. Nothing positive can come from being sentimental, which explains why Hakushū praises the great power Sakutarō now possesses even if it has made the poet quite ill.

Again in the preface, Hakushū praises Sakutarō's sentimentalism, linking it to the poet's overly sharpened sensitivity: "If the illumination coming from the *fine hairs of the roots of the bamboo*—so fine one does not know if they are there or not—if that is what you call the *culmination of sentimentalism* (*senchimentarizumu no kyokuchi*)—then certainly the man who cries gnawing on the tips of those fine roots is none other than our sick Sakutarō" (emphasis mine).<sup>27</sup> Hypersensitivity could be a gloss for Hakushū's definition of *senchimentaru*. In this quotation, Hakushū first borrows the image of bamboo from the "Take" 竹 poems (one of the most original images in Sakutarō's *Howling at the Moon* collection).<sup>28</sup> He then uses the phrase "culmination of sentimentalism," found in Sakutarō's 1914 prose poem "SENTIMENTALISM," to synthesize his own description of a sentimentalist using Sakutarō's phrases. Thus, for Hakushū, Sakutarō is the ultimate sentimentalist poet: a poet whose sensitivity is broadly encompassing yet also finely attuned. The drawback of being a sentimentalist, as Hakushū suggests, is that it makes one sick and emotionally atrophied. Yet, to Hakushū's critical eye, Sakutarō's modern malaise—the combination of extreme sensitivity and skepticism about this material world—far from being lamentable, is his genius.

Like Akutagawa's Heian-period menial, who initially struggles to live while "waiting for the rain to end," the sentimentalist poet is paralyzed into a state of nonaction, "saddened at [his] excessive hands." However, quite unlike the menial of "Rashōmon," who loses his naïveté and is only able to act after he becomes skeptical of the old hag, Sakutarō's sentimentalist figures are inherently skeptical about the real world. When his sentimentalists finally do act, they do so out of a perverse sense of purpose. For Sakutarō, the only option for a true sentimentalist is to compose poetry. Some critics, such as Robert Epp, who comprehensively translated and interpreted Sakutarō's oeuvre into English, see in the poet's early works a demonstration of that which is frank and genuine. "In short, [his early works] are 'sincere' ... [Sakutarō] never enhance[d] or enrich[ed] sentiment through self-

conscious, discursive reasoning.”<sup>29</sup> To the contrary, I would argue that Sakutarō’s early sentimentalist excessiveness is not sincere. It is a kind of literary pose. The poet’s excessive emotions have no pragmatic use or function, and furthermore, because they do not stem from real-world experiences, they alienate him from the very world he should feel. In the Japanese Sentimentalist mode as pioneered by Sakutarō, poetry is a false yet joyous form of labor precisely because it generates no material product in the real world. The sentimentalist supremely feels, but these feelings do not help him survive. He hones his hands to dig, but he produces nothing out of the ground to help him survive. Unlike Akutagawa’s menial, the figures in Sakutarō’s poetry reject survival in this world because such a rejection allows the sentimentalist to transcend the material.

In his poetry, Sakutarō is loath to acknowledge the material world—it is beneath his notice. Those who toil in it are not the subject of his poems. Sakutarō’s dictum in the preface of *Howling at the Moon* sums up the nature of what “work” means for a poet: “Poetry (*shi* 詩)? It is that which understands the emotional nervous system. Poetry is a living, working (*hataraku*) psychology (*shinrigaku* 心理学).”<sup>30</sup> Deep attunement to one’s emotional state rather than living a productive life is the key to creating modern Japanese poetry. Barzun’s definition of the European sentimentalist rings true even for Sakutarō, the Japanese Sentimentalist. Discussing the Romantics, Barzun writes, “Byron and Rousseau among the first ... proclaimed that the goal of life is not happiness (in the sense of enjoyment) but activity. Unlike the sentimentalist who has a compartmented existence, the romantic realist does not blink his weakness, but exerts his power.”<sup>31</sup> For the sick sentimentalist poet Sakutarō, however, personal agency (taking action in the material world) and poetic power (liberation through literature) are mutually exclusive. Praising Sakutarō, Hakushū wrote of him in a lineage of great decadent poets:

As [Murō] Saisei says, your greatness is different from that of Poe or Baudelaire: you are lonely; you are honest; you are tidy; you are transparent (*kimi wa shōjiki de, seiso de, tōmei de* 君は正直で、清楚で、透明で); and, you move in an energetic way with much precision ... [in your writings] there are things like the bluest sky and streets made of highest-quality amber. There you also see horrifying murder incidents occur and fabulously keen detectives running about.<sup>32</sup>

Far from taking action, the sentimentalist poet watches but does nothing. Sakutarō's "personal private detective" (*watashi no tantei*) in the poem "Satsujin jiken" 殺人事件 ("Murder Case"), to which Hakushū refers, "wears a crystal costume and / crawls from the window of my lover," who has been shot twice.<sup>33</sup> The detective figure, part of the seeing "I" of the poem, slinks off to a fountain. Instead of solving the crime and bringing the murderer to justice, the solitary private eye "feels melancholia" (*urei o kanzu*). Less of a problem solver, Sakutarō's sentimental private eye is a brooder, but brooding is what makes a sentimentalist poem great. Hakushū applauds Sakutarō's creation of a poetry that ventures into new poetic territory of a lyric mode that makes immediately transparent the feelings of the poet at the same time the poem overpowers the reader with the dense core of those feelings. Examples such as these in Sakutarō's poetry and in the remarks by his admirer Hakushū demonstrate the *modus operandi* of Sakutarō's Japanese Sentimentalist: the poet's sentimental figures seem powerless to do anything but watch—or in some cases, they only act to flaunt their overwhelmed, sentimental behavior so as to be seen and recognized by others as exquisitely complex bearers of poetic sensibility.

In some cases, Sakutarō's sentimentalists not only exhibit signs of physical weakness, they are completely paralyzed in this world. In extreme cases, they are amputees, robbed of the means to walk because their heightened sensitivity has completely made them unfit to function in the material world, as seen in this excerpt from "Ariake" ありあけ ("Dawn," 1915):

From the pain a patient has from a long illness,  
His face becomes nothing more than spidery webs,  
Below his waist, all he has is like a shadow and fades away  
Above his waist, swamp land proliferates,  
His hands rot,  
And his body, all over, really, is messed up<sup>34</sup>

In "Dawn," like "Sensitive Hands," the sick poet's hands are no longer helpful appendages. They now simply draw attention to the half-rotting, plant-like state of his body. Seo Ikuo considers the connection between sentiment and sickliness in these poems from *Howling at the Moon* and asks, "Why did Sakutarō call such grotesque physical sensations 'sentimental' (*senchimentaru*)?" Seo's answer is that degenerative sensations of the body in Sakutarō's poetry worked as an allegory for the

crumbling of the national body. “We see similar formulations in Takuboku’s feeling of being unable to return home (*kizoku sōshitsu kan*) and Hakushū’s nostalgic emotions around the same time.”<sup>35</sup> Arguing that Sakutarō’s poetry prominently figures as one of the three crises (or “incidents,” *jihen*) in the culture of 1910s Japan, Seo claims that one of these crises is when the free-verse poetry movement, in which Sakutarō prominently participated, challenged the “correct thinking” of prose fiction writers (such as the advocates of Naturalism and *genbun-itchi*). Sakutarō used a complicated double metaphor of “light” and “body” in his early poetry, such as in the previously discussed “SENTIMENTALISM” prose poem as well as in his 1914 “Sin-Cleansing Poem Notes,” which Seo feels most clearly expresses the poet’s effort to transcend the “trauma” of Western influence through the use of the impossible image of a “womb that conceives and bears light (*hikari*),” which is another image deeply connected with his sentimentalist stance:

These days, within me there has been conceived a strange light, which I cannot understand. This little one has gradually started to flail about, yet since the outer wall of the womb is thick, he has not easily burst outside me. It is quite painful, you know, this agony I feel, right before the offspring issues forth, as if being choked. Everyday I write on these scraps of paper things I don’t understand, feeling that soon, soon my sentimental (*senchimentaru*) nirvana will come.<sup>36</sup>

From the “sensitive hands” of Sakutarō’s intensely feeling sentimentalist “honing his hands through digging” to the ranks of amputated observers, Sakutarō creates images of people, the poet’s representatives, who are enervated or—to extend the image—half-buried by poetic sensitivity. In “Sin-Cleansing Poem Notes” the sentimentalist inside the poet, an unborn infant, is truly weak yet, once he emerges into the world of light, this persona will subsume the person Sakutarō. Sakutarō places his faith in neither Buddhism nor Christianity but in poetry, especially of a sentimentalist kind. Throughout his early poetic period, Sakutarō exhibited a strong literary mission to combine sensual pleasure and religiosity, Seo explains.<sup>37</sup> Why then does Sakutarō choose to describe these combined feelings as *senchimentaru*? In Sakutarō’s poetry and essays, he uses the term to play with nuances of sensuality, emotionality, and religiosity but he repeatedly uses *senchimentaru*, this modern expression of useless emotionality, to demonstrate that Western

knowledge has not empowered the Japanese; if anything, it has become their Achilles' heel.

Although Seo uses the term “wound” 傷 (*kizu*) to describe the changes to Japanese life after Westernization began in the Meiji period, in the context of Sakutarō's sentimentalism we should understand *kizu* as “trauma,” or the continued pain from being “opened” to Western influence. However, for Sakutarō, far from having negative connotations, the *senchimentaru* attitude produced from such trauma positively transforms the poet from his sick, painful state into a potentially liberated and enlightened being (“nirvana”). Seo argues that free-verse poets in the 1910s lacked the ability to apply “the homogeneity of *genbun itchi* [the unification of spoken and written language] found in *shōsetsu* to their verse. Instead, what they discovered was that colloquial free verse could reveal a fracture in the otherwise solid formation of individual interiority and the communal mindset of the nation.”<sup>38</sup> Sentimental poets have a cross—or stigma—to bear for the nation. Sakutarō felt that “the culmination of sentimentalism” was “in madness” but it is also “in Yaso [Jesus]” and “in death.” Although “traumatized,” Sakutarō's sentimental figures could transform their weaknesses and failings in the material world into a metaphysical strength even if it made them look mad.

Sakutarō, being at the forefront of this free-verse group, took “delusions” (*mōsō*), seen in his early sentimental poetry, as the core mission of his poetry. “The delusion of light conception in Sakutarō's writing thus served to help differentiate the formal body of interiority from the “normality” codified in prose. Unlike the “normality” of prose, verse should advocate the life of “an abnormal interiority” (*ijō na naimensei*).<sup>39</sup> Thus, *senchimentaru* was one Sakutarō's markers of “abnormal mentality,” which was doubly laden with its traditional meaning of “feeling” as well as “abnormality.” Why didn't Sakutarō simply use the Japanese word *kanjō-teki*? Seo does not answer this question. Foreign words like *senchimentaru* in the 1910s mark poetry's difference from the “normality” of Japanese language—that is, prose. Tanaka Kyōkichi, an illustrator and printmaker closely allied with Sakutarō, found a way to challenge the healthy “normality” of art through his attempts to illustrate Sakutarō's sentimentalist poetry.

### Sentimentalist Despair in Poetry and Visual Art

One finds in the visual arts, as in poetry, the depiction of wounded, inert, despairing, and agonized figures in sentimentalist works. In fact, the last mention of *senchimentarizumu* in *Howling at the Moon* is in a eulogy

Sakutarō wrote for one of the collection’s print artists, Tanaka Kyōkichi 田中恭吉 (1892–1915), establishing the link shared between their sentimentalist poetry and art. It is clear from Sakutarō’s tone that with Kyōkichi’s death, Japan lost one of its greatest sentimentalists. Kyōkichi died from tuberculosis in 1915, shortly before the artist could see his prints published in the collection. Sakutarō spoke of Kyōkichi’s ability to render *senchimentarizumu* into visual art:

Trying to take back “the life one cannot take back,” the sad soul, he who seems to weep, who frets in vain, trying to raise his body from the grave, that is one side of Tanaka Kyōkichi’s strange art. There is where you will find both the deep, deep sigh of despair (*zetsubō*) as well as the fearful, cruel *senchimentarizumu* that bleeds forth from the depths of a man’s heart.<sup>40</sup>

In this essay, Sakutarō’s image of the recumbent Kyōkichi, overcome by emotion as well as by his tuberculosis, is completely congruent with the image of Japanese Sentimentalism seen in Sakutarō’s verse. Here, the sentimentalist is not unwilling to move, but is physically unable to do so. Out of that state of inertia comes the artist’s feeling that is refracted through the lens of sentimentalism and in turn produces a powerful feeling of despair. It is evident that Tanaka embraced despair and sickness in his art as seen in a letter he wrote to Onchi Kōshirō 恩地孝四郎, who both helped Kyōkichi’s drawings and prints appear posthumously in *Howling at the Moon* and also contributed his own prints to *Howling at the Moon*. Kyōkichi wrote to Onchi of his joy upon seeing a photographic portrait of Aubrey Beardsley, the British artist and fellow consumptive: “I lined up my thin fingers alongside [those in] the picture and felt he and I had the same constitution.”<sup>41</sup> Alexandra Tankard has described how Beardsley celebrated his “consumptive difference” and “disability pride” by including the honest and revealing photograph of his deteriorating state in his 1897 *Book of Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley*.<sup>42</sup> For Kyōkichi, the bolstering effect the photo had on him is clear from his letter to Onchi where he says he was “greatly overjoyed” (*hijō ni ureshikatta*) by it. Thus, Sakutarō is correct in isolating the theme of physical weakness in Kyōkichi’s art and co-identifying it with his own poetics of *senchimentarizumu*, the celebration of the art of inertia.

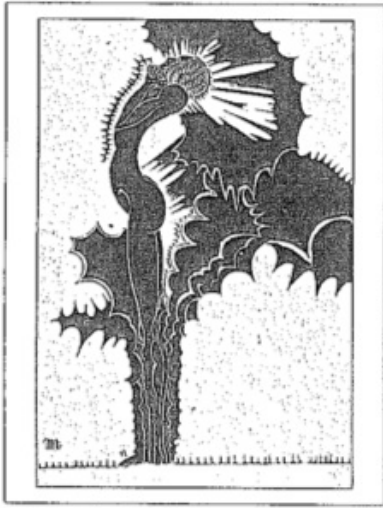
Beardsley’s work, too, helps us understand the way in which Kyōkichi mediated Western influence through his sentimentalism. Sakutarō’s appreciation of the “deep, deep despair” in Kyōkichi’s work



is the other aspect of sentimentalism that reminds us of the cues Kyōkichi took from Beardsley. Maeda Yūgure 前田夕暮, in the January 1917 issue of *Poetry*, wrote, “The art of Tanaka Kyōichi is something heretofore unseen in Japan. He had an expressiveness with his line work that had much in common with Beardsley, but [Kyōkichi’s art] is more frighteningly truthful than Beardsley’s. What he seizes, he seizes completely and with such abnormal keenness; this is why his printed images are the most appropriate for Hagiwara’s work.”<sup>43</sup> There are great similarities between the two artists. Kyōkichi seems to have taken three important cues from Beardsley: an economic line, asymmetrical design, and the use of negative space. (Brian Reade points out that Beardsley himself may have arrived at these ideas through Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, or secondhand through James Whistler, who was influenced by them.)<sup>44</sup> Particularly in Kyōkichi’s art, the powerful use of negative space in Kyōkichi’s drawings and prints brings out the “deep, deep despair” Sakutarō wrote about, and this is perhaps why Maeda emphasizes that Kyōkichi’s prints are the most appropriate art to accompany these poems. Maeda astutely describes the Japanese Sentimentalists’ love of despair as part of desire for the “frightful truth,” a quality Kyōkichi and Sakutarō celebrated and exalted in their joint work in *Howling at the Moon*.

In the same letter to Onchi, Kyōkichi acknowledges that he liked Edvard Munch as much as he liked Beardsley. Kyōkichi’s art, strongly reminiscent of both, perfectly captured the mood of Sakutarō’s poetry, and it has often been said that *Howling at the Moon* succeeded in garnering the wide praise it had because of its synthesis of the poetry of Sakutarō and the art of Kyōkichi. Kyōkichi promoted his own unique artistic vision by reacting to and building on Sakutarō’s Japanese Sentimentalism, ultimately becoming a feeling equally shared by both the poet and the visual artist. The sentimentalism of Kyōkichi’s art is “horrificing and cruel” precisely because of the “deep, deep despair” felt by a superlatively sensitive artist. Tanaka Seikō, poet and scholar of Taishō-period aesthetics, has written that Kyōkichi reached his artistic maturity in 1915 when Kyōkichi created a series of six pen drawings entitled “Shingen yūshū II” 心原遊趣 II (“My Heart’s Peaceful Scenes II”). These drawings precede his works for *Howling at the Moon*, and he had intended them to be published as a part of his own second poem-print collection.<sup>45</sup> Tanaka Seikō believes they represent an important shift in Kyōkichi’s art, as “the image of death takes on a deeper color than it did in the first issue [of *Tsukuhae* 月映 (Moonlight) magazine].”<sup>46</sup>

I would argue that the important development in Kyōkichi's art is not just the proliferation of scenes of death in his art but that by early 1915 one would see a new (albeit all-too-short-lived) expression of Kyōkichi's attitude toward death. Drawings like "Kaikon no uchi ni saku hana" 悔恨のうちに咲く花 ("Flowers Bloom while One Repents") and "Rinjū kunō" 臨終苦悩 ("Deathbed Agony") combine the sensuous line of Beardsley with the overwhelmed figure so common in Munch's art.



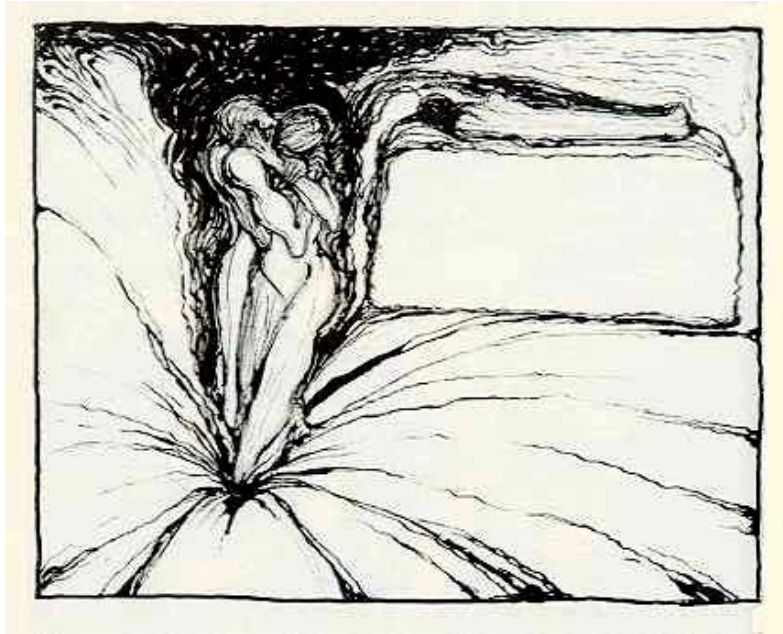
"Kaikon no uchi ni saku hana"  
("Flowers Bloom while One Repents,"  
1915)



"Rinjū kunō"  
("Deathbed Agony," 1915)

In these drawings, Kyōkichi's figures, true representatives of Japanese Sentimentalism, do little else besides emote their agony. In "Flowers Bloom while One Repents," the praying figure, seemingly more vegetable than human, sprouts out of the ground locked into the pose of a penitent engaged in intense prayer. The praying figure, as in Sakutarō's description of the sick artist Kyōkichi, does nothing but focus on the sky above him, a transcendent world. As Tanaka Seikō suggests, the naked figure in "Deathbed Agony" is "deformed, possessing legs that are strangely elongated with a lower torso that is much like a ball in its shape; in short, this is a body heretofore unseen in Kyōkichi's art."<sup>47</sup> In his earlier prints for *Moonlight*, Kyōkichi often depicted figures in baroque, elongated stances, but the unnatural shape of these figures in

the 1915 prints suggests their uselessness to society. Collapsing on the ground or escaping the gravity of the earth, they do nothing except strike a pose of beautifully intense supplication. This tone of “despair,” which Sakutarō sees as the manifestation of Kyōkichi’s sentimentalism and thus descriptive of Kyōkichi’s genius, permeates the final series of works he made for *Howling at the Moon*.

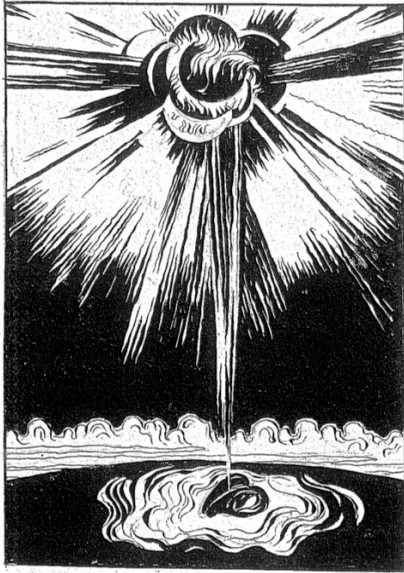


“Shinibito to ato ni nokoreru mono” (“The Dead and the Bereaved,” 1915)  
published in *Howling at the Moon* (January 1917)

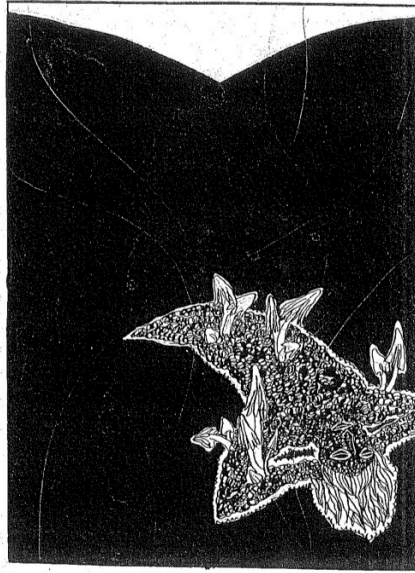
One can see both Kyōkichi’s maturity as an artist and his development as a Japanese Sentimentalist, I would suggest, in the overapplication of wavering lines found in his work, much like those seen in Munch’s paintings and prints. Both artists use radiating sets of wavy, sinuous lines to reveal the manic energy, or perhaps more properly speaking, the anxiety felt by both the subject in the image as well as the artist. Regarding Munch’s use of sinuous lines, Prelinger and Robison describe how Munch transformed this characteristic decorative feature of

Art Nouveau “into an intricate syntax, creating a synesthetic correspondence between sound and time.”<sup>48</sup> Notice, for example, the similarities in their mutual use of wavy lines that contour the principal figures, such as in Munch’s *The Scream* or in Tanaka’s illustration “Shinibito to ato ni nokoreru mono” 死人と後に残れるもの (“The Dead and the Bereaved”). Another indication of Kyōkichi’s final maturation is the use of manic lines in *Howling at the Moon*’s “Chijō no kōfukusha” 地上の幸福者 (“Happy One of the Earth”). Even more than in “Deathbed Agony,” which was produced only a few months prior to the art for *Howling at the Moon*, the sinuous lines of his final artworks have an edgier quality to them. The anxiety always felt in Kyōkichi’s art, usually depicted as a glow around its languid and baroque human figures, now seems to explode with urgency. The paralyzed sentimental figure, contrary to logic, radiates a new kind of power gained through his being inert. For sentimentalist artists and writers, physical power and agency are not important. On the contrary, revealing one’s lack of power in one’s art enables one to trace and describe the outlines of the metaphysical world, a world beyond action, and for Kyōkichi, perhaps more than for Sakutarō, the sentimentalist figure urgently needs to transcend the material world and his imperfect body.

Another trend in Kyōkichi’s art that suggests a deeper maturation of his style is his rendering the human figure more abstractly. In “Deathbed Agony,” the overwhelmed and penitent figure contorts his body to impossible extremes. His figure is a parody of a person wrapped up in himself. In “Ketai” 懈怠 (“Laziness”), a print featured in *Howling at the Moon*, the same figure of “Deathbed Agony” seems to be reborn as a true Japanese Sentimentalist. He is so overwhelmed that he is not only a comatose invalid, he is more vegetable than human. The curvy, languid figure de-evolves further into a curvy blob barely resembling a human being and more like a fungus. Kyōkichi’s vegetative or vinelike figures have regressed to the forms of sprouting seeds or unfolding, spore-producing fungi. In “Laziness,” the jagged edges of the white outline of the supine dehumanized subject, truly a poetic floor mat, still subtly emanates that nervous energy, the hallmark of Sakutarō’s sentimentalism. “Laziness,” which appeared in *Howling at the Moon*, embodies, however abstractly, the characteristics of Kyōkichi’s mature phase: Japanese Sentimentalism. That is why this work and his other illustrations in the collection perfectly match the spirit of Sakutarō’s poetry.



“Chijō no kōfukusha”  
 (“Happy One of the Earth,” 1915)



“Ketai” (“Laziness,” 1915) published in  
*Howling at the Moon* (Jan. 1917)

The publication of *Howling at the Moon* in 1917 marks the high point of sentimentalism in literature and its union with the visual arts, but it also marks its passing. By this time Kyōkichi was dead, and Sakutarō had suffered a nervous breakdown, requiring years before he recouped his poetic powers. Yet the sentimentalism of *Howling at the Moon* resonated with young writers far outside of Tokyo. Young men, like Miyazawa Kenji, would attempt to utilize and reinterpret *senchimentarizumu* as a viable path in the creation of modern poetry.

### **Azalea Sentimentalism**

To judge the extent of the spread of Sakutarō’s sentimentalism, it is important to look at writing beyond the borders of the nation’s capital. The poems of two young men living in the remote northeast area of Tōhoku, Hosaka Kanai 保阪嘉内 (1896-1937) and Miyazawa Kenji, demonstrate the distance and duration of the sentimentalist spell Sakutarō cast, holding aspiring poets in his thrall. Hosaka never made an

impact with his poetry like Kenji, but he is particularly important to an understanding of Kenji's early literary development. Like Kenji, Hosaka studied at Morioka Agricultural and Forestry High School from 1916 to 1918. Together, they formed the core of their coterie magazine *Azaria* あざりあ (*Azalea*) and even after Hosaka's expulsion from the school, they maintained their close friendship through frequent exchanges of letters. Much has been written on their close, almost romantic, relationship,<sup>49</sup> but the enthusiasm both Kenji and Hosaka had for sentimentalism helps us better understand not only Kenji's early poetry but also how Sakutarō and Hakushū's sentimentalist influence can be more precisely measured on their poetic successors.

According to Taima Bikō, a "deeply interesting episode" depicting Sakutarō's influence on Kenji is found in an anecdote by former classmate Abe Takashi. Sometime in late 1919, Kenji visited Abe, then at the University of Tokyo, and was fascinated by Abe's copy of *Howling at the Moon*, which prompted him to comment on Sakutarō's book, "Pretty weird verse, huh?" (*fushigi na shi da naa*).<sup>50</sup> Likewise, anecdotes from Kenji's friends attest to Kenji's spoken love of the verse of Hakushū, who shares a connection to Sakutarō and his brand of sentimentalism.<sup>51</sup> Typically in Kenji studies, these admissions are used to broadly situate Kenji under Hakushū's and Sakutarō's influence, as seen in their descriptive entries in the *Miyazawa Kenji Handbook* (Miyazawa Kenji handobukku, 1996) and the glossarial dictionary for the author (*Miyazawa Kenji goi jiten*, 1989). In my view, sentimentalism provides a concrete example of what Kenji and his coterie-magazine friends found so appealing in the two poets and the artists associated with them. Although influence can be difficult to trace, the *tanka* and literary criticism in *Azalea* provide direct evidence that Japanese Sentimentalism shaped Kenji's formative poetic years.

Kenji, Hosaka, Kosuga Kenkichi, and Kawamoto Yoshiyuki 川本義之 privately published six issues of their own literary magazine at Morioka Agricultural and Forestry High School from July 1917 until July 1918, when all but one of the four young men graduated. *Azalea* included submissions from other fellow students, but for the most part the literary output of *tanka*, *haiku*, *shi*, and philosophical essays therein expressed the feelings of these four young men who edited it. Kenji perhaps felt more confident about the *tanka* he published in *Azalea* than in the school's official student publication, *Kōyūkai kaihō* 校友会会報 (School Friends and Alumni Bulletin), which was open to all students but

also carried with it rules that limited political expression. Sakai Tadaichi hypothesizes that Kenji felt he could publish *tanka* in *Azalea* without restraining his creativity.<sup>52</sup> Kenji ended up collecting nearly all of his *tanka* from this period into his *Kakō* 歌稿 (Tanka Manuscript), a collection of nearly 800 *tanka* written from the years 1911 to 1921 that ultimately went unpublished.<sup>53</sup>

The vogue that sentimentalism enjoyed in the art and literary scenes of Japan in the late 1910s is particularly evident in a short essay written by Kawamoto, an agronomy student and colleague of Miyazawa Kenji, that appeared in the third issue of *Azalea* in mid-October of 1917, roughly half a year after *Howling at the Moon* was published.<sup>54</sup> Kawamoto's essay, "Azaria ni arawareta senchimentarizumu" あざりあに表れたセンチメンタリズム ("The Sentimentalism Found in *Azalea*") not only sheds new light on what his closest friends thought of Kenji's *tanka* but also reflects an amateur's grasp of Sakutarō's sentimentalism—indeed, this essay suggests that for these young men, Sakutarō's take on sentimentalism had effectively surpassed the standard definition of "excessively emotional," used and understood by poets like Kōtarō. Kawamoto may have been merely a young and amateur writer, but his articulation of the Japanese Sentimentalist creed, however crude, helps clarify what Sakutarō's sentimentalism meant for some of these aspiring writers by the late 1910s. Kawamoto's essay begins with a criticism of three sets of *tanka* (*rensaku* 連作): Hosaka Kanai's "Rokugatsu sōgen-hen" 六月草原篇 ("June Prairie' pieces"), his "Ōzora ga mattaku harete osoroshiya" 大空がまったく晴れて恐ろしや ("How Terrifying It Is When the Big Sky Suddenly Clears"), and Kenji's "Yo no sora ni futo arawarete" 夜の空にふと表れて ("What Suddenly Appears in the Night Sky"), a companion to Hosaka's set. These three sets of poems are those with the "strongest emotional tinge" (*mottomo kanjō-teki shikisai no tsuyoi* [sakuhi]).<sup>55</sup>

Kawamoto's essay traces his slow acceptance of sentimentalism, growing from being disappointed at first with Kenji and Hosaka's new style to his full enthusiasm for it. As the essay develops, it reveals that even Kawamoto, an amateur literatus, understood that the term *senchimentarizumu* meant more than excessive emotion. His essay demonstrates that the aesthetic term had by 1917 recognizable qualities, such as poetic hypersensitivity, extreme emotional posing, the bystander stance, a sick persona, and a yearning for the metaphysical world. Initially Kawamoto states that the latter two sets of poems disappointed

him because he could not understand them as well as he could the first set. “Overall, I felt I had an incomplete understanding of these [latter] two sets of poems. My dissatisfaction came from not being able to grasp the authors’ true intentions (*hontō no sakusha no kokoro*).”<sup>56</sup> Kawamoto reveals two expectations he had about poetry that sentimentalist works at first did not meet. First, he expects to be able to identify in the *tanka* the actual feeling of the author. Next, he states that he misunderstood these sentimentalist poems because he felt even if the poets employed symbolism, he expected the poems would nonetheless have a sense of reality lurking underneath that symbol. Kawamoto singles out two poems by Hosaka from his “June Prairie” pieces in order to illustrate the fact that he initially felt the poems had a strong symbolic, rather than sentimentalist, flavor:

農場の農夫はみんな昼深き睡に陥ちて湯ひとりたぎる  
*Nōjō no nōfu wa minna hiru fukaki nemuri ni ochite yu hitori tagiru*  
 All of the men on the farm snooze hard in the afternoon all by itself the bath  
 water boils

どろの木は三本立ちて鈍銀の空に向へり女はたらき  
*Doro no ki wa sanbon tachite nibugin no sora ni mukaeri onna hataraki*  
 Poplar trees, three in a stand, point to the dull and silver sky and the women  
 keep working<sup>57</sup>

In these poems, Hosaka, an agronomy student, shows a strong identification with the workers in the fields, although it is they, not he, who toil. The triple connection between the workers, nature, and the poet’s view thereof initially satisfies Kawamoto’s need for a focused poetic sensibility from the author filtered through a symbol. Yet other poems in the set defy the critic because he has not yet understood the sentimentalist streak to Hosaka’s poetry. “I narrow-mindedly believed in the almighty power of the symbol in poetry (*shi*). As a result, I rejected their poems for just being emotional (*kanjō-teki*), believing they failed because they lacked a sense of reality (*genjitsumi*). I was wrong.” Thus, Kawamoto first assumes poems must use symbolism at the very least to create a poetic moment, but these *rensaku* break that rule. What Kawamoto seems to be suggesting is that he was initially befuddled by Hosaka’s and Kenji’s extreme emotional posing, a characteristic of Japanese Sentimentalism. If we go further than Kawamoto and apply a sentimentalist reading of Hosaka’s poems, we can see that in both examples the poetic speaker does not symbolically identify himself with



the poem's images. Quite the contrary—in both poems, Hosaka's speaker is a useless bystander who only marvels at the alien quality of the peasants' power to work.

In the essay, Kawamoto notes the strong symbolism in Kenji's poems in the early issues of *Azalea*, but those poems do not strongly meet Kawamoto's criterion for sentimentalism. He mentions Kenji's set, "Mifuyu hinoki" みふゆひのき ("Deep Winter Cypress"), without citing any of these poems for analysis, suggesting that they were more symbolic than sentimentalist. The following two *tanka* by Kenji from that set are highly symbolic, but they lack the sick quality that seems to be a requirement for Kawamoto's later designation of *senchimentarizumu*.

ひまわりのすがれの茎は夕暗のひのき菩薩のこなたに立てり  
*Himawari no sugare no kuki wa yuugure no hinoki bosatsu no konata ni tateri*

The dried stalks of the sunflowers stand here before Evening Cypress  
 Bodhisattva

あはれこは人にむかへるこころなりひのきよまことなれはなにぞや  
*Aware ko wa hito ni mukaeru kokoro nari hinoki yo makoto nare wa nani zoya*

Ah! What stands before people here has feelings! Cypress Tree, truly tell me! What are you?<sup>58</sup>

Kawamoto is instead attracted more to Hosaka's poems and then even more so, when the critic later identifies in Hosaka's *tanka* a sickly emotional (*kanjō-teki*) side where the poet feigns excessive emotion rather than reflect his actual emotional experience.

Although he was friends with Kenji and Hosaka, Kawamoto may have not been privy to his colleagues' passionate interest in sentimentalist writing. He notes that the more he read their *tanka*, the more he realized that a secret literary agenda, Sentimentalism, was inspiring their poetry. "I felt that all three sets of poems were playful (*yūgi-teki*) in spirit. However, this was a misunderstanding I had only at first. Now I see truly that they are serious (*majime*) works," Kawamoto wrote, expressing how he overcame his initial displeasure with the latter sets of *tanka*. He now rallied around them:

These poems are honest (*shōjiki* 正直), tidy (*seiso* 清楚), and transparent (*tōmei* 澄明 [*sic*]). There is a direct truth (*chokujitsu* 直実 [*sic*]) in these

works, as if blood can come out of them, such as they are, born from countless moments of pain. These two authors are possessors of extremely unusual nerves and feelings. The nerves of these two young men are incredibly abnormal (*byō-teki* 病的), emaciated, and sensitive (*yasete togatte iru* 痩せて尖ってゐる). The nerves of these two sick young men waver in a sky of pure silver. Therefore, it is there that their truth resides. Their poems (*uta*) are very much the prayers of those who wish to be completely free of such unbearable sickness. It is there that their truth resides.<sup>59</sup>

This statement is Kawamoto's clearest definition of the sentimentalist style of the two poets. Moreover, one senses that Kawamoto, now that he is able to articulate the sentimentalist creed for himself, enthusiastically joins Kenji and Hosaka's ranks. In his criticism, he defines and even defends the sentimentalist position on reality as one not focused on the reality perceived by people, but instead "direct truth" (*chokujitsu*).

A Japanese Sentimentalist poet, as it turns out, writes "direct" poems, not "realistic" (*genjitsu*) ones, yet because of the unique sensitivity of the poet, a casual reader may not be able to grasp the intense feeling produced by such an abnormally suffering temperament. In other words, for this aspiring critic, the world perceived by the sentimentalists is one in which the truth of human suffering is powerfully felt by the honed, perhaps overworked, nerves of these otherwise idle young men. Kawamoto's last remark harkens back to Sakutarō's description of the art of Kyōkichi, which was fueled (and twisted) by his sickness. There is a great disparity between real life as it is understood by the average person and the Japanese Sentimentalist poet's fantastic perception of how the world works against and even incapacitates young men. The Japanese Sentimentalist poet lives in a world where one relishes both one's excessive feeling and the resulting incapacitation. For these sentimentalists, poetry is only honest and direct when it sings of a life lived in nonaction. Akutagawa's Heian-period menial, who shrugged off such *sentimentalisme* and chose to live by any means necessary in "Rashōmon," is nowhere present here. Instead, Kenji and Hosaka, successors of Sakutarō's Japanese Sentimentalism, demonstrate in their poetry that powerlessness is to be relished because it reveals a superior poetic sensitivity.

One should note the derivative quality of Kawamoto's criticism. Looking at the vocabulary and the order of his words, it is evident that Kawamoto plagiarized Hakushū's preface to *Howling at the Moon*,

published some eight months earlier. Mirroring Hakushū's phrases, "You are honest, tidy, and transparent (*kimi wa shōjiki de, seiso de, tōmei de*)," Kawamoto writes: "[These poems] are honest (*shōjiki* 正直), tidy (*seiso* 清楚), and transparent (*tōmei* 澄明 [*sic*])."<sup>60</sup> This instance of Kawamoto's plagiarism and one other in the essay prove that Hosaka's and Kenji's poetry was perceived as an analogue to Sakutarō's, and as indirect evidence that they worked under the influence of a major Japanese Sentimentalist such as Sakutarō, or at least that certain key sentimentalist rhetoric resonated with their own literary ambitions.<sup>61</sup>

Two more poems each by Hosaka and Kenji further demonstrate that they, like Kawamoto, were influenced by Sakutarō's sentimentalist style. These poems exemplify the poetic mode of sentimentalism in which the poem's speaker revels in the degree to which he is overwhelmed by his excessive sensitivity. The poems' speakers are so sensitive they are crushed by the oppressiveness of the sky or the weight of the world. At their best, these poems proclaim the poet's hyperawareness and are playful because the poet parodies himself. At their worst, these broody poems are simply maudlin. Hosaka's poems clearly show the "playful" aspect of sentimentalist style at its best when the poet reveals his obsession with the sky, almost straining to compete with the sky's greatness:

大空に傷が出ねばいいが、紅色のあんまり高い煙突がたちて  
*Ōzora ni kizu ga deneba ii ga, beniiri no anmari takai entotsu ga tachite*  
 I wish a wound didn't appear in the big sky above but the red and too tall  
 chimney goes on standing there ...

大空は我を見つめるこれはまた恐ろしいかなその青い眼が  
*Ōzora wa ware o mitsumeru kore wa mata osoroshii kana sono aoi me ga*  
 The big sky above stares at me, with its blue eye: what a scary thing it is!<sup>62</sup>

Two examples this time of Kenji's *tanka*, again included in Kawamoto's essay that demonstrated Kenji and Hosaka's sentimentalist qualities, remind us of the comparatively poor quality of Kenji's early poetry, especially his sentimentalist verse. Kawamoto says that Kenji's poems "greatly resemble" Hosaka's, but he also states that "I would not say [they] are completely the same."<sup>63</sup> One wonders why Kawamoto felt compelled to qualify this statement unless he wanted to remind Kenji that he was not any less original than Hosaka, and thus not a weaker *tanka* poet. However, contemporary critics disagree. In 1975, discussing Hosaka's and Kenji's strengths as young *tanka* poets, Sakai Tadaichi

wrote, “Indeed, even if we dismiss the level of polish, during this time it was Hosaka Kanai who was the stronger poet for his power of expression.”<sup>64</sup> In 1990, the *tanka* poet Okai Takashi 岡井隆 reinforced Sakai’s view.<sup>65</sup> The following two examples of Kenji’s *tanka* in the sentimentalist style reveal his difficulty balancing the overwrought, emotional persona of the sentimentalist style with his penchant to sketch the landscape in his verse:

夜の空にふと表れて淋しきは床屋の店のだんだらの棒

*Yo no sora ni futo arawarete sabishiki wa tokoya no mise no dandara no bō*  
Suddenly appearing in the night sky, sadness is the barber’s striped pole.

夜をこめて七ツ森まできたりしにはやあけぞらに草穂うかべり。

*Yo o komete Nana-tsu-mori made kitarishi ni haya akezora ni kusaho*  
*ukaberi*

Through the night I passed, and no sooner had I reached Seven Hills, did the tips of tall grasses waver high in the sky at daybreak.<sup>66</sup>

Kenji’s poems are more “serious” (*majime*) than Hosaka’s, according to Kawamoto. Sakai and Okai both attribute that “sober” (*otonashii*) quality to the deficiencies of Kenji’s poetry in this early period. Unlike Hosaka, Kenji perhaps took sentimentalism too far, and the resultant “sensitivity” feels forced and awkward, especially when he explicitly states the “sadness” (*kanashiki*) of the scene. The connection between the speaker’s sadness and the inanimate barber’s red-and-white striped pole is tenuous. (Furthermore, why would Kenji, who had enjoyed wearing his hair shorn like a monk as early as 1913, feel sadness at passing a barbershop at night?) One senses that the poem is incomplete not so much because of its missing copula but rather from its lack of an active verb. Kenji’s poems lack the humorous and easy flow from the overwhelming image to the speaker’s hyperbolic emotion as seen in Hosaka’s Japanese Sentimentalist-style poetry.

In Kenji’s second *tanka*, the extreme sensitivity of a sentimentalist poet is more adequately expressed in the heads of grain of the wavering grasses. It is an image to which Kenji would return often: the wavering pampas grass (*susuki*) that ubiquitously appears in Kenji’s later children’s stories (*dōwa* 童話), “Kaze no Matasaburō” 風の又三郎 (“Matasaburō the Wind Imp”) being a notable example. In this *tanka*, the speaker’s displacement of his feelings into the image of the tiny grass seeds makes him seem entirely insignificant in the vast dawning sky.

However good Kenji's second poem is, in comparison to Hosaka's easy and humorous use of sentimentalist rhetoric in his absurdly egotistical *tanka* (i.e., as in Hosaka's second poem when the sky's eye stares at him), Hosaka strikes us as not only a better *tanka* poet but also as someone far more knowledgeable of the limits of sentimentalism. Hosaka plays in the sentimentalist mode and is also able to point out how ridiculous it is. It would take Kenji much longer to reject sentimentalist influence and create the kind of neutral position that Ueda Makoto characterizes as Kenji's awareness of "cosmic reality." This awareness is a balance of internal reality with external reality, of Kenji's ego with nature.<sup>67</sup> My guess is that in the *Azalea tanka*, Kenji was imitating Hosaka's sentimentalism, but since Kenji had not yet read Sakutarō's *Howling at the Moon*, he failed to fully grasp the style Hosaka was imitating and parodying. Thus, Kenji's poem was an imitation of Hosaka's imitation of Sakutarō's poetry. If Kenji had been as fascinated with *Howling at the Moon* when he first saw it in his dormitory room in Tokyo as Abe Takashi recounts,<sup>68</sup> then it is likely that Kenji had not yet seen Sakutarō's work when he and Hosaka were composing their poetry for *Azalea* from 1917 to 1918, and therefore Kenji's sentimentalism was informed second-hand by Hosaka.

During their *Azalea* days in 1917 and 1918, Hosaka may have felt confident enough in his poetic skills to mock himself for having the overly inflated ego of a sentimentalist, but Kenji had not yet found a way to reveal his inner voice. Only later with his *shi* in the early 1920s would Kenji properly reveal a poetic persona that fused both a grandly sensitive persona and his love of the landscape in his unique way, as evident in this excerpt from his *shi* "Haru to shura" 春と修羅 ("Spring and Asura," 1924):

The blue color and bitter taste of Wrath:  
He walks gnashing his teeth, spitting, and pacing back and forth  
through the abyss of the light of April's atmospheric layer  
That solitary Asura is me.<sup>69</sup>

Kenji's poetic persona as an Asura could only manifest after he had fully rejected the hyperbolic emotions of human sentimentalism in favor of attaining the cosmic awareness of the universe, untainted by the pettiness of human ego. Grandiosity, it seems, is not the exclusive province of Japanese Sentimentalism but of poetry in general.

### Sakutarō's Rejection of Sentimentalism

By the 1930s, even Sakutarō's fondness for poetry in a *senchimentaru* mood had begun to wane, which he made clear when he shifted away from his earlier position on the superiority of a sentimental stance. In the September 1936 issue of *Bungakkai* 文学会 (Literary World), Sakutarō wrote about Romanticism in the world and in Japan. By the Shōwa era, he was able to retrospectively assess the impact of Romanticism, and in turn sentimentalism, on the Japanese artist. In "Romanchisuto no ni-shurui" ロマンチストの二種類 ("The Two Kinds of Romanticists"), he writes: "The first is the ADVENTURE Romanticist; the second is the SENTIMENT Romanticist" (Romanized capitals are in the original text). He explains that the former is more commonly found among French writers and artists, whereas the "Sentiment" kind can be traced to the German Romantics, including Goethe and Nietzsche, "and includes the film actor Charlie Chaplin."<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Verlaine and Rimbaud, both Romanticists, exemplify the two types: "Verlaine, that passionate seeker of truth, that classic SENTIMENTALIST, recognized his metaphysical 'god' in young Rimbaud, ... but the through-and-through ADVENTURER Rimbaud quickly retreated from Verlaine and with cruelty bit the hand of Verlaine, the hand that fed him."<sup>71</sup> In the companion essay, "Nihon no shijin: genjitsu-teki romanchisuto" 日本の詩人：現実的ロマンチスト ("Japanese Poets: Realistic Romanticists"), Sakutarō ponders the question: if the sentimental type is more common in Germany and the Adventurer type is more common in France, then which type is one likely to find in Japan? Having greatly shaped the Japanese notion of sentimentalism, Sakutarō reassessed it in retrospect some twenty years after promulgating the term. His reassessment confirms my hypothesis that *senchimentarizumu* was a term he playfully used through the 1910s to venerate excessive feeling and justify inaction. For Sakutarō and others who followed him, *senchimentarizumu* hinged on the belief that personal agency was not possible—moreover, that taking action was unpoetic. By 1936, Sakutarō having radically changed his position, wrote:

The Japanese [poet] has much in common with the French. And although he has a passionate emotional makeup, he is not at all a SENTIMENTALIST in the mold of the West. Where he should be a SENTIMENTALIST, the Japanese [poet] is far too realistic and is more of a practical, common-sense kind of person. His senses are geared toward the materialistic.<sup>72</sup>

In this way, Sakutarō describes a Japanese Sentimentalist who is less like his Western forebear in his excessive emotionality and is instead rooted in the physical world, and thus, in a sense, worldly. The ancient poets of Japan made the pathos of *mono no aware* their theme and that “was a kind of sentimentalism,” but ultimately the Japanese Romantic is a “realist Romantic” (*genjitsu-teki romanchisuto* 現実的ロマンチスト) or elsewhere called a “pragmatic Romantic” (*puragumachikku-roman ningen* プラグマチック・ロマン人間), both terms being coined by Sakutarō here. Thus, when Sakutarō was reinterpreting Romanticism for the Nihon Rōman-ha 日本浪漫派 (Japan Romantic School), he was, as the first Japanese Sentimentalist, also skeptically reevaluating sentimentalism. The reversal in Sakutarō’s poetics is stunning and can be understood not only in the context of Japanese Romanticism but also in that of Japanese Sentimentalism. Just as Kōtarō warned against excessive sentiment in Western forms (Verlaine’s poetry) or in Japanese forms (*yūgen*, *aware*), now Sakutarō, in his late years, suggested that no Japanese poet could find his home in sentimentalism. By 1936, Sakutarō had returned sentimentalism to its conventional sense where he had found it at the beginning of the 1910s. Kevin Doak notes a strong nihilist streak in Sakutarō’s writing of the 1930s, particularly in works like “Nihon e no kaiki” 日本への回帰 (“Return to Japan”), which he began writing in 1934 and finally published in 1938. “Hagiwara has discarded poetry, if not from a sense of historicity, then at least from an awareness of historical concerns. Poetry has become impossible to write until the larger question of culture is settled.”<sup>73</sup> By 1936, as seen in these essays about Romanticism and Sentimentalism, when Sakutarō made his “return to Japan,” he rejected not only the innovations he had made in Japanese poetry but also his achievement in shaping the poetic discourse of *senchimentarizumu* in the 1910s. With his promotion of a “realist Romanticist” in the Shōwa period, Sakutarō had reached a dead-end with his faith in the possibilities of sentimentalism for Japanese verse.

## Conclusion

Japanese Sentimentalism is best understood as a phenomenon in Japanese literature and the arts that can be said to have lasted roughly less than a decade starting in the early 1910s and concluding around 1920. Although the term *senchimentarizumu* is still used today, it no longer has the cachet it once had for writers like Sakutarō, Hakushū, and Kenji. In poetry (Sakutarō) and in the arts (Kyōkichi), Japanese

Sentimentalism had meant more than “excessive feeling,” it had also carried the connotation that displaying excessive emotions was superior to taking action—a stance that was antithetical to other modern poets, like Kōtarō. Seo Ikuo argues that the turn to sentimentalism, especially for Sakutarō, was a way for a new generation of writers to reject the dominance of European thought over Japan. Sakutarō and those poets and artists who thought like him briefly pioneered this original artistic response, what I call Japanese Sentimentalism, displaying on the one hand how they could easily synthesize both European and Japanese artistic sensibilities, but on the other hand associating a sense of weakness or broken subjectivity that resulted from the rough, painful assimilation of European culture into Japan. Feeling Sakutarō’s influence even in the northern periphery areas of Japan like Iwate, Kenji and Hosaka wrote “Azalea Sentimentalist” *tanka* in the fields, under wide-open skies, near cypress trees and barber poles, demonstrating that sentimentalism could be embraced by Japanese poets both in the city and in the country; even an agronomy student like Kawamoto could isolate and heavily borrow key points from the great poet Hakushū to articulate this fashionable sentimentalist creed and apply it to his colleagues’ poems. The amateur writings of all three young men provide one very strong example of how far outside the Tokyo metropolis Sakutarō’s specific kind of *senchimentarizumu*, his poetic stigmata, had spread by late 1917. Sakutarō, Kyōkichi, and, to some extent, Kenji did not realize sentimentalism as a full cultural movement, but their unforgettable works of art and poetry, which today we commonly accept as Taishō-period masterpieces, were created with the spirit of Japanese Sentimentalism.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Takamura Kōtarō, “Fuyu no shi,” in *Nihon kindai bungaku taikei: Takamura Kōtarō Miyazawa Kenji shū* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1971), 36:176. Kōtarō uses the French pronunciation of the term. Hidaka Takao gives “behavior overcome by emotion” as the usual gloss for this but adds interestingly that in the poem “[these traits] can be taken as something typical of women but



[Takamura] grasps how they come to be a part of a person's identity through the demands of society."

<sup>2</sup> For this paper, I refer to the writer, poet, or painter by using his pen name (Sōseki) or personal name (Sakutarō, Kenji, Kōtarō, and Kyōkichi) when it is customary to do so in the research circles for that artist or author.

<sup>3</sup> Makoto Ueda, *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), 242.

<sup>4</sup> Kōtarō's essay appeared in the June 1912 issue of *Bunshō sekai* 文章世界.

<sup>5</sup> Takamura Kōtarō, "Senchimentarizumu no maryoku," in *Takamura Kōtarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1958), 8:12.

<sup>6</sup> Takamura, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ueda, 263.

<sup>8</sup> Ueda, 264–265.

<sup>9</sup> Arakawa Sōbei, *Kadokawa gairaigo jiten* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1967), 684–685.

<sup>10</sup> Sterne's narrator Yorick, for example, praises the "Sentimental Traveler" over other types of travelers in the novel's preface for his reader, explaining, "if he has been a traveler himself that with study and reflection hereupon he may be able to determine his own place and rank in the catalogue – it will be one step towards knowing himself" (Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* [Berkeley, Calif. and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967], 82–83). The narrator's paroxysms of emotion in *A Sentimental Journey*, such as one produced by the memory of a snuff box given to him by a French monk, seem so awkward that he feels required to defend them: "[looking at the box struck] so forcibly upon my affections, that I burst into a flood of tears—but I am as weak as a woman; and I beg the world not to smile, but pity me" (102–103). Since Thackeray's time, the sincerity of Sterne's sentimentalism has been doubted. A modern scholar of Sterne, Gardner Stout expressed the view that Sterne's own use "sentimental" was one of self-reflexive "comic detachment" used to ultimately mock the prevailing views of the reading public who were used to a more sincere and "pathetic" narrator to express sentiments of benevolence (Stout, "Introduction," in Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick*, 27).

<sup>11</sup> B. Sprague Allen, "The Dates of Sentimental and Its Derivatives," *PMLA*, 48.1 (March 1933): 305. Allen writes: "Clearly Sterne was exhibiting no

startling originality when in 1768 he gave to the narrative of his Continental journey the title that he did.” Allen, 306.

<sup>12</sup> Allen, 306.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 75.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan E. Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, the Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 184. Zwicker finds that in *The Golden Demon* the wide polarity of the ethical choice between love and money turns to a similar polarity between the “endless present of accumulation” of serial episodes (i.e., the modern novel) and “the narrative desire or impulse to construct a past ... the past of the early nineteenth-century aesthetic of sentiment and melodrama.” Thus, for Zwicker, Meiji sentimental fiction engages the reader in a conversation about time at two levels: first, the dramatic tension faced by the characters who struggle to make the virtues of the past impossibly work in the present; second, the form of the serial novel itself creates tension for the reader who desires for closure to the ongoing “accumulation” of serial episodes but at the same time desires the story to continue to provide entertaining reading.

<sup>15</sup> Ken K. Ito, *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender, and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 108.

<sup>16</sup> The suggested French pronunciation in Japanese is *sanchimentarisumu*, according to Yoshida Sei'ichi's 吉田精一 gloss in the *Taikei* edition of the story. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, “Rashōmon,” in *Nihon kindai bungaku taikei: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shū* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1970), 38:51. “Rashōmon” was first published in *Teikoku bungaku* in 1914 and Akutagawa soon republished it and other stories in a collected volume of the same name in 1915.

<sup>17</sup> Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, trans. and ed. Jay Rubin (New York: Penguin, 2006), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Two other commentators have suggested why the term appears in the story. Jay Rubin, the most recent translator of Akutagawa's stories, explains that it was a rookie mistake and that Akutagawa “would learn not to throw French vocabulary—*sentimentalisme*—into narratives about ancient Japan for one thing” (Jay Rubin, “Translator's Note,” in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Rashōmon*

and *Seventeen Other Stories*, trans. and ed. Jay Rubin [New York: Penguin, 2006], xlii). In the first edition of the story, Akutagawa wrote “Sentimentalism” without the final “e” so only in later published editions did he stress its French character. Kiyomizu Yasuji 清水康次, the commentator of the *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū*, does not explain the term beyond glossing it as *kanshō-guse*, or a penchant for being emotional. See *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 1:324 and 1:388. In his commentary on the story, Yoshida Sei’ichi does not explain the meaning of the term; he instead simply suggests that Akutagawa included the French term because to do so “was fashionable in the day, Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 being a prominent example of someone who often used this technique” (*Nihon kindai bungaku taikai: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shū*, 38: 51). Yoshida is not specific about Ōgai’s penchant for using imported vocabulary, but a similar example comes to mind where Ōgai, like Akutagawa, anachronistically applies a Western (i.e., post-Meiji) term to the consciousness of a premodern character. In the final section of “Takasebune” 高瀬舟 (“The Boat on the River Takase,” 1916), after Ōgai’s Edo-period constable Shōbei internally debates whether or not his prisoner was unjustly sentenced, the narrator tells us Shōbei ultimately resigns judgment to a higher “authority” (*ōtoritē* オオトリテエ).

<sup>19</sup> In an early scene, the narrator expects Okane, the wife of a relative, to make sentimental small talk about blooming flowers and dying fish but he is ultimately disappointed by her stoicism. “I smoked my cigarette, anticipating some sentimental (*senchimentaru*) words from her about the sad fate of the goldfish. I waited and waited, but she said nothing.” (Natsume Sōseki, *The Wayfarer*, trans. Beongcheon Yu [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967], 36.) Sōseki’s use of the term, like Kōtarō’s, agrees with standard definitions of the Japanese *senchimentaru* as “sensitive” (*kanshō-teki* 感傷的) or “excessively emotional” (*tajō* 多情).

<sup>20</sup> See note 1 in *Nihon kindai bungaku taikai: Hagiwara Sakutarō shū* (Kadokawa shoten, 1971), 37:64. Writing to Hakushū on January 14, 1915, Sakutarō expresses his “gratitude for having someone other than myself—someone as gifted as you—understand my own personal sentimental[-ism] (*senchimentaru*). What a sigh of relief I felt when you [told me] you understood these ‘Bamboo’ poems.” Hagiwara Sakutarō, *Hagiwara Sakutarō zenshū* [hereafter *HSZ*] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1977), 13:75.

<sup>21</sup> *Kanjō* ran for thirty-two issues from June 1916 to November 1919. “SENTIMENT” prominently appears as a gloss and subtitle for the journal from 1918, often appearing over long French quotes from Auguste Rodin. Besides

Sakutarō's and Saisei's poems and prose poems, other regular contributors of poetry to *Kanjō* include Maeda Yūgure, Kitahara Hakushū, and the *sōsaku-hanga* 創作版画 print artist Onchi Kōshirō. Onchi organized Tanaka Kyōkichi's prints and drawings for *Howling at the Moon* and also contributed his own prints for the collection. The first image ever to accompany text in *Kanjō* is a print by Onchi found in issue 2 that prefaces Saisei's *Jojō kokyoku shū* 抒情小曲集 (Lyric Short Songs). It is an image of three hands germinating out of the ground like a plant, which reminds one of the joint motif of hands and earth in Sakutarō's "Hands of Sentiment."

<sup>22</sup> Hagiwara Sakutarō, "Kanshō no te," in *HSZ*, 1:31.

<sup>23</sup> Hagiwara Sakutarō, "SENTIMENTALISM," in *HSZ*, 3:142.

<sup>24</sup> Hagiwara, 142–143.

<sup>25</sup> Kitahara Hakushū, "Jo," in *HSZ*, 1:7–8.

<sup>26</sup> Fukunaga Takehiko, *Tatsuo, Sakutarō, Saisei: ichū no bunshitachi* 達夫・朔太郎・犀星：意中の文士たち (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1994), 2:146.

<sup>27</sup> Kitahara, *HSZ*, 1:6.

<sup>28</sup> Hakushū seems to be responding to the opening stanza of the second "Bamboo" poem in the collection (*HSZ*, 1:21):

Bamboo spawns on the ground's surface, shining  
 bluish bamboo spawns,  
 now under ground, the roots of bamboo spawn,  
 those roots gradually grow finer,  
 fibers finer than the tips of the roots now spawn,  
 fibers that blur so faintly now spawn,  
 faintly they tremble.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Epp, *Rats' Nests: The Collected Poetry of Hagiwara Sakutarō* (Stanwood, Wash.: Yakusha, 1993), 21.

<sup>30</sup> Hagiwara, *HSZ*, 1:10.

<sup>31</sup> Barzun, 77.

<sup>32</sup> Kitahara, *HSZ*, 1:6.

<sup>33</sup> Hagiwara, *HSZ*, 1:33–34.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, *HSZ*, 1:55.

<sup>35</sup> Seo Ikuo, *Sensō shiron 1910–1945* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2006), 27.

<sup>36</sup> Hagiwara, "Jōzai shihen nōto" in Seo, 10.

- <sup>37</sup> Seo, 11.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>40</sup> Hagiwara, *HSZ*, 1:110.
- <sup>41</sup> Letter to Onchi Kōshirō, presumably dated April 15, 1915, as quoted in Tanaka Seikō 田中清光, *Tsukuhae no gakatachi: Tanaka Kyōkichi, Onchi Kōshirō no seishun* 月映の画家たち：田中恭吉・恩地孝四郎の青春 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 189.
- <sup>42</sup> Alexandra Tankard, “‘If I Am Not Grotesque I Am Nothing’: Aubrey Beardsley and Disabled Identities,” in *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Dinah Birch and Mark Llewellyn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 103–104.
- <sup>43</sup> Maeda Yūgure as quoted in Kubo Tadao, “Commentary,” in *Nihon kindai bungaku taikai: Hagiwara Sakutarō-shū*, 37:418.
- <sup>44</sup> Brian Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967), 313.
- <sup>45</sup> At Kitahara Hakushū’s urging, Katō Kazuo published two of the existing drawings in the January 1916 issue of *Kagaku to bungei* 科学と文芸 (Science and the Literary Arts). These two drawings have alternate titles: “Kaikon ni saku hana” and “Rinjū no kunō.”
- <sup>46</sup> Tanaka, 190.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.
- <sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Prelinger and Andrew Robison, “The Scream,” in *Edvard Munch: Master Prints* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2010), 43.
- <sup>49</sup> See Hosaka Tsuneo and Ozawa Toshirō, *Miyazawa Kenji: tomo e no tegami* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1968); Sugawara Chieko, *Miyazawa Kenji no seishun: ‘tada hitori no tomo’ Hosaka Kanai o megutte* (Tokyo: Kadokawa bunko, 1994); Jon Holt, “Ticket to Salvation: Nichiren Buddhism in Miyazawa Kenji’s ‘Ginga tetsudō no yoru,’” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (forthcoming).
- <sup>50</sup> Taima Bikō, “Hagiwara Sakutarō,” in *Miyazawa Kenji handobukku*, ed. Amazawa Taijirō (Shinshokan, 1996), 151.
- <sup>51</sup> Sugiura Shizuka, “Kitahara Hakushū” in *Miyazawa Kenji handobukku*, 54. According to these recollections, Kenji called Hakushū “an incredible person”

(*taihen na mono da* 大変なものだ) and “a great poet” (*erai shijin* 偉い詩人). Sugiura quite rightly questions this long-held view and suggests instead that Kenji’s adolescent literary phase has perhaps more in common with the “sentimental poets” (*Kanjō-shiha*) who appeared a bit after Hakushū in the Taishō period.

- <sup>52</sup> Sakai Tadaichi, *Miyazawa Kenji ron* 宮澤賢治論 (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1968), 210.
- <sup>53</sup> When Miyazawa Kenji was twenty-four, in the summer of 1920, he assembled 762 *tanka* poems into a manuscript. This manuscript, tentatively called *Kakō* (Tanka Manuscript) by the author, represented ten years of poetic composition. This early version of the manuscript is called *Kakō A* (Tanka Manuscript A) by the editors of Kenji’s *Collected Works*. It is sometimes called the “Toshi manuscript” because his younger sister Toshi helped him write out nearly half of the poems in a clean hand. By the autumn of 1921, he had edited the manuscript into perhaps its final form. This second version, called *Kakō B* (Tanka Manuscript B) by the editors of his *Collected Works*, contains 811 poems. This version also contains poems from 1909, but the editors of the *Collected Works* feel that Kenji did not actually write them in 1909, but instead later recalled events from that year and placed the poems in the opening section of *Tanka Manuscript B* to effectively complete a biographical snapshot from his literary awakening through 1921, when he abandoned *tanka* and effectively closed that chapter of his life. Kenji wrote on the cover of *Tanka Manuscript B* “not necessary to publish.” Later emendations to this text, thought to be made in the last decade of his life, suggest that despite his ambivalence about publishing the *tanka* collection, he still considered these poems worthy, at some point, of publication. Given all of his effort to revise these poems, why he never tried to publish them in 1921, or in subsequent years, is a mystery.
- <sup>54</sup> Kawamoto Yoshiyuki (1897–1933) was born in Tottori prefecture and he matriculated into Morioka Agricultural and Forestry High School in Iwate with Hosaka Kanai in 1916. At that time, Kenji was already a first-year student, so Kawamoto and Hosaka were his juniors by one year. Unlike Kenji and Hosaka, Kawamoto preferred to publish *haiku* and *shi*, rather than *tanka*, in *Azalea*; he later published a collection of *shi* entitled *Yume no hahen* 夢の破片 (Fragments of Dreams) in 1925. After graduation in 1918, Kawamoto returned to Tottori and taught both there and in Nagano. In July 1933, two months before Kenji died, Kawamoto perished while trying to save a colleague from drowning. See *Miyazawa Kenji goi jiten* 宮澤賢治語彙辞典, ed. Hara Shirō (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 1989), 153–154.

- <sup>55</sup> Kawamoto Yoshiyuki, “Azariya ni arawareta senchimentarizumu,” in *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* [hereafter *SKMKZ*] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1999), 16:255 (Part 1, Book 1).
- <sup>56</sup> Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 256.
- <sup>57</sup> Hosaka Kanai as quoted in Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 256.
- <sup>58</sup> Miyazawa, *SKMKZ*, 213.
- <sup>59</sup> Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 256.
- <sup>60</sup> Kitahara, *HSZ*, 1:53.
- <sup>61</sup> Kawamoto steals another line from the same paragraph of Hakushū’s preface. When Kawamoto compares the sensitivity of Hosaka and Kenji’s *tanka* to the “glint of a razor’s edge” (*kamisori no hirameki* 剃刀の閃き), he borrows a phrase Hakushū himself repeatedly quoted from Sakutarō’s poems to praise and promote *Howling at the Moon*’s creative expression. Kawamoto writes, “[The two authors of the ‘Sky’ poems] pray forever seeking the light with their fine nerves, which have the glint of the sharpest razor.” Kawamoto, 257.
- <sup>62</sup> Hosaka Kanai as quoted in Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 257.
- <sup>63</sup> Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 257.
- <sup>64</sup> Sakai Tadaichi, 199.
- <sup>65</sup> Okai Takashi, *Bungo shijin Miyazawa Kenji* 文語詩人宮沢賢治 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 91. One may add that Kenji himself may have felt that Hosaka was the better poet even though he was Kenji’s slight junior in actual age. One notes a trend in Kenji’s correspondence from 1916 through 1917 to Hosaka. Kenji often sent sets of *tanka* to Hosaka, perhaps seeking his feedback. In his *nenga-jō* 年賀状 postcard dated January 1, 1917, Kenji even refers to a *tanka* Hosaka had composed about the Nicolai Dome in Tokyo when they visited the city together in the previous year. In my view, the power relationship between these young men only changed sometime in March 1918 when Hosaka was expelled from Morioka Agricultural and Forestry High School, presumably for unbecoming conduct. In the fifth issue of *Azalea*, Hosaka had written a Nietzschean rant calling for the Emperor to be overthrown. He was then summarily dismissed from the school. It is only then that Kenji’s style of writing to Hosaka changed as Kenji adopted a new, righteous tone in preaching the superiority of his Nichiren beliefs over Hosaka’s egocentric philosophy. See letters #25 and #49 for a contrast. Miyazawa Kenji, *SKMKZ*, 15:33 and 15:55.

- <sup>66</sup> Miyazawa as quoted in Kawamoto, *SKMKZ*, 15:257. Kawamoto miscopied Kenji's poem in two places (*sora o komete Nanatsumori made koshi ni haya akezora ni kusaho ukaberi*); the correct version is found in the same volume of the *zenshū*, p. 228. Definitive versions from both *Tanka Manuscript* versions A and B are found in Miyazawa Kenji, *SKMKZ*, 1:73 and 1:231, respectively.
- <sup>67</sup> Ueda, 190.
- <sup>68</sup> Abe Takashi, "Aru hi no Kenji" 或る日の賢治, in *Miyazawa Kenji kenkyū shiryō shūsei* 宮沢賢治研究資料集成, ed. Tsuzukibashi Tatsuo 続橋達夫 (Tokyo: Nihon zusho sentā, 1990), 10:375. Abe says the memory of Kenji's encounter with *Howling at the Moon* was one of the clearest memories of Kenji: "I couldn't help but watch at how, as he turned each page, his eyes became glazed over with a strange light (*Kenji no me ga iyō na kagayaki o obite kuru*). I told him, 'If you're going to read it, be my guest and take it with you.'"
- <sup>69</sup> Miyazawa, *SKMKZ*, 2:22–24.
- <sup>70</sup> Hagiwara, "Romanchisuto no ni-shurui," in *HSZ*, 11:26–27. Sakutarō uses the original English words and writes them in capital letters.
- <sup>71</sup> Hagiwara, *HSZ*, 11:28.
- <sup>72</sup> Hagiwara, "Nihon no shijin: genjitsu-teki romanchisuto," in *HSZ*, 11:29.
- <sup>73</sup> Kevin Michael Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 49.

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