“... our country has every religion. Christianity. Buddhism. Mohammedanism. Even the Worship of Fire. But the one with the greatest following is ‘The Religion, or Ism, of the Modern.’ Or to put it another way, ‘The Religion, or Ism, of Life.’... And by life I mean the business of making a living. Eating, drinking, copulating. That sort of thing... I’m serious. The Great Cathedral of Modernism is the biggest building in the land.”

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kappa, 1927

Modanizumu is an ideology that flows at the base of our lives. ... [But it is an ideology that] does not adhere to any fixed phenomenon or set state of being. ... It is like a roll of film continuously exposed to the opening and closing of the rotary shutter of the movie camera... it is a special frame of mind, a posture consciously adopted toward the art of living.


Ryūji and Sayo... belonged to a new and younger generation that burned with a passion for l’esprit nouveau.

Funahashi Seiichi, Diving, 1934

Making It New: Rethinking Modernism

It is one of the anomalies of the study of modern Japanese literature in English that until very recently surprisingly little has been published on the role of modernism in Japanese fiction. Aside from a handful of studies on individual writers, there is no comprehensive survey of the topic. Nor is there an anthology of translations that provides a systematic introduction to the range of Japanese modernist authors and styles. Equally curious is the fact that, while examples of Japan’s most distinguished modernist classics have been available in translation since the late 1950s and early 1960s—one thinks here of Kawabata Yasunari’s Snow Country, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s “Tattooer” and Portrait of...
**Shunkin**, or Nagai Kafū’s *A Strange Tale from East of the River*—it is frequently the case that their modernist elements have been overlooked or discounted in favor of discussions on what the works have to say about the traditions of Japanese life, culture, and aesthetics. Thus, Kawabata’s *Snow Country* became the quintessentially haikuesque novel, and Tanizaki’s *Portrait of Shunkin*, a glimpse into the world of traditional Japanese music or even a Zen homily on the virtues of personal sacrifice and instant enlightenment. Even the words “modernism” and “modernist” are of relatively recent vintage in the discourse on modern Japanese literature in English, having come into broad usage only in the last decade or so. Moreover, they are often used with the reluctance of trepidation, haunted by doubts about their applicability in the face of issues of equivalence and authenticity vis-à-vis Western European modernism. That modernism in Japanese literature has been treated so cursorily and cautiously is surely one of the shortcomings of our field, especially when one considers how important *modanizumu*—as modernism is called in Japanese—has been as a literary movement within the history and evolution of twentieth-century Japanese letters. Why is it that its story has not been more fully and fairly told in English?

This volume seeks to address this anomaly by joining recent efforts that expand the discourse beyond treatments of solo modernists—take, for example, William Gardner’s *Advertising Tower* (2006) and Miriam Silverberg’s *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense* (2006)—or studies that revisit the received wisdom concerning canonical figures—such as Roy Starrs’ *Soundings in Time: The Fictive Art of Kawabata Yasunari* (1998) and Thomas LaMarre’s *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun’ichirō on Cinema and “Oriental” Aesthetics* (2005). This volume’s contribution to the momentum lies, first, in presenting translations of twenty-five stories and novellas representative of Japanese modernist prose. Via the medium of translation, a broader spectrum of Japanese modernists now speaks to English readers across three-quarters of a century and a sea of cultural and linguistic difference. In addition, via the introductory materials, this volume provides a framework for a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of not only the individual selections, but also the larger spectacle of *modanizumu* in prose. In short, the two-pronged strategy of combining the arts of translation and analysis offers readers exposure to a new and greater range of texts as well as an interpretative appreciation of the materials. What did it mean to be *modanist* in prose? This is the central question that has guided the translation and interpretation of the texts in this introduction to *modanizumu*.

**New Faces**

First, the translations introduce a number of new faces. Murayama Kaita, Tachibana Sooto, Tani Jōji, and Yoshiyuki Eisuke will be entirely new because they have not been previously translated. Kajii Motojirō, Okamoto Kanoko, Osaki Midori, Takeda Rintarō, and Yumeno Kyūsaku have been favored with
an occasional translation, but the translations are scattered, hard to find, and often presented in isolation from literary history, not to mention the story of *modanizumu*. Meanwhile, Abe Tomoji, Funahashi Seiichi, and Itô Sei were prominent movers and shakers in the postwar Japanese literary establishment. Abe was active in rebuilding the Japan branch of the international writers association or P.E.N. Club after World War II, while Itô was at the center of a cause célèbre in the courts on behalf of freedom of the press and artistic expression when his unabridged translation of D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928; trans. Chatarei fujin no koibito, 1950) was published and banned—a ban that was sustained by the Japanese Supreme Court. Their fame in Japan notwithstanding, very little of their work was translated. Itô’s *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts* and Funahashi’s *Diving* have long been considered key works in the modernist repertoire. They appear here in translation for the first time. As for the fiction of Ishikawa Jun, I have sought to make it available through publication of *The Bodhisattva* (1990) and *The Legend of Gold and Other Stories* (1998). Nonetheless, Ishikawa is still not widely recognized as he should be.

Of the eighteen authors included here, only three are well known outside Japan. Detective fiction fans will be familiar with Edogawa Ranpo, but few have paid attention to his significance as a modernist. Likewise with Kawabata and Tanizaki. They need little or no introduction, although readers may be surprised to find them among “the moderns” because they have habitually been thought of as spokesmen for traditional Japan. To the contrary, they are very much modernists. In the introductory materials, I cite them precisely because translations of their works have been available for quite some time and non-Japanese readers of modern Japanese literature will be conversant with them. What is *modanist* about Kawabata and Tanizaki helps us to understand what is *modanist* in the larger movement.

The inclusion of new faces also makes it possible to present the gamut of the new, neo, and nouveau schools of prose *modanizumu*, eachprefacing itself with the ever-present moniker of shin or shinkō, that competed in the 1920s and 1930s to signify the “new” or “modan.” While this volume nods briefly in the direction of the “New Sensation,” or Shin kankaku, school that has been introduced previously in studies on Kawabata Yasunari or Yokomitsu Riichi, the focus is on the larger contingent that includes the “New or Modern Art” of the Shinkō geijutsu authors, the “New Psychological Literature” of Shin shinri-shugi bungaku, the many writers who wrote for *Shin seinen*, or *New Youth* magazine, as well as one from the “New Society” of the Shin shakai-ha. Likewise, because commercial journalism came to play a definitive role in the promotion and popularization of modernist fiction, I also include selections from not only the small, self-financed coterie magazines (dōjin zasshi) that were the initial driving force of the movement, but also the general-interest journals (sōgō zasshi) that marketed a lively cocktail of literature, current events, gossip, and practical how-to advice to a rapidly expanding
urban audience of students, intellectuals, white-collar workers, and housewives. With their hefty circulation figures, these journals, run by powerful editors and brokers of literature such as Kikuchi Kan and Nakamura Murao, became the venue by which many aspiring young writers moved beyond the little magazines to establish themselves as professionals.

As a result, a number of the selections may differ from readers’ traditional expectations of modernist literature as a literature of Caligariesque jagged edges. The staccato, montaging effects of Yoshiyuki Eisuke’s “Colorful Shinjuku,” the distortions of time and imagery in Kawabata’s Page of Madness or Hagiwara Sakutarō’s “Town of Cats,” and the Cubist jumble in Inagaki Taruho’s “A Shop That Sells Stars” are examples of these jagged edges in this volume. But the emergence of a mass market for creative fiction in Japan in the 1920s encouraged the popularizing of avant-gardism. The effect of popularization was to soften the sharp edge of the surrealist mode and the theme of alienation that bulked large in European modernist prose. As a result, the literature of jagged edges constitutes only one facet of Japanese modanist prose. Simply stated, the youthful exuberance of writers of modernist fiction in Japan largely precluded a pattern of withdrawal into the surreal or retreat into alienation. Instead Japanese modernists embraced the speed and novelty of the twentieth century and engaged in a literary and political activism that manifested itself, on the literary side, as experimentation in narrativity and, on the political, in advocacy of the individual versus ideology or the nation state. These are concepts that are developed throughout this volume.

**New Approaches**

Second, in identifying what is modanist in Japanese fiction, I have employed an inductive approach that asks what the works have to say about themselves. I start with a general overview of the movement in Japan, especially as it relates to prose fiction, but then turn to the translations, organized into the four parts: Anti-Naturalism, Cosmopolitanism, the Multiple Self, and Actionism. While these salient characteristics often overlap in a single work and the stories might easily be reshuffled to fit any or all of these four categories, focusing on these four rubrics has the salutary effect of pointing to the overarching meanings of modanist fiction and simultaneously bringing organization to bear on specific formalistic traits. Some of these traits will be readily apparent from the physical look of the texts. Readers will note the ubiquitous use of dashes, exclamation points, and ellipsis marks, and the frequent identification of characters and place names by single capital letters. Or there is the epiphanic visuality of the many spectacles, or kōkei, that appear in these texts with striking regularity. As the characters for light (kō) and scene (kei) in the word kōkei suggest, modernist writers sought to highlight the deliberately constructed nature of their narratives in much the same way that early-twentieth-century movie moguls and fashion photographers used
the invention and innovation of the klieg lamp to illuminate their sets and poses. To know how true this is one need only recall the powerfully specular and symbolic moment in Kawabata’s *Snow Country* when a singular and seemingly disembodied eye, magnified in a train window and illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun, is allowed to float across the landscape of the opening chapter of the novel.

Meanwhile, less obvious traits will require closer inspection or explanation. There is, for example, repeated use of layering or superimposition in *modanist* prose, as the mirror scene from *Snow Country* already illustrates. Moreover, the deployment of the bilingual gloss, via the agency of *furigana set* in small type alongside the larger typeface (and in *katakana* alongside Japanese or foreign-language text), permits a character in a story to speak to the reader in two languages at once—in a manner not unlike the way that subtitles provide a second voice in foreign-language films today or *benshi*, Japanese film narrators, once did in the case of silent pictures. It is, alas, a textual device not readily reproducible in English-language print, and the visual effect of the Japanese text vanishes in translation even when special adjustments are introduced in English to signify the presence of such interlinear glosses. But most fugitive of all is the matter of tone, especially an ironic or facetious one. Without recognition of the centrality of its seriocomic tone, *modanist* literature loses much of its verbal fascination and philosophical relativism, not to mention its chic urbanity. I shall have more to say about this important mode of reading *modanist* texts.

I also resort to retelling the oft-told tales of the modern boy and girl, of the dance halls and milk bars of Japan’s Jazz Age, and of the nonsense of eroticism and grotesquerie. These are the most famous of the many catch phrases typically used to describe *modanizumu*. These shibboleths make excellent starting points for drawing in readers and evoking the razzamatazz of a bygone age, or what a character in *Diving* calls the provocative allure of the modern (*kindaiteki chôbatsu*). But the image of *modanizumu* they promote, although exciting, is superficial or derivative. This is a stereotype that has dogged the movement since its heyday, when the attack against the moderns was led by ultranationalists on the right and Marxists on the left. For the ultranationalists, modernism was too *modan*, alien and subversive of Japanese tradition. For Marxists and practitioners of proletarian literature, it was not *izumu* or ideology enough to contribute to the class struggle and bring about revolutionary change. In truth, Marxism and modernism in Japan have been uneasy left-of-center bedfellows since the first half of the twentieth century, when both vied for the moral, cultural, and political high ground in the arena of progressive thought and praxis. The tension between the two often posed an intractable dilemma for intellectuals in the prewar period, and nowhere is this metaphor worked to better success than in Itô Sei’s *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts*, where an imaginary debate ensues between the deceased spirits of the proletarian novelist Kobayashi Takiji and the modernist author Akutagawa.
Ryūnosuke. In the “Last Judgment” held by both men, writers are saved or damned depending on their respective allegiance to the principle of “cultural materialism” or “writing beautifully.” More recently, modanizumu has come under attack from postmodern critics who see the sleek athleticism of its aesthetics as implicitly and unreflectively fascist. It is a refrain that echoes the Marxist complaint, or it is theme and variation on a larger cultural critique of Japan as an “Empire of Signs.”

Writing in 1930, in an essay titled “Modanizumu bungaku-ron” (1930, “On Modanizumu in Literature”), the Japanese modernist Ryūtanji Yū made a point of objecting to “the metaphorical critique that says modanizumu is nothing more than the latest display of imported cosmetics.” This view, which Ryūtanji recognized as endemic to modanizumu’s detractors, represented for him the naïve worldview of the “o-nobori-san,” an affectionate but derogatory term for country folk who came to the big city of Tokyo for the first time and mistook all that was new and state of the art as alien and imported. “They are agog at the most ordinary and commonsensical accessories of modern living,” he complained with the air of an urban sophisticate. What was needed, as he went on to say in a tongue-in-cheek passage that involved play on the French word cancan, was an atarashii kankan—a “new sense-sense” or “new feel-feel.” His pun was a smart turn of phrase that reflected the playful creativeness and ironic tone that Ryūtanji brought to his works and is characteristic of the chicness of modernist writing in general. Just as the cancan was an expression of Moulin Rouge moderne in France, Ryūtanji suggests Japan has a kankan of its own. If we do not master this new dance step and engage modanizumu in ways that move beyond past treatments of the subject, we may find ourselves becoming the happy-go-lucky but naïve o-nobori-san who, in chasséing to the center of the floor in the modern department store, apartment house, or dance hall, fails to recognize what is modan about Japanese modernism. There is snobbery in such talk—another criticism that was often leveled against the modernists, along with superficiality and bourgeois complicity. Claims to sophistication, taste, or being fashionable always leave one vulnerable to the charge of snobbery. At the same time, the brazen derring-do on behalf of the new—indeed, the existentialist plunge into the unknown as Funahashi describes it in Diving or as Tanizaki advocates in defending art and love in “The Censor”—is essential to overcoming the dead weight of the status quo or the received wisdom of the past.

Toward a New History

Third, I seek to move beyond interpretative problems that have bedeviled the study of modanist fiction outside Japan. In short, I seek to address the question raised at the very beginning of this introduction: why is it that the story of Japanese modernist fiction has not been more fairly or fully told before now? For that, a short review of the past history of the subject is required.
It was over three decades ago that a prominent member of the Shin kankaku, or New Sensation, school, Yokomitsu Riichi, was first introduced to non-Japanese readers through Dennis Keene’s translations of Yokomitsu’s early fiction: “Love” and Other Stories, published in 1974, and his pioneering study, Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist, published in 1980. Although Yokomitsu had been an immensely famous writer, if not a “god” of modern Japanese literature during his heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, his reputation plummeted after the war and his death in 1947. He never achieved the international recognition that came to his contemporary and close friend Kawabata, with whom he started the Shin kankaku coterie magazine Bungei jidai (1924–1927, The Age of Literary Art). By translating Yokomitsu’s stories and writing a monograph about their author, Keene made a leading but neglected writer known outside Japan for the first time. He was also the first student of Japanese Studies in English to employ the terms “modernism” and “modernist” in talking about twentieth-century Japanese literature.

Still, he took a decidedly guarded view of his subject. As he wrote in the introduction to “Love” and Other Stories:

Yokomitsu’s early literature . . . is perhaps the one serious attempt in Japanese to write a modernist literary prose, a prose which has something in common with what was going on in Europe in the 1920s. It is certainly true that one can find things written in Japanese in the twenties . . . such as futurist poems and manifestos, cubist and surrealist poems, [and] prose works more aggressively modernist than Yokomitsu’s, but these look now like merely the sad detritus of dead fashions, and even in terms of literary history it is difficult to give them any kind of serious attention. . . . Yokomitsu’s prose is Japanese modernism of the 1920s, the only literary modernism of that period in Japanese which can be read with an interest that goes beyond mild curiosity.2 (Keene’s italics)

That issues of equivalence and authenticity are at work here is evident from the fact that “what was going on in Europe” is taken as the measure of modanizumu in Japan. The manifestos, poems, and prose produced by Japanese in the 1920s are found to be lacking, either on account of being derivative to the point of aggressive imitation or, conversely, impoverished by having little in common in content and quality with European models. Not even Yokomitsu escapes criticism. Only his early literature passes muster, and anything he wrote after 1930 is “an indication of how modernist literature failed in Japan.” Moreover, Yokomitsu lacked the competence to emulate the works of Flaubert and Gide, whom he greatly admired. Gide’s Les faux-monnayeurs (1925; trans. The Counterfeiters, 1927) was, for example, his ideal of the anti-omniscient, self-conscious modernist novel. Yet he failed to grasp, let alone replicate, the relativistic spirit of Gide’s two-tiered structure in which
a narrative is told in tandem with a journal chronicling the process by which an author tells his tale. What’s more, he failed to meet the expectations of his own clarion call to create a popular modernist novel that combined vernacular elements with highbrow fiction. In short, *Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist* concluded that its subject was not much of a modernist after all, although the fault was not Yokomitsu’s alone. “I have argued that modernism in Japan had to fail,” writes Keene, “since the symbolist tradition from which European modernism got its life did not exist in Japan. One needs only to alter the terms of this argument to see this [failure] as a pattern existing in other areas of Japanese life in this century.”

One can hardly imagine a bleaker conclusion. It strips Yokomitsu of his title, and it treats Japan as an intellectual miasma into which external ideas, such as European modernism, gained entry only to wither on the vine for want of a fertile intellectual soil that would sustain and foster imported concepts. Such was the *doro numa*, or “mud swamp,” theory of Japanese culture much in vogue. It was most famously advanced by the writer Endō Shūsaku in his novel *Chininmoku* (1966; trans. *Silence*, 1969), in which the metaphor of the mud swamp was used to explain why Christianity had failed to put down roots in Japan. Subsequently, it was applied to a host of other shortcomings and errors in the introduction of external—most notably Western—ideas. If Japan had once been excoriated for being the land of imitators, now it was scolded for not having tried hard enough.

Issues of authenticity and the limits of cross-cultural borrowing also surfaced in the next major foray into the topic of *modanizumu* in Japanese prose to appear in English, namely, a chapter on “Modernism and Foreign Influences” in Donald Keene’s hefty compendium on modern Japanese literature, *Dawn to the West* (1984). This chapter also begins by focusing on Yokomitsu but adds three names—Hori Tatsuo, Itō Sei, and Satō Haruo. Like Yokomitsu vis-à-vis Gide, they are discussed in light of the influence of Proust, Joyce, and Wilde, respectively. Their early fiction is seen as derivative, although little concern is expressed over preconditions such as the lack of a symbolist tradition. Instead *modanizumu* is treated as a febrile “passing phase” in which Japanese writers became infatuated with the avant-garde poetry and prose emanating from the cultural capitals of Europe. As a result, they threw themselves into the business of importing, imitating, and translating the principal works of Western European modernism, while tactically using the mantle of Western cultural authority to legitimize their new agenda. Yet, like acne or first love in adolescence, eventually the Western rash (*seiyō kabure*) went away, and the passing phase was outgrown. “The modernist experiments [of these writers] tended to lose significance,” Keene concludes, “when they came in different ways to carry out . . . an inevitable return to Japan.” The proper trajectory for a writer’s career lay in abandoning external contamination and effecting a safe and proper return to Japan. Modernism in Japanese fiction was a sidetrack at best.
It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Kawabata and Tanizaki are treated in *Dawn to the West* not as modernists but as the embodiment par excellence of a central thesis that holds that true maturity in twentieth-century Japanese literature resided in a reversion to and a mastery of native styles and tropes. This concept of writers’ inevitable return to Japanese tradition became fairly widespread after the poet Hagiwara Sakutarō first enunciated it in a famous essay titled “Nihon e no kaiki” (1938; trans. “Return to Japan,” 2005). It called for Japanese writers to rediscover their roots, albeit without becoming jingoistic or ultranationalistic. Later, it became aligned with wartime talk of overcoming the modern (kindai no chōoku) or, in the postwar years, tied to the folk notion that Japanese invariably rediscover a simple and shibui taste for green tea over rice (o-chazuke no aji) as they age and mature. Tanizaki’s decampment from Tokyo to Osaka in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 is typically cited as supporting the validity of this paradigm. The story goes that, faced with the total erasure of traditional culture in Tokyo and his disappointment with the exoticism of the West that he pursued early in his career, Tanizaki abandoned Tokyo, the site of his birth and his youth, and chose to retreat to the Japanese cultural homeland of Kyōto and Osaka. Only then did he become a fully developed writer and creator of such masterpieces as *Tade kuu mushi* (1929; trans. *Some Prefer Nettles*, 1955) and *Manji* (1930; trans. *Quicksand*, 1993), both of which Keene ranks “among Tanizaki’s best.” With *Quicksand*, Keene tells us, Tanizaki abandoned “Westernism” once and for all.

Yet such a heavily orientalist view obscures the degree to which both Kawabata and Tanizaki were actively involved in the creation of modernist fiction throughout their careers. As already mentioned, Kawabata’s *Snow Country* can easily be read as a modernist novel, and Tanizaki’s *Quicksand* is surely better understood as a modernist parody of women’s fiction than as “narration . . . rooted in the Japanese past . . . [and] reminiscent of the old storytellers.” Likewise, Tanizaki’s *In’ei raison* (1933–1934, trans. *In Praise of Shadows*, 1977), which Keene calls “a most moving defense of the traditional aesthetic,” requires a more nuanced reading. In pitting the shadowy virtues of the Japanese toilet against the cold, lily whiteness of the Western bathroom, Tanizaki was writing a tongue-in-check take-off and critique of the pomposity and prevalence of Nihonjin-ron theories of culture. Most telling of all, however, is the degree to which both Kawabata and Tanizaki were fascinated by the new medium of the cinema with its enviable facility to replicate the experience of dreaming and seamless narration. The moving pictures were, in Tanizaki’s words, “the purification—Crystallization—of nature that is necessary to art.” Early on in his career he was a film buff and critic, writing essays such as “Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai” (1917; trans. “The Present and Future of Moving Pictures,” 2005), “Eiga zakkan” (1921; trans. “Miscellaneous Observations on Film,” 2005), and “Karigari bakase wo miru” (1921; trans. “A Viewing of Dr. Caligari,” 2005). Moreover, he was one of the first
novelists in Japan to argue on behalf of cinema as an art form, emphasizing the importance of the scenario writer as a literary consultant and cinema composer. Both he and Kawabata wrote scripts and photoplays for the avant-garde film movement, and Kawabata’s scenario Page of Madness is included in this volume as an example. Thus, a balanced assessment of the creative genius of these writers recognizes the deftness with which both men straddled East and West, thereby synthesizing native and foreign influences in their prose as well as embracing the medium of film, which, like the camera and the photograph, was not of Japanese invention but was rapidly taken over and thoroughly naturalized. It is hard to imagine Japan without the black box of the camera.

Thus, where Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist resolutely closed the door on the viability of modernism in Japan, Dawn to the West opened it again, ever so slightly. In addition, Dawn to the West argued Japan had more than “one serious counterpart” who pursued styles different from Yokomitsu’s because they were not aligned with his coterie magazine or the Shin kankaku style. Finally, it emphasized the important pedagogical role that all four writers played in acquainting Japanese readers with trends in Western literary circles.

Still, both books saw Western European modernism as a unilateral source of influence and authority. Neither questioned the prioritizing of the West and its Ur-texts. Nor did they entertain a less dichotomous relationship between East and West and thereby embrace degrees of engagement and separation, or even the diversity, autogeneration, and/or simultaneity of the international modernist experience. Their view held sway, and the study of Japanese modernism in English fell dormant. Modanizumu was rarely discussed, and no modernist novels were translated with the exception of Tanizaki’s Chijin no ai (1925; trans. Naomi, 1985), a book very much at the heart of the modernist experience with its focus on a Japanese woman who looks Eurasian and its playful subversion of gender expectations. Even so, the prefatory materials to the translation make no mention of modanizumu or modernist literature except to call the novel “the evocation of popular culture in Tokyo between World War I and the earthquake [of 1923]” and to point briefly to “another phenomenon of the early twenties . . . the ‘modern girl.’”

**Modanizumu Boom**

By the late 1990s, however, modanizumu was beginning to make a name for itself outside Japan. Modernist paintings from exhibitions held at the Kanagawa and Mie prefectural museums traveled to Paris in 1986 and then Sydney in 1998. In 2002 the Academy of Arts in Honolulu mounted its own show, Taishō Chic—Modernity, Nostalgia, and Deco. Meanwhile, Edward Seidensticker’s Tokyo Rising (1990) became the first historiography of post-1923 Tokyo to appear in English, and it has been followed by such popular recensions of the topic as Phyllis Birnbaum’s Modern Girls, Shining Stars, and the Skies of Tokyo (1999). Scholarly researchers also began to dig into the details es-

In the field of literature, scholars of modern Japanese poetry such as Hosea Hirata, Miryam Sas, Hiroaki Sato, and John Solt took the lead in producing translations of and monographs on the modernist poets Hagiwara Sakutarō, Kitasono Katsue, Nishiwaki Junzaburō, Takamura Kōtarō, Takiguchi Shūzō, and Tomotani Shizue. Particular attention was directed to *shōgenjitsu-shugi* (surreal or hyper-realism) and the constellation of talents who gathered around Haruyama Yukio, poet and inspired editor of the journal *Shi to sbiron* (1928–1933, *Poetry and Poetics*). In relatively short time Japanese modernist poetry became available—“like morning as a gem o’erturned” (*kutsugæsareta bōsæki no yō na asa*), to quote Nishiwaki’s famous and felicitous phrase. Thomas Rimer’s *Toward a Modern Japanese Theater* (1974) was also a precursor in identifying the impact that modernism had on the stage.


Nonetheless, old ways of thinking live on. Reservations concerning the worthiness of Japanese modernist fiction, especially as to its authenticity vis-à-vis European modernism, continue to surface. The available commentary in English on Uno Chiyo’s *Confessions of Love* by Phyllis Birnbaum and then Rebecca Copeland, for example, alerts us to the fact that the famous modernist painter Tōgō Seiji is the real-life model for the string of failed romances pursued by the novel’s first-person protagonist, Yuasa Jōji. But only perfunctory note is made concerning *Confessions* as an anti-naturalist—and therefore potentially modernist—send-up of the confessional I-novel (*watakushi sbōsetsu*). Furthermore, little is said about the novel’s overall seriocomic tone, although facetiousness or double-voicedness in a text is often a tip-off that modernistic relativism is at work. Ever the unflinching flapper and devotee of style across her long, madcap career as novelist and fashion designer, Uno knew how to create a sensation, literary or otherwise—including marrying the artist who was the subject of her novel. In *Confessions* she has great fun parodying
the conventions of romantic love and courtship East and West—from vamp women à la Hollywood to peeping toms who hark back to the kaimami/fence-peeking practices of the Heian period. She even includes a traditional lovers’ double suicide (shinji) that goes hilariously awry. Just as Tanizaki took great delight in subversively reversing gender roles in traditional male-female relations by, for example, turning a man into the servant of a woman in Portrait of Shunkin (and to a lesser extent in his story “The Tattoo/er”), Confessions is a modernist farce that mocks not only male privilege and passivity, but also the supposedly modern girls who are all too eager to indulge the whims of their “Jōji boy.” Needless to say, grasping its tone and that of other modernist novels is an important interpretative task. This is especially true in the case of modernist fiction, where authorial intent is central to a revolt against common sense realism.

Or take, for example, Stephen Snyder’s critical study Fictions of Desire—Narrative Form in the Novels of Nagai Kafū (2000). One welcomes its refreshingly different treatment of Kafū’s Bokutō kitan (1937; trans. A Strange Tale from East of the River; 1965), which Snyder recognizes as a metafictional, autoreferential, and parodic success worthy of the very best modernist fiction. A Strange Tale was seen in the past as an odd and difficult text, its idiosyncrasies attributed to the stylistic vagaries of traditional Japanese genres of the essay novel, poem story, or linked verse. But the strangeness of Kafū’s tale resides instead in what one might call its special brand of “Asian fusion” in which Kafū created a new and original mode of narration by combining elements of classical Japanese mono-no-aware lyricism, the “story-within-the-story” (saku-chū-saku) style of Edo prose, and the novel-as-commentary-on-the-novel à la Gide in Les faux-monnayeurs.

Yet in discussing what makes Kafū’s tale unique, Snyder considers Kafū’s modernism only “covert,” and he genuflects before what he calls “a general consensus” that modernism in Japanese fiction was “by and large a failure” or “at best one-dimensional.” The Japanese modernists, he goes on to say, were sorely lacking in “the revived Shandean spirit” that inspired their European counterparts. He is referring to Laurence Sterne’s The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1767), a novel much admired in recent years not only for its discursive and ironic style, but also as a prototype for British and American modernist—if not more appropriately postmodern—fiction, in which dramatic development of plot is all but abandoned. While Snyder’s praise for Kafū at “hav[ing] grasped the essence of Modernist self-consciousness” is welcome news, his overall assessment parallels to a striking degree the opinions of three decades ago, when Dennis Keene noted his considerable reservations about the limits of modernist fiction in Japan. Indeed one hears the echo of Keene’s symbolist critique, if not its churlish tone of disappointment. Snyder writes that, in being all too earnest in emulating the West, Japanese modernists mistook the Shandean tone of European modernist prose “for yet more dead seriousness,” thereby missing
the spirit of playfulness essential to the modernist point of view and stunting their creative growth in the process. Devoid of play, spontaneity, or chicness, modanizumu in Japanese prose became little more than “the attempt to find a Japanese idiom in which to render the verbal pyrotechnics of the European brand.”10

Most recently, this “general consensus” is replayed in Donald Richie’s foreword to Alisa Freedman’s painstaking translation of Kawabata’s \textit{Asakusa kurenaidan} (1930; trans. \textit{The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa}, 2005). Richie not only quotes Snyder on the failure of Japanese literary modernism on the part of the quartet of Yokomitsu, Itō, Hori, and Satō, but he also typifies \textit{The Scarlet Gang} as an example of “one-shot modernism.” Kawabata’s Asakusa caper was, we are told, an instance of “selling oil” (\textit{abura wo uru})—which means, pace Richie and Ian Buruma, who reviews the translation in \textit{The New York Review of Books}, to dawdle or loiter on an errand instead of “pulling a fast one and getting away with it”—the metaphor and method that Richie assigns to Kawabata’s achievement in writing \textit{The Scarlet Gang}.11 There is indeed a great deal of complex fabrication to the narrative structure of this novel, but it is part of an ongoing exploration of modanizumu that runs throughout Kawabata’s career and is readily apparent in, for example, \textit{Kinjū} (1933; trans. “Of Birds and Beasts,” 1980). Kawabata went on to employ many of the modernist techniques that Richie aptly cites—detachment and distancing, randomness, a succession of images, and flâneur-like slumming. With regard to this final technique, one is struck by the remarkable parallel between Kawabata’s \textit{Snow Country} and Nagai Kafū’s \textit{Strange Tale from East of the River}—namely, their mutual search for atypical beauty in unexpected places.

Finally, Seiji Lippit’s \textit{Topographies of Japanese Modernism} (2002) represents the first effort in the study of literary modanizumu to move beyond individual writers and introduce a synthetic approach that examines the four “topographies” of the works of Akutagawa, Yokomitsu, Kawabata, and Hayashi Fumiko. Lippit is fully cognizant that modernism in Japanese prose “cannot be reduced solely to the assimilation of an external culture or an identification with the West.” Yet he associates prose modanizumu in nearly every direction with disorientation, dissolution, disruption, estrangement, fragmentation, and finally the defeat of literature—to cite key words that recur in his text. There is no denying that formal rupture is a salient feature of modernism because, as many have pointed out, the onset of modernism in literature arose from “a crisis in representation.” At the same time, it moved rapidly toward reintegration, creating new forms of narrative that combined mimesis with ironic self-perception. Thus, where Lippit sees, for example, the concept of the urban landscape as “the ground for representing a fragmented consciousness of modern culture” or “cultural homelessness,”12 one might easily argue the reverse—as Unno Hiroshi does in his study \textit{Modan toshi Tōkyō} (1983, \textit{Modern City Tokyo})—that the modern city was the seat of liberation, engagement,
and integration. This, I contend, is more than a matter of looking at a glass as half empty or half full because the emphasis on disintegration reflects a habitual uneasiness among scholars of modern Japanese literature working in English concerning the status and importance to be bestowed upon modanizumu in Japanese prose. Only as a greater range of primary materials become available in English will it be possible for Japan’s modernists to emerge from the closet, so to speak, and let us hear how they sought to express themselves in their modanist prose.

**Envisioning Global Modernism**

The translations presented in this volume look, moreover, to a far more ambitious project, namely, rethinking the parameters of international or global modernism. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane broke new ground more than a quarter of a century ago by including Austrian Secessionism, German Expressionism, and Russian Constructivism alongside chapters on the Anglo, French, and Italian movements in their handy volume *Modernism* (1976). At the time such expansiveness was seen as innovative, if not provocative. Nonetheless, as Astradur Eysteinsson acknowledges in *The Concept of Modernism* (1990), “Anglo-centrism” remains “the hallmark of a great deal of modernist studies.” Bradbury and McFarlane’s advances notwithstanding, *Modernism* was international only within the framework of Europe and North America. Much the same can be said of Eysteinsson’s exploration of the topic. A global view is overdue.

Surely part of the appeal of Japanese modernist fiction for foreign readers ought to reside in those points at which the literature departs from its Western counterparts. “They don’t write like us!” exclaimed an external referee and non-Japanologist in a Ph.D. defense, speaking both in wonder and frustration on reading Tani Jōji’s “The Shanghaied Man.” If Japanese modernists wrote differently, what was it that set them apart? What did they have in mind when they thought and wrote about the modan? How did they see modanizumu as affecting their art, life, and ideas? Intellectuals across the globe found themselves contending with the modern as it evolved in their respective languages and cultures at the beginning of the twentieth century. How did the response of the Japanese—which may or may not have been contiguous with the West or other parts of the globe—enrich and enlighten our appreciation of modernism overall?

An international approach ought to encompass a plurality of “modernisms” the world over, including Japan’s modanizumu. It might examine modernist art and literature in “secolonal” situations, to use Mao Zedong’s nomenclature for China’s status vis-à-vis the West, by looking, for example, at Leo Lee’s *Shanghai Modern* (1999), Liu Jianhui’s *Mato Shanbai* (2000), or Shu-mei Shih’s *The Lure of the Modern* (2001). It might pursue Progressive Art in subaltern India, Sri Lanka, or Bali, or explore Middle Eastern, African, and occidental contexts previously relegated to the periphery of the West.
such as *el modernismo* in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal. Responsibility for minting the term “modernism” belongs, after all, to the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. In the case of Western European and North American literature, for example, it is only in recent years that the modernism inherent to the Harlem Renaissance has come to be recognized and studied. Similar circumstances apply to early queer literature. The novels of Radclyffe Hall, Hilda Doolittle, and Christopher Isherwood are being reread not only as representing a minority voice, but also as articulating core issues of what it meant to be modern. The gender slippage introduced by Noël Coward in the witty and gay lyrics of “Any Little Fish Can Swim” (1931) or Cole Porter in “You’re the Top” (1934) speaks of strategies of artistic subversion that are contrarian and formalistic at one and the same time. As Noël and Cole knew only too well, being modern meant breaking taboos. But they also knew it had to be done with style.

Because *modernism* was both a counterdiscourse and a dialectic that broke with dichotomous logic (even as it pitted the new against the old or the less modern) and sought to give artistic, vernacular, and lifestyle expression to the yet unarticulated—or the still unspeakable—language of the twentieth century, its search for a new mode of discourse moved along two powerful but contradictory trajectories. These were the iconoclastic and the formalistic, the former being all about rebellion and demolition, and the latter, fiercely hegemonic in defining and controlling the shape and form of how the new and modern were to be expressed. These countervailing directions account in large part for why defining modernism is remarkably elusive and frustrating.

To tackle such a project is, ultimately, to determine the locus modernus of the modernist movement. Is modernism inherently and exclusively tied to a single culture or historical moment, and therefore inadmissible to transmission? Or, given the right conditions, did it sweep beyond its original borders, penetrating foreign cultural spaces and setting in motion provincial dramas of assimilation and resistance? This is the shop-worn paradigm of modernism and modernity as catalyst or contagion in which the inspiration and/or corruption of modernist ideas are seen as radiating to the world from the cultural capitals of Paris, London, and Zurich.

In the early 1960s it became commonplace to prioritize formalistic characteristics in analyzing modernist texts. This trend also prevailed in Japan, where it was abetted by an effort to sanitize modernist literature of pre- and postwar accusations that *modernizumu* was guilty of collusion with elitism and moneyed capital. The antimodernist charges emanated chiefly from Marxist critics, but there is no denying that the 1920s and 1930s saw explosive growth in the print and commercial art industries as well as the birth of mass culture and literature (*taishū bunka, taishū bungaku*). The trend toward emphasizing *modernizumu’s* formalistic side was also driven by a desire to promote to the world an image of Japanese literature as aesthetic and apolitical—the chrysan-
themum without the sword, as it were—once modern Japanese novels began appearing in translation during the decade following World War II. As a result of these twin pressures, the discourse on *modanizumu* came to focus on noncommercial “little magazines.” As already mentioned, the Shin kankaku writers of the coterie magazine *Bungei jidai*, associated with Kawabata and Yokomitsu, were seen as exemplary of a pure or high modernism committed not only to formalistic priorities, but also to disengagement from commercial and ideological issues.

Since the mid-1980s, however, a different view has emerged, especially among Japanese scholars. Following the theory of synchronicity or simultaneity, it argues for the point of view that modernism unfolded contemporaneously across the globe, or at least in nations or social sectors sharing analogous levels of economic, technological, and cultural development. This is the view known as *dōjisei*, or simultaneousness, that has enjoyed considerable currency in Japan. Initially, it was championed by exhibitions and catalogs related to the fine and applied arts. The shift in thinking was fueled, moreover, by the *modanizumu* boom that swept Japan in the 1980s. The postwar economic miracle was at its zenith, and the 1920s and 1930s—Japan’s last golden age of international power and affluence before a half century of war, destruction, and then national reconstruction—became the object of much interest and nostalgia. The revival commenced with the rediscovery and exhibition of modernist painting, and it led in turn to retrospective exhibits in the plastic, commercial, and decorative arts—ceramics, lacquerware, sculpture, photography, film, advertising, Art Deco, and kimono design. Many out-of-print works by modernist writers were republished, and bookstores set up special corners to advertise them. Subsequently, NHK national television capitalized on the boom by turning the lives of the modernist novelist Yoshiyuki Eisuke and his wife Aguri into an avidly watched saga on Japan’s quintessentially modernist couple. In particular, the series, called *Aguri*, focused on Eisuke’s wife as a new woman (*atarashii onna*) who, by opening one of Tokyo’s first beauty parlors in 1929, defied the conventions of the times and went into business for herself. Hiring the famous MAVO artist, dramatist, and set designer Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–1977), she had him design an avant-garde salon where she provided her clientele with the bobbed haircuts and cold wave sets that were the height of fashion.14 The television series also led to republication of Eisuke’s brassy paens to the watering holes and nightspots of Tokyo. “Colorful Shinjuku” (1930, “Hanayaka na Shinjuku ni tsuite”) is included in this volume.

If interest in the 1920s and 1930s had flagged in the years immediately following World War II and use of the term “modernism” narrowed to refer chiefly to experimental poetry in the *chōgenjitsu* or surreal/hyper-realistic style, suddenly *modanizumu* and Art Deco were all the rage in much the same way the United States witnessed a “thirties revival” interested in the film stars of the silver screen two or more decades ago. *Modanizumu* returned to everyday parlance and broader definition, covering a wide range of phe-
nomina that were considered *modan*, especially in the context of the modern city (*modan toshi*). Scholarly recuperation of modernist painting, artifacts, and texts proceeded apace. In the field of literature, it was Kawamoto Saburō, Maeda Ai, Sekii Mitsuo, Suzuki Sadami, Unno Hiroshi, Yamashita Takeshi, and others who took up the task. A comprehensive, ten-volume anthology of short modernist fiction, *Modan toshi bungaku* (1989–1991, *The Literature of the Modern City*), edited by Kawamoto, Suzuki, and Unno, was the first to appear in more than fifty years and to provide contemporary readers with the broad sweep of works by modernist writers. In addition, the publishing house of Yumani shobō was instrumental in reproducing texts of modernist novels and promoting scholarly research. Most important of all, these new stirrings represented not only a departure from past strategies that employed the aura of the West to bolster *modanizumu*’s claims to cultural legitimacy—a strategy often advanced by Japanese modernists in their day—but also the effort to define Japanese modernism on its own terms.

A new discourse evolved that, by deviating from the hegemonic notion of a singular nationality or cultural hemisphere as fountainhead, redefined modernism in terms of the emergence of the modern metropolis, an experience shared by denizens of the twentieth century the world over. In *Modan toshi Tōkyō*, for example, the journalist and urbanologist Unno Hiroshi took to the streets to recapture the mood and spectacle of the city as it looked three-quarters of a century ago, when Tokyo became Japan’s first *modan* metropolis. In doing so, he assumed the mantle of the *flâneur* (*tosbi yūbosha*), following in the footsteps of not only such famous ramblers as Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, but also a host of Japanese novelists, from Tamenaga Shunsui of Edo to Nagai Kafū in Tokyo, who have been perambulating and chronicling Japanese urban life since the eighteenth century. As Unno rambled across the bridges that span the Sumida River or wandered down the back alleys of Asakusa and the broad avenues of the Ginza, he narrated his tour by citing a miscellany of sources that ranged from restaurant menus and handbill advertisements to such local-color novels as Ubukata Toshirō’s *Tōkyō batsu-nobori* (1923, *First Trip to the Capital*), Kamitsuka Shōken’s *Tōkyō* (1928, *Tokyo*), and *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* by Kawabata. The task that confronted modernist writers, he argued, was creation of a spatial dimension within the novel (*shōsetsu kūkan*) capable of reflecting the expansion and explosive growth of Tokyo, which he saw as a vast playground for personal exploration and urban socialization. The modern city became an urban space (*toshi kūkan*) in which autonomous individuals from all parts of Japan—namely, the *o-nobori-san*, or country folk who visited or relocated to the capital—lived and wonder-wandered, reveling in their anonymity and the new identities that they created for themselves independent of the constraints of the traditional Japanese family system or the demands of the nation state. For Unno, modern metropolises such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto were the birthplace and natural home of the modern, liberated self in twentieth-century Japanese society. He took a highly optimistic
view of urban life, seeing it as a setting in which city and citizen lived in happy symbiosis.

**Fission and Fusion**

As for this volume, it positions itself between shifting currents of diversity and cross-fertilization, seeing international modernism as a combination of both fission and fusion—the fission of independent creativity and the fusion of cross-cultural interaction. Because, however, the discourse on modernism has historically been couched in language that is overwhelmingly reflective of events in the European sphere, past treatments of the subject both in and outside Japan have found it difficult to escape that frame of reference. What dates do we choose, for instance, as marking modernism’s incipience East and/or West? Are the key years 1910 and 1922, because they are the dates most commonly cited in the literature on Europe? Is it symmetry or coincidence that 1910—the year in which, according to Virginia Woolf, human nature changed forever and Europe ceased to be its nineteenth-century self—is also the date generally agreed on as marking the beginning of modernist art and prose in Japan?

Needless to say, it is difficult to find “modernisms” that operated in total isolation. This is especially true in the case of Japan because of the country’s long history of cultural reception and assimilation as well as the speed with which that process accelerated after the middle of the nineteenth century. News of developments in European modernist art arrived in Japan quickly, and translations of modernist literature were generated with striking rapidity, the time lag never being more than a decade even in the case of the most prodigious and difficult works to translate. Indeed the alacrity with which Japanese accessed information external to Japan puts to shame the level of cross-cultural intercourse that moved in the opposite direction or the still limited extent to which the West has acquainted itself with Japan. Nonetheless, as Steve Yao reminds us in *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (2002), “the generative importance of the practice of translation” was itself a salient feature of modernism the world over because it prioritized not only going farther afield for new sources of inspiration but also breaking down the walls of the prisonhouse of national languages or canonical notions about style.\(^{16}\)

As a cultural, artistic, and philosophical phenomenon that occurred across the globe circa the turn of the twentieth century, modernism was not solely the product of the historically privileged master texts, paintings, and manifestos of Western Europe. Just as the representation of the word “modernism” was transformed and naturalized by its rendition into Japanese via the *katakana* syllabary, its divergent pronunciation and orthography as *mo-da-ni-zu-mu* simultaneously foregrounds its affinity with yet also its distance from other modernisms.
Modernism as Modanizumu

Modanizumu, as the term “modernism” was rendered into Japanese in the late 1920s, became a powerful intellectual idea, mode of artistic expression, and source of popular fashion in Japan from approximately 1910 to 1940, a period that coincides with the emergence of other modernisms across the globe. It manifested itself as radically new movements in the arts, dramatic shifts in lifestyle, and sweeping socioeconomic changes. It redefined the age-old Japanese rule of taste by casting aside the authority of tradition and continuity in the name of the modan as the new measure of fashion, mores, and manners. As a form of cultural rebellion, it sent shock waves through Japan’s political and social establishment, which censored it as alien, injurious to public morals, or anti-Japanese. Bracketed by the democratic years of the Taishō era (1912–1926) and the hapless first decade of Shōwa (1926–1936), it shared much in common with other alternative lifestyle-isms that departed from the nation-centered and group-oriented values of traditional mainstream Japan—notably, individualism, internationalism, liberalism, and feminist liberation (kojin-shugi, sekai-shugi, jiyū-shugi, josei kaibō). At the same time, it aligned itself with what we now recognize as the first of the information and consumer revolutions of the twentieth century, when the new technologies of speed, sound, and light—the motorcar, airplane, telephone, radio, rotary press, and moving pictures—made it possible for culture to be mass-marketed to the emerging middle class in Japan’s urban centers. As the three epigraphs that preface this introduction suggest, Japanese-style modernism was pragmatic and powerful as a “new religion,” kaleidoscopic and contradictory as an “ideology of no fixed positions,” and independently minded and politically charged as l’esprit nouveau. These are but three definitions advanced by those who, experiencing the phenomenon firsthand, sought to capture the welter of artistic movements and lifestyle issues that energized Japanese life in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus we see modanizumu is a broad, complex, and at times elusive phenomenon. Getting at the heart of it is not easily done.17

Artistic Modanizumu

First and foremost, it is the schools and movements in the arts that define modanizumu: MAVO in painting, jun’eiga-geki in cinema, bunriiba in architecture, chōgenjitsu-shugi in poetry. Also of special interest here are the permutations on shin and shinkō—the new and the modern—that prefaced the names of the big and little magazines and coteries that shaped the world of Japanese modernist prose fiction.

Analogous movements in the West are far better known, reflecting developments across a far wider range of languages, cultural capitals, and nationalities: Symbolism, Successionism, Futurismo, Fauvism, Cubism, Constructivism, Imagism, Vorticism, Expressionism, Dada, Modern Art, the Abstract, die neue Sachlichkeit. Likewise with their defining moments: Igor
Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* in music (1913), T. S. Eliot’s “Prufrock” in poetry (1917), James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in prose (1914–1922), or Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* in painting. To quote the reporter covering the New York Armory Art Show of 1913, when Duchamp’s *Nude* was first shown in the United States, modern art burst upon the American scene “like an explosion in a shingle factory.” Modernism’s inaugural firsts came fast and furious, with each new ism pushing the envelope of its boisterous manifesto and initiating its particular brand of “demolition work” on traditional establishment art.

Doubtless each of us has our favorites. In painting, one thinks of Munch’s *The Scream* (1893), Matisse’s *Green Line* (1905), Picasso’s *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907), or Kandinsky’s *Improvisations* (1920s); in architecture, of Gropius’ Bauhaus in Dessau (1925), Le Corbusier’s “machine for living” at Savoye (1929), Miës Van der Rohe’s Pavilion in Barcelona (1929), and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim in New York City (1946–1959)—another descending staircase albeit in the form of a museum designed to display art in a single unfolding line. In music, there is the dissonance of Scriabin, Schoenberg, or Shostakovich, or the operas of Berg, Bartók, and Szymanowski; in film, Wiene’s *Doctor Caligari* (1919), Eisenstein’s *Potemkin* (1925), or Dreyer’s *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928); on stage, Strindberg’s *Dream Play* (1902), Valle Inclán’s *The Lamps of Bohemia* (1920), or Brecht’s *Three Penny Opera* (1928). In dance, there is Nijinsky, Duncan, or Graham; in prose, Gide’s *Immoralist* (1902), Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–1927), and Musil’s *Man without Qualities* (1930–1942); in poetry, Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes* (1918) or e. e. cummings set in lower case. And last but not least, Gertude Stein’s “arosearosearosearose.”

These are but a few of the canonical moments and monuments from the history of modernism in the arts of the West. They are now celebrated in museums and concert halls or enshrined in the annals of avant-garde literature and cinema quite contrary to the anarchical project that lay at the core of their original revolt—for surely anarchism is the philosophical root from which modernism springs. The establishment now patronizes modern art, just as its *objets* and *textes* exercise the minds of scholars. Indeed the critical literature on the subject has become an ever-widening gyre, and the list of formalistic traits that have been identified as modernist in art and literature is long: juxtaposition, elliptical apposition, parataxis, the play within the play, synaesthesia, metafiction, disjunction, interruption, flatness, spatiality versus linearity, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, free association, automatic writing, unconsciousness, primitivism, montage, atonality, epiphany, and, certainly most emblematic of all, the ubiquitous catalog.

By contrast, the defining moments and inaugural firsts of Japanese modernism are not well known outside Japan, and one may wonder where to begin. There are the oft-cited cross-cultural influences that have been prioritized as starting points in past treatments of the history of *modanizumu*: the
first renderings of Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud into Japanese in Ueda Bin’s *Kaichō* (1905, *Sound of the Tide*) or of Symbolist poetry in Nagai Kafū’s *Sangōsbū* (1912, *The Coral Collection*); Marinetti’s manifesto on Futurism that was rendered into Japanese only three months after its appearance in *Le Figaro* in 1909 by no less a literary light than the Meiji period novelist Mori Ōgai; the birth of *shingeki*, the new theater, and especially the Théâtre Libre (Jiyū gekijō) created by Osanai Kaoru, also in 1909; the debut of Matsui Sumako, Japan’s first stage actress and female star, as Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in 1911; the publication of Iwano Hōmei’s translation of Arthur Symon’s classic study *The Symbolist Movement* (1899; trans. Hyōshō no bungaku, 1914); or the growing influence of modern French literature due to the posting of the poet Paul Claudel as France’s ambassador to Tokyo in 1921 and a spate of translations from French novels ranging from Paul Morand’s *Ouvert la nuit* (1922; trans. *Yoru biraku*, 1924) to André Gide’s *L’immoraliste* (1902; trans. *Haitokusha*, 1924) and *Les caves du Vatican* (1914; trans. *Hōshō no nukeana*, 1928). Meanwhile, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Imperial Hotel, erected in the heart of Tokyo between 1917 and 1922, became legendary as an expression of modernist architecture that withstood earthquakes and war only to succumb to the wrecker’s ball in 1968.18

Still far less known are the beginnings of an indigenous modernism as seen in such abstract and iconoclastic paintings as Yorozu Tetsugorō’s *Self Portrait with Cloud* (1912), Murayama Kaita’s *Young Man Urinating* (1914), Tōgō Seiji’s *Woman with Parasol* (1916), Kanbara Tai’s *On the Subject of Scribebin’s “Poem of Ecstasy”* (1922), and Yanase Masamu’s *Me on a Morning in May Before Breakfast* (1923). Or there are the first showings of Japanese “pure films”—Sei no kagayaki (1918, *The Glory of Life*) and *Rōjō no reikon* (1921, *Souls on the Road*).

Although the seismic upheaval of the Great Kantō Earthquake that leveled much of Tokyo and Yokohama on September 1, 1923 is invariably cited as the metaphorical marker for the eruption of a modernist consciousness in Japan, such stirrings predated the earthquake by a decade or more. Even the first half of 1923 had already witnessed a notable cluster of modernist happenings: the publication of *Aka to kuro* (*Red and Black*), an important journal of anarchist poetry; the appearance of *Dadaist Shinkichi no shi* (*Poems by the Dadaist [Takahashi] Shinkichi*); or the famous, media-covered antics of MAVO, the iconoclastic group of constructionist painters, sculptors, and performance artists who, when ejected from a juried exhibit at the national museum in Tokyo’s Ueno Park, staged their own impromptu show on the park grounds and scuffled with the police when the artists threw rocks at the exhibition hall. As for modernist architecture, there were temporary structures—such as Horiguchi Sutemi’s Peace Exhibition Tower of 1922 or Maekawa Kunio’s La Salle de Spectacle, built as part of the Japanese pavilion at the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris—along with permanent ones like Yamada Mamoru’s Tokyo Central Telegraph Office of 1925 or Tsuchiura Kameki’s
Nonomiya Apartment House of 1934, which were intended to last, although they did not survive World War II. Others—like the Dōjinkai Aoyama Apartments built in 1927 along the grand boulevard of Omote-sandō in Harajuku, Tokyo, and long a symbol of rationalized modernist living—have been demolished in recent years to make way for postmodern malls and high-rise housing. Smaller commercial and residential structures have survived nonetheless, and they are to be found in the downtown and suburban sections of many Japanese cities. Finding the modan in contemporary Japan takes legwork, although the task has been made easier over the last three decades as Japanese museums, publishing houses, scholars, and the general public have turned to the business of revisiting modanizumu with considerable enthusiasm and nostalgia.

A GREEN SUN AND A TATTOO

In the arts of painting and prose, two works from 1910 signal the onset of an indigenous modernism. Not only did they raise the clarion call of rebellion against established art, but they also articulated a modernist message that emerged out of the context and idioms of Japanese culture.

First is the provocateur essay “Midori-iro no taiyō” (1910; trans. “A Green Sun,” 1992) by the sculptor and poet Takamura Kōtarō, who championed freedom of artistic expression through the creation of abstract art. After three years of life abroad in New York, London, and Paris, Takamura returned to Japan to find himself disillusioned not only with Japanese culture in general, but also with the art world in particular. The latter was, as he saw it, hopelessly in thrall to the antiquated notion of what he called local color, his term for the stereotypically orientalist ways in which Japanese artists depicted Japan. “There are,” he wrote of those working in both Japanese-style inks and Western-style oils, “not a few . . . who take a step or two, then hesitate, thinking that nature in Japan has a certain set of inviolable colors peculiar to it, so that if they infringe on it, their works will immediately lose their raison d’être—all this prompting them to suppress the flaming colors . . . in their hearts.”19 So pervasive was “seeing nature in Japan in light ink tones,” he lamented, that no other colors were tolerated, let alone imagined. Moreover, artists were bent on obtaining the stamp of officialdom, and works deviating from the norm were weeded out. Even a highly admired pioneer in oil painting, Kuroda Seiki, was intent on “striving to Japanize himself.”20 And, as for those who actively embraced orientalist notions of local color, he identified them as “tend[ing] toward Monarchism . . . in contrast to my leaning toward Anarchism.”21 Takamura’s condemnation of the Japanese artistic establishment was swift, hard-hitting, and personal. As he boldly announced in his opening salvo to “A Green Sun,” “People [have] become stuck in an unexpectedly insignificant place.”22

Takamura preferred flaming colors. Thus, his manifesto called for the liberation of Japanese painting from a hidebound emphasis on pictorialism
and orientalist understatement. He challenged his peers to paint “a green sun” to replace both the literalism and the provincialism of depicting Japan as the stereotypical or mystical Land of the Rising Sun. “If someone paints a ‘green sun,’ I will not say it is wrong. . . . The good or bad of a painting has nothing to do with whether the sun is green or flaming scarlet.”23 To the contrary, its worth lies in the “infinite authority in the artist’s Persönlichkeit [personality]. In every sense, I’d like to think of the artist as a single human being.”24 “I’d like the artist to forget he’s Japanese. I’d like him to rid himself entirely of the idea that he is reproducing nature in Japan. I’d like him to express on his canvas the tone of nature as he sees it, freely, indulgently, willfully.”25 Here we see Takamura’s challenge to the nation- and group-oriented bent of Japanese society as it operated in artistic circles. Although “A Green Sun” argues largely on behalf of individual expression and less explicitly for abstract painting, in retrospect we see that it was in the vanguard of articulating a rationale for the wave of highly individualistic abstract painting that began to be produced in the 1910s by the modernist artists Kanbara, Murayama, Tōgō, Yanase, and Yorozu. Moreover, the rationale is couched in terms of what will be achieved by no longer suppressing inner passions and flaming colors rather than in terms of new precedents emanating from Europe. No mention is made of Matisse or Picasso. Nor is the West evoked as the Other that is to be emulated. During and after his stay in the United States and Europe, Takamura became increasingly ambivalent about the artistic hegemony of the Western pantheon. In addition, his essay anticipates a growing disaffection with landscape painting, an art form that depicted reality pictorially. He calls instead for painting based on the creative powers of the imagination.

The second work that provocatively signals the onset of modanizumu is the short story “Shisei” (1910; trans. “The Tattoo,” 1962; “The Tattooer,” 1963), one of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s earliest pieces. If “A Green Sun” is hardly known outside Japan, “The Tattoo/er” belongs to the handful of Japanese fictional works that have achieved international recognition. Readers of Japanese literature will be familiar with this infamous tale of a master tattooer who transforms the body of a young girl into a work of art. In a single night, he embalishes her back with the image of large, lethal-looking spider.

At its coarsest level of interpretation, “The Tattoo/er” appears to be little more than a male sexual fantasy of seduction and control—and an early example of ero-guro nansensu. The artist drugs the girl, and in an erotically charged scene, he pricks her the whole night through with his vermilion needles. This is the level of interpretation at which the story is treated, for example, in Joyce Buñel’s dubious adaptation for the film Tattoo (1981) that is reset in contemporary America. The servant girl is turned into a runway fashion model living in New Jersey and the theme of sexual exploitation is developed far beyond the intent of Tanizaki’s original story.

On an another level of interpretation, however, “The Tattoo/er” is a
high-minded metaphor for an artist’s unrelenting, Pygmalion-like devotion to his craft and his determination to identify and tattoo the perfect canvas, thereby realizing the crowning achievement of his artistic career. Once the orgiastic event is over and the dream of creating a magnum opus played out, the tattooer is a spent man yet a fulfilled artist, liberated perhaps from further illusions or ambitions. Finally, the closing scene introduces a third layer of meaning in its dramatic and ironic reversal of readers’ expectations concerning gender roles. Until nearly the end of the story, the young girl is treated as an innocent and unsuspecting victim, but then she awakens to the desire to dominate and control men in the final paragraphs. Earlier passages suggest such desires are already latent within her, if not all women. Only now, as a result of the mentoring of the artist, have they been brought to the fore. Empowered by the spectacle that covers her back, the innocent maiden is transformed physically and metaphorically into the femme fatale of a male-devouring whore-spider (yorō-gumo). As a matter of fact, on the morning following her ordeal, she announces to the awed and exhausted tattooer that he is the first of many men who will live in thralldom to the beauty of her tattoo, her body now being a work of art. The artist is, she announces haughtily, the fertilizer (koyashi) essential to her new persona. Just as he had shown her a painting of an ornamental tree in full bloom surrounded by a pile of cadavers and had suggested that nature requires a constant supply of night-soil fertilizer to renew and regenerate its bounty, the story argues that art, power, and beauty are nurtured and made fertile only at great cost and sacrifice. The artist must pour body and soul into every creation; likewise, a truly beautiful woman must keep her looks alive by exacting subservience and tribute. Thus, even as Tanizaki begins his tale by stating tongue in cheek that “The Tattoo/er” is merely a playful celebration of “the noble virtue of frivolity” (“oroka” to ii tattoo toku), we discover his agenda of erotic and grotesque nonsense has considerable substance that lifts the story out of its coarsest level of interpretation. In fact, it raises genuine questions concerning the meaning of art, the nature of gender and power, and the problematics of beauty.

“The Tattoo/er” constitutes, moreover, an implicit social critique of Japan because, as we are told in its opening passages, the current day and age—namely, 1910, or two years before the end of the Meiji era—starkly contrasts with an earlier day and age—namely, the Edo period (1603–1867), when “things did not grate harshly against one another” (hageshiku kishimi-awanai jibun). Instead “the beautiful were the powerful ones” (atsukushii mono wa kyōja), and life was “free and relaxed” (nombiri shite ita). Blessed with leisure, people devoted themselves to the pursuit of fashion, craftsmanship, and art for art’s sake. Following a primitivist strategy that revisits an earlier and supposedly less sophisticated age, Tanizaki asks his readers to step back in time by nearly a century to consider the merits of life in Japan during what can be identified as the decades of Bunka and Bunsei (1804–1829). He presents
them as a time when wit and pleasure were highly esteemed—as were women who were depicted on the stage, for example, in heroic roles in plays like The Female Sadakurō (Onna Sadakurō), The Female Jiraiya (Onna Jiraiya), and The Woman Thunder God (Onna Narukami). It was an age of liberalism, affluence, and urbanity worthy of being reclaimed not in xenophobic retreat to the past but through rediscovery of a modernity latent and detectable within pre-Meiji history. Like many novelists writing in the years following Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, Tanizaki was disenchanted with the economic and human costs that accrued to an imperial power intent on building an international empire. In looking to the past for a different model of the future, he presents the townsman culture of the Edo period as an artistic and societal alternative to the policies of the Meiji establishment. Needless to say, in presenting his view of Edo as far nobler, he erases any vestige of the feudalistic authoritarianism historically associated with the samurai class, Neo-Confucianism, and the Tokugawa shogunate. Nor does he dwell on the price that art demands from its devotees by rendering them into fertilizer in the name of a higher beauty—a sacrifice that ironically rivals the demands that the Meiji era placed on its subjects by turning them into cannon fodder for the modern nation state. Instead he offers a vision of Edo that is paradoxically older yet more modern as well as more urbane and freer than the boorish and illiberal times of 1910. Such is the fantasy and social critique that Tanizaki implicitly invites us to consider in “The Tattoo/er.”

Thus, in its emphasis on the high price that art exacts, Tanizaki’s story paved the way for other literary works that celebrated art for art’s sake and the artist’s unwavering devotion to his craft. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s “Jigokuhen” (1918; trans. “Hell Screen,” 1948, 1961), the story of an artist who sacrifices the life of his only daughter to complete the screen, is perhaps the example that will be most familiar to readers of Japanese literature. As a matter of fact, Tanizaki’s “The Tattoo/er” and Akutagawa’s “Hell Screen” are often grouped together as works of the Aesthetic School (tambi-ba) and are seen not only as harbingers of modernism in prose but also as the beginnings of opposition to the literary school of Naturalism (shizen-shugi) and the narrative style of the I-novel, which emphasized flat, unvarnished, and sincere depiction in contrast to the new, spectacle-driven narrative style of the modernists. I shall return to this point concerning the fundamental differences in naturalist and modernist narrativity in Part 1. For the moment, suffice it to say that to paint the Rising Sun green, as Takamura suggested, and to champion Homo ludens as Tanizaki’s antidote to the harshness of contemporary times were the opening salvos in the Japanese modernist assault that, commencing in 1910, evolved into a culture war between Meiji and modernist conceptions of Japan and the country’s future. Of these two pieces of demolition work, Tanizaki’s diabolism—or akuma-shugi as he characterized his philosophy at this early stage of his career—was more provocative and sophisticated.
Vernacular Modernizumu

The story of Modernizumu is also inextricably tied to powerful socioeconomic forces that initiated an intensely urban phase in twentieth-century Japanese history. Modern times constituted a new chapter in the ongoing urbanization of Japan, a society in which urban centers developed early in history and where the tension between city and country has always been pronounced. Thus, Modernizumu chronicles the emergence of a new and vastly larger middle class of white-collar, salaried workers—a class distinct from the relatively small pool of intellectuals, professionals, and technicians who were the middle managers of urban society during the Meiji period. It is the drama of millions of Japanese who, by uprooting themselves from the countryside, moved to the big cities to man the juggernaut of a newly created import-export economy. It is the tale of the transformation of Osaka and Tokyo into Asia’s biggest and most modern metropolises as well as the efflorescence of provincial centers and ports—Fukuoka, Kobe, Kyoto, Otaru, and Yokohama. For example, between 1900 and 1932, Tokyo’s population mushroomed from one to six million, making it the second largest city in the world after New York. Modernizumu also marks the advent of cinema, big daily newspapers, and radio. It tells us how the silver screen, rotary presses, and gramophone combined forces to educate the public and create a vision of the modern city as a well-stocked department store marketing convenience, cosmopolitanism, and the dream of social advancement for salaried men and café waitresses alike. It is the story of big capital, the rise of the newly minted Narikin/nouveau riche, and of a mighty economic engine that fueled not only competition in international trade but also Japan’s ascendancy as an imperialist power. I shall refer to this aspect of Japanese modernism as vernacular or popular Modernizumu in order to point to broader zeitgeist issues of lifestyle and fashion and distinguish them from parallel developments in the fine and plastic arts already touched on. Although vernacular expressions of the modern in Japan often overlapped with those in the West, it is in the arena of popular culture that local considerations actively came into play and the divergence from Western-style modernism is most pronounced.

As postmodernist critics have pointed out, the marked tendency of modernist studies to focus on the canonical moments in painting, literature, and architecture has had the effect of blindsiding us to the close association, if not collusion, between high art and its commercialization in both highbrow and vernacular forms. As leading postmodern critic Terry Eagleton once announced, “High Modernism was born at a stroke with mass commodity culture.” Consequently, a meaningful discussion of the defining moments of modernism in the West—and the East as well—must also take into account its commercial and vernacular manifestations.

In the case of Europe and the United States, one thinks of Josephine Baker, Charlie Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich, Frankenstein, Mae West, Art
Deco, Ragtime, Swing, *Rhapsody in Blue, An American in Paris, Private Lives, Vanity Fair* magazine, the novels of Morand, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald, the fashion photography by Hoyningen and Huene, searchlights, skywriting, and that most exotic of dances, the tango. These forms of vernacular modernism penetrated Japan with alacrity. The moving pictures were a singularly important conduit given their commercial power, transcultural influence, and infinite repeatability. Not only were the leading men and women of foreign silent films and then the talkies well known to the Japanese public, but also, as Abe Tomoji’s “A Negro in Cinema,” included in this volume, suggests, character actors like the African-American Stepin Fetchit had a following in Japan. Only jazz rivaled film in terms of its global reach, popularity, and ubiquity. In 1920, *jazz* received its first mention in the Japanese press, and Japan’s first dance hall, Kagetsuen, opened in Yokohama. In 1925, Japan consolidated struggling radio stations to create the first national and nationwide broadcasting studio, NHK (*Nippon hōōkyōoku*). Meanwhile, *janarizumu*, or journalism in the American vein, became a byword for news reported in provocative or sensational ways. As Hollywood films, swing jazz, and yellow journalism saturated the Japanese market, vernacular *modanizumu* came to be associated with Americanization and the rise of mammonism.

Like the arts, Japanese vernacular *modanizumu* is hardly known outside Japan. Take the institution of the *benshi*, the raconteurs or film narrators for the silent pictures, whose style of narration evolved from longstanding traditions in the puppet and Kabuki theaters. Takeda Rintarō’s “Japan’s Three-Penny Opera” tells us of the final demise of this institution that flourished circa 1900 to 1932. Or there are the illustrations of popular artists such as Takehisa Yumeji and Takabatake Kashō, the revues and sideshows of Asakusa Park, the all-girl cast of the Takarazuka theater, the new genres of detective and mystery fiction, and the story of the modern boy and girl, as well as of “the cultural life.” The appearance of these elements of popular fashion and lifestyle were closely tied to a major generational shift. Born on the cusp of the twentieth century, Japanese modernists belonged to Japan’s first generation to live and think in global terms. In the case of Tokyo, they were witness to a shift in the cultural center of the city from Asakusa, once the commercial heart of Edo and then the entertainment hub of the Meiji era, to the Ginza, with its broad avenues for window shopping—known as *gin-bura*, or strolling on the Ginza—and the emergence of a new kind of café society represented by the establishments of “Le Printemps” and “The Lion.” By 1928 they were passengers aboard Asia’s first subway, the underground line connecting the old and new centers of the city—Asakusa and Ginza—and providing transportation to the department stores located in Ueno and Kyō-hashi. As the population of Tokyo swelled and the capital expanded in new directions, new entertainment and commercial centers began to emerge in suburban sectors. Yoshiyuki Eiske’s “Colorful Shinjuku” is an ironic paean to the raw vitality of the city’s rapid growth. Everywhere the business of be-
ing _modan_ was spelled out in the slashing, eye-catching typeface of the Art Deco–like _zu'an-mo'ji_ that advertised anything and everything from bottled beer to _l'esprit nouveau._

**Moda, Mobo**

The shift from the studied pomp of the Meiji era to the energetic and irreverent mood of Taishō and Shōwa is personified best by the _moga mobo_, or the _modan garu_ and _modan boi_. As champions of the _modan_, they shed their kimonos for Western dress: sailor pants for the men and long, lightweight dresses worn with cloche hats and bobbed hair for the women. In 1925 only 1 percent of Japanese women wore Western-style clothes versus 67 percent of males. Within five years, however, young women had switched to dresses in overwhelming numbers. The modern girl caught the eye of the media. Far more than the _modan boi_, she became the target of controversy, censure, and regulation. In modernist texts women are frequently treated as icons of rebellion or flashpoints for social controversy. Tanizaki’s portrayal of Naomi, the Eurasian-looking dominatrix in _Chijin no ai_, is an oft-cited example. Similarly, in his novel _Sasameyuki_ (1948; trans. _The Makioka Sisters_, 1957), Tanizaki identifies Taeko, the deviant, nontraditional sister, as a modern girl. Meanwhile, Yumiko and Haruko, the heroines of Kawabata’s _Scarlet Gang of Asakusa_, represent competing portraits of modern Asakusa girls.

In the stories presented here it is the female characters who are most acutely aware of the growing discontinuity between old and new Japan and of their status at the cutting edge of change. Funahashi Seiichi’s _Diving_ provides examples of three young women and their responses to life in the 1930s. The character Sayo quietly but heroically rejects the demands of the traditional Japanese family and urges her husband Ryūji to join her in pursuing the _esprit nouveau_ of their generation and the natural inclinations of their hearts. Meanwhile, Ejima Itsuko is the rare instance of a woman permitted to join the all-male membership of a literary magazine. In spite of her independent and quixotic spirit, she is identified as sexually aggressive, emotionally volatile, and unduly calculating—or the panoply of negative traits that society often assigned to the new woman. A similar treatment applies to the character of Miya Toshiko, Japan’s Number One Taxi Dancer. Meanwhile, in Tachibana Sotoo’s _Tale of Trouble from the Bar Roulette_, scores of waitresses are hired and fired with impunity, and much fun is made of the character of Inamoto Yōko, the novelist-cum-bar-owner-cum-virago who talks like a man and who is modeled on the real-life novelist Yamada Junko, a figure of scandal and controversy at the time. The female characters in these novellas point to the growing presence of women in the workforce, largely in service occupations, and the rare instance of a woman pursuing a professional career. The most independent of the modern women in this volume is Mukoyama Reiko of Yoshiyuki’s “Colorful Shinjuku.” Not only does Reiko solicit her own employment, but she also arrives at the job interview riding the tool of her trade—a
motorcycle with sidecar. “Anything is permissible” (arayuru baai wo yurusu), she announces in hammering out a contract.

**The Cultural Life**

But the sybaritic girl and boy address only a facet of the modernist lifestyle because the period is also defined by another key phrase, the cultural life, or *bunka sekatsu*, that is typically associated with the efficient in-town apartment house or the cozy suburban residence. When Japan’s first display of model homes proved an instant success at the Peace Exposition held at Ueno, Tokyo, in 1922, private contractors began building housing developments as well as commuter bus and train lines on the outskirts of metropolitan centers.31 *Kultur* (from the German) and *bunka* became labels for the convenience and comfort of these structures known as *bunka jutaku*, or *Kultur* houses. Soon the term was applied to nearly everything: from the ism of *bunka-shugi*, or culturalism, a philosophy of individual and national self-improvement, to *Kultur* films (*bunka eiga*), to new and improved cultural pots and pans (*bunka nabe*).

Through its portrayal of Sachiko, her husband Teinosuke, and the house where they reside in the affluent suburb of Kansai Ashiya, Tanizaki’s *The Makioka Sisters* provides us with an excellent glimpse into the cultural life of an upper-middle-class, urban Japanese family from the late 1930s. The ostensible focus of the novel is, as its readers will know, Yukiko, the first of Sachiko’s two younger sisters, and the challenge that the Makioka family faces in arranging a marriage for Yukiko. Because Yukiko is presented as the embodiment of all that is beautiful, gracious, and self-effacing in the traditional definition of Japanese femininity, she requires a husband who can recognize and cherish her comely virtues. She is the antithesis of the *moga* and a study in contrast to her younger sister Taeko. As the novel progresses, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that the heroes of the novel are Sachiko and Teinosuke because of their superb and spontaneous sense of good taste, which is reflected in their skill at being à la mode in everything from sushi to French wines and their unrivaled sense in identifying the best sites for family reunions and marriage interviews. Indeed much of the pleasure of reading *The Makioka Sisters* resides in observing their astute attention to detail. It is a level of competence, refinement, and sensitivity that, by contrast, is sorely lacking in Sachiko’s older sister Tsuruko and her brother-in-law Tatsuo, who presides over the family’s reputation and finances as the titular head of the Makiokas. As Sachiko and Teinosuke quickly recognize, keeping up family appearances can no longer be achieved by a slavish devotion to tradition or convention, especially now that the Makioka fortune has dwindled and the country is at war in China. To the contrary, it will be found in the élan of “making it new,” to borrow Ezra Pound’s modernist phrase. As the novel makes explicit again and again, this resourceful couple is unrivaled in their ability to enliven the moment through mastery of, in the Japanese idiom, the art of being chic or *iki*—a term of aesthetic approbation to be discussed in short order. Even as
Sachiko and her husband bow in the direction of tradition, they are intent on infusing it with the *modan*, albeit never cheaply or blatantly so. Indeed, one might call *The Makioka Sisters* a manual of *modanist* manners because it is an excellent guide to the cultural life of Taishō and early Shōwa Japan.

**Pretty Boys and Girls**

The growth of the middle class and the ongoing socialization of new urbanites into city life also saw the escalation of educational opportunities for children at the secondary levels of middle and higher school and, for the select few, at the university level. Many of the young writers included in this volume began their literary careers while enrolled in college. Even today, university education in Japan serves as a hiatus for self-exploration. Not until after World War II did compulsory education extend beyond primary school but city dwellers and white-collar workers in the 1920s were already quick to recognize the social and economic advantages that accrued with additional years of schooling. Greater time spent in school also had the effect of ushering in a youth culture that not only institutionalized but also beatified the pleasures of an extended childhood and adolescence.

The emergence of the youth market in the 1920s is evident in, for example, the rapid growth of commercial magazines for preteenagers such as *Nippon sbōnen* (1906–1939, *Nippon Boy*), *Shōnen kurabu* (1914–1962, *Boys’ Club*), and *Shōjo no tomo* (1908–1948, *Girls’ Companion*). These magazines provided a mix of education and entertainment that emphasized science and technology for boys and homemaker skills for girls. Particularly noteworthy was the appearance of the magazine *Shin seinen* (1920–1950, *New Youth*), which was pitched to teenagers and young adults. Within three years of its debut, the magazine emerged as the leading venue for the modern detective story (*tantei sbōsetsu*), thereby launching the careers of Edōgawa Ranpo, Tani Jōji, and Yumen Kyūzaku, who became famous as writers of mystery and adventure fiction. Ranpo’s first exercise, “The Two-Sen Copper Coin,” appears in this anthology for the first time in a translation that includes a careful unraveling of the coded message central to the story’s riddle. In a similar way, Tani’s “The Shanghaied Man” foregrounds the importance of mastering codes. Without a knowledge of, first, the argot of seafaring men and, then, the Morse code, the protagonist of the story would have been condemned to languish forever on land, if not in jail. The editors of *Shin seinen* and their chief spokesman, the critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, saw the magazine as performing a civic and pedagogical mission by equipping youngsters with the intellectual and social skills essential to success in modern society and urban life. They emphasized the acquisition of detective and ratiocinative thinking displayed by such popular *Shin seinen* heroes as Ranpo’s master sleuth Akechi Kogorō or Tani’s samurai-for-the-masses Tange Sazen. Meanwhile, in the case of *shōjo zasshi*, magazines for young girls, melodramatic stories (*shōjo sbōsetsu*) predominated, many of them modeled after the *Hana monogatari* (1924, *Flower Tales*) cre-
ated by Yoshiya Nobuko, inventor of the genre. A typical story describes the vicissitudes of a beautiful and innocent girl who, after suffering misfortune, triumphs and achieves happiness.

Much of the material written for the youth market also catered to a taste for nonsense literature (nonsenseu bungaku) and curiosity seeking (ryōki sbumi). The former consisted of light-hearted silliness or provocative parodies and satires, while the latter focused on a popular fascination with the ero-guro aspects of abnormal physiology and psychology drawn from police files, news reports, or translations of case studies by Krafft-Ebing, Freud, Hirschfeld, Ellis, and other Western psychologists and sexologists.32 Finally, magazines such as Kagaku gabō (1923–1950, 1956–1961, Science Illustrated) marketed cutting-edge developments in science, technology, and science fiction. Karel Capek’s play R.U.R. (1921, Rossum’s Universal Robots) was translated into Japanese as Jinzo ningen (The Man-Made Human) and mounted on the stage of the modernist Small Theater at Tsukiji in Tokyo (Tsukiji shōgekijō) in the same year that it was published in Czechoslovakia. Objects of postmodern fascination today such as robots and animé first make their appearance in this period. As a variation on the illustrated youth novel, manga comics began appearing in magazines that catered to the youth market.

Romanticization of prepubescent youthfulness has a long history in Japanese culture and literature, as seen, for instance, in medieval tales of temple acolytes or Edo period nanshoku, or male-male love, stories that celebrated loyalty between an older male (nenja) and his ephebe (chigo). The segregation of male and female children after primary school and the prolongation of education into the middle school and high school years gave new impetus to this traditional celebration of the adolescent male in the form of idolization of the pretty boy (bisshōnen)—as well as the newly added category of the pretty girl (bisshōjo). The phenomenon was especially true in the case of publications for the youth market. While a number of prominent artists and illustrators worked in this vein, the commercial artist Takabatake Kashō became particularly renowned for his drawings of bisshōnen and bisshōjo.33 His pretty boys appear in simple kasuri kimono, sandals, and regulation school hats with identifying badges on the hatbands, while young girls are dressed in school uniforms or traditional kimono. More exotic poses depict schoolboys fighting like samurai warriors or KO’ing foreign opponents in the boxing ring, while schoolgirls appear in tank-top swimwear, though not in mixed company. References to pretty boys and same-sex crushes appear in several stories included here: Murayama Kaita’s “The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino,” Inagaki Taro’s “The Story of R-chan and S,” and Kajii Motojirō’s “The Ascension of K.”

Perhaps the best expression of the romanticization and commercialization of adolescent exuberance is to be found in the creation in 1913–1914 of the all-girl theater (shōjo kageki) created by the railroad and department store magnate Kobayashi Ichizō. Conceived as a means to attract customers to a spa
that Kobayashi built in Takarazuka on his commuter train line to the outskirts of Osaka, the Takarazuka Revue rapidly expanded to fill two theaters—one, at the original site (1924), and the second in Tokyo (1934)—and to establish a finishing school and a music academy for girl performers. The revue, theaters, and school are still going strong today. Pertinent here is Takarazuka’s development of new modes of adolescent female representation. On the one hand, the all-girl review promoted the image of the pretty and desexualized bishōjo actress, who constituted a modern update on the traditional theatrical role of the innocent, unmarried daughter (musume-yaku). On the other hand, it also became scandalously famous for the epicene and erotically charged performances of its female actors who impersonated men (otoko-yaku) both on and off stage. Adolescent innocence, androgyny, gender-crossing, and moga-like assertiveness—as well as latent rebelliousness and homoeroticism—have been the essential ingredients in the Takarazuka formula ever since its creation nearly a hundred years ago.34

**Iki—the Aesthetic of Edo Cool, Taishō Chic**

Articulation of an adult aesthetic of modernist urbanity belongs, however, to the scholar and philosopher Kuki Shūzō and his famous disquisition on Japanese chic, *Iki no kōzō* (1930; trans. *The Structure of Detachment*, 2004). In everyday parlance, *iki* is a term of aesthetic praise directed toward a person’s manner of dress, deportment, and air of being fashionable. Smart, chic, gallant, stylish, sexy, and risqué are approximations in English, yet none does the word justice. Because Kuki—who was the son of a well-to-do member of the peerage and later a professor of philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University—lived in Europe from 1921 to 1928 and came into contact with the philosophers Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, and Edmund Hussel, he had ample opportunity to observe Western culture and to learn its vernacular and philosophical categories. As a result, he came to believe *iki* was an intrinsically Japanese expression if not a worldview distinct to Japan. As he notes on the first page of his study of the subject via a pun on the homophones of *iki* as “chic” and *iki* as the verb “to live,” “in the final analysis, *iki* [being chic] is an *ikitata* [way of living] unique to Japan.” He describes *iki* as a combination of coquetry, pluck, and resignation (*hitai, ikiji, akirame*) and then proceeds to a hermeneutical exploration of its aesthetics and psychodynamics that includes a schematic diagram that illustrates how *iki* intersects with other well-known terms of Japanese aesthetic approbation or disapproval: namely, that Japanese-style chic possesses a touch of understatedness (*shibumi*) and showiness (*bude*), that it bridges high and low taste (*jōbin, gebin*), and that it is the antithesis of boorishness (*yabu*). The source of its ironic freshness derives in part from its parlous state of indeterminacy.35

While it is not possible to reconstruct here the complexities of Kuki’s thesis—the reader is referred to Hiroshi Nara’s richly annotated translation—suffice it to say *iki* arises in the context of a playful but controlled tango
of overture and standoffishness—a push-pull tension that emerges from the interplay of anticipation and frustration. Such feelings apply in many social situations, but they are especially pronounced in negotiations between the sexes where a display of emotion is teased out by the lure of gratification yet is simultaneously tempered by circumspection over possible rejection. Kuki writes: “A coolly discerning knowledge based on personal or social experience rules iki, whose existence depends on maintaining possibility as possibility. . . . Iki allows for being tinged by another color without being muddled by it.” Such feelings, he argues, are characteristic of a mature and somewhat jaded or bittersweet view of life that falls midway in the human lifespan between the saccharine and uninhibited passions of youth and the astringent and restrained attitudes of age. In modernist literature, for example, Kawabata’s Snow Country articulates this contradictory combination of attraction and repulsion, as seen in the on-again/off-again relationship that develops between the male and female protagonists, the art critic Shimamura and the geisha Komako, in the course of Shimamura’s three visits to the spa where Komako lives and works in the snow country. Among the selections presented here it finds its expression in the aesthetic of strong or severe beauty (tsuyoi utsukushisa, karai utsukushisa) enunciated by Osaki Midori in her story “Shoes Fit for a Poet,” in which the modernist poet redefines beauty as “supple and solid” and as a masculinization of the feminine. This tough or hard-edged art possesses the uncanny power to both attract and repel—whether in the form of pennmanship, a naked foot, or what becomes the story’s central image, “a [woman’s] remarkable pair of shoulders . . . soft and inviting yet sharply defined.”

Kuki’s study sought, therefore, to explore the phenomenology of a quotidian term and to identify its aesthetics conceptually and schematically—hence, the “structure” (kōzō) of iki in the title of his ruminations on the topic. In plumbing the origins of the term, moreover, he engages in creating a historiography that outlines how the iki aesthetic and lifestyle emerged during the Bunka/Bunsei years of the Edo period. In doing so, he roots through the appropriate historical resources: the literature of the Edo period novelist Tamenaga Shunsui, the stylish conventions of the pluckish Fukagawa geisha, and the lyrics of shamisen music performed in the Utazawa and Kiyomoto repertoires. As noted in reference to “The Tattoo/er,” these are the years that Tanizaki evoked as the quintessence of Edo townsman culture and a lifestyle more modern than Meiji.

Finally in his study of iki, Kuki was engaged in the production of a Nihonjin-ron, or theory of Japanese culture. Like many Japanese intellectuals thinking and writing in the twentieth century, he sought to define what was uniquely Japanese, especially in contrast to the West. Yet, even as he literally and figuratively returns to Japan from Europe to delve into an aesthetic that derives from cultural norms of a century earlier, his model of urbanity and sophistication—even to the point of fashionable snobbism—resonates to a
surprising degree with definitions of the modan of the 1920s and 1930s. To be iki and modan are strikingly synonymous.

Like his close friend Tanizaki, Kuki perceived a modernist spirit at work in the townsman and demimonde culture of the late Edo period. It is a view that he also shared with the writers Nagai Kafū and Ishikawa Jun, although they placed the site of origination for the modernist impulse in Edo a quarter of a century earlier in the Tenmei period (1781–1789) and the erudite circles of the bunjin literati, especially writers of sharebon pun books and kyoka comic verse. In fact, “Mars’ Song,” the story by Ishikawa that appears in this volume, singles out the Tenmei literati Ōta Nanpo and Hatanaka Kan-sai for their timelessly modern sense of cool and dispassionate refinement. Moreover, their sanity, humor, and self-control are offered as an antidote to the overheated madness of war and militarization that swept Japan in 1937–1938. Not only is war insane, as the first-person narrator of “Mars’ Song” argues, it is the antithesis of all that is iki. There may be no easy equivalent for iki in English, but “Edo cool” and “Taishō chic” come close to encapsulating the ideal of being au courant in Japan during the respective periods of Tenmei/Bunka/Bunsei and the 1920s/1930s.

**The Essence of Modanizumu**

What broad, fundamental statements can we make about modanizumu? Japanese novelists who set out to define their modernist approach systematically are few, but the insights of those who were intimately involved with modanizumu in prose—namely, the quotations from Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Ryūtanji Yū, and Funahashi Seiichi cited as epigraphs at the beginning of this introduction—offer suggestions for getting at the theoretical essence of Japanese modernism.

First, Akutagawa coins two words to describe it: kindai-kyō, or the worship of the modern, and its synonym, seikatsu-kyō, or the worship of living or one’s livelihood. In addition, he makes a point of drawing attention to the fact that these two religions or teachings (kyō) must be correctly understood as meaning “the Ism of the Modern” and “the Ism of Life, or Living.” Thus modanizumu is an ism tantamount to a religion, yet rather than resembling the historical institutions created by Christ, Buddha, or Zoroaster, it finds its parallel among the so-called new religions (shin-shōkyō) that, like Ōmoto-kyō and Sōka Gakkai in Japan or Bahai in Iran, came into existence at the end of the nineteenth century and displayed a propensity for the eclectic, secular, and pragmatic that departed from the absolute values of traditional belief systems. These new religions emphasize life in this world rather than the next, even if they are not without the evangelical zeal of older eschatological creeds.

As an ideology or ism of the modern, Akutagawa’s modanizumu also closely resembles the philosophy of Vitalism (vita-ism) as it was advanced by the turn-of-the-century French thinker Henri Bergson, who posited the existence of a creative spirit that informs the history of human thought and
civilization. In the 1920s Bergson’s ideas were in vogue in Japan, especially among modernists, who responded favorably to his concept of \textit{\`{e}lan vital} as a disruptive but ever-evolving life force that operates in human history. As the scholar of \textit{modanizumu} Suzuki Sadami argues, the belief in life and a life force was a central tenet of Japanese anarchism and modernism.\textsuperscript{19} We see it expressed, for example, at the very end of Itō Sei’s \textit{Streets of Fiendish Ghosts}, in which the brooding protagonist, in dispelling the past misdeeds of his life, is determined to survive at all costs.

Finally, Akutagawa sees \textit{modanizumu} as a form of materialism that is intimately tied, on the one hand, to the pragmatic business of getting on with everyday living—“eating, drinking, copulating”—and, on the other, to an existential credo or raison d’être. His “Ism of the Modern” is a profession of faith in the power of progress to make life better, to improve society through science and technology, and to generate greater opportunities for individual choice and self-expression. Regarding the awesome power of the modern, he has no doubts; he is, in fact, somewhat intimidated. The Cathedral of Modernism, he says, is “the biggest building in the land,” and the countless antennae of the radio towers that rise from its great dome are symbols of technology, international communication, and the power of the new media. Enshrined at the center of this cathedral is the Tree of Life (\textit{seimei no ki}) as well as those whom he identifies, albeit somewhat ironically, as modernism’s principal saints: Gauguin, Nietzsche, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Wagner, and the Japanese novelist Kunikida Doppo.

His effusions about \textit{modanizumu} notwithstanding, Akutagawa was profoundly ambivalent and skeptical about modernism’s promise for the future. His definition of \textit{modanizumu} as the religion of daily living appears, after all, in his last work but one, \textit{Kappa} (1927; trans. \textit{Kappa}, 1970), an allegorical tale that he published in March 1927 before taking his life at the age of thirty-five in July. \textit{Kappa} tells the tale of a mythological modernist land populated by a race of highly intelligent water creatures known as the Kappa. The novel’s narrator and Akutagawa’s alter ego—Patient 23 in a suburban mental hospital—falls into a hole in the ground much like Alice’s entry into Wonderland and thereupon visits the sites and salons of Kappaland. Yet even as Patient 23 admires the fully rationalized and modernist lifestyle of the Kappa, and he uses its virtues to satirize the shortcomings of Japan and of humankind, he is also brutally frank in describing its cruel limitations, such as the rank economic exploitation of one Kappa by another or the highly arbitrary use of capital punishment. For Akutagawa, the Ism of the Modern is a double-edged sword. What may seem like \textit{Alice in Wonderland} can all too quickly devolve into \textit{Animal Farm}.

Like Akutagawa, Ryūtanji also sees the modernist worldview as rejecting the absolutism of traditional religions and ideologies, yet he experiences none of Akutagawa’s ambivalence. Moreover, he seeks to emphasize its non-ideological nature, a position assumed by many Japanese modernists who,
opposed to Marxism, identified with art and the modern. In Ryūtanjī’s definition, **modanizumu** abhors fixity of any sort, embracing instead flow, movement, and relativity, and he likens it to a special frame of mind, a posture consciously adopted toward the business of living (*tokusubu na isbikiteki seikatsu taidō*). He compares it to the all-encompassing panorama of motion pictures and, through his metaphor of the movie camera and its rotary shutter, to an endless and indiscriminate stream of images exposed on a role of film. The flickering yet seamless continuity of the moving pictures is, he implies, an apt description for the ineffable and paradoxical nature of an ideology of no fixed positions. **Modanizumu** flows “at the base of our lives,” he says, yet it is not an ideology that “adheres to any fixed phenomenon or set state of being.” His image calls to mind Virginia Woolf’s famous metaphor of the twentieth century as a black box in which randomness replaces nineteenth-century orderliness.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Ryūji and Sayo, the married couple and central protagonists in Funahashi Seichi’s *Diving*, do not use the word **modanizumu** per se but are advocates of *atarashii seisbin* (new spirit), a term that entered Japanese as a translation of L’*esprit nouveau*. Although L’*esprit nouveau* originally referred to the purist movement in painting and architecture started in Paris shortly after World War I by the painter Amédée Ozenfant and the architect Le Corbusier, it was used in Japan in the early and mid-1930s as a byword for the activism of European intellectuals such as André Malraux, who joined the Popular Front in France and Spain and campaigned with other writers on behalf of “the defense of culture” and against the rise of fascism and Nazism. Although Ryūji is aware of the catastrophic events taking place in Europe, and he recognizes their deleterious effect on politics in Japan, what he and his wife mean by a modern *esprit* is the broader cause of opposition to the old mold (*furui kabi*) of Japan’s feudalistic past, especially as embodied in the patriarchal family system. As the title of the novella *Diving* suggests, they seek to take a headlong plunge into an unfettered world of their own self-realization. In Ryūji’s case, this existential leap translates into jettisoning the family business to pursue a career as a writer of fiction; in Sayo’s, it means abandoning the traditionally defined role of dutiful wife and daughter-in-law. To go diving is to follow one’s heart—or what the novel calls *soshitsu*, predisposition or temperament, and glosses as *inkurinēbon* (inclination). Near the end of the story, Sayo reminds us “our natural inclinations [*sosbitsu+inkurinēbon*] are a towering presence in our lives. No matter how hard or how often we try to suppress them, their inner evolution is a force that inevitably rises to quash the tyranny of external reality. . . . the pure and unmitigated commitment to making the best of one’s talents as well as the courage to hurl oneself down that path . . . signify the emergence of a heightened level of consciousness in even the most ordinary human being.” In telling the tale of this couple’s rebellion and their search for the spirit of a new sense of selfhood, Funahashi gives expression to a philosophy of actionism, or *kōdō-sbugi*, as it was advanced by him and his fel-
low coterie members—Abe Tomoji, Komatsu Kiyoshi, Itō Sei, Tanabe Moichi, and others—in founding the coterie magazine Kōdō (1933–1935, Action!), an important periodical in the history of Japanese literary modanizumu.

For Akutagawa, Ryūtānji, and Funahashi, modanizumu was a worldview with a telos and epistemology even as they deemed it secular and materialist. If Akutagawa puzzled over the distinction between religion and ism, then Ryūtānji emphasized modanizumu’s specular aspects and Funahashi, its existential. All three recognized its materialistic side and saw considerable danger of it devolving into mammonism. At the same time, they recognize its spiritual dimension as well as its potential as secular humanism.

**The Historical Divide**

In its broadest usage, modanizumu represents the introduction of a new definition of the modern into a society already intensely involved in the process of rapid modernization and Westernization since 1868. While it shares traits in common with other exceptionalist periods in Japanese cultural history that showed a strong preference for “nowness” over tradition—be it the *imamekashiba* extolled as a virtue in *Genji monogatari* (ca. 1010; trans. *The Tale of Genji*, 1925, 1976, 2001), the feisty spirit of *iki* during the cultural efflorescence of the Tenmei and Bunka/Bunsei eras, or the *tōsei* fashions “in the current style” of the earliest years of the Meiji period when imperial restoration policies had yet to solidify—what sets it apart from these earlier variations on being up-to-date is its peculiar nesting of the *modanist* within the modern. It is this double-edged modernity that imparts an extra level of complexity to modanizumu. By virtue of being a heterogeneous *modan* embedded in yet rebelling against a dominant, quasi-modern, and increasingly anachronistic narrative of Meiji-style modernization, modanizumu also sets itself apart from the modernist rebellions of Western Europe, where the revolt against the past constituted a less problematic antithesis between tradition and modernity. Perhaps its readiest parallels are to be found in the modernisms of cultures and subcultures that were also historically double-binded in the pursuit of the modern, even as they shared in the tension between rebellion and formality that defines all modernist movements. Doubly or triply conflicted modernist narratives on a national level like those of the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution of 1917 or the transformation of Ottoman into modern Turkish culture are likely examples, as are those of a cultural or personal nature such as the African-American experience with modernism in the United States or modernist modes of expression in early queer or gay literature. Exploration of these parallels lies beyond the scope of this volume, however.

Looking at Japan today and where it stands in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the divide between the Meiji and Modernist conceptions of modernity becomes all the more apparent. If Meiji was the modern Neo-Confucian nation state that stood for gunboats, paternalistic control, and imperial pomp, then modanizumu had the foresightenedness to look farther
down the road and envision a time when Japan might become a superpower in the business of living (seikatsu taikoku), to cite a phrase coined during the days of Japan’s Economic Miracle. Of these competing definitions of modernity, it appears modanizumu’s was the more prescient and far-reaching. Its implicit vision of a utilitarian and pluralistic utopia and its pursuit of what it called the cultural life clearly anticipated the largely secularized, half-capitalist/half-socialist, semi-international, and quasi-pacifist model of urban efficiency, clean technology, and active patronage of the arts that Japan has become today. The many value-added accoutrements routinely associated with the richness, leisure, convenience, and consumerism of contemporary Japanese culture—be they robotics, fax machines, video players, manga, animé, the pocket orchestra of a Sony Walkman, or a street brigade of cell phones users—surely trace their origins to the sleekness of design, rationalization of function, and finesses at handling the business of living that were the product of modanizumu’s fusion of art, technology, and commerce. Its aesthetics and politics privileged a purposeful indeterminacy of spontaneity and play, if not a fair degree of androgyny and nonessentialism. Or as Ryūtanji Yū argued in his kaleidoscopic metaphor, life became a never-ending moving picture that embraced the relativism of no fixed positions.

Modanizumu’s day in the Japanese sun was relatively brief, commencing shortly before the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 and ending with Japan’s descent into the dark valley of war and destruction after 1938. Not without a threnody of its own, given the earthquake of 1923, the economic crash of 1929, the takeover of Manchuria in 1931, and invasion of China in 1937, it marched—or perhaps more apropos to the period, danced—to the beat of a different drummer. For a short while, liberality, self-cultivation, and an air of affluence were in vogue, and they were pursued with the urbanity and playfulness of adult chic and adolescent exuberance. By all reports, Japan’s modanist age was a sight to see—and a time to be seen in.

Notes


5. It is interesting to note how Edward Seidensticker’s views on the issue of Tâ-
nizaki’s “orientalization” and “return to Japan” have changed over time. In his memoirs, *Tokyo Central*, he writes of “Tanizaki . . . [as] a very experimental writer. He liked experimenting with traditional forms, or non-forms.” Moreover, he challenges the received wisdom concerning Tanizaki’s departure for Kansai after the earthquake of 1923. “I find it harder all the time . . . to believe that Tanizaki was drawn to Osaka because it was more traditional than Tokyo. In this regard I have changed, for I clearly oppose a traditional Osaka to a modernizing Tokyo in my introduction to the translation. I now think one of the chief charms of Osaka, of which I am very fond, to be its lusty, unapologetic modernism [my italics].” See Edward Seidensticker, *Tokyo Central* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), p. 116. Note also that *In Praise of Shadows* is conceived in the spirit of Tanizaki’s novella *Tomoda to Matsunaga no banashi* (1926, *The Story of Mr. Tomoda and Matsunaga-san*). In this rollicking farce, Tanizaki creates a man who alternates between his thin, pale, and wan Japanese personality (Matsunaga Ginsuke) and his robust Western or modernist self (Tomoda Ginzō). For a synopsis of the novella, see Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals—Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 237–238. Rubin notes how the story “turns Tanizaki’s famous aesthetic of shadows on its head, negating the very core of Japan’s cult of restraint and suggestion” (p. 238). Also see note 10 of the essay introducing Part 3.


While Copeland recognizes that “in each scene, just as the melodrama is reaching its peak, Uno interjects a ludicrous detail that turns potential pathos into something approaching comedy” (p. 53), nonetheless her treatment of the novel emphasizes Uno’s mastery of the I-novel form and her “achievement . . . [in being] able to narrate the story in [a man’s] voice, using his persona” (p. 52). See Rebecca Copeland, *The Sound of the Wind* (Honolulu; University of Hawai‘i Press, 1992), pp. 40–54.


11. See Richie’s “Foreword” in Kawabata Yasunari, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, trans. Alisa Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. xxx. “If Kawabata was ashamed, he shouldn’t have been.” While Richie’s remark suggests something potentially embarrassing about a derivative, one-shot flirtation with Eu-
ropean modernism, he seeks to exonerate *The Scarlet Gang* by calling it an important novel of manners. “It effortlessly captures a remarkable era and a fascinating place, both now gone.” In her preface, Freedman also subscribes to the view that *The Scarlet Gang* “differs markedly from Kawabata’s later work on Japanese aesthetics” (pp. xxxiii–xxxiv), although it is unclear whether later work refers to what Kawabata wrote in the wake of *Scarlet Gang* or in the postwar years. Richie’s definition of modernism follows that of Malcolm Bradbury, who coedited *Modernism* with James McFarlane in 1976, (p. xxi; p. xxi, n. 18). Both Richie and Freedman note Kawabata’s evolution in this work from a writer working in the Shin kankaku (New Sensation) mode to the Shinkō geijutsu (New or Modern Art) style, which Freedman identifies as “more journalistic” (pp. xxviii, xxxv–xxxvi; p. xivi, n. 6). Ian Buruma’s review of the translation, “Virtual Violence” (*New York Review of Books*, vol. 52, no. 11 [June 23, 2005], pp. 12–15), perpetuates the view that Kawabata “quickly went on to develop a very different, very classical style” (p. 12). It also repeats Richie’s interpretation of the Japanese idiom *ahura wo uru*. “Selling oil” means spending a great deal of time (until the last drop of oil falls) or, when sent out on an errand, deliberately dawdling or lingering on the way. Fibbing (Buruma, p. 13) or pulling a fast one (Richie, p. xxv) seems a bit of a stretch.


14. The television series was based on Aguri’s autobiography (Yoshiyuki Aguri, *Yasuraume ga minoru toki* [Tokyo: Bun’ensha, 1985]). Also see Yoshiyuki Kazuko, et al., *Yoshiyuki Eisuke to sono jidai—modan toshi no bikari to kage* (Tokyo: Tokyo shiki shuppan, 1998). It is typical of the many publications that appeared at the time of the NHK series and the Aguri/Eisuke revival.


16. See Steven Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (New York: Pal-
grave Macmillan, 2002), p. 2. Yao observes that “feats of translation . . . g[a]ve rise to, but sometimes even themselves constituted, some of the most significant Modernist literary achievements in English” (p. 3).

17. Take, for example, the matter of dates, a topic revisited by nearly everyone writing on the subject. Because the ideas, events, and fashions associated with modanizumu unfolded by fits and starts across a variety of settings and disciplines, no single moment stands out as truly symbolic or fully indicative. Nor are there dates that demarcate a certifiable beginning, end, or finest hour. Even as the movement is bracketed by the beginning of the Taishō period and the end of the first decade of the Shōwa era, it straddles Meiji, Taisho, and Shōwa and belongs to none exclusively. Likewise, the utility of the “twenties and thirties” to denote the period has limitations, although I use the phrase in this book as shorthand for the three decades spanning 1910 to 1940.


Meanwhile, the catalog for the Taishō Chic exhibit held at the Academy of Art, Honolulu, in 2002, sets the dates as 1900 to 1930, and historian Sharon Minichiello coins the term “Greater Taishō” as a portmanteau word to encompass the decades that stretch across late Meiji, Taisho, and early Shōwa. Her benchmark years are world and local events. On one end she cites 1900, the date of the Universal Exposition in Paris as well as the alignment of the oligarch Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) with the party system.” On the other, she cites the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the assassination of Prime Minister Hamaguchi in 1930. See “Greater Taishō: Japan 1900–1930,” in Taishō Chic—Japanese Modernity, Nostalgia, and Deco, ed. Lorna Price, pp. 9–10. Other scholars see Japan’s seizure of Manchuria in 1931 as a cut-off date.

This volume argues with regard to prose fiction that literary modanizumu begins in 1910 and remained vibrant until the onset of government suppression in 1938. Moreover, it was the years of 1930 to 1938 that witnessed the fullest flowering of modanizumu in fiction.

Note that in Modan toshi Tokyō, Unno Hiroshi jettisoned the use of reign names Meiji, Taisho, and Shōwa in preference for a Western typology of decades, thereby making modanizumu into Japan’s equivalent of “the twenties, the age in which contemporary city life came into being [in Euro-America, Japan, and elsewhere].” To be precise, however, his dates for “Japan’s twenties” actually run “from the seventh and eighth years of Taishō [1918–1919] to the seventh year of Shōwa [1932].” Moreover, his periodization is closely tied to the rise and fall of Marxism and proletarian literature and art that were modanizumu’s rival and at times nemesis. As a result, Unno’s periodization as well as his identification of Kawabata’s Asakusa kurenaidan (1930) “as the masterpiece of the city novel, which crowns the end of the age of the twenties,”
seems somewhat arbitrary, if not belabored. See Unno Hiroshi, *Modan toshi Tokyō*, pp. 10–13, 58.

As for the word *modanizumu*, until and throughout the 1910s, *kindai* (modern, modern age) was the code word for the new and modern, and *kindai-shugi* (modern-ism) the standard translation of modernism into Japanese. By the 1920s, the word *modan* or *modan* had entered Japanese as a neologism, as in, for example, the essay “Modan garu no shutsugen” (1924, “The Arrival of the Modern Girl”) by Kitagawa Shūichi, the first to coin the phrase “modern girl (or gal)” and herald her arrival on the cultural scene. By the 1930s, *modan* was very much in fashion, as seen from the plethora of *modan-go*, or “modernese,” dictionaries. *Fujin bissū modan-go jiten* (Lady’s Dictionary of Essential Modernisms), *Modan manga jiten* (Modernist Manga Manual), and *Modan jōbiki ensaituropedea* (Encyclopedia of Modern Common Sense) all appeared in 1931. The *Urutora modan jiten* (The Dictionary of the Ultramodern) tells us, for example, that the correct sequencing of modern girl and boy (*moga, mobo*) is—“ladies first”—with the *moga* in the lead.

The word *modanizumu* also came into use in the 1930s. Its usage was not as exceptional as is suggested by William Gardner’s *Advertising Tower*. In addition to the critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, who Gardner cites as an exception, members of such journals as *Bungaku jidai* (1929–1932, *The Age of Literature*) and *Kōdō* (1933–1935, *Action!*) often used the term in print. See William O. Gardner, *Advertising Tower—Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 34–35, 276. Writing in 1963, the literary critic Hirano Ken speculated, “I would think that, as for what was called *modanizumu* literature at the time, the use of the term was limited to the works of Ryūtanji Yū, and so forth, which for better or for worse represented American-style customs that had garishly surfaced in consumer-oriented urban culture.” Hirano offers no documentation, however, and reflects a trend from the 1930s and again in the 1950s to associate *modanizumu* with Americanization. See Hirano Ken, *Sbōwa bungaku-shi* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), p. 60. Note also the distinction that Isolde Standish, citing the film historian Iwamoto Kenji, draws between the term *kindai-shugi* written in Chinese characters and “the *katakana* neologism *modanizumu*. The latter “indicates a clear division of meaning . . . and a more general ‘structure of feeling.’ . . . Iwamoto argues that in the 1920s and 1930s these meanings became fixed and *kindai-shugi* came to be associated with European rationalism (gōrisbugi) derived from political philosophy and the sciences, while the term *modanizumu* carried a far lighter sense of frivolity, cheerfulness and the new.” See Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema—a Century of Narrative Film*. (New York, London: Continuum, 2005), p. 32.

18. The Imperial Hotel was torn down in 1968 and replaced by a high-rise structure of the same name. Only the lobby was salvaged, and it was contributed to an assemblage of late-nineteenth-century buildings reconstructed on the outskirts of Nagoya in what is known as Meiji mura (Meiji Village). While Wright’s Imperial Hotel symbolizes a modernism that is imported or derivative, Tanizaki’s novel *The Makioka Sisters* suggests many Japanese living in the 1920s and 1930s saw it as representative of Japanese modern architecture. Wright’s complex for the Jiyū Gakuen School (1922) founded by the Hani family is an example of his modernist architecture that has survived in Tokyō.

traveled abroad from 1906 to 1909, and his essay on “A Green Sun” was published in the April 1910 issue of *Subaru* magazine. It provoked controversy because of Takamura’s open attack on the artistic establishment, and though he did not refer to his essay as a manifesto, it quickly acquired a reputation as “Japan’s first ‘Impressionist’ manifesto.” (Post-Impressionist is probably the more precise term). While in Paris, Takamura was drawn to the Fauvist paintings of the Dutch painter Kees van Dongen (1877–1968) and to the sculpture of Auguste Rodin (1840–1907).


23. Ibid., p. 182.


26. See “The Tattoo,” translated by Ivan Morris in *Modern Japanese Stories* (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962), pp. 90–100; and “The Tattooer,” translated by Howard Hibbett in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, *Seven Japanese Tales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 160–169. The English translations of “Shisui” by Morris and Hibbett exercise translator’s license in handling the original text. For example, the *jorō-gumo* (*Nephila clavata*; literally, “whore-spider”) is rendered in the Hibbett translation as “black-widow” (*Latrodectus mactans*), a species not found in Japan. Both Morris and Hibbett treat the newly tattooed woman’s declaration that the master tattooer has become her fodder—or literally, fertilizer (*watashi no koyashi ni natta*)—as “You are my first victim!” However natural the phrase “victim” may sound in English, its substitution for “fertilizer” undermines the linkage between this final pronouncement and an earlier incident in which, before drugging the girl, the tattooer sought to awaken the dominatrix latent in her personality by showing her two paintings. One picture scroll was of a Chinese princess coolly observing the torment of a man chained to a vertical metal cylinder in which a fire is about to be stoked. The second was titled *Koyashi* (Fertilizer) and depicted a woman leaning against the trunk of a cherry tree in full bloom. Scattered at her feet are male corpses, or the human compost that will decompose and nourish the tree, thereby insuring the return of its blossoms the following spring. Note also that the ornamental tree as a symbol of a beauty sustained by human sacrifice is a theme pursued in other modernist works that speak of the importance of the spectacular. See, for example, Kajii Motojirō’s “Sakura no ki no shita ni wa” (1928; trans. “Beneath the Cherry Trees,” 1964) or Sakaguchi An’gō’s “Sakura no mori no mokai no shita” (1947; trans. “In the Forest, under Cherries in Full Bloom,” 1997). As in “The Tattooer,” the artist is rendered as subservient to the art that he creates.

27. See Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, *Tanizaki Jun’ichirō zenshū* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1968), vol. 1, p. 25. The text of “Shisui” does not specifically identify the period as Bunka/Bunsei or the Kasei years (1804–1829) as this pinnacle of Edo period culture is often called in Japanese. But references in the story to the *ukiyo’e* printmakers Toyokuni and Kunisada and to famous tattooers, Charibun of Asakusa and Yatsuhei of Matsushima-chō, date the events of “The Tattooer” to the Bunka/Bunsei period. The dates, for example, for the leading print makers in the Utagawa School are Toyokuni I (1769–1825), Toyokuni II (1777–1835), and Toyokuni III, also known as Kunisada (1786–1864). In addition, Tanizaki sets the story in the Fukagawa district of Edo. The emergence of Fukugawa as a counterculture and unlicensed pleasure district that com-
peted with the licensed pleasure quarter at Yoshiwara is historically associated with Bunka/Bunsei. The master tattooer in the story, Seikichi, lives in Saga-chō in Fuku
gawa, and he first encounters the young girl who becomes his perfect canvas one
summer day when he passes the Hirasе restaurant in Fuku
gawa and sees her naked
foot—the typical mark of the feisty, iki spirit of a Fuku
gawa geisha, who refused to wear tabi like her Yoshiwara competitors. Instead she preferred to show a bit of “skin”
at the hem of her kimono.

er gives Against the Grain: Selected Essays (1986), p. 140, as the source of the Eagleton
citation. In the same collection of essays, Eagleton criticizes high modernists for con
cealing the commercial side of modernism and denying the commodification of the
movement (Butler, p. 274). For more on this aspect of postmodern criticism, see Kevin

Knopf, 1957), p. 335. The passage reads: “Kyō wa ne-cban ga o-bime-sama de, Koi-cban wa modan gāru no koshimoto ya”/“Sachiko will be the princess, and I will have to be a
servant in foreign dress.” In this passage Taeko, or Koi-san, refers to herself as modan gāru no koshimoto, or, literally, “a lady-in-waiting/servant [dressed] as a modern girl.”
Given the context, Seidensticker adroitly and succinctly handles her comment as “a
servant in foreign dress.”

There is more to the meaning of the passage, however. The three Makioka siste
rs—Sachiko, Yukiko, and Taeko—as well as Sachiko’s daughter Etsuko have gone on
an excursion to the countryside for the ostensible purpose of visiting in-laws and see
ing fireflies, although the occasion is actually another marriage interview for Yukiko.
Taeko’s function is to chaperone her niece and keep her out of earshot while her
two sisters attend the interview with the potential groom. Sachiko and Yukiko have
brought formal kimono to wear for the event, while Taeko has not. When Taeko tells
her niece that she does not even own a formal summer kimono and metaphorically
describes herself as “a moga servant in foreign dress,” she is indicating her subservient
and humorously oddball status as a koshimoto within an imaginary retinue that waits
upon the princess/o-bime-sama of her older sister. The princess dresses appropriatel
ly for her position in life and the occasion at hand, but the moga servant is, at best, attired
in nontraditional dress. Taeko may not be a koshimoto in the traditional sense of the
term, but she does her level best as a modern girl to make her two sisters look good
and keep her inquisitive niece from prying into adult affairs.

Taeko is also referred to as a modern girl by her sister Sachiko in book 2, chapter
7: “Jibun ta chi no shima ni naka de wa bitori de ke-iro no kawatta, kappatsu de senshuteki de, nan demo omou koto wo hōjakubujin ni yatte nokeru kindai-musume de aru”—“Taeko
alone of the four sisters was the brisk, enterprising modern girl who proceeded with
out hesitation—sometimes to the point of making herself a little unpleasant—when
she decided where she was going” (Tanizaki Jun’ichirō zenshū 15:310; Makioka Sisters,
p. 189). Interestingly enough, Sachiko’s remarks appear here in a scene where she
reminiscences about Taeko’s performance of a traditional Japanese dance number,
Yuki (Snow), to jiuta song and shamisen accompaniment. On that occasion Taeko was
dressed in kimono and her face and hair done in the manner of a geisha. The costume
had the effect of erasing Taeko’s moga-like girlishness and giving her “a beauty more in keeping with her years” (jisai no nenrei ni fusawashii toshiba-bi to ita yona mono ga arrawarete iru). This passage, which refers to Taeko’s transformation into the beauty of a mature woman (toshiba-bi), indicates there is something iki about her, at least when she is garbed in traditional costume. In this connection, see the discussion of Kuki Shūzō’s concept of iki and its relation to mature or iki femininity later in this introduction.


32. See papers presented at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting held March 22–25, 2007. They argue for substantial content in so-called nonsense literature in their discussions of curiosity-seeking or ryōki (Jeffrey Angles); the fiction of Asahara Rokurō and Ryūtanji Yū (Alisa Freedman); the “soft-edge/nan+sen [surf]” (nan of yarwarakas+sen of “pointed” or “in the fore”) humor employed by the famous benshi film narrator Tokugawa Musei in his 1927 parody of detective fiction in “Obetai buru-buru jiken” (Kyōko Ōmori); and, finally, the parodic take-offs on the genre of samurai film in the 1920s and 1930s (Yoshida Junji).

33. For illustrations by Takabatake Kashō (1888–1966), see Bessatsu Taiyō: Takabatake Kashō (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1985); or visit the website at http://www.kasho.org. Other famous illustrators working in the same vein as Kashō are Takehisa Yumeji (1884–1934) and Nakahara Jun’ichi (1913–1983). See the website of the Yayoi and Yumeji museums located in Tokyo (http://www.yayoi-yumeji-museum.jp) for more on Kashō and Yumeji as well as http://www.junichi-nakahara.com for Nakahara.


A taste for the sexually ambiguous is also found in the character of Ljatnikov, also known as Anastasia, in Yumeno Kyūsaku’s “Love after Death.” Likewise, it is characteristic of Inagaki Taruhō’s “Story of R-cban and S,” also in this volume. Homoeroticism is readily apparent in the latter, which describes a same-sex crush that reaches its seriocomic dénouement in the final battle scene at the end of the story. In the 1950s and 1960s, Inagaki became something of a cult figure for his modernist style and his writings on boy love (shōnen-aī) and the A-feeling (A-kankaku). As references to the boy fascinated by shadows in Kaji Motojirō’s “The Ascension of K” and the open rivalry between Murayama and da Vinci in “The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino” also indicate, the topic of same-sex attraction is common in modernist prose, where it is presented without moral judgment in an uninhibited and often idyllic manner. One
might argue that some modernist writers focused on male-male affection as a kind of backlash or protest against the strong tendency in the Meiji period toward the heteronormalization of culture and literature as argued in Jim Reichert, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

35. “Iki is fundamentally an ironic mode—if it must be explained, it has failed. What can be said of an aesthetic that prefers the oblique to the straight, the slightly off to the fresh, a whiff of the possibility of sex to the certainty of it? Iki is rebellious, never straightforward, and it shrivels under direct gaze. As the essence of the sensibilities of the politically stifled, socially jaded, yet highly creative populace of early nineteenth-century Edo, *iki* was ultimate cool.” See Liza Crihfield Dalby, *Kimono—Fashioning Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 55. Also see Dalby’s *Geisha* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 271–279.


In his essay Kuki identifies a long list of characteristics as *iki*: “relaxing the body slightly,” “the wearing of thin fabric,” “describing someone right after bathing,” “both relaxation and tension are required of the eye, mouth and cheek,” “[traditional] hairstyles, when informal,” “taking the kimono skirt in the left hand,” “bare feet,” “the hand is curled or bent back slightly,” “vertical stripes,” “the color brown,” “a certain degree of deviation” in the playing of traditional Japanese music, especially the performance style of the Utazawa school. Quotations are from the Nara translation cited above. Nara also notes the atypical—or chic—discourse strategies that Kuki, a philosopher teaching at Kyoto Imperial University, employed in writing about his subject. “The effect is one of serious argument lightened by a certain playful exposition” (p. 103).

For a critical view of Kuki’s concept, see Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan—Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996). “Kuki discovered in *iki* an existential disposition that was free, he claimed, from Western obsessions with identity and certainty, untainted by a rationality of ends. An implausible synthesis of apparently contradictory attributes, *iki* offered the prospect of a logic emptied of instrumentality, replacing purposeful, belabored love with disinterested free play. This was a logic, claimed Kuki, unknown in the West” (p. 15). Because of Kuki’s alleged support for Japanese imperialism in the late 1930s, Pincus reads *Iki no kōzō* retrospectively as “aesthetic modernism [that] discovered emancipatory potential in the modern but also condoned its most oppressive possibilities: imperialism, racialized nationalism, and mechanized warfare, to name a few” (p. 16). She seeks to explore “under what conditions . . . Kuki’s cosmopolitan disposition [lent] itself to insular culturalism” (p. 26). To argue, however, that “the exceptionality of spirit that Kuki claimed for *Iki no kōzō* would soon serve as a rationale for Japan’s domination of Asia and the spilling of Asian blood” (p. 16) seems far-fetched and inflated. Moreover, Pincus’ fleeting treatment of the “experimentally modernist narratives” of Tànizaki (p. 11) or of Mori Ōgai’s “Mainichî” (1890; trans.
“The Dancing Girl,” 1964, 1975) (p. 35) also reflects a one-dimensional reading of “plot[ting] a return to distinctively Japanese sites and sensibilities” (p. 11). It is a mistake automatically to equate nostalgia for Edo with a conservative retreat to Japan or a reaction against mass, machine, or modern culture. As we saw in the case of Tanizaki’s “The Tattooer,” Edo can be employed as a progressive oppositional strategy to critique contemporary society.

Finally, one notes that Kuki’s thesis on iki ignores the school of Shinnai shamisen and vocal music that, although originally a product of the music world of Osaka, took Edo by storm in the nineteenth century as the most iki form of traditional Japanese music. Moreover, Shinnai maintained that reputation throughout the Taishō period and early Shōwa, if not into the postwar years.


37. In his novel Hakubyō (1939, Writing in White), a rumination on art and architecture, Ishikawa Jun (1899–1987) has the modernist German architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) step forward—thinly disguised as “Professor Kraus”—to deliver a speech on the essence of Japan’s premodern modernity. Although not well known today, Taut ranks alongside the architects Gropius, Miès Van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier as one of the principal theoreticians of twentieth-century modernist architecture. He also wrote on Japanese architecture while residing in Japan from 1933 to 1936. In particular, his books Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture and Houses and People of Japan (published in English in 1935 and 1937 and adapted in a Japanese-language edition titled Nibonbi no saibakken [The Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty]) led to renewed interest among Japanese in the Katsura Detached Palace at Katsura, Kyoto, which Taut “rediscovered” as the epitome of indigenous Japanese taste and the modern before it was modern. In his table speech in Ishikawa’s novel, Taut/Kraus defines Japan’s premodern modernity as a sober gaiety—sabi ni shibe bade de aru. It is a definition surprisingly consonant with Kuki’s description of the push-pull or dialectical nature of iki as well as iki’s mood of tempered playfulness. For more on Ishikawa’s views of the Tenmei literati Ōta Nanpo (1749–1823) and Hakanaka Kansai (1752–1801), and on Bruno Taut, see Ishikawa Jun, The Legend of Gold and Other Stories, trans. William J. Tyler (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), pp. 179–189 and pp. 263–265, respectively.

Interestingly enough, Kawabata Yasunari also championed the influence of the Tenmei literatus Ōta Nanpo in his famous modernist novel Scarlet Gang of Asakusa, which focuses on two types of modern girls or moga, Yumiko and Haruko. Although the narrator of Kawabata’s novel does not wish to be identified as “a mediocre copy of the ‘debauched men of letters’ of old like Ōta Nanpo, alias Shokusanjin,” nonetheless he implicitly draws a parallel between his modish Asakusa girls and Shokusanjin’s portrayal of two famous premodern modern women, O-sen and O-fuji, by citing Shokusanjin’s Comments on the Merits of O-sen and O-fuji (O-sen O-fuji yuretsu-no-ben) included in Tale of Dobei, the Candy Seller (Ame-uri Dobei ga den) of 1769. See Kawabata Yasunari, The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa, trans. Alisa Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 155.

38. Shortly after introducing these neologisms in chapter 14 of his novel Kappa, Akutagawa inserts a parenthetical note indicating that “the Worship/Religion of the Modern” (kindai-kyō) and its synonym “the Worship/Religion of Making a Living” (seikatsu-kyō) are to be specifically understood as “isms” (shugi) rather than religious
tenets as suggested by the character of kyō (religion, teachings). The parenthetical passage reads as follows: “(To translate the term from the original [Kappa] phrase as ‘the Religion of Life’ might not be right. The original word was Quemoocha, and the ending chū is equivalent in meaning to the English ‘ism.’ In addition, quemal, from which que-moo derives, is more than ‘to live’ [ikiru]. It means ‘eating, drinking, and copulating.’)” Also compare Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kappa, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000), p. 116. Bownas uses “viverism”—instead of vitalism—to translate seikatsu-kyō.

39. See Suzuki Sadami, “Seimei” de yomu Nihon kindai—Taishō seimei-shugi no tanjō to tenkai (Tokyo: NHK Books [Nihon hôsô shuppan kyōkai], 1996). In his evolutionary model of history, Bergson was drawn to the concept of mutation rather than natural selection. Progress in human thinking is achieved by the sudden appearance or rupture into the quotidian of the life force of the élan vital (Japanese: seimei no chōyaku). In a wide-ranging discussion of philosophy and literature, Suzuki examines how seimei-shugi was taken up and developed by Japanese intellectuals in the Taishō period starting from the philosopher Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) and the anarchist Ōsugi Sakae (1885–1923). Tanabe saw it as a variation on bunka-shugi, or culturalism (p. 19). Ōsugi introduced the concept of élan vital in Sei no kakujū (1919, The Amplification of Life), calling for the expansion and liberation of the self and issuing his famous statement that “beauty lies in disharmony or dissonance” (bi wa rancho ni ari) (p. 22).

40. In Virginia Woolf’s famous metaphor, the world ceased to be “a series of gig lamps” lined up like horse carriages and liveried coachmen in a hierarchical display of nineteenth-century pomp and circumstance. To the contrary, it became an unsettling, awesome black box, a space in which atoms, “disconnected and incoherent,” merged into “a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.” These passages appear in her essay on “Modern Fiction” of 1919.