This anthology examines the profound ways in which the modernist imagination re-presents time and space in Japanese experimental fiction in the interwar years of the 1910s to the 1930s. The fourteen writers selected for this anthology experimented with a protean modernist style in a vivacious period between the nation-building Meiji (1868–1912) and the dark war years of Showa (1926–89). Their works capture imaginary temporal and spatial dimensions that embody various forms of futuristic urban space, colonial space, utopia, dystopia, and heterotopia. The development of mass consumer culture and moneyed capital stimulated the publication of many new and experimental journals in that period, and these in turn became the venues for the debut and development of nouveau art and literary movements, such as the Shinkankaku (New Sensation) School, the Shinkō geijutsu (New Art) School, the Proletarian School, and mass literature (taishū bungaku). Meanwhile, the frantic development of Tokyo as a leading modern metropolis in Asia to rival the capitals in the West and the expansionist vision of the Imperial state to extend its colonial transformation of other Asian cities into model modern metropolises continued to tease the imagination of experimental writers, who developed narrative strategies and a language drawn from new forms of visual representation to reconfigure time and space. This results in mind-bending spatial and temporal re-presentations in art and literary texts that are constantly in flux—fantastical, futurological, haunting, and cautionary—and shaped an experimental language that aims at the distortion of space, time, and motion. The modernist impulse
in the stories challenges realism, naturalism, temporal linearity, and the laws of physics. It is a language that is disorienting because of its formal disruption but also exhilarating and engaging for the same reason.

Modernism rejects the mimetic function of art through a re-imag-ination of the human experience, and this includes new forms of presenta-tion in space and time. In the West, impressionist and post-impressionist art privileges the new conception of space in its departure from a representa-tion of objective reality, while modernist fiction privileges the indi-vidual experience and presentation of temporality in its rejection of linear chronological time. This diversification in art and literature has to do with the inherent difference in the two art forms: visual art captures effectively the presentation of space, and literary art, especially narratives, appeals to one’s sense of time. However, the perception of time and space is inextricably linked since modernist texts tend to juxta-pose planes of existence and consciousness across geographical and temporal borders to create a multidimensional and multiperspective experience. This anthology attempts to explore how the physical and empirical expe-rience of time and space is distorted and reconfigured through the prism of modernist Japanese prose. In locating modernism in the spatial and temporal reality of Japanese narratives, I hope to provide a context to examine Japanese modernism on its own terms as well as to situate it in global modernism, overall.

The title “Three-Dimensional Reading” does not refer to the Renais-sance system of perspective that created an illusion of three-dimensional depth on a flat, two-dimensional canvas. The term “three-dimensional” (rittaiteki) in this anthology comes from Rittai-ha, which is what cubism is called in Japanese, even though it is common now to refer to cubism as Kyubizumu. Rittai-ha suggests both a visual effect of presenting a single image from different temporal and/or spatial perspectives and a concep-tual cubist effect that emphasizes abstraction over realistic representa-tion. In 1908, the art critic Louis Vauxcelles, in writing about the art of George Braque, commented that he “reduces everything, places and figures and houses, to geometrical complexes, to cubes.”1 This form of reduction is a clear rejection of realism and a conventional three-di-men-sional perspective. Thus three-dimensional reading here refers to a
cubist reading that involves the discovery of a conceptual depth in a two-dimensional presentation of time and space, when the modernist writer breaks away from the seemingly coherent and stable representation of linear time and external reality in a single perspective and re-imagines the world in multiple time and spatial planes jostling simultaneously and spontaneously in a text, as in the way dreams seep into consciousness or when past and future time crowd into a present moment to generate a spectrum of meaning and possibility in an otherwise flat surface. One of the clearest examples in Western visual art is Marcel Duchamp’s (1887–1968) “Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2” (1911), a work that depicts the successive phases of the movement of a single machine-like body on a flat canvas. Another example is Pablo Picasso’s “Girl Portrait circa 1936” in which the left and right sides of the canvas contain different expressions and emotional states to symbolize the multiple selves within a single person. In Japanese literature, Yokomitsu Riichi cites Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s *Yabu no naka* (1922; trans. “In a Grove,” 1954, 1999, 2006) in his treatise “Shinkankaku-ron” (On New Sensation) as an exemplary work that presents a single event in multiple perspectives without a unifying narrative voice (or the conventional omniscient point of view) and thus renders the event unstable and conceptually unfathomable. Yokomitsu emphasizes the *rittaisei* in modernist prose—in the rejection of chronology and temporal linearity in plot development, the breakdown of a conventional and recognizable concept of time and space and a shift to mental images, as well as the use of a sensual or aural reality to express conceptual depth and three-dimensionality.

To the three-dimensional reading of spatiality, I would add the need and possibility of a three-dimensional reading of temporality in order to understand the challenging presentation of time in the selected stories. In an essay written in 1917, Satō Haruo provides a clue for a three-dimensional reading of time:

> Since the critic of civilization (*bunmei hihyōka*) is neither simply an idealist nor a sentimentalist prone to self-righteousness, he dwells in a place where it is possible to be simultaneously idealistic and realistic. In fact, his ideal finds its true meaning precisely when it
penetrates the innermost core of reality. A critic is also a prophet, a philosopher, and a poet. Yet precisely because he sees himself as a critic, he stares reality in the eye and maintains close contact with the flat temporal surface of “today.” He is in firm grasp of the fine point where the ideal three-dimensionality of eternal time (*eien to iu risōteki rittai*) penetrates the two-dimensional plane of today. That is where he anchors the basis of his existence.\(^3\)

Here Satō has provided a model or a metaphor for thinking about the intersection between eternal time (past, present, future) and each existential moment. Eternal time takes the form of a three-dimensional shaft that penetrates the two-dimensional plane of this very moment of existence. He suggests that it is in the fine point of crossing between the two kinds of time that the critic anchors his or her existence to critique the world. Without the three-dimensionality embodied in the crossing, any attempt in criticism will be superficial at best. Satō’s idea of time is a modernist attitude found elsewhere in the world. “To me there is no past and future in art,” said Picasso,\(^4\) referring to the endless possibilities of reinterpretation and adaptation of past art in creating new works. In a similar vein, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot’s works are so abundant in allusions that the past is summoned to life in the present to address the future. In a modernist moment, past, present, and future exist simultaneously in a work of art and demand a new conceptual understanding of time.

In selecting stories from the modernist period to illuminate our understanding of past, present, and future time, and in harnessing our historical hindsight and the accumulation of critical insights to access past writings, we hope to establish the possibility of multiple imaginary crossings in which different temporal dimensions intersect to engender a rich and deep reading experience that liberates the reader from the shallow confines of a present moment.

This anthology also incorporates five images by the contemporary artist Sakaguchi Kyōhei, whose two-dimensional ink-on-paper drawings based on five stories in our anthology capture the powerful conceptual dimension within and in between the lines. Sakaguchi called his text-to-
image artwork *rittai dokusho* (cubist/three-dimensional reading), a term that inspired the title of this collection.

**Critical Context**

Perhaps a word about the critical contexts of spatial theory and modernist literature will help us situate this anthology. My selection of the stories was to a great extent informed by my reading of theories of space in Western and Japanese scholarship. These include critical concepts and terminology in the works of Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, David Harvey, Walter Benjamin, Maurice Blanchot, Isoda Koichi, and Maeda Ai, all of whom have contributed significantly to the theories of space on a multidisciplinary level. To examine the selected stories in this anthology, I will draw upon such concepts and discourses whenever relevant: the differentiation of place and space and their intricate relationship (Heidegger, de Certeau), the idea of social space (Lefebvre) and interior space (Bachelard), the exploration of utopia, dystopia, and heterotopia that capture the constantly shifting geopolitical dynamics of a world in flux (Foucault), the time-space compression that challenges conventional narrative strategies dependent on realism and linearity (Harvey), the flaneur and the metropolis (Benjamin), elusive death’s space as quintessential modernist space (Blanchot), power and ideology (Isoda), and the interchangeable nature of utopia and dystopia (Maeda).

In addition to references to theories of space, this anthology will also respond to existing theoretical and critical discourses on modernism and attempt to re-draw the parameters of global modernism, an endeavor that William Tyler has initiated in his pioneering work *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan 1913–1938* (2008). Most Western studies focus primarily on European or English-language texts despite an increasing awareness of the diversity and global spontaneity of the movement. Among recent publications, Pericles Lewis’ *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007), Steven Matthews’ (ed.) *Modernism: A Sourcebook* (2008), and Julian Hanna’s *Key Concepts in Modernist Literature* (2009) are particularly useful for the breadth and clarity of their academic dis-
course. A typical guide to modernism would include an introduction to the historical and social context of modern times (the Industrial Revolution, World War I, imperialism and the Empire, Fascism, the great leap in science and technology, urbanization, the proliferation of popular culture and consumerism). Added to that is an outline of key themes, issues, and concepts, among which the avant-garde, dadaism, surrealism, cubism, futurism, imagism, vorticism, primitivism, etc., are crucial in evaluating modernist art and literature. The catalog of Western modernist works central to the critical literary discourse inevitably includes Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and Pound’s *Cantos*. Despite the fact that Peter Nicholls had argued persuasively in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1995) for the need to study modernisms in the plurality of their global and diversified form, his sources were still limited to European and American texts, even with the inclusion of a chapter on African-American modernism.

In the Japanese context, Seiji Lippit’s *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (2002), William O. Gardner’s *Advertising Tower: Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s* (2006), Gregory Golley’s *When Our Eyes No Longer See: Realism, Science, Ecology in Japanese Literary Modernism* (2008), and William J. Tyler’s *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan 1913–1938* (2008) are significant publications in establishing the foundation for the study of modernism. In discussing the works of Akutagawa, Yokomitsu, Kawabata, and others, Lippit introduces a new and exciting critical language to examine literature, space, and the geopolitical tension embedded in the texts of interwar Japan. Gardner’s book examines the work of Hagiwara Kyōjirō (1899–1938) and Hayashi Fumiko (1903–1951) in urban environments that embodied popular culture, technology, urbanism, propaganda, media, with the emphasis on cultural studies. Golley transcends the academic borders of natural and social sciences as well as the humanities to create a fascinating critical language to discuss the modernist phenomenon in the works of Tanizaki, Yokomitsu, and Miyazawa Kenji. In particular, he borrows the idea of “Minkowski space”—the combination of the three dimensions of physical space with that of time into a four-dimensional space-time—to discuss the astrophysical phenomenon in Miyazawa’s world, a critical concept that is quite
different from the three-dimensional reading that this anthology suggests but nonetheless resonates in a playful and meaningful way.

Tyler’s book argues and illustrates convincingly that the literary experiments contributing to a definition of *modanizumu* is a spontaneous and exuberant movement in style and expression responding to Western modernism in part but also boldly innovative and firmly embedded in the Japanese language and literary tradition. The selection of stories in this anthology responds to some of the themes and issues that Tyler raised in his book, such as anti-naturalism, cosmopolitanism and popularization, the multiple self, and modernism in politics. In contrast to the broad sweep of Tyler’s survey-like collection, we focus on the coordinates between spatial and temporal configuration and modernism and select stories that embody the wandering modernist esprit of strange and bizarre imaginings. Furthermore, by situating the modernist phenomenon in the topography and time of Japan, we hope to give Japanese literary modernism a sense of locale and temporal orientation as we trace its place in global modernism. In his discussion of David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), Thacker points out that in an age where space replaces place in the general state of time-space compression, modernism redirects one’s attention to the inherent interest, importance, and uniqueness of locale. That is to say, even though London, Paris, Tokyo, New York, and Shanghai approximate one another on a global level as metropolises of speed, fashion, and mass consumption, they also capture the literary imagination by nature of their non-replaceable individuality. In the way the River Thames runs softly in the bleak modernist landscape of T.S.Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, the Sumida River will bear witness to urban transformations and literary development in Japanese modernism. But the emphasis on the uniqueness of locale does not always have to entail what Harvey terms “the aestheticization of local, regional, or national politics.” The reader is encouraged to see a modernism engaged in a dialectic discourse between place as a physical locale and space as an embodiment of a multitude of symbolic, aesthetic, and political meanings. Thus to introduce Japanese (and colonial) place-names on the map of modernism is an attempt to explore the movement in a global context: how do concepts and issues associated with the mod-
ernist movement and the accompanying process of urbanization, mass consumption, popular culture, and expansionism play out nearly simultaneously in Mrs. Dalloway’s Regents Park and Asakusa Park; how are they similar or different; and how does the juxtaposition of modernist texts written thousands of miles apart enrich our understanding of the simultaneity and spontaneity of the modernist movement? This is when a dialectic interaction between two vastly different geographic partners becomes fruitful and necessary to our understanding of global modernism. I also hope that once we find the coordinates for both the Thames and the Sumida in our broadened vista of reading, the map of modernism will acquire a new and three-dimensional effect that transcends the limitation of a flat surface, enabling the reader to perceive the simultaneity of global modernism from different perspectives.8

The Writers and the Stories

The fourteen stories in this anthology are arranged under three kinds of re-presentation of time and space: (1) scenes of the mind; (2) time and urban space; and (3) utopia and dystopia. Needless to say there are untold possibilities in the choice of stories and groupings. Several factors determine our selection of stories:

1. All stories are engaging and twelve out of fourteen stories are translated here for the first time to augment the list of modernist Japanese fiction available in English;9
2. Relatively obscure stories by well-known writers (Sōseki, Tanizaki, Kawabata, Satō) are included here to re-assess their contributions to the modernist tradition;
3. All stories address both the themes of spatial/temporal configuration and the modernist impulse;
4. Two writers—Tamura Taijirō and Ryūtanji Yū—are translated here for the first time;
5. The stories demonstrate the spectrum of aesthetic and intellectual possibilities in modernist fiction: dark and haunting pieces alongside light and playful ones; introspective, poetic pieces next to pictur-
esque, colloquial compositions; and stories that are in between—serious and comical, extroverted and contemplative, beautiful and grotesque.

Not all writers in the list are generally considered “modernist” in literary history, but their works are chosen because they show certain formal and thematic tendencies this anthology considers modernist. Sōseki is conventionally known for dark, philosophical full-length novels at the dawn of Japan modernization; Uno Kōji for his jōsetsu (rambling-recitation) style; Tamura Taijirō for his postwar treatises on literature of the flesh (nikutai bungaku); and Nakajima Atsushi for stories of ancient China and Micronesia. In this anthology, Sōseki is re-evaluated for his modernist perception of a sound-induced space; Uno for his imagination of an ever-expandable universe within the confines of his closet; Tamura for his sensitivity for the sensuality and terror of the mechanical form; and Nakajima for his capacity to describe the protean nature of colonial space which replicates the strange shapelessness of modernist space.

Kajii Motojirō, Inagaki Taruho, and Yumeno Kyūsaku were all from outside Tokyo and were “lone wolves” in the sense that none belonged to a literary salon or movement, modernist or otherwise. Kajii was isolated by his illness and died with hardly any literary recognition, but the unique collection of short stories he left behind has established his fame at home and abroad as a representative modernist in the depiction of the fragmented self and the doppelgänger that Tyler explored in his Modanizumu. Taruho’s friendship with the modernist poets of his time—Hagiwara Sakutarō, Kitasono Katsue—placed him in that league, and he shared with them the playful imagination of changing forms and shapes of things, an inherent skepticism of a stable, external reference, and a love for the lightness of tone. YumeQ, as Yumeno is fondly nick-named now, straddled the ambiguous border between “pure” and “mass” literature with his psychological and often complex writing style and his idiosyncratic propensity for science fiction and detective fiction, both of which feature prominently in our exploration of modernist genres in this anthology.

Tanizaki, Akutagawa, and Satō Haruo transcend the narrow confines
of a single school or movement by virtue of their versatility and prolific career. While Golley has devoted a chapter to Tanizaki’s erotic science and Lippit to Akutagawa’s experimentation in urban cultural space in the modernist context, this anthology has focused on their interpretations of the space- and time-obsessed genre of utopia and dystopia fiction in the creation of a modernist space-time. Satō places himself among “critics of civilization,” and indeed his voluminous critical writings attest to this calling. “For a man of letters, it is wrong not to possess or wish to possess the passion of a critic of civilization,” he wrote in 1927, a year before he published “Nonsharan kiroku” (A Record of Nonchalant), the story selected for this anthology. “Those who avoid in-depth criticism of life and dissecting social criticism are not fit to be called good critics of civilization” (Satō 1999, 74).10 “Nonchalant” combines his passion for social, literary, and moral criticism as well as a time-space imagination in an science fiction–like genre that predates the great dystopian literature in the West, including Adolph Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), and it is the intention of this anthology to place this work at the forefront of the modernist vision.

The only writers in this anthology directly involved in avant-garde movements or associated with modernist literary factions are Kawabata and Yokomitsu. In 1924, they were among the founding members of the *Bungei jidai* (Literary Age), a coterie magazine where the Shinkankaku style germinated. However, the magazine ceased publication in 1927, barely two years and eight months after its inception. In 1926, both of them joined the New Sensation School Film Association (Shinkankaku-ha eiga renmei) where the film director Kinugasa Teinosuke also belonged, and Kawabata wrote the script for the modernist film *Kurutta ichipeiji* (1926, trans. “Page of Madness,” 2008). In 1930, Kawabata was among the thirteen founding members of the New Art School, a short-lived movement that emphasized the autonomy of art and played a crucial role in attracting writers with a modernist bent, such as Ryūtanji Yū and Yoshiyuki Eisuke. But perhaps more significant than their brief association with these rapidly changing literary movements is their dedication to producing treatises, criticism, and literary works that came to define and shape Japanese modernism. Two years before the founding of *Bungei*
jidai, Kawabata had already expressed great dissatisfaction in an essay about the conventional hierarchical order and compartmentalization of “words, language, literature” and “human experience,” making one into the master and the other the slave, the conqueror and the conquered. “Once we go through the purgatory of self-doubt and self-rejection in the conventional use of words, then a new expression will be discovered.” Thus Kawabata’s modernist quest is for a new expression that erases the perceived boundary and difference between words and experience, between language and sensation, between literature and life. In another essay titled “Shinshin sakka no shinkeikō kaisetsu” (An Explication of the New Tendencies in New Writers, 1925), he writes, “There are only three ways in perceiving a white lily in the field: Is the lily in me? Am I in the lily? Are we separate? The third form of perception belongs to the Naturalist way of writing, which is orthodox objectivism… The other two forms of perception reveal the mark of a new expression in subjectivism… Self and Other become one, and the borders among all things vanish as they merge into a single dimension in the mind.” Kawabata was to pursue and refine this vision again and again in different kinds of writings—the bawdy Asakusa kurenaidan (1929–30, trans. The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa, 2005), the dream-like Yukiguni (1935–37, 1947; trans. Snow Country, 1957) and the many short compositions embodying disturbing images and piercing sensations, as in the one in this anthology.

Less than a year after Bungei jidai ceased publication, Yokomitsu went on a sojourn to China in 1928. He was no longer affiliated with any avant-garde journal or association, but he remained one of the most tireless theorists of modernist literature. His treatise “Shinkankaku ron” (On New Sensation, 1925) in the second issue of Bungei jidai ties the contemporary art movements of futurism, cubism, expressionism, dadaism, symbolism, structuralism, and certain aspects of realism to shinkankaku. He was also centrally involved in the “Keishiki shugi bun-gaku ronsō” (Formalism Debate, 1928–29), a literary debate between the Shinkankaku School and Proletariat Literature on the relations between the political masses and literary readership, as well as that between form and content of an artwork. But again, Yokomitsu’s most profound and lasting legacy in our understanding of Japanese modernism is the rich
and varied body of literary experimentation he left behind, from the exploration of a cartographic, non-mimetic presentation of a town as in the selected story in this anthology, to the examination of a new understanding of the bodily sense of time in *Jikan* (1931; trans. “Time,” 1956), and the philosophical exploration of the seduction and cruelty of the mechanization of human life in *Kikai* (1930; trans. “Machine,” 1962).

Hori Tatsuo and Ryūtanji Yū were intermittently involved with the modernist movements from the mid-1920s and early ’30s. Hori is generally recognized for his Proustian stories of convalescence set in the patrician highland resort of Karuizawa, but this anthology highlights his affinity with the gritty, plebeian, sexually amorphous Asakusa, in a story that predates and rivals Kawabata’s *Asakusa kurenaidān* (1929–30). His involvement with modernist coterie was sparodic. Along with Murō Saisei, Nakano Shigeharu, Nishizawa Ryūji, and Kubokawa Kakujiro, Hori was involved in the founding of *Rōba* (Donkey) in 1926, a magazine that was proletarian in nature. In 1930, he joined the Shinkō geijutsu-ha kurabu (The New Art Club), whose members included Nakamura Murao, Kawabata, Ryūtanji, but that club lasted only a year. Ryūtanji had a stellar presence in the literary salon but faded quickly after a falling out with Kawabata. He turned his interest to the cultivation of cacti, a career change that is as idiosyncratic and surprising as the unpredictable staccato of his stories.

I will now proceed to discuss the categorization of spatial/temporal configuration and the individual stories under each heading. “Scenes of the Mind” is a response to the obsession with interiority in I-novels and confessional novels that dominated the literary scene from the turn of the twentieth century. The choice of stories in this section provides a humorous, modernist twist to interiority by externalizing fears, anxieties, pathological obsessions, and dreams, and projecting them onto actual places or imaginary space—a room, an attic, a sick bed, or even a piece of furniture. One of the modernist responses to the dark and hidden interiority of serious, brooding modern Japanese fiction is to give it a shape and project it onto a spatial dimension to mark its inescapable reality and overwhelming monstrosity. By transforming interiority into interior space engorged with the mind’s unrest translated into the
sights, sounds, and smell of the surrounding, modernist texts add an absurd and terrifying dimension to previously intangible and invisible interiority. Sōseki’s “A Strange Sound” (*Hen na oto*, 1911) exemplifies this process of transformation. A Sōseki stand-in—an invalid confined to a hospital room—becomes obsessed with a strange sound coming from the room next door and begins to transfer his curiosity and apprehension about the elusive space of death to the adjacent imaginary space shaped entirely by sound. In Uno Kōji’s “The Law Student in the Garret” (*Yaneura no hōgakushi*, 1918), a detached narrative voice tells the story of how a neurotic law student holed up in a six-mat attic room transforms first his room, and then his body-sized closet, into an infinitely expandable territory of past reveries and current fantasies, a story that foretells with uncanny absurdity the plight and rationale of the pathological social recluse (*hikikomori*) in our time. Uno’s story also provides the model setting for Edogawa Ranpo’s “The Wanderer in the Attic” (*Yaneura no sanposha*, 1925), a murder/suspense story that exemplifies the *ero-guro-nansensu* of Taishō modernist literature. Kajii Motojirō, known for his modernist “invalid” pieces that play on the ideas of the double, shadow, and alter ego, captures with vivid grotesquery scenes of urban decay in “Scenes of the Mind” (*Aru kokoro no fūkei*, 1926) just to reject firmly grasped external reality in favor of its reconstitution in the metaphor of the wasting body. Kawabata Yasunari’s “The Sound of Footsteps” (*Ningen no ashioto*, 1925) echoes the themes of sound and the invalid in Sōseki’s and Kajii’s works. An amputee imagines a world beyond his field of vision based on the sound of footsteps he hears, creating a spatial dimension that is at once poetic, humorous, grotesque, and haunting.

The language, techniques of expression, and narrative strategy of these stories betray various modes of modernist writing: the reliance on a sonic dimension to create space, the doppelgänger, the permeable border between real and imaginary space as well as the inner mind and outer reality, and an overall sense of humor, self-deprecation, and absurdity in depicting the somber themes of illness and death. Furthermore, all these stories address certain aspects of spatial theories, in particular Gaston Bachelard’s theory of “topoanaylysis,” in which interior space becomes “the topography of our intimate being.” They all embody Henri
Lefebvre’s theory of representational space, that is, space as imagined by inhabitants and an alternative dimension that rejects “the rational order and cool logic of the representation of space.” They also illustrate David Harvey’s emphasis of the body or the psyche as a “representational space” in reaction to the “representation of space” in modernity, an idea indebted to Lefebvre’s terminology. Finally, three of the four stories can be considered as études on dying as the narrators edge ever so gingerly toward what Maurice Blanchot termed “death’s space,” so that they can practice dying in their characters.

“Time and Urban Space” comes naturally in an anthology on spatial/temporal configuration and modernism, since the dominating experience in modernist literature centers on bizarre locales, urbanization, the metropolis, and colonized territories. Inagaki Taruho’s “Astromania” (Tentai shikōshō, 1928) and Tamura Taijirō’s “Configuration” (Keitai, 1932) transform physical space and quotidian sensual perceptions into the extraordinary by focusing on how those perceptions are painstakingly constructed and received. A painter and a writer, Inagaki incorporates striking visual elements in his writing, some of which are reminiscent of early cinema. In “Astromania” he describes the homemade cinematic universe created by boys crazy about stars, using a language that borrows heavily from science fiction, visual art, popular culture, and cinematography, while alluding to the historical context of World War I as well as the military build-up in Japan and the Western world. “Configuration” is a challenging story that captures the frenzied movement and changing shapes of things in a mechanical age. The narration, told in a single paragraph, superimposes the sensation of a man’s fainting fit on his experience of a plane crash during the war and captures the inward collapse of images in multiple temporal and spatial dimensions (e.g., palm trees, propellers of a fighter plane, and an overhanging fan) into a singular continuum of existence and perception. Reminiscent of Georges Braque’s *Man with a Guitar* (1913), which captures the simultaneous visual representations of facets of a single item on a flat pictorial space, Tamura’s story is a fascinating response to futurism, dadaism, and cubism. Both stories explore a new spatial order embodied in physical empiricism yet seemingly untouched by external reality. In Taruho and Tamura’s worlds,
space becomes “outer space”—an alluring and haunting dimension that always lies a step beyond one’s reach.

Yokomitsu Riichi’s “The Underside of Town” (Machi no soko, 1925) is deceptively simple and resembles the mapping of a town. Yokomitsu experiments with the cinematographic point of view, stark and sensuous images, and a rhythmic tone of narration that generates Deleuzean repetitions to destabilize the text. Most notable in his description of the town is a deliberate experimentation with geometric shapes and the laws of physics, the way Cézanne transformed his still lifes and landscapes into colorful spheres, cones, and cylinders. Furthermore, the seemingly disjointed vignettes in the story are linked by an undercurrent of social criticism—a proletarian theme widely explored by modernist writers. Finally, in the context of spatial theory, Yokomitsu’s “mapping” rejects the stability of place and echoes Michel de Certeau’s idea of the tour, a concept that emphasizes the interpretation and transformation of space through the movement of the human subject traversing it.19 In other words, maps inform while tour narrates, and Yokomitsu takes us through a tour of a cubist landscape in his story.

For stories about city life and the ubiquitous mobo and moga in Japanese modernist fiction, Hori Tatsuo’s “Aquarium” (Suizokukan, 1930) takes the reader to the streets of Asakusa, the testing ground for the latest trends in popular culture and literature. Aquarium is a nickname for the venue where dance troupes and performers vie for a spot on stage and a place in the patron’s heart. It is a story of love, jealousy, lesbianism, murder, and suicide, told with the modernist touch of lightness and melodrama. Ryūtanji Yū’s “Pavement Snapshots” (Peibumento snappu, 1930) is a story told in the form of shifting and fragmented vignettes, resembling a cubist collage or pastiche. It echoes the twin obsessions of the flaneur20 in Walter Benjamin’s The Arcades Project21—a taste for detached and aesthetic observation and a passion for street photography. It captures the essence of the picturesque in modernist expression, as Susan Sontag aptly describes in On Photography.

The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller
who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flaneur finds the world “picturesque.”

The last story in this category is Nakajima Atsushi’s “Landscape with an Officer” (Junsa no iru fūkei, 1929), which takes us to a Korean city in 1923, then under Japanese colonial rule. Nakajima was deeply interested in the human and spatial dimensions arising from the colonial power structure, and this story delineates the frustration, anger, and finally, helplessness in a tangle of relationships between Koreans and Japanese caught in the space of colonial daily life—in buses, eateries, brothels, and on the street. Gritty, confrontational, fragmented, and open-ended, this story addresses the issues of power, ideology, politics, and the human factor in the production of space. Nakajima’s story illustrates how colonial space is twice appropriated: first in the physical and geographical dimension, and second in a textual and linguistic dimension, when Korean names, words, and places are converted into Japanese pronunciation. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre writes, “Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.” No other spatial and textual configuration in this selection is more politically charged than Nakajima’s colonial Korea, in which he raised questions of disempowerment, expansionism, modernization, and their repercussions in Japan and its colonies.

“Utopia and Dystopia” consists of stories that focus on alternative temporal and spatial realities typically found in science fiction, fantasy, and futurological fiction. With the founding of magazines such as Shin seinen and Kagaku gahō in the 1920s, science fiction and popular literature went through a boom, and writers experimented with a mixture of styles and genres, rendering the division between highbrow “pure” literature and lowbrow popular literature pervious. The period also coincided with Japan’s expansionist vision, and stories that contain visions of a new world abound, told as fantasies, dreams, or satires. All four stories in this section create self-contained worlds embodying various forms of physical and conceptual utopias that can easily be inverted as dystopias. It is as though the textual utopias and dystopias replicate and critique the
founding of “new worlds” in the actual geopolitical reality of imperialism on a national and global scale. Whether they are meant to be cautionary, playful, or simply fantastical, utopian and dystopian texts typically question and reject the status quo, a mark of the modernist political and aesthetic attitude, and these four stories fulfill precisely that function.

The scholar Maeda Ai illuminates our understanding of utopian texts in his famous essay *Gokusha no yūtopia* (1981; trans. “Utopia of the Prisonhouse: A Reading of *In Darkest Tokyo,*” 2004).24 One of his major arguments is the reversible nature of utopia and dystopia. He draws our attention to the paradox that “the prison as a space of confinement was also a space of imagination” by reiterating the well-known facts that Campanella, the author of the classical utopian text *The City of the Sun,* was confined for twenty-seven years in a prison in Napoli, while Marquis de Sade, who constructed an entire textual utopia of eroticism and libertinism, was incarcerated in prison and a mental asylum for thirty-two years. Furthermore, the utopian projection in modernist fiction was largely driven by an urban predicament of confinement in the interwar years, and fiction served as a form of liberation from the physical and spiritual confinement of an impersonal and increasingly militaristic metropolis.25 The inherent reversibility of the two supposedly polarized states—confinement and liberation, hell and paradise, dystopia and utopia—is evident in all four of our stories. The easy inversion clearly emphasizes the fluidity, formlessness, and permeability of the two states and the necessary irony and satire embedded in them. Now I will examine how the stories in this section reconfigure time and space in the text.

Tanizaki, known for his strong and idiosyncratic opinions on interior space, urban space, and the ills of poor urban development in essays such as *In’ei raisan* (1933–34, trans. *In Praise of Shadow,* 1977) and *Tōkyō o omou* (1934, *Thinking of Tokyo*), creates an outlandish theme park of sorts in “A Golden Death” (*Konjiki no shi,* 1916) that parodies everything from materialism and mass consumption to an insatiable appetite for exoticism and foreign products. The story is schizophrenic in style and narrative strategy. While it contains swaths of highbrow art theory in Japanese and German quoted in the original language, it also embodies the perennial lowbrow themes of popular literature—sex, dramatic rise
and fall in fortune, an ostentatious display of wealth, a bizarre death—and prefigures the mode of *ero-guro-nansensu* writing in modernist literature. The plot is simple: the narrator and his childhood friend Okamoto are rivals in looks, intelligence, and family fortune, but by the time they reach adulthood, their paths diverge widely. The narrator becomes an accomplished scholar and writer as his family fortune declines, while Okamoto becomes increasingly drawn to aestheticism and decadence in his thinking and way of life. But what separates them most decidedly are their thoughts on art. While the narrator emphasizes the beauty of ideas, Okamoto takes an opposite view. To exemplify his emphasis on the importance of physical and material art—in the form of architecture, fashion, food, and above all, the human body—Okamoto casts his entire fortune into building a wonderland of extravaganza and carnality in Hakone.

The theme park–like wonderland consists of an eclectic assembly of replicas of famous architecture around the world. These include the Greek Pantheon, the Spanish Alhambra Palace, the Japanese Hall of the Phoenix, the Vatican, and the Chinese Epang Palace. As for his ostentatious display of artwork, sculptures alone include replicas of the statues of the Buddha, goddesses, real and imaginary animals from the Thirteen Imperial Tombs of China, and Rodin’s “Eternal Idol.” Central to the lavish and decadent display of riches and material art and architecture of the world is Okamoto’s gaudy and theatrical performance using his own body. Elaborately dressed up in different costumes every day, he assumes the form of a rose sprite, a faun, a reveler in *Carnaval*, but even these are not sufficient to satisfy him. Finally, he strips himself and first paints his body black as a native in Schéhérazade’s *A Thousand and One Nights*, then covers his body with gold leaves in imitation of the Buddha, just to die the abrupt, ridiculous, and titular “golden death” in the end.

Not only does this story directly inspire Edogawa Ranpo’s *Panorama kidan* (1926, Strange Tale of Panorama Island, 2013)—a representative modernist text of *ero-guro-nansensu*—it prefigures the proliferation of theme parks in the late stage of capitalism (e.g., Disneyland, Universal Studios, Tobu World Square), the insatiable appetite in a mass consumption culture for ostentatious material gratification, and the intoxication
with *kosupure* (costume play) and avatars in the current digital game-obsessed world. With uncanny foresight, Tanizaki created a spatial dimension in “The Golden Death” that parodies the utopian-totalitarian dream-turned-nightmare in his time and prefigures the taste for vulgar extravaganzas in ours, when pleasure and enjoyment reflect a perverse obsession with commodity and public display, especially that of the human body.

Akutagawa’s short and fantastical “Wonder Island” (*Fushigi na shima*, 1924) alludes directly to Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726, amended 1735), long considered a classic to illustrate utopia and dystopia. Akutagawa’s story features SUSSANRAP Island (the name is an obvious inversion of Mount Parnassus, home of the Muses for art and literature)\(^26\) with a 600-meter vegetable pyramid in the center that resembles Mount Fuji. All islanders are involved in the cultivation, trading, evaluation, and finally, disposal of vegetables, and even professors in universities teach only courses on extinct species of European vegetables. A cartoon-like political satire that prefigures the imaginary spatial dimension and creatures in his more famous *Kappa* (1927), “Wonder Island” satirizes Japan’s overflow of homegrown ideologies and literature (the warm-colored vegetables of red and yellow are said to have proletarian flavor while the cool-colored vegetables of lime and green, bourgeois flavor) sprouting mostly from dated European seeds and ready to be discarded once judged unpalatable by arbiters (critics) selected for their inability to either see, hear, touch, or taste. Despite the zealous over-production, the irony that no vegetable ends up on anyone’s plate is not lost on the reader.\(^27\) The islanders also idolize the chameleon BABRABBADA (suggesting modernist gibberish), which is said to have already replaced Jehovah and Allah in world religions as the prophet for commercial success, to the extent that department stores in New York are said to wait for a sign from the chameleon before they prepare for a new season. With a rotting mountain of surplus vegetables and the color-changing chameleon as the god of sales, Akutagawa is unsparing in his acute criticism of over-production, groundless and fickle judgment, and the ultimate waste of effort in modern consumer society that has spread its rules over the literary world.
Witty and amusing as it is standing alone as a miniature political satire, “Wonder Island” opens up a new spatial dimension when positioned among Akutagawa’s other stories and essays on native and colonial space and place. For instance, “Ōkawa no mizu” (1912, “The Water of Sumida”) is an essay deeply colored in the nostalgic hues of the author’s remembrance of his childhood days in the Shitamachi, and “Yūyūsō” (1927, “A Cottage in Ruin”) is a short story that explores the ghostly remains of an old house and an abandoned garden. In these works, realism and lyricism dominate the space of nostalgia and constitute the aestheticism of the past and the ruins. In comparison, “Wonder Island” rejects both realism and lyricism and fills its modernist spatial dimension with a pastiche of allusions (from Gulliver to Marx), strange typography, and a light-hearted mix of genres (satire, farce, fantasy). Dissimilar to yet reminiscent of the strange places in Akutagawa’s “historical” fiction, “Wonder Island” creates a space that is exotic, inaccessible, yet strangely familiar by virtue of its nature of parody.

Satō Haruo’s “A Record of Nonchalant” (1929) is perhaps the most ambitious modernist experiment in this anthology. The story is set in the city of Nonchalant, which comprises a literally vertical future society extending from a subterranean world inhabited by an underclass of humans who subsist on gas to a high-rise world of mindless bourgeois who are slaves of fashion. Any attempt to challenge the stratification is punishable by memory erasure, voice muting, or death. Subterranean humans are given a chance for a “better life” by a cross-species surgical change into plants. One feels inclined to call the story science fiction because it contains themes typical of the genre, such as futuristic worlds, aliens and improbable events, and a focus on spatial dimensions. It is also tempting to call this world a “dystopia,” even though the neologism did not gain currency even in the West until the Cold War period in the 1950s. Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1994 [1932]), one of the earliest classics depicting a modern dystopia, was not yet in print.

“Nonchalant” also responds to and critiques contemporary literary trends of its time. This includes a parody of proletarian literature, a tinge of the legacy of the Shinkankaku-ha in its rejection of realism and naturalism, and a keen awareness of the rise of mass literature. Yet “Noncha-
lant” is both none and a mixture of all of the above. It is a chimera that combines recognizable features of literary genres and trends that came in vogue in the 1920s, but it also treats each recognizable part as an alien to attack. As a result it is a self-rejecting, self-loathing chimera engaged in an absurd dance to define its own form—a form marked by discontinuities and confusion in its narrative strategy and clashing imagery. This unabashed display of nonsense and grotesquery ironically places the story in the league of modernist literature.

On the level of spatial imagination, Satō’s dystopian configurations betray a fascination with a complex urban space that features a vertiginous, over-built, future metropolis, environmental pollution and subterranean spatial confinement. This was an obsession common to the modernist writers who experimented with *nansensu* literature—essentially an urban genre—such as Yokomitsu and Kawabata, as well as many popular writers of Japanese science fiction in the second half of the 1920s, such as Kozakai Fuboku (1890–1929) and Edogawa Ranpo (1894–1965). Satō’s works—for instance, his debut story “Supein inu no ie” (1917; trans. “House of a Spanish Dog,” 1970), the twin stories “Den’en no yūutsu” (1919; trans. “The Sick Rose, a Pastoral Elegy, or, Gloom in the Country,” 1993) and “Tokai no yūutsu” (1923; trans. “Gloom in the City,” 1993), and the utopian story “Utsukushiki machi” (1919; trans. “Beautiful Town,” 1996)—have always featured his fascination with blueprints, floor plans, and Western and Japanese architecture. But “Nonchalant” reveals a spatial imagination in an absurdist mode and opens a dimension that is quite literally out of this world. Finally, the three stories by Tanizaki, Akutagawa, and Satō exemplify an awareness of both temporal and spatial three-dimensionality in their capacity to satirize society and politics in their own times as well as ours, but it is Satō’s science fiction–like story that is most self-consciously three-dimensional in time and space.

The anthology concludes with Yumeno Kyūsaku’s “Hell in a Bottle” (*Binzume no jigoku*, 1928). In this story, a brother and a sister shipwrecked as young children alone on a tropical island grow up to experience the torment of forbidden love. The whole story is in epistolary form centering on letters found in three beer bottles retrieved from the sea. The letters are composed in vastly different styles. These include the formal *kanbun-
style (literary Chinese) letter from the village office about found bottles, the introspective and confessional rhetoric of the brother, the biblical and church language of sin and punishment that governs the thinking of the adult children who learned to read and write through the Bible (the only text they had), and finally the childish hand of children composing their first letter to seek rescue. Despite the deliberately clichéd and melodramatic plot, the narrative reveals the spectrum of linguistic possibilities in the formulation of the Japanese modernist expression. These include the blend of Chinese and Western influences, the patchwork of premodern and modern expressions, and a splash of eroticism characteristic of mass literature. The narrative reflects a mix of styles, genres, and language that forms the modernist narrative mode.

Nearly every story in this anthology contains some form of Foucault’s heterotopia, defined as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites…are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” Foucault uses the mirror, the screen, or the stage as examples of heterotopia because they contain both real and unreal spaces. Heterotopia is a real space that acts as a counter-site, and it is important that heterotopia involves a sense of movement between the two sites. No other story in this collection embodies the idea more clearly than “Hell in a Bottle.” Within the compact space of each of the three bottles are utopia/heaven (the tropical island of abundance, beauty, and health) and its inversion dystopia/hell (a claustrophobic space of incest and guilt), diametrically opposite conditions that flow readily into each other to create a new spatial perception that challenges any presumption of an absolute and inherent nature of external reality. “Hell in a Bottle” demonstrates the modernist impulse to question, destabilize, and invert the conventional perception of time, physical space, place, and geography by inserting a dimension (in the form of the bottles and the letters they contain) in the narrative space that is both real and unreal, contemporary and historical, and forces us to recognize the space of fear and pleasure hovering in between the two sites. It is the movement in the space between that speaks most eloquently of the elusive modernist space this anthology hopes to locate.

The existing scholarship in Western and Japanese modernism and
spatial theories is indispensable in our attempt to forge a critical language and methodology to examine spatial configuration and modernism in Japanese literature. Even though both Peter Nicholls and William Tyler from their respective angles have argued persuasively for the diversity, spontaneity, and global nature of the modernist movement in world metropolises, it is still hard to place Japanese modernism in a global context and encourage cross-border studies without a more complete repertoire of translated works. Peter Nicholls’ *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (2nd ed., 2009) includes a full-length chapter on African-American modernism but contains nothing outside the European and American literary tradition. In spatial theories and studies, *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds., 2005) contains a chapter on African writing and one on imagism and the geography of the Orient, but nothing on Asian literature or Japanese spatial configuration. Finally, the study of utopian/dystopian literature, a genre tightly bound up with spatial imagination, has until now been largely a Western-oriented critical discourse. It is our hope that this anthology, by adding to the body of Japanese modernist fiction available in translation, will broaden the channel of dialogue in the global intellectual discourse on spatial/temporal theory, utopianism, and modernism.

**Notes**


2. Yokomitsu Riichi, “Shinkankaku-ron—kankaku katsudō to kankakuteki saku hin ni taisuru hinan e no gyakusetsu” (On New Sensation—a rebuttal to criticism on New Sensation activities and New Sensation works) in *Yokomitsu Riichi zenshū*, v. 13 (Kawade shobō shinsha, 1982), 75–82.


5. In *Modanizumu*, Tyler wrote about the conventional critical strategies “that employed the aura of the West to bolster modanizumu’s claims to cultural legitimacy,” and suggested it is appropriate to “define Japanese modernism on its own term” (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 17.


8. I am indebted to Aaron Gerow’s comment in response to my presentation of a paper on three-dimensional reading at Yale University, October 19, 2011.

9. Two of the stories have been previously translated. Nakajima Atsushi’s *Junsa no iru fukei* was translated by Robert Tierney as “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch of 1923” and is available online only: http://ceas.uchicago.edu/japanese/Sibley_Translation_Project.shtml (accessed December 26, 2011). Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Machi no soko* was translated by Dennis Keene as “The Depths of the Town” in the anthology *“Love” and Other Stories of Yokomitsu Riichi* (Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1974), 109–14.


11. Kawabata Yasunari, “Gendai sakka no bunshō wo ronzu” (A Critical Discussion of the Writings of Contemporary Authors) in *Kawabata zenshū*, vol. 32, 18–19 (Shinchōsha, 1982).


15. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), xxxii. Bachelard focuses on the transformation of a stable, architectural place into a poetic, imaginative space, the way an inhabited house transforms into a home, and rooms and corridors articulate “the topography of our intimate being.” Calling it “topoanalysis,” Bachelard focuses entirely on interior space and leaves out location and geography. Bachelard’s theory is particularly useful when applied to an entire category of Japanese fiction obsessed with the interior, allowing dreams, the unconscious, or a particularly fertile imagination, often stemming from an invalid’s mind, to transform physical dwelling into a space of infinite longings and possibilities.

son-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 42. Lefebvre outlined three categories of social space in *The Production of Space*. These include (1) Spatial practice—this refers to what people do in spaces, that is, experienced space; (2) Representation of space—this refers to space as perceived by planners, architects, and governments, and are drawn on plan, maps, diagrams; (3) Representational space—this refers to space as imagined by inhabitants and is often linked to the minds of artists and writers. It rejects “the rational order and cool logic of the representation of space; instead representational space is alive: it speaks.” Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 42. All three categories are present in this anthology, and no doubt the third aspect of social space—representational space—is closest to the modernist impulse.

17. According to Andrew Thacker, “Harvey argues that the space of ‘the body, or consciousness, of the psyche’ had been repressed by ‘the absolute suppositions of Enlightenment thought.’ Now, however, ‘as a consequence of psychological and philosophical findings’ such interiorized spaces could ‘be liberated only through the rational organization of exterior space and time.’” Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 270. See also Thacker’s interpretation of Harvey in *Moving through Modernity*, 36–41.

18. In *The Space of Literature*, Maurice Blanchot quotes Kafka, writing in December 1914, “The best of what I have written is based upon this capacity to die content… I even enjoy dying in the character who is dying.” Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (1955), trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, [1982], 1989), 90. Blanchot comments that “Kafka feels deeply here that art is a relation with death” (1982), 91. This refers to the fact that art enables the writer to explore the space of death, or even practice dying (in oneself or in a character), by reconfiguring it as a textual possibility, especially in the appropriation and distortion of physical space, both indoors and outdoors, as a substitute for the unknown territory. Blanchot’s critical and philosophical discourse on the space of death is extremely helpful in our understanding of the elusive modernist space of death in the interior pieces by Sōseki, Kajii, and Kawabata, writers who are obsessed with the paradoxical form and formlessness of mortality.

19. Michel de Certeau writes that a place “implies an indication of stability” while a space “is composed of intersections of mobile elements.” *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117. A further distinction is made between maps and tours. “Maps, constituted as proper places in which to exhibit the products of knowledge, form tables of legible results” de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 121. Tour, on the other hand, focuses on the experience of moving though space. See also Thacker’s analysis of de Certeau in *Moving through Modernity*, 29–36.
20. Walter Benjamin’s much-quoted “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in *Illuminations* (English trans., 1968) draws upon the Baudelairean flaneur and transforms the interpretation of the urban landscape. The flaneur in Baudelaire’s world is a man of leisure who glides through the city with an air of superiority and detachment that marks him as an outsider, observer, and commentator. He is out of place in the turmoil of the city even if he appears to be mixed in with the pedestrians. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, [1968], 1985), 155–200, esp. 173.


27. I am indebted to the contributions from my students in my seminar “Interpretations of Modernity” when we read this story together in December 2011, especially to Tetsushi Watanabe, who presented on this story.
