Terms of Understanding
The Shōsetsu according to Tayama Katai

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TAYAMA Katai 田山花袋 has a curious status in modern Japanese literature. On the one hand, he is a writer rejected or even ridiculed by many literary critics of the last fifty years. One typical history of Meiji and Taishō literature, for example, notes that “in his will to be faithful to the principles of Naturalism, he was more impassioned than any other writer, but he could not overcome his innate banality, vulgarity, and sentimentality; to the end, he was no more than a deficient, though impassioned, writer.”¹ Perhaps because of such dismissals, many critical studies of Katai’s oeuvre seem to exhibit a certain defensiveness about their choice of subject. Iwanaga Yutaka 岩永聡, a prolific scholar of Katai, opens one monograph with the disclaimer that while the standard view of Katai’s “dearth of talent” (sainō no mazushisa 才能の貧しさ) is probably a reasonable characterization, one which even the author himself accepted, Katai nevertheless contributed greatly to Meiji literature precisely because of his rejection of the demand that writers be talented.² Today, the publishers of Katai’s texts show a similar ambivalence; there can be few books on the market in Japan (or anywhere else in the world) that include an afterword describing the author as “a person bereft of creativity and talent.”³

Paradoxically, however, Katai’s place in the canon remains unassailable. His 1907 novel Futon 蒲団 is widely thought to be a crucial text in the development of modern Japanese literature. It is regularly cited as a prime example of Naturalist writing, as the first shōsetsu 私小説, or as the first Japanese confessional novel. Given the novel’s supposed originary status, it is no surprise that two recent Western studies on the so-called shōsetsu genre, Edward Fowler’s The Rhetoric of Confession and Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit’s Rituals of Self-Revelation, take Futon as their point of departure. As with Katai’s works in

¹ Cited in Miyazaki 1975, p. 213. The work cited is the fifty-year retrospective Bungei gojūnen-shi 文芸五十年史, written by Sugiyama Heisuke 杉山平助 in 1942. This and all other translations from Japanese sources are my own.
² Iwanaga 1956, pp. 2–3.
general, though, the prevailing critical opinion of *Futon* is by no means uniformly positive. On the contrary, the most significant forces acting to canonize the work may well have been the biting condemnations of it, chiefly Kobayashi Hideo’s 1935 “Watakushi shōsetsu ron” 私小説論 and Nakamura Mitsuo’s 1950 *Fūzoku shōsetsu ron* 風俗小説論. In other words, what has made *Futon* noteworthy has been the historical event of its publication.

Although *Futon* certainly seems to be a prime candidate for the perhaps dubious honor of the first *shishōsetsu*, or the first confessional novel, its characterization as such masks persistent ambivalence in the text itself. In their portrayal of Katai as the progenitor of a literary movement, moreover, Kobayashi, Nakamura, and subsequent scholars have tended to overlook significant differences between Katai’s theories of literature and the features of the genre he ostensibly created. In her 1996 study of the *shishōsetsu*, Tomi Suzuki convincingly argues that the “genre” of *shishōsetsu* is really not a genre at all, but rather a mode of reading, an interpretive paradigm. Drawing attention to the historically constructed nature of the “I-novel meta-narrative,” she argues that what would come to be considered the *shishōsetsu* genre was something retroactively created and defined. In other words, rather than the texts defining the nature of the genre, the genre retroactively defined the interpretive paradigm to be used for understanding the texts. Offering an insightful reading of *Futon*, Suzuki presents mainly internal evidence to suggest that Katai’s contemporaries would not have viewed the work in the same way that later critics such as Kobayashi and Nakamura did. Specifically, she argues against Nakamura’s assertion that *Futon* lacks an ironic distance between the author and the protagonist.4

Since Suzuki’s focus is on *Futon* and the short stories that preceded it, she leaves open the question what Katai’s later literary production might reveal about how he viewed literature in the light of *Futon*’s success. If, as Kobayashi, Nakamura, and others have argued, *Futon* represented a watershed not only in Katai’s literature but in the literature of Japan as a whole, surely his post-*Futon* works merit our attention, too. Here I will focus on one of these: *Inaka kyōshi* 田舎教師, a novel Katai wrote two years after *Futon*. It is one of his best-known novels, and, as I hope to show, one that cannot be readily categorized as autobiographical or confessional.

One of Katai’s concerns in this novel, I would argue, is none other than to address the question of what it means to write a novel. In addition to his voluminous literary output, Katai was also a prolific literary critic and theorist. While he was perhaps not among the most learned contributors to this field, his essays were nevertheless influential, and they reveal much about his somewhat idiosyncratic use of terms that came to define the parameters of the *shishōsetsu* genre, terms such as “objective” (kyakkanteki 客観的), “subjective” (shukanteki 主観的),

4 Suzuki 1996, pp. 69–73. Suzuki draws upon some of the same scenes Nakamura cited to demonstrate the absence of ironic distance between author and protagonist, but instead uses them assert that the text of *Futon* develops “ironic and critical perspectives...vis-à-vis the protagonist.”
“imagination” (sōzō 想像), and “recreation” (saigen 再現). If the arguments he set forth in critical works or works of literary history such as “Rokotsu naru byōsha” 露骨なる描写 (February 1904), Shōsetsu sahō 小說作法 (June 1909), “Byōsharon” 描写論 (April 1911), and “Meiji shōsetsu naiyō hattatsushi” 明治小説内容発達史 (May 1914) are read alongside a novel such as Inaka kyōshi, they engender an understanding of Katai’s project very different from the prevailing view. In short, they speak against the assumption that Katai esteemed personal confession and the documentation of the author’s private life as the ideal form of the shōsetsu. To be sure, he drew heavily upon his own life experiences in his writing, but the scope of “experience” as he understood the term cannot be so narrowly circumscribed; his literary aim at the time was by no means limited solely to the kind of revelatory writing with which his name is now associated.

Katai and the Shishōsetsu
The discussion that has grown up around the shishōsetsu has informed much criticism of Futon and of Katai’s literature as a whole. To understand the reception of Katai’s work, it is therefore necessary to look first at several interrelated critical essays on the shishōsetsu. One such critical work is Nakamura Murao’s 中村武羅夫 essay of 1924 that distinguished between the honkaku shōsetsu 真実小説 and the shinkyō shōsetsu 心境小説. Although Nakamura used the term shinkyō shōsetsu instead of shishōsetsu, the critical responses that followed this essay show its inaugural role in the first phase of critical debate over the shishōsetsu; in Tomi Suzuki’s terms, Nakamura’s essay was one of the foundational texts of the “I-novel meta-discourse.” As his choice of terminology suggests, Nakamura wrote the essay to advocate what he called the “authentic novel” (honkaku shōsetsu), a third-person, objective work that depicts people, life, and society instead of the author’s state of mind. In formulating definitions for these terms, he particularly stressed that the honkaku shōsetsu does not insist upon an extradtextually focused reading. Epitomized by Anna Karenina, which he acclaimed as “the Bible of the novel,” the honkaku shōsetsu was “a novel in which the author becomes completely hidden in the shadow of what is depicted. The interest of the honkaku shōsetsu lies not in who wrote it; rather, it is a novel that has meaning because of that which has been written, even if one does not know who wrote it.” By contrast, in the more subjective shinkyō shōsetsu, “the author appears directly in the work; the author speaks directly in the text; or to state it more precisely, it is a novel in which the author’s direct speech becomes the work itself.” The central axiom underlying the interpretive paradigm of the

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5 The terms have been variously translated into English: Edward Fowler uses “true novel” and “mental state novel” (Fowler 1988, pp. 44–45), Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnerfeit favors “genuine novel” and “condition of the soul novel” (Hijiya-Kirschnerfeit 1996, pp. 152–53), and Tomi Suzuki renders the terms “authentic novel” and “state-of-mind novel” (Suzuki 1996, p. 49). On the distinction between shinkyō shōsetsu and shishōsetsu, see note 8.


7 Nakamura 1924, pp. 11–14; emphases in original.
shishōsetsu thus appears here in an early form: knowing the identity of the author of a shishōsetsu is an essential part of its proper appreciation.

Whereas Nakamura Murao was highly critical of the shinkyō shōsetsu, in a responding essay entitled ‘Watakushi’ shōsetsu to ‘shinkyō’ shōsetsu’ published the following year, Kume Masao came out strongly in favor of the form, which he called the watakushi shōsetsu. He declared that the shishōsetsu was, “in the true sense, the basis of prose literature, its true path, its essence.”

Kume also offered one of the earliest and most influential definitions of the genre. He first distinguished it from a confusingly similar genre: the Ich-Roman. According to Kume, unlike the Ich-Roman, which can be defined in purely formal terms as a first-person novel, not all shishōsetsu are written in the first person, and, likewise, not all first-person novels are shishōsetsu. For Kume, the important consideration, then, is not a formal one, but rather one of content: “In a word, it is a novel in which the author exposes (sarakedasu) himself most directly.” Kume goes on to reclaim the maligned shinkyō of Nakamura, recuperating the author’s portrayal of his state of mind as an essential artistic component of the genre, necessary in order to distinguish the novel from mere confession (kokuhaku, or zange). Closely related to these demands for authorial self-exposure and artistry are Kume’s views on creativity and factuality: “I simply cannot believe that art, in its true sense, can be the creation of another life. . . . To me, I just cannot see art as anything but the recreation (saigen) of the one life that a person has led. . . . In the end, the foundation of all art is the self.” Though one might well wonder about the practical limits of using such material as the sole source of novelistic content, Kume is quick to assure that anyone, “no matter how boring or mediocre,” has the capability to write his own shishōsetsu. Rejecting commonsense criteria of what might make a good novel, Kume declares that the only important concern is “whether or not that ‘I’ is expressed faithfully.” Implicit in these comments is Kume’s proposal of a method for evaluating art based on its authenticity: in a telling analogy, he later observes that the most exquisitely wrought artificial flowers are not the equal of a single wildflower.

It was this rejection of fiction and artifice that led Kume to make what was

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8 Though Kume Masao’s title uses the reading watakushi shōsetsu, for the sake of consistency I use the term shishōsetsu in the remainder of this article. It is also important to note that the terms shinkyō shōsetsu and shishōsetsu are not exactly synonymous and have been used contrastively by various commentators. In 1951, Hirano Ken distinguished the shinkyō shōsetsu of the Shirakaba 白旗 school, which he characterized as a literature of salvation (sukui no bungaku救いの文学), and the shishōsetsu of the Naturalists, whom he called writers of a literature of destruction (hametsuha 破滅派). Hirano’s terms are similar to those of Itō Sei伊藤整, who in 1957 similarly distinguished between chōwagata 調和型 and hametsugata 破滅型 (for discussion of these issues, see the summaries in Hijiya-Kirschner 1996, pp. 90, 102; Fowler 1988, p. 68; Suzuki 1996, pp. 62–63).

9 Kume 1925, pp. 50–51.

10 Kume 1925, pp. 51, 53, 56.
probably the most memorable statement of his 1925 essay: a broad swipe at several revered nineteenth-century European classics and the novelistic conventions they represent. He wrote that while he could enjoy reading Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Flaubert, ultimately he saw them as “nothing more than great popular fiction; in the end, mere made-up tales (tsukurimono).” Kume’s argument, and this denunciation specifically, were unambiguously rejected in another important study of the so-called shishōsetsu genre: Kobayashi Hideo’s “Watakushi shōsetsu ron,” published in 1935. Focusing on the differences in social circumstances between Japan and Europe, Kobayashi argues that it is precisely these differences that make the great novels of Europe appear to be mere popular novels to Japanese critics such as Kume. Kobayashi presents the shishōsetsu, which he defines tersely as “the honest confession (kokuhaku) of the self, woven into a novelistic form,” as an international phenomenon, and includes in the genre such European works as Rousseau’s Confessions and Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther. Nevertheless, he clearly holds the Japanese development of the form to be exceptional. Japanese authors’ lack of the particular social background of Europeans, specifically their lack of a “socialized self” (shakaika shita ‘watakushi’ 社会化した「私」) made it inevitable, he argues, that they would turn to the narrow details of private life in the process of self-expression.

Seeing Katai’s Futon as Japan’s first shishōsetsu, Kobayashi describes it as exemplifying this inward tendency. He begins his consideration of Katai with the citation of a well-known passage from the author’s retrospective Tōkyō no sanjūnen 東京の三十年, in which Katai recalls his encounter with the short stories of Maupassant: “Up until now, I had only gazed longingly at the heavens. I knew nothing of the earth. Absolutely nothing. A shallow idealist! From now on, I would become a child of the earth and, like a beast, crawl the earth rather than just gaze at the stars.” In Kobayashi’s view, Katai could see only Maupassant’s technique, not his miserable life circumstances, his disillusionment, or his solitude; whereas Maupassant’s works were unrelated to the author’s actual life, they directed Katai toward his own private life. It thus was “only natural” that Katai, resigned to no longer gaze skyward, “chose his own private life as a repository that would furnish his work with an unceasing supply of material.” For Kobayashi, the impact on future shōsetsu of Katai’s choice to chronicle his own life can hardly be overstated: “Ever since, the shōsetsu has adhered to the author’s actual life.” Though Kobayashi’s evaluation of the worth of the shishōsetsu differs strikingly from Kume Masao’s, both agree that the genre finds

11 Kume 1925, p. 53.
14 Kobayashi 1935, p. 184. This passage actually appears in Tōkyō no sanjūnen 東京の三十年 in quotation marks; see Tayama 1917, p. 566. Katai is retrospectively recalling his reaction to Maupassant and reciting what he remembers writing. What is presumably the original text appears in a different (though no less emotive) form in “Ten to chi to” 天と地と, published in March 1902.
15 Kobayashi 1935, p. 185.
its most basic definition in the author’s exposure of events from his own private life. Both, moreover, see this circumscription of content as the inevitable outcome of the author’s rejection of imagination.

One can find an even more elaborately dramatized version of Kobayashi’s history of the appearance of Futon in Nakamura Mitsuo’s Fūzoku shōsetsu ron, published in 1950. Nakamura’s characterization of Katai’s literary method has been supremely influential in much of the writing about the author produced in the last several decades. Like Kobayashi, Nakamura attributes a decisive role to Futon, arguing that “[the meaning of] realism—the fundamental method of literature—and even the very concept of literature, were determined by Futon.”

Nakamura follows Kobayashi’s lead in viewing Futon as devoid of a social dimension, but he turns literary history into an arena of agons, a “duel” of “fateful significance” for modern Japanese literature. Concurring with Hirano Ken平野謙, Nakamura portrays Shimazaki Tōson’s 島崎藤村 Hakai 破戒, published the year before Futon in 1906, as the genuine starting point of Naturalism. By depicting the turmoil of a protagonist from the buraku 部落 class, Hakai, he argues, was poised to encourage the development of a truly socially engaged literature. With the appearance of Katai’s Futon, however, this potential quickly perished, lamentably still unfulfilled:

Ever since the facile success of Futon made abortive the author’s labor to create human types from within himself—an effort that showed slight sprouts in Hakai and [Futabatei Shimei’s 二葉亭四迷 Sono omokage 其面影—the Naturalist writers of Japan have been utterly emancipated from the toil of universalizing the interior of the self and giving its thought concrete form; thus, the Japanese shishōsetsu was established through a crafty circumvention of what might well be called the most arduous work of the modern novel.

To illustrate this “crafty circumvention” of the novel’s “most arduous work,” Nakamura points out what he considers to be two of Futon’s fatal flaws. He argues first that the text eliminates any distance between the author and the principal character, Takenaka Tokio 竹中時雄:

While Katai was deeply moved by [Gerhart Hauptmann’s] Einsame Menschen, he utterly ignored the distance between the author and the characters in the text, jumping to the conclusion that if he modeled himself on [its protagonist] Vockerat, he could thereby become Hauptmann. He had lost sight of one of the most important dimensions of modern literature, and his peculiar formula of “author equals character” was created in the name of the truth that the modern novel demands.

The outcome of blurring the actual author with a fictional character is the loss of any potential for critical remove; indeed, in Nakamura’s eyes, Takenaka

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16 Nakamura 1950, p. 547.  
17 Nakamura 1950, pp. 543–44.  
Tokio, whom he calls the “puppet of the author’s self-intoxication,” is so much the center of the text that his presence literally overwhelms and excludes all other characters. To put it differently, the principal character of Futon becomes coextensive with the work itself. This leads Nakamura to the novel’s second flaw: since there is no distance between author and character, “the work as a whole ends up being no more than the spewing forth of the author’s ‘subjective emotions.’”

In this equation between Tayama Katai and Takenaka Tokio, Nakamura finds the first instance of what he asserts became a dominant pattern for the novel in Japan. He locates the origins of this slippage in a particular understanding of realism:

It seems that the ideology underlying the shishōsetsu in Japan from Katai down to Tanaka Hidemitsu is that the author, by turning himself into a literary character, could produce a novel and at the same time secure a guarantee of its veracity. There is nothing more indisputable than writing by oneself about oneself. The idea is that as long as it is factual, there is no room for lies. Like Kobayashi before him, Nakamura sees the author’s desire to eliminate the lies and imagination of fiction as leading ineluctably to only one possible literary topos: the factual chronicling of the self. He asserts that Katai and his contemporaries viewed the employment of imagination in a literary work to be anachronistic: no different from believing in the superstitions of a bygone era. With the advent of science, they assumed, literature “should ultimately be grounded in fact, should only depict what the author had seen or heard, should only sing of what the author had experienced.” Nakamura further echoed Kobayashi in his description of the consequences of this approach: rejection of the nonfactual and an exclusive focus on the author’s individual life experience led to a loss of the social dimensions fundamental to the European novel:

The true social dimension of the novel is guaranteed because the author encounters the reader in the novel, a world removed from actual life, and the reader comes in contact with the author amid that fiction. But as a consequence of the shishōsetsu’s elimination of the fictionality of the novel, it has also lost its social dimension.

To strengthen his interpretation of Futon, Nakamura also looked to Katai’s later memoirs, especially the 1917 Tōkyō no sanjūnen, finding in them suggestive comments about Katai’s motivations in writing the novel. One, alluded to above, is Katai’s likening of his own situation to that of Vockerat in Gerhart Hauptmann’s Lonely People (Einsame Menschen). In the chapter from Tōkyō no

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20 Nakamura 1950, pp. 554, 555.
21 Nakamura 1950, p. 549.
22 Nakamura 1950, p. 564.
23 Nakamura 1950, p. 566.
sanjūnen entitled “My Anna Mahr” (an allusion to the young woman who becomes the object of Vockerat’s interest in Hauptmann’s drama), Katai recollects a distressing conversation he had in 1907 with his friend and fellow writer Kunikida Doppo. Although Doppo expressed hope that their time for literary recognition had finally come, Katai remained dubious:

[In the wake of Tōson and Doppo’s success] I felt as though I had been left behind. I’d been to war and come back, but hadn’t written anything to show for it. . . . I had to write something. With these thoughts in mind, I walked incessantly, but I couldn’t write anything. I was desperate and impatient. . . . Just then, the work that was profoundly moving my mind and body was Gerhart Hauptmann’s Einsame Menschen. I felt as though Vockerat’s loneliness was my loneliness. And I felt I had to shatter my current patterns and forge some kind of new path with regard to family and work. . . . I thought I, too, wanted to walk a painful path. I thought I would boldly fight against myself at the same time that I fought against society. Things I had left concealed, things I had covered up, things that were I to confess them might destroy my very spirit—these things I would uncover and reveal. I made up my mind to write about my Anna Mahr, who had troubled me since spring of the year the Russo-Japanese War began, two or three years earlier.24

These comments seem to confirm Nakamura’s assertion that Katai was unable to distinguish between himself and his (or others’) fictional characters. They also apparently accord well with the inevitability thesis of Kobayashi and Nakamura: that Katai’s purported inward confessional turn was the unavoidable result not only of his rejection of imagination, but also of his unique understanding of realism and his frustratingly low position in the bundan in 1907.

Katai’s recourse to European literary analogy is, however, by no means unique to Futon, and it does not necessarily indicate a lack of distance between the author and his literary creations. In fact, a predilection for alluding to (at times tenuous) Western literary parallels is apparent in other works Katai wrote both before and after Futon, and in many of these Katai is not identifiable with the protagonist. The 1902 novella “Jūemon no saigo” 重右衛門の最後, for example, opens with an outburst of continental name-dropping, including the memorable passage that introduces its title character:

Speaking of Turgenev, I just remembered that I once met a man in the countryside who could have come right out of A Sportsman’s Notebook. It really moved me. He was precisely like the Russian serfs we see in Turgenev’s work. In my limited experience, it’s fair to say I’d never seen the power and form of nature so vividly.25

The man in question, Jūemon, is always viewed from the detached perspective of Tomiyama 富山, an outsider to the village, and one with no access or insight into Jūemon’s mind. Jūemon himself, moreover, is a belligerent alcoholic with

25 Tayama 1902a, p. 90.
deformed genitals who seeks revenge on his tormentors through arson, not exactly a typical “Russian serf,” as depicted by Turgenev, and all in all, quite a far cry from Katai himself.

A similarly elliptical appeal to Turgenev occurs in *Tokyo no sanjūnen*, when Katai reminisces about what led him to write *Inaka kyōshi*. He describes visiting his friend Ōta Gyokumei 太田玉茗, the priest at a temple in Hanyū 羽生, Saitama prefecture, and recalls the feelings of sorrow that swept over him upon seeing the grave of the young Kobayashi Shūzō 小林秀三 (the model for the protagonist of *Inaka kyōshi*): “The graveyard scene from *Fathers and Sons* appeared before my eyes. He was totally different from Bazarov, but still...”26 Katai is quite right about Shūzō being “totally different from” Bazarov; indeed it is hard to imagine two characters with less in common. There being precious little to link *Inaka kyōshi* to *Fathers and Sons* beyond the fact that both contain a graveyard scene, it is probably wise to avoid reading too much into the connection Katai proposes. Rather than confirming his ostensible inability to distinguish his own life from the fictive worlds of European literature, these allusions merely serve as an index of Katai’s reading habits and an acknowledgment, or at least assertion, of literary lineage.

It is also important to bear in mind that Katai wrote “My Anna Mahr” in 1917, ten years after he had published *Futon*. As Tomi Suzuki has observed, Katai’s version in *Tokyo no sanjūnen* contrasts strikingly with how he characterized *Futon* just after he had completed it. In his 1909 *Shōsetsu sahō*, a nearly two-hundred-page work that is something of a guidebook for aspiring writers, he writes:

As for my *Futon* I had no specific intention. It’s not a confession (zange), and it’s not the case that I intentionally selected those kinds of ugly facts (shūjijitsu 糟事実) to write about. It’s just that I took the facts I had discovered from within life and spread them out before the eyes of the reader. If the reader reads them and finds them unpleasant, or feels disgust, or searches among them for the Exalted Author’s Mind, or receives some lesson from them—all of that is irrelevant to me. Or if the reader in his curiosity takes them and forces them to fit into my experience, evaluating my personality, responsibility, or thought, that doesn’t matter. My only concern is the extent to which I have been able to depict those discovered facts and to how close my writing has been able to approach the truth.27

Of course, as is the case for any writer, and especially one like Katai whose reach is so often thought to exceed his grasp, what Katai says about *Futon* is a matter distinct from the issue of what he achieves in the text itself. Still, these comments do at least cast doubt on the prevalent view of his literary method as a project that achieved its ultimate form in the confession of the author’s private life.

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26 Tayama 1917, p. 648.
27 Tayama 1909b, p. 228; this quotation is cited partially in Suzuki 1996, pp. 91–92.
Katai’s Theories of Literature

During the ten-year period from 1904 to 1914, Katai wrote not only literary works such as Futon and Inaka kyōshi, but also several essays on literary methodology. These essays cover such practical points as description, observation, and narrative technique, while also treating more abstract issues, including the difference between subjectivity and objectivity and the relevance of this distinction to the author. Katai also drew upon such ideas when he composed a historical survey in 1914 of the novel’s development in Japan. These works show him employing, with a quite different set of associations, concepts and terms that later became fixed as key words of the so-called shishōsetsu genre. Before turning to Inaka kyōshi, it will be useful to consider briefly the views on the methods and aims of the novel found in these theoretical essays.

Katai’s earliest and best-known essay on descriptive methodology is surely his manifesto “Rokotsu naru byōsha,” published in February 1904. One of his chief aims in this spirited piece is to challenge the aesthetic principles of the Ken’yūsha, in particular what he characterizes as the group’s excessive attention to style and technical artistry (gikō). In attacking the literary artifice associated with the Ken’yūsha, Katai espoused the use of the colloquial style as a more direct, natural, and genuine means of expression. Inspired in part by the shasei movement of Masaoka Shiki, the use of colloquial style became increasingly prevalent in the first years of the twentieth century.28 The Naturalists, whose subsequent success would make the colloquial style the dominant form in the novel, advocated its use as a medium that offered, in Nanette Twine’s concise summary, the “closest approach to the language of everyday life, which allowed full and free expression of the often tortuous meanderings of the author’s psyche and, lacking the artifice and ‘artistic’ aspect of traditional styles, was suited to the unvarnished revelation of man’s darker side.”29

Of Ozaki Kōyō and the Ken’yūsha, Katai writes: “Aesthetes... If we follow what they say, writing must above all be pretty. Thought must above all follow the dictates of aesthetics. They say it would be a grievous error to write of nature as it is, and that in all things, one must not write without idealizing or gilding (mekki).” Looking to European precedent for a model of how Japanese literature will and should develop, Katai links this kind of literary practice to “classicism” and “romanticism.” The title of his essay derives, in fact, from his

28 The Ken’yūsha, established in 1885, was a literary society centered around Ozaki Kōyō and other figures affiliated with “G 社” (Katai’s abbreviation for the Ken’yūsha, which he apparently pronounced “Gen’yūsha”; Tayama 1917, pp. 480, 557). Given the vehemence of his later opposition to Kōyō, it is ironic that Katai in fact briefly became a member of the Seishunsha, the organization of Kōyō’s disciples that published a journal called Senshiban, which was suffering from an excessive concern with style at the expense of authenticity (Tayama 1909b, pp. 351–53).
summary of the history of European literary development in the nineteenth century: “The gilded literature was smashed to smithereens and the cry that everything be bold (rokotsu 露骨), everything be true (shinsō 真相), everything be natural, spread to the furthest reaches of continental literature . . . smashing romanticism in its path.” Katai’s essay thus establishes a polarity between the Ken’yūsha’s attention to technical artistry, and the “bold” and “frank” description of nineteenth-century European writers. It is a gradient not only of style, but also of content, as his celebration of the European writers’ evocation of “blood and sweat” suggests. The age of Kōyō and his contemporaries, which succeeded only in “cosmetic” or “cowardly” depiction, has passed, Katai declares triumphantly.30 As Katai’s use of metaphors like “gilding” and “cosmetic” shows, he clearly understood the issue in terms of the need for literature to plunge fearlessly beneath the superficial exterior shell of matters, bringing to light what had been concealed beneath.31

Beyond its suggestions for the novel’s style and content, Katai’s recommendation to probe boldly beneath the surface was also a call for a particular writerly attitude: investigative objectivity. The importance of the terms “subjective” and “objective” to Katai’s understanding of literature is apparent from even a cursory look at his critical work. Yet, in spite of his copious writings on the issue, the question of what exactly these terms meant to Katai is by no means easily answered. In his history of Meiji literature, for example, he praises Shimazaki Tōson’s “use of the ever so simple technique of an impressionist painter” in the novel Haru 春, noting that this technique reveals the author’s “broad objective perspective” and that the omission of psychological description shows the work itself to be “objective.”32 The association of this objective perspective with impressionist painting suggests that Katai’s understanding of subjectivity and objectivity (not to mention impressionism) is, if nothing else, idiosyncratic.33 His use of the terms is not, however, meaningless. It is clear that he did not think

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31 Katai’s fondness for this cluster of related metaphors can also be seen from the sections of Shōsetsu shinzui 小説神髄, the 1885 treatise on the novel by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遥, that he cites in his history of the development of Meiji literature: “To dig to the heart of these human feelings (ninjō 人情), depict the inner regions of the heart without any omission, and be meticulous and precise—this is the work of the novelist. That the renowned unofficial historians (haikansha 稗官者) of China and Japan just focused on dramatization and staging is because they thought it sufficient to depict only the surface (hisō 皮相) of human feelings” (cited in Tayama 1914, p. 16).
32 Tayama 1914, pp. 113–14. In the first instance, Katai uses the phrase hiroi kyakkanteki no mikata 広い客観的の見方, and in the second he uses the English term “objective.”
33 In its definition of various meanings of the term “impressionism,” in art and literature, The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (third ed.) consistently emphasizes the importance of the author’s subjective response: “concentration on the immediate visual impression produced by a scene,” “use of details and mental associations to evoke subjective and sensory impressions rather than the re-creation of an objective reality,” “the practice of expressing or developing one’s subjective response to a work of art or to actual experience.” For Katai, however, “impressionism is an art of objectivity,” in which the “subjective perspective is behind the scenes, in the background; it must be a transparent lens” (Tayama 1909c, p. 3).
highly of what he designated “subjective” expression: in his criticism of Kōda Rohan 辻田露伴, for example, Katai writes that throughout Rohan’s work, “the subjective view is always the center. The view of life that unites all of his work is not built up from the author’s observations of the vicissitudes of his life, but is instead a subjective view gained from the author’s own individuality and idiosyncrasy.”34 Here, Katai characterizes subjectivism as inherently narrow and limited, contrasting it to the broader possibilities afforded by the observation of life.

In a history that is harshly critical of almost every writer it treats, Katai saves perhaps his highest praise for Higuchi Ichiyō 橋口一葉, focusing specifically on her transcendence of such subjectivism. He calls Ichiyō’s “Takekurabe” たけくらべ “a seamless masterpiece in which the essence of nature reveals itself utterly; the narrow subjective view (shō shukan 小主観) present in her earlier works is nowhere to be found. It seems that ‘life’ appeared clearly before her eyes.”35 As these passages show, Katai faulted narrowly subjective writing and praised broad objectivity. The confusing point, however, is that he often used the term “broad objectivity” interchangeably with a seemingly contradictory term: the “subjectivity of Nature.” Wada Kingo 和田謙吾 provides an illuminating explanation of the issue:

This idea of “the subjectivity of Nature” (daishizen no shukan 大自然の主観) was always lurking in the background of Katai’s understanding of “objectivity” during his Naturalist phase. In Inki tsubo インキ壺 he said, “A subjectivity that lacks subjectivism—this is what I want to seek” (Bunshō sekai 文章世界, September 1909), and “I want to approach a subjectivity that resembles nature, and then I think I’ll have the right to talk about what subjectivity means” (Bunshō sekai, March 1911). The goal here is “the subjectivity of Nature,” and this is in fact also the base of what Katai called “objectivity.”36

In other words, Katai sought at this stage in his career to transcend his own narrow subjectivism and align himself with the detached, objective perspective of Nature.

For Katai, description grounded in careful observation was the method by which this fusion with Nature’s objective perspective could be achieved. Kobayashi Hideo, Nakamura Mitsuo, and others have presented Katai’s rejection of imagination as the principal factor that purportedly led him to resort to revealing his personal life in his literature. Yet, far from a dismissal of content unrelated to the author’s private life, Katai’s rejection of imagination can be more meaningfully understood as an exhortation to observe others. In his “Byōsharon,” for example, he distinguishes between purely abstract imagination, which was undesirable, and the imagination that comes from observation, which was essential:

34 Tayama 1914, p. 47.
35 Tayama 1914, p. 82.
Take an incident. Any incident, big or small, it doesn’t matter. Now just study its process carefully and see what happens. From this, you’ll gain many different kinds of silent lessons. What you had imagined would happen proves to change radically in accord with the incident’s psychological progress. You’ll be astonished by how it changes—developing in some unexpected direction. In short, the way a situation develops by “going precisely in the direction it will” is so complex, chaotic, and minute that it is inscrutable to human imagination. When I am confronted with such a situation, I am made keenly aware of the smallness of man and the vastness of nature. But as you amass these minute psychological experiences, your imagination will be more than mere imagination. It will be imagination premised on fact, and so you will be able to conduct observations that, even if not precisely right, are nevertheless not far off.37

The distinction Katai articulates here between “imagination premised on fact” (i.e., empirical observation) and “mere imagination” clearly shows that he did not categorically reject imagination. As the reference in this passage to the “smallness of man and the vastness of nature” suggests, moreover, his rejection of “mere imagination” was coextensive with his rejection of the author’s narrow subjectivism. In other words, Katai’s critique of imagination did not imply acceptance of subjectively chronicling the author’s private life as the only domain of literary expression.

In order to appreciate the “vastness of nature” or, as Katai put it elsewhere, to approach the subjectivity of Nature, one needed to observe and examine the world around one. As he explained in his 1911 “Byōsharon,” it was this experience of observation that the author was trying to “recreate” (saigen) in writing a novel. The decidedly visual nature of Katai’s favored form of literary evocation is evident in the distinction he drew in the essay between byōsha 描写, which he compares to “painting,” and kijutsu 記述, which he calls simply “description.”38 In Katai’s formulation, whereas kijutsu simply transmits what the author has seen and heard, byōsha aims at the recreation of this sensory experience. As a further illustration of this distinction between byōsha and kijutsu, Katai introduces another set of complementary terms in his history of Meiji literature. He quotes Tsubouchi Shōyō’s description on how the novelist should write: “To evoke [the characters’] emotions, the novelist does not use his own design to create the feeling of good and evil, right and wrong, but only observes as a bystander (bōkanshite 傍観して), depicting the situation as it is.”39 Katai argues, however, that Shōyō’s own works, such as Tōsei shosei katagi 当世書生気質, fall short of this goal, since the author explains (toku 説く) more than he depicts (egaku 描く). Katai’s favored literary method of recreating observed experiences by depiction was thus an outgrowth of both his belief in unmediated realism and his attempt to rid the novel of the author’s subjective interventions. Through its structure, narrative style, and descriptive techniques, Katai’s novel Inaka kyōshi enacts his observational method and the theories of literature that underlay it.

37 Tayama 1911, pp. 126–27.
38 Katai uses the English words “painting” and “description”; Tayama 1911, p. 117.
39 The passage is cited in Tayama 1914, p. 17.
Inaka Kyōshi and Its Sources

Tayama Katai published Inaka kyōshi in October 1909, just over five years after first learning of the life and death of a young man named Kobayashi Shūzō. Kobayashi, who like Katai himself grew up in the countryside, had fervent literary aspirations but died at the age of twenty before they could be fulfilled. He spent the last few years of his life working as a teacher in the small town of Miroku, on the outskirts of Hanyū in Saitama. The principle character of Katai’s novel, Hayashi Seizō, is modeled on Kobayashi, and the text opens with Hayashi’s first few tentative days as a teacher. At the time, Hayashi is envious of his peers’ exciting plans for study in Tokyo and disappointed in his own humble station. The novel follows his slow process of resignation, as he gradually adjusts to life as a country teacher and resolves not to despair over his failure to achieve his former aspirations. At the same time, Inaka kyōshi also chronicles his brief but costly foray into the world of the nearby Nakada pleasure quarters, resulting in his debilitation and, finally, his death from tuberculosis.

In modeling the fictional character Hayashi Seizō on the real-life Kobayashi Shūzō, Katai made extensive use of Kobayashi’s diary. After Kobayashi’s death, the diary was left in the care of Ōta Gyokumei, a poet and friend of Katai’s who served as the priest of Kenpukuji temple in Hanyū. During Kobayashi’s employment at the Miroku school, he lived for a time with Ōta at the temple. After Kobayashi’s death, in response to Katai’s interest in his life, Ōta lent his friend the young man’s diary. The combination of this diary, Katai’s conversations with Kobayashi’s friends and family, and his own first-hand investigation of Miroku, Hanyū, and its environs formed the basis of Katai’s novel. Though Kobayashi’s diary was lost for a time, a substantial section of it was recovered through the efforts in the mid-1950s of Kobayashi Ichirō and Iwanaga Yutaka.40 The discovery of Kobayashi Shūzō’s diary has made possible a particular kind of critical approach to the work: one which relies on meticulous cross-checking between the life of Kobayashi Shūzō as revealed in the diary and the life of Hayashi Seizō as depicted in Inaka kyōshi. We learn, for example, that whereas Kobayashi died on 21 September 1904, Hayashi dies in the novel on 5 September 1904, a sixteen-day difference that makes the fictional death more neatly coincide with the fall of Liaoyang in the Russo-Japanese War.41

Going beyond merely identifying the discrepancies between the two texts, a

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40 In the introduction to his English translation of Inaka kyōshi, Kenneth Henshall writes that “Unfortunately the diaries themselves appear to be no longer extant, having been used to repair sliding doors during the Second World War” (Henshall 1984, p. xi). Some of Kobayashi Shūzō’s diary was in fact used to repair shoji during the war, but a significant portion of the diary has been reproduced nevertheless in Kobayashi 1963; see also Iwanaga 1968, p. 276. In 1969, Kobayashi Ichirō published an expanded edition of his study, including reproductions of the surviving part of the original diary and a transcription printed on facing pages. The extant diary covers the year 1901 in its entirety, and, as Kobayashi has observed, over half of Katai’s novel concerns events from this year in the young teacher’s life (Kobayashi 1969, pp. 6–7).

41 The discrepancy is discussed in Kobayashi 1963, p. 8; and Iwanaga 1968, p. 266.
secondary stage of research has endeavored to explain such variations in the light of Katai’s own life experiences. Through first-hand interviews and an exhaustive investigation of birth records, for example, Iwanaga Yutaka concludes that, unlike the first-born Hayashi Seizō of Inaka kyōshi, Kobayashi Shūzō actually was the third-born son; he had one elder brother who died in infancy, but his eldest brother, Ishihara Tamisuke, died in 1903 at the age of twenty-five. This elder brother had his birth recorded on the Ishihara family register, but was in fact the biological child of Kobayashi Shūzō’s mother, Ishihara Yoshi, and father, Kobayashi Shinzaburō. Shūzō also had a younger brother, Hirokichi, who died in infancy. In the novel, however, Seizō has only one brother, whose death at the age of fifteen leaves Seizō without “someone to talk to.” Iwanaga notes that the infant Hirokichi’s death could not have had much impact on Shūzō—certainly he would not have felt the kind of loss Hayashi Seizō experiences because of his younger brother’s death in Inaka kyōshi—and argues that in the novel Katai essentially transformed the death of the elder brother, Ishihara Tamisuke, into the death of a younger brother. Iwanaga’s most provocative suggestion, however, is that this transformation was motivated by Katai’s own family background: “If he intermixed himself little by little into the diary, he would have a young man who was easy to create. Hayashi Seizō is a young man produced by a mixture of Kobayashi Shūzō and Tayama Katai.” In short, the dominant reading paradigm of Inaka kyōshi has been the same as that of Katai’s other works, notably Futon: it seeks to expose an overlap between the author and his protagonist.

Remarks by Katai, too, have contributed to this tendency. In Tōkyō no sanjūnen, for instance, he downplays the importance of Kobayashi Shūzō’s diary to the composition of Inaka kyōshi. “I could have written Inaka kyōshi even without the diary,” he notes, “but the fact remains that the diary was extremely good material.” As we have seen, Katai recollected the writing of Futon in a way that seemed to blur the distance between author and protagonist. In his later account of writing Inaka kyōshi, Katai is complicit in a similar erasure of this distance. Regarding the scenes in the novel that take place in the Nakada pleasure quarters, he writes:

Actually, the section about the Nakada pleasure quarters was fictional conjecture (kakō). But I believed that for the life of a young man, such a scene,
even if the form were different, would undoubtedly have existed somewhere. A one-year lapse in the "diary" also gave me the space to conjecture. And that one section to some extent shows the author and the protagonist deeply intertwined.\textsuperscript{45}

It is precisely this kind of overlap between Katai and his characters that Nakamura Mitsuo and others have seized upon in their descriptions of Katai's literary method as exemplary of the \textit{shishōsetsu} genre. It has enabled statements such as one found in a general survey of Katai's life and works that describes all the young men in the novel as "alter egos of Katai as a young man."\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Stylistic Markers and Authorial Distance}

In spite of Katai's 1917 comments, the text of \textit{Inaka kyōshi} shows remarkably little overlap between its author and protagonist. Though the painstaking research of Iwanaga Yutaka and Kobayashi Ichirō is not to be dismissed lightly, their efforts to enumerate Katai's departures from the diary obscure an important fact: the text of \textit{Inaka kyōshi} itself problematizes the narrator's confrontation with the diary and foregrounds the differences between a diary (\textit{nikki} 日記) and a novel (\textit{shōsetsu}).

As part of his argument that pure literature in Japan is considered "inherently referential," Edward Fowler persuasively argues that an appeal to the author's private life "as the Ur-text of pure literature" is one of the central conventions of \textit{shishōsetsu} writing and reception.\textsuperscript{47} It is precisely this mode of reading that has informed the critical approach of Iwanaga and Kobayashi: they proceed from the assumption that events and artifacts external to \textit{Inaka kyōshi}—namely Tayama Katai's life and Kobayashi Shūzō's diary—form the definitive texts by which the novel should be evaluated. So committed are they to the project of looking outside the text to the author's private life that they fail to appreciate the uncollapsed three-point distinction between the protagonist, Hayashi Seizo; the narrative perspective; and the author, Tayama Katai, that is to be found interwoven within the work itself and that is one of the text's most striking features. In their rush to contrast the model, Kobayashi Shūzō, with his fictional counterpart, Hayashi Seizo, moreover, they overlook the tension within \textit{Inaka kyōshi} between the narrative discourse and its "citation" of the protagonist's diary. The contradictions between Katai's novel and Shūzō's diary that Iwanaga and Kobayashi so tirelessly expose might better be seen, however, not as flaws Katai could only clumsily conceal, but as the product of a deliberate differentiation of the diction, content, and scope of \textit{Inaka kyōshi}'s central narrative, on the one hand, and the cited diary, on the other.

In \textit{Inaka kyōshi}, Katai intersperses passages quoted from Hayashi Seizo's diary among the novel's principal narrative. It is important to bear in mind that Katai was the ultimate author not only of the narrative sections of \textit{Inaka kyōshi},

\textsuperscript{45} Tayama 1917, p. 654.  
\textsuperscript{46} Fukuda and Ishibashi 1968, p. 144.  
\textsuperscript{47} Fowler 1988, p. 134.
but also of the "quoted" sections of Seizō’s diary. Although many of these "quoted" passages in the novel are quite similar to those in the actual diary of Kobayashi Shūzō, they are not simply verbatim citations of a historical document, but rather diary entries made by the fictional character Hayashi Seizō and then "cited" by the novel’s narrator. Through the choice of diction, Katai sustains a consistent distinction between the narrative and the diary entries. Whereas the novel’s narrative is in a simple colloquial style, the style of the cited diary passages recalls *gazoku setchūbun* in its use of classical verb conjugations and syntax derived from kanbun. It is also more exclamatory and emotive than the somewhat subdued narrative voice, and it frequently makes a humorously incongruous use of foreign loan-words. An example is provided by the narrative’s first mention of the diary: absently gazing at the passing scenery as he rides in a cart to Miroku for his first day of work, Seizō spontaneously recalls writing a prayer in his diary on behalf of his friend Katō Ikuji:

> He remembered that on that night, he had written in his diary: “Let him be fortunate; I beseech thee, O lord, lord, make fortunate my friend’s pure ‘love,’ his beautiful and innocent love. With thy compassionate hand, make them fortunate, O lord, I beseech thee, for the sake of my dear friend, I beseech thee,” and then he had slumped down on top of his desk.48

The somewhat affected, repetitive, and voluble style attributed to the diary is reconfirmed in later citations. On 31 December 1901, Seizō writes in his diary: “O, at long long last, 1901 has passed. How much has happened in this year of my life that I shall not forget! Don’t speak. Don’t speak. This alone is the one thing I have determined; I say: this is how the world is, so I shall not speak, but rather shall think alone. O!” (p. 128). The heightened tone serves to call attention to the diary whenever it is quoted. We see a similar phenomenon in the citation of letters exchanged between Seizō and his friends. Written in *sorobun* these letters incorporate some of the same stylistic hybridity as the diary. A sentiment as banal as “There’s more to life than love,” for example, attains a certain stylistic markedness when expressed as *koi—sore nomi ga raifu ni arazu* 倍—それのみがライフにあらず (p. 111).

The narrative’s use of colloquial language, by comparison, signals its allegiance to the “unmediated” form of narrative discourse that Katai espoused in opposition to the artifice of the Ken’yūsha style. The difference is especially evident in how the narrative voice and the diary handle dialogue. In a quoted entry from 4 January 1902, Seizō writes:

> This evening, Sawada came over. At Katō’s urging, we went to play *karuta* at Kitagawa’s. Is he one who knows nothing of friendship, one who would sell out

48 Tayama 1909a, p. 7. The stylistic contrast is even more marked in the original Japanese, which reads: そしてその夜日記帳に「かれた、幸多かれ、願はくば幸多かれ、オへ神よ、神よ、かの友の清きラウ、美き無邪気なるラウに願はくば幸多からしめよ、涙多き汝の手を以て願はくば幸多からしめよ、神よ、願ふ、親しき、友のために願ふ」と書いて、机の上に打伏したことを思い出した。
his friends for his own gain? Again he said, “Tell me what you hope for, and I will do whatever is within my power.” I said “Nothing.” Are these words truly from his heart? In the diary, Seizō makes no attempt to record his own and Kato’s speech as it was actually spoken; the dialogue appears in the same classical style as the surrounding diary entry itself, thus calling attention to its mediated quality. This representation of oral discourse as written discourse contrasts with the main narrative’s presentation of the speech of Seizō and other characters in a form closer to actual speech.

The difference in technique is apparent in the chapter that immediately follows these diary quotations, a short anecdote set in a bathhouse about an old man named Kihei who one morning freezes to death while fishing. It is a vignette with no connection to the plot and little to contribute beyond local color. It does, however, form a striking juxtaposition to Seizō’s diary in its handling of dialogue, for in this brief scene, the narrative pointedly mimics the characters’ dialect:

“That’s really something ’bout Kihei, ain’t it?”
“You got that right. I ran into him when I went out this mornin’. He was carryin’ his net and I sez, ‘You going out with it so cold? You’ll freeze!’ You just never know.”
“Howd’ya s’poze it happen’d?”
“Good question. It’s just a canal, a real nothin’ place.”

In his critical work, Katai wrote extensively about the advantages of various kinds of writing styles. In his 1909 Shōsetsu saho, for example, he recounts the development of dialogue in modern Japanese fiction and offers some suggestions to prospective writers:

In the past, the purpose of literature was not to approach truth, and so it did not emphasize dialogue. . . . As literature gradually began to bear a tighter relationship to life, it became less common to write a novel in such a style. With the rise of genbun itchi 言文一致, dialogue at last was deemed worthy of attention. . . . There is no special method for writing dialogue well. Aside from carefully observing those people whom you intend to write about, there’s just no other way. As for observation, the key is to pay attention to the endings of their words.

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49 Tayama 1909a, p. 130. No distinction is made between the classical style of the diary and the dialogue it quotes.
50 Tayama 1909a, p. 136. The conversation reflects the dialect of rural Saitama and Tochigi: 「喜平さんな、どんでもねえこんだったっってなあ」「ほんにさあ、今朝行く時、己巳邂逅したやアよ。様子持って行くから、この寒いのに目振りに行くけえ、御苦労なこっちゃなアって挨拶しただアよ。わからねえもんなんだよなあ」「どうしてまアそんなことになったんだんべい？」「ほんにさ、彼処は堀切で、何でもねえ処だがあなア」
If you note the speaker’s intonation and speech mannerisms in detail, the person will come out that much more clearly.\textsuperscript{51}

The bathhouse scene quoted above from \textit{Inaka kyōshi}, published only four months after \textit{Shōsetsu sahō}, shows precisely this attention to dialect.

The narrative adopts the detached observational method illustrated in the overheard conversation of two unnamed “villagers” not only toward peripheral figures like the men in the bathhouse, but also to depict central characters. Often Seizō and his friends are presented as speaking in an abstruse argot, full of coded references. One typical conversation in the novel’s first chapter contains dialogue like the following:

“What about ‘A’?”
“I don’t think so.”

Ikuji hesitatingly asked “Then what about ‘Art’?”

Seizō’s heart raced a little. He had started to say “Yeah, if I have a chance, who knows what will happen . . . but for now, I’m not thinking about that,” but then suddenly burst out playfully with “If you go with ‘Art,’ then I’ll feel the same way about you and ‘Art’ that I feel about Obata 小畑 and ‘Miss N.’” (pp. 6-7)

Rather than explaining what these opaque terms mean, the narrator merely reports them. It is not until the twelfth chapter that we learn, for example, who “Art” is (p. 55). Just as the bathhouse scene gestures toward its own compositional method, so, too, does this scene with Seizō and his friends suggest Katai’s style of detached observation. By its very inscrutability, the conversation creates a sense of externality made explicit in the narrator’s comment following a particularly abstruse sequence of dialogue about “L,” “the Sage,” and other obscure references: “For one listening to it from the side, it was a style of speech that was a little difficult to understand, but their conversation did in the end become meaningful” (p. 69).

One of the principal effects of the stylistic differences between Seizō’s writing and the narrative in which it is embedded is to solidify the contrast between the discursive world of the narrative and that of Seizō and his peers. In so doing, it also reinforces the reader’s awareness of the distinction between narrator and protagonist. Though the predominant reading paradigm for Katai’s work posits an overlap between these positions, the rigorously maintained stylistic difference actually serves to preserve a distance between them.

\textit{Defining the Nature of Novelistic Discourse}

The inclusion of the stylistically marked diary within the narrative not only emphasizes the difference between narrator and protagonist, it also calls attention to the nature of novelistic discourse. In an early scene, when Seizō is just beginning his new career, the narrator describes him musing about how to reflect this change in the recording of his diary: “If this were a novel, one would start

\textsuperscript{51} Tayama 1909b, pp. 269-72.
Although Seizō does in fact decide to start a new page, the narrative voice has already rendered its judgment. If Seizō’s use of dates, his tendency to express himself in poetry, and his experimentation with (typo)graphical oddities were not evidence enough, the narrator’s proposition, “If this were a novel . . . ,” highlights the fact that what Seizō is writing is decidedly not a novel.

Katai draws attention to the specific features of novelistic discourse by contrasting the kind of information provided in Seizō’s diary with that conveyed by the surrounding narrative. One of the earliest citations from the diary records Seizō’s expenses. The diary entry reads like an account book, listing his expenditure of “25 sen for a registered seal, 22 sen for some name cards, 3.5 sen for toothpowder and a toothbrush, 8.5 sen for two brushes, 14 sen for an inkstone, 1 yen and 15 sen for a hat, . . . ” et cetera (p. 16). Such a list is valuable insofar as it reveals Seizō’s financial worries, but it also serves to emphasize the contrast between the kind of information in the diary and that provided by the much more vivid enveloping narrative. In a later passage, Seizō jots down the varieties of flowers he observes on the bank of the Tone 利根 river, an impressive list of some thirty-two species (p. 201).52 While there is a similar attention to flora and fauna in the narrative, there is never simple enumeration; description instead occurs in the context of some narrative event and foregrounds the perceiving subject. In a passage immediately following Seizō’s list of flowers, the narrative highlights this contrast, depicting natural phenomena in fine sensory detail:

Many different varieties of vegetation were assembled in the school’s newly built flower bed. In the fences of the farmhouses, there were pear blossoms and double cherry blossoms, and in the fields were peas and fava beans. Sometimes the sound of a wheat-pipe could be heard. Swallows swooped down, cutting a diagonal path across the road. There were ants, bees, and beetles, and, at night, insects whose names were unknown would make their incessant noises as the frogs’ voices sang out. (p. 202)

Even in its chronicling of more exciting events, the diary retains a certain terse, telegraphic style. Frequently, its brevity is openly opposed to the detail and visual richness of the main narrative. One example of this contrast occurs when Seizō happens upon the priest and his wife in the bath, an incident that is related in both the diary and the narrative. The narrative introduces the clipped, somewhat bashful, diary version with: “He remembered writing with a lighthearted tone in his diary: ‘This evening, I chanced to see the priest in an intimate (?) moment with his “Wife” in the small bath, and was surprised and embarrassed by the

52 A concern for minutiae is a recurring feature of the diary. In his entry for 2 January 1904, for example, Seizō notes that his relative Kikuko きく子 has counted 7,256 grains of rice in one ご合 (180 cc), but on 4 January, he records that the Yoroza chōkō 万朝報 newspaper has determined that there are, in fact, 73,250 grains of rice in one しょ 升 (a unit equal to ten ご合). See Tayama 1909a, p. 187.
unexpected sight.'”53 This citation of the diary is immediately followed by the narrator’s much more detailed and thorough reconstruction of the incident and its background:

The bath was situated so that it could be entered from the doorway to the priest’s living quarters. There were many sticks and boards originally intended for use in funerals that were left over in the main hall, and, just two months ago, the priest had hired a carpenter to come build a fine bath out of them. Inside he had installed a round tub. The smoke drifted from the kitchen to the priest’s living quarters. On that day, Seizo had gone to the living room to ask for an ember to light his cigarette, but no one was there, and he could hear laughter coming from the bath. With no special purpose in mind, he went to have a look, only to find the priest and his wife pressed together like lovebirds in the small tub. The priest gave a carefree laugh and said “This is quite a time to be seen!” For Seizo this comic event was more than just a comic event; he felt that the experience had made him see the priest’s life and his relationship with his wife more clearly. (p. 100)

By placing these two parallel accounts back-to-back, Katai again foregrounds the contrast in discursive style between the narrative and the diary. The unabashedly sensuous quality of the narrative version, with its overheard laughter, drifting smoke, and cavorting lovebirds forms a clear counterpoint to Seizo’s tentative synopsis of the event in his diary.

The juxtaposition of these two accounts shows not only a difference in the quality of description, but also hints at Seizo and his friends’ reluctance to write frankly about sexuality. The omission of sexuality from the written discourse of these young men is an issue intimately related to the generic definition of the novel that Inaka kyōshi implicitly proposes. The narrative’s allegiance to the literary aspiration of unvarnished depiction is at its most obvious when the subject is sexual desire and activity. In the first chapter, in the middle of a conversation between Seizo and his friend Katō Ikuji about love, Ikuji quotes a letter from a mutual friend: “The other day, he sent me a letter, and in it he said, ‘Thank you for your help with my love [affair]. I have learned for the first time the woes of love. But for now, I hope this love develops as it may, without anything “Physical” . . .’”54 Though the written discourse of these young men disavows the physical, the narrative insistently and immediately fills in this gap with a description of Seizo’s reaction: “the sound of the phrase ‘without anything “Physical,”’ gave Seizo a little jolt.” The emphasis on physical themes that this

53 This quotation clearly shows the diary’s contrastive stylistic features of classical conjugations and mixed diction: かれは日記に軽い調子で、「夕方知らずして、主の坊が Wife と共に湯の 小ささに親しみて (?) 入れるを見て、突然のこととに気の毒にもまた面喰はされつ」と書いたの を思出した。Tayama 1909a, p. 100.

54 It is interesting to note the contrast of Katō’s colloquial speech with the classical form of the written discourse he quotes: この間、手紙を寄越して、「余も卿らの余のラヴのために力を貸せし を謝す。余は初めて恋の物うきを知れり。しかして今はこのラヴの進み進まんを願へり、 Physical なしに．．．．．．．」なんて言って来たよ; Tayama 1909a, p. 6.
passage suggests is merely a prelude to such later narrative lines as: "As his body
developed, his heart inflamed and cooled by turns. He became able to read the
glances of the young women around town. Unawares, he had come to know the
taste of love. There were times when a certain 'desire' would seize him and he
would secretly perform polluting acts" (p. 31). Though it might seem merely
prurient, the narrative's persistent inclusion of such physical rawness helps both
to demonstrate the unflinching descriptive method and to define the constitutive
elements of novelistic discourse that Katai espoused.

That the presence or absence of such sexually candid description is inextrica-
ibly bound up with the issue of genre is most explicitly revealed in the passages
relating to the Nakada pleasure quarters. In this sequence, Seizō falls in love with
a prostitute named Shizue 静枝 and becomes embarrassingly indebted to his
friends and colleagues, only to have Shizue purchased by another customer. As
might be expected, the sequence is marked by its frankness, but the absence of
diary entries during this period of time is another striking characteristic. Indeed,
once Seizō has stopped frequenting Nakada, the narrative comments: "From the
time he began visiting Nakada, Seizō ceased writing in his diary. It was because
he thought there was a distinct possibility that what he had carelessly written
might perhaps be seen by someone else" (p. 182). The fear of discovery is not,
however, Seizō's only motivation in ceasing his diary writing. As the narrative
follows his thoughts, it becomes clear that the act of writing a diary has a spe-
cial role to play in regulating conduct: "He had said to himself that if he were
unable to adequately convey the events of his life and his state of mind in a diary,
then it was better to stop keeping one, but on the other hand, he also thought that
the true meaning of writing a diary lay in not doing things he couldn't write about
in it" (p. 183). The "events" that this passage alludes to are, of course, the sub-
stance of the novelistic narrative that has followed Seizō's foray into physical
expression. As discussed previously, Katai noted in Tōkyō no sanjūnen that the
diary's one-year lapse gave him the opportunity to conjecture; these passages
demonstrate, however, that Katai made use of this lapse not to blend himself into
the novel, but rather to enrich his distinction between the generic scopes of the
novel and the diary, and to illustrate the execution of his unvarnished descrip-
tive method.

The determination to reveal the unpleasant facts lurking beneath life's serene
surface that Katai articulated in "Rokotsu naru byōsha" is, of course, evident in
Inaka kyōshi, but it is important to note as well how the novel's narrative voice
calls attention to the process by which these darker sides of life become visible.
It is a process that can only take place in the novelistic narrative, which depicts
Seizō in the first part of the Nakada sequence as a detached observer. As Seizō
gradually finds himself irresistibly drawn to Nakada, the narrative emphasizes
his discovery of darkness:

Living in this way, Seizō heard of all kinds of stories about the village, even
though he didn't particularly seek them out. There was the story of a woman
whose sufferings at home drove her to throw herself into the waterway, and then
the story of a young nanny who had been duped by a traveler, taken into the
woods, and raped. There was the story of a band of three armed robbers who had
broken into a wealthy farmhouse, tied up the farmer and his wife, and made off
with their money, and then there was the story of the cocoon dealer who had
committed love-suicide with a waitress. He discovered that the more one lis-
tened, the more one understood that in this village he had thought was so peace-
ful, there was painful and tragic “life,” too. (p. 145)

It is hardly coincidental that the final sentence of this passage closely recalls a
similar discovery in Katai’s novella “Jūemon no saigo.” In this earlier work, the
protagonist, a young man named Tomiyama, journeys to the countryside, where
he is at first struck by its majestic beauty:

O, this quiet village! How violently was my heart, with its propensity for fan-
tasy, struck by the sight of this village! For six years, I had endlessly fantasized,
and now here it was in front of me! I had, in fact, been deeply stained by the dust
of the world, and for a long time had ached for the beauty of nature; and now I’d
be able to enjoy it to my heart’s content, wouldn’t I? Didn’t I have two friends
in this quiet village just waiting to comfort my world-weary self?55

News of the string of arsons that have plagued the town, however, soon deflates
Tomiyama’s rapture: “O what a peaceful village! O what beautiful nature! No
sooner had I thought this than I was reminded of what the woman had said; her
words slowly festered in my heart. A fire-pump in this peaceful village! Arson
in this beautiful village!”56

In Inaka kyōshi, Katai explicitly links the kind of bold revelation evident in
“Jūemon no saigo” to novelistic discourse. While on the one hand the narrative
of the novel depicts Seizo’s psychological state with considerable richness, it
also resolutely declares that such expressiveness is simply not possible in a diary:
“Seizo thought he would write his feelings down in detail, but didn’t think he
would be able to express himself adequately, so he decided to consign them to
memory instead.”57 The psychological detail of the surrounding narrative serves
as proof that Seizo’s silence stems not principally from the ineffability of his
feelings, but rather from the strictures of his chosen medium.

**Narrative Perspective and Authorial Subjectivity**

In its recuperation of what the diary suppresses, the narrative of Inaka kyōshi
boldly asserts its exteriority by relating incidents that Seizo could not possibly
have observed or known about. These instances include such seemingly incon-
sequential, yet no less revealing, descriptions as “The gentle poignancy of his
travels brought sweet tears to his eyes. Before long, he began to snore lightly”

55 Tayama 1902a, p. 106.
56 Tayama 1902a, p. 115.
57 Tayama 1909a, p. 43.
(p. 17), or the description of the aftermath of a party: “Three of them had collapsed. The principal lay snoring with his head on his elbow and his legs curled up, Ōshima 大島 lay on his back with his legs out and his chest bared, and Seizō, his face red, lay with his head resting on the tatami. Looking bored, Seki 関 ventured alone into the next room . . .” (p. 91). Though they are not crucial to the development of the plot, these scenes nevertheless subtly foreground the externality of the perceiving gaze. Other more obvious departures from Seizō’s sphere of experience and knowledge are evident in the conversations that occur in his absence: as Seizō’s tuberculosis takes an increasing toll on his physical stamina, his friends express concern: “When Seizō wasn’t present, Ogyū 吳生 said ‘But he was so vigorous last year,’ and told Obata that women had come to see Seizō at school” (p. 197). In another scene shortly after this one, the two young men reverse roles, and Obata initiates a conversation with Ogyū about their friend’s declining health, again “when Seizō was not around” (p. 200). More examples—indeed, entire chapters—could be cited, but as these instances demonstrate, far from being tied exclusively to Seizō, the narrative in fact unambiguously proclaims its independence from his perspective.

In addition to reporting others’ dialogue, the narrative’s occasional comments on other characters’ thoughts makes its externality to Seizō even more pronounced. In one early scene, Ikuji and Seizō find themselves unable to speak their minds, and yet the narrative perspective is still able to represent their inner thoughts:

“It sure is a bad road!”

The two of them talked in this way to each other. But in their hearts, both of them were thinking about Mihoko 美穂子. As for Ikuji, he wanted to tell his friend all of his troubles with the woman, leaving nothing out. He thought if he opened up and told Seizō, his heart would settle down. Yet for some reason, he didn’t feel inclined to open up and reveal himself. Both of them walked on silently. (p. 62)

A strikingly similar scene occurs later in summer: “Just as they had in spring, the two friends walked the road home in silence. For Ikuji and Seizō alike, a mountain of things lay waiting to be said in each of their hearts. But neither made any attempt to touch upon them” (p. 94). In both of these instances, the narrator asserts no special bias of perspective or insight; the narrative is, in other words, equally cognizant of both Ikuji’s and Seizō’s states of mind. By its very impartiality the narrative demonstrates its detached point of view. The narrator’s use of universal pronouncements that approach stereotypes further emphasizes this detached vantage point. In an early description of Ikuji, for example, the narrator writes “Ikuji showed the suffering facial expression of the young man who secretly carries love in his breast” (p. 32). The employment of such type-based depiction gestures toward the narrative’s own judgmental independence, illustrating that while it has insight into the protagonist, it is by no means identical with him. An even more blatant assertion of the narrative’s independence from Seizō’s perspective is evident in its explicit observations about his ignorance.
Before the Nakada sequence, Seizō has occasion to reflect on a former schoolmate named Kotaki 小滝, who now works as a geisha:

Occasionally, Seizō would seriously consider what it meant to be a geisha. At those times, he would think about himself and Kotaki. There were times when he would paint a “romantic” scene in his mind. Sometimes he would imagine the ill-fated life of a geisha, who could protect neither her chastity nor her body, and tears of sympathy would stream from his eyes. Seizō still didn’t understand about geisha and other such matters. (pp. 66-67)

As with this dismissive comment about Seizō’s immaturity and lack of worldly sophistication, the employment of generalized judgments of this sort repeatedly jars the reader into renewed awareness of the narrator’s independence. After documenting a conversation where Ikuji and Katō enthusiastically debate the effect of a man’s circumstances on his life, the narrator scoffs, “At this point the same old simplistic idealistic theories would come out. Positive ideas and negative ideas became a tangled jumble, and the discussion would end without ever reaching a conclusion” (p. 33). Similarly, after describing Seizō’s “passionate enchantment” with the Myōjō 明星 poets as a “flowing spring to Seizō’s parched heart,” the narrative betrays a certain coolness as it takes a step back into disinterested resignation: “the debate they’d once had on the pros and cons of the Myōjō school, they now had again” (p. 38). The narrator’s dismissive tone sometimes verges on ennui, as in such later comments as “Young people are never at a loss for something to say” (p. 61), or “What enabled them to talk and talk about their ideas without any end in sight was their youth” (p. 63).

The intrusion of this kind of categorical pronouncement into the narrative is not unique to Inaka kyōshi. In Katai’s Futon, for example, the narrator breaks off from a close portrayal of Takenaka Tokio’s thoughts to declare: “But, inasmuch as he was a writer, this man had the ability to view his own psychology objectively.”58 In the course of the work, however, it becomes clear that this characterization cannot be taken at face value. Jay Rubin pinpoints the irony of this line in which “Katai succeeds in convincing us that the statement is generally true about Tayama Katai precisely because it is a false assessment of Takenaka Tokio.”59 Indeed, viewed from the point of view of the story as a whole, the statement becomes a comical testament to Tokio’s self-deception; he is anything but objective. The humor emerges more clearly in such later descriptions of Tokio as, “His excited state of mind, his unbridled emotions, and his pleasure in sadness intensified to an extreme, and while he was on the one hand tormented by acute jealous thoughts, on the other hand, he coolly viewed his own situation with objectivity.”60 Here we can see a clear distinction in Futon between the narrative voice and the protagonist, an ironic distance that the

58 Tayama 1907, p. 8.
59 Rubin 1984, p. 100.
60 Tayama 1907, p. 32.
narrative’s use of abstract judgmental pronouncements enhances. After protracted anguish over his student Yokoyama Yoshiko’s relationship with the young Tanaka Hideo, for example, Tokio consoles himself with her return: “Facing her figure, Tokio felt a certain indescribable satisfaction in his heart, and half forgot his pain and distress. Though your rival be formidable, if you can just monopolize your lover, then your heart will calm—this is the condition of one in love” (p. 38). Such abstraction helps reinforce the distance between narrator and protagonist.

To be sure, in emphasizing the difference between the perspective of the narrator and protagonist, Katai appears to take an inherently paradoxical stance. In the case of Inaka kyōshi, by calling attention to the absence of certain kinds of information from the diary, the narrative inevitably raises questions about the source of its knowledge. Grounded theoretically in the thesis first formulated by Kobayashi Hideo, Nakamura Mitsuo, and others that Katai’s rejection of imagination inevitably led him to turn toward confession of his own life in his literature, the effort to resolve those questions has further stimulated the impulse to look for potential parallels to Inaka kyōshi in Katai’s own experience. It is on these grounds, for instance, that Wada Kingo faults the second half of Inaka kyōshi, in which the Nakada licensed quarters section occurs, for “exhibiting a tendency toward shishōsetsu.”

In fact, however, what we might better see here is evidence of Katai’s efforts to establish a universal perspective independent not only of the characters but also the author. The manner in which he incorporates a character explicitly modeled on himself into Inaka kyōshi offers further evidence of this attempt. Although later critics of Inaka kyōshi, following the conventions of shishōsetsu reading, asserted that Katai blurred the borders between his own private life and Hayashi Seizō’s, such a reading is undermined by the presence in the novel of the Tokyo-based writer Hara Kyōka, a character whose circle of acquaintances, history of publications, and wartime journalistic deployment clearly associate him with the historical Katai. With its sophisticated and somewhat whimsical dispatching of the historical Katai to a third position altogether, the text of Inaka kyōshi caricatures simple equations between Katai’s own private life and Seizō’s.

The novel’s first reference to Hara introduces him as the epitome of the young men’s aspirations. As Seizō and his friends excitedly talk of soliciting pieces for their journal, Gyōda bungaku, they imagine working their way up the ladder of literary prestige: “And then at Jōganji temple in Hanyū, there’s Yamagata Kojo, a pretty well-known writer in the bundan, especially famous for new-style poems, so first we’ll get him to join. And if we have him ask, maybe we can get a manuscript from Hara Kyōka” (p. 35). Hara’s first visit to the countryside, accompanied by Taiyō reporter Aihara Kenji, only reinforces his status as the object of the young men’s attention:

61 Wada’s quotation is cited in Kobayashi 1963, p. 8.
“Seizō’s room was situated across the courtyard from the priest’s quarters, and so the scene of the priest and his guests chatting was clearly visible. . . . The visitors’ Western clothes and laughing voices were, for the young men, the seeds of supreme envy” (p. 79).

Though such depiction of Seizō’s envy might seem to indicate no more than the seepage of Katai’s adulation fantasies into his fiction, the text of Inaka kyōshi is far from uncritically narcissistic in the deployment of its author in the fictional garb of Hara Kyōka. On their first sighting of Hara, for example, the young men are envious, but that does not keep them from observing, “So it turns out Hara is that obese? I wouldn’t have thought he could write such gentle stuff” (p. 79). In part because Hara is not a central character in Inaka kyōshi, the text’s ironic presentation of him is more immediately apparent in this novel than the presentation of Tokio in Futon. In one memorable episode, the narrative records the nighttime revelry of Hara, Aihara Kenji, and the temple priest from a perspective of detached amusement:

Returning to the temple, they [Seizō and Ikuji] found that the three men were still drinking in the priest’s quarters. Their raucous voices sounded like a storm. The taller of the two visitors [Aihara] tugged on the priest’s hand, trying to lead him off somewhere. Hara in his Western clothes pushed from behind. The priest had at some point changed into his robes: “All right, all right. If you guys want it that bad, I’ll recite a sutra; but in return you have to beat the wooden block!” The priest was also quite drunk. “OK, then, I’ll beat the block,” said the magazine reporter. The three men careened into each other as they stumbled down the long corridor to the main hall. From the priest’s quarters, the priest’s wife and the novice peered out and laughed as they watched the drunken scene. As the three men tried to enter the main hall from the corridor, they slipped on the stairs. Falling like dominoes on top of each other, they erupted in laughter. The journalist picked up the mallet and struck the wooden block. Poku poku poku—it sounded pretty good. The priest and the literary man Hara watched him, and one of them said with a laugh, “That’s great! It seems you’ve done this before.” (p. 80)

Like much of the narrative, this passage is both visually and audibly evocative, but more notable as an aspect of the descriptive method of Inaka kyōshi is its remove from any single character’s perspective. Though it begins by describing events as Seizō and Ikuji see them, it shifts to view the scene from the perspective of the priest’s wife and the novice, and ends with a description of the sound of the wooden block that approaches the perspective of the three men. It shows, in other words, a narrative perspective that asserts its own all-embracing universality by refusing identity with any single figure.

This contrast of individual and universal perspective is evident in the juxtaposition of different observations on the scene. “Who would have thought that the literary man is such a happy-go-lucky and childlike being?” Seizō remarks to Ikuji, only to have the narrator comment: “It had never occurred to the young men that the famous literary man and journalist would take part in such childish
play. But even though they didn’t sufficiently understand the state of mind and lifestyle associated with such activity, they were nevertheless envious” (p. 81). Again, though the narrative perspective enters into the minds and frames of reference of the characters in Inaka kyōshi, it is irreducible to any single one of them. And with its coyly detached allusions to Hara Kyōka’s portly physique and his drunken antics, the text’s narrative perspective appears to proclaim its independence not only from protagonist but from author as well.

In its declaration of a universal perspective independent of the author, the narrative stance of Inaka kyōshi exemplifies Katai’s theories of subjectivity and objectivity. At the same time that this novel was being published, Katai was serializing, in Bunshō sekai, Inki tsubo, the essay in which he articulated his goal of seeking “subjectivity that lacks subjectivism,” of transcending his individual authorial subjectivism and adopting the broad subjectivity of nature. The narrative stance adopted in Inaka kyōshi shows Katai’s attempt to fulfill this goal of transcendence. It is as though he disposes of his own subjectivism by projecting it all into the peripheral character of Hara Kyōka; Hara’s existence, in turn, allows the text to call attention to the absence of authorial subjectivism by ironically distinguishing Hara Kyōka from the narrative perspective. Moreover, by repeatedly emphasizing the narrative’s lack of equivalence to Hara or any other character, the text suggests its own approach to a universal perspective that might be identified with Katai’s “subjectivity of Nature.”

Observation and the Descriptive Method of Inaka Kyōshi
The universal narrative perspective of Inaka kyōshi is most evident in the text’s descriptive method, which invariably describes phenomena as though they are visible, audible, or otherwise immediately perceptible to an unnamed insubstantial observer. Throughout the text, chapters open with nearly cinematic descriptions such as the following, which begins chapter 8:

The following day at about one o’clock in the afternoon, Seizō, wearing his white striped hakama and carrying his borrowed clogs, walked through the outskirts of Gyōda alongside his half-bald father, who was wearing a tattered striped haori. The rain had just stopped and the sky was still fairly cloudy; occasionally there would be a tentative flash of sunshine. Along the river that divided the town and the village, the reeds and rushes and willows were already putting out buds of luxuriant green; five or six ducks quacked noisily, and along the banks, simple bamboo and more elegant bull’s-eye patterned umbrellas lay out to dry. A farmer from nearby who had come to town to shop sat feasting on his noodles. The receding figures of the father and son walking side by side moved quietly through the space between the low awnings and roofs of clay tile, the eaves with their diapers hung out drying, the mason’s workshop, the blacksmith, the house where young women wove plain indigo cotton cloth, the sweet shop with children clustered around, and other buildings that lined the road on either side. (pp. 40–41)

This passage and the countless others like it in Inaka kyōshi describe Seizō and his father as though they are only part of the scenery: it is not them but their
“receding figures” (*ushiro sugata* 後姿) that move through the streets. Such descriptions immediately raise the question of who sees this rear view; from whose perspective do their figures recede? Yet, as later passages reveal, the perceiver is pointedly absent from the text; in other words, the point of view from which such scenes are visible is a disembodied one:

Wearing a white splash-patterned garment with his thin cotton haori, the figure of Seizō (*Seizō no sugata* 清三の姿), a cheap straw hat atop his head, walked quickly over the embankment’s grass road where the katydids chirped and crickets raised their pleasant voices while grasshoppers jumped about. With not a soul around, his gaunt figure seemed to stand out (*yasegisu na sugata wa ukidasu yo ni mieru* 瘦削な姿は浮き出るように見える) as he stood with the broad river before him in the early night air. (p. 156)

With its use of the verb *mieru*, this passage implies a perceiving subject, and yet the reference to there being “not a soul around” calls attention to this subject’s absence. The narrative gaze is one without substance, one unattached to any human subject, or, in Katai’s formulation from *Inki tsubo*, a subjectivity without subjectivism.

Katai’s frequent use of intransitive sensory verbs such as *mieru* and *kikoeru* 聴える in *Inaka kyōshi* is directly connected to his theories of observation and its literary recreation (*saigen*), most clearly articulated in his 1911 “Byōsharon.” In this essay, as noted above (p. 55), Katai set forth a distinction between “depicting” (*byōsha*) and “decribing” (*kijutsu*) an incident:

*Byōsha*—the purpose of depicting (*egaku*) is not to transmit meaning or tell a story. Nor is it to relate an event. It is to take a raw scene that enters the brain through the eyes, and recreate (*saigen*) it as it is, showing it on the page. . . . “A plum tree is in bloom” (*ume ga saiteiru* 梅が咲いて居る). This is *kijutsu* and not *byōsha*. “The plum tree comes into view whitely” (*shiroku ume ga mieru* 白く梅が見える). Here, the feeling of *byōsha* begins to emerge. Endeavoring to write in such a way that the tree in bloom before us becomes apparent, as though it is clearly visible in front of our eyes—this is the essence of *byōsha*. “He closed the rain shutters” (*kare wa amado o shimeta* かれは雨戸を閉めた). “The sound of the rain shutters closing could be heard” (*amado o shimeru oto ga kikoeta* 雨戸を閉める音が聞えた). . . . the latter example is closer to the nature of *byōsha*.62

As these examples show, observed, sensory experience was inseparable from Katai’s use of the term *saigen*. The disembodied perceiver of *Inaka kyōshi*, whose gaze observes, for example, that “Seizō’s straw hat moved through the mulberry field, appearing and disappearing as he went” (p. 159) may be regarded as a special variety of the “bystander” whom Tayama idealized. The insubstantiality of the disembodied perceiver’s subjectivity insures that it faithfully records scenes as they are observed without the intrusion of the author’s abstract design.

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62 Tayama 1911, pp. 118–19.
But what about the fact that Katai never really observed Kobayashi Shūzō doing any of the things that Hayashi Seizō does in *Inaka kyōshi*? The apparent contradiction stems from a definition of “experience” that is unreasonably narrow. The experience that is being recreated is not necessarily the author’s own personal life experiences, but rather his experience of observation in a more general sense. Observation occupied a central place in the method of literature Katai espoused and practiced. To Katai, observation was a means not just of understanding one’s own life, but of understanding others. In *Shōsetsu sahō*, for example, he advises aspiring writers, once they have grasped the fundamentals of external description, to try penetrating more deeply:

> First, let’s imagine you are watching a beggar. The beggar probably has his own reasons for becoming a beggar, hereditary factors, and unique manners, so without looking only at the beggar’s external appearance, observe and examine him from different perspectives. Try to determine accurately what he is thinking. Or, if you are going to write about love, don’t write just about the externally apparent things like the way the two lovers meet, or shake hands, or have conversations, but rather accurately observe and write unreservedly about what they are thinking in their hearts. If you don’t do this, you will be unable to write about people or nature.63

Though criticism of Katai often asserts that he believed one could write accurately only about one’s own private life, his injunctions against imagination are really no more than injunctions against an abstract literary method that is neither premised on nor recreates the author’s experience of observation. As his advice here shows, however, he believed that it was possible to write “accurately” (*tadashiku* 正しく) about what another person was experiencing, provided one engaged in careful study.

Katai’s novel *Inaka kyōshi* provides its readers with an example of his method of literary observation in practice. In this sense, *Inaka kyōshi* is indeed about Katai’s own experience. But contrary to the arguments of the *shishōsetsu*-inspired critics who have tried to find references to Katai’s private life in its pages, “experience” in this case does not mean the author’s personal history. It does not mean a pervasive and inevitable overlap of author and protagonist. Rather, this novel recreates Katai’s experience of observing Kobayashi Shūzō through his diary and through Katai’s first-hand travels to the countryside. The use of lush visual descriptions and verbs such as *mieru* and *kikoeru* in the novel’s narrative serve to recreate the sensory experience of this observation. Tayama Katai was in fact the perceiving subject who read Kobayashi Shūzō’s diary, interviewed his friends and family, and surveyed his living environs. But by making the perceiving gaze irreducible to any single character, by making it disembodied and insubstantial, Katai’s novel persistently effaces its author from the position of the text’s central subjectivity. The text’s clever use of the char-

63 Tayama 1909b, pp. 353–54.
acter Hara Kyōka as a repository for the author’s real-life identity further exemplifies Katai’s endeavor to recreate his observations without focusing narrowly on himself as the perceiving subject. Hara Kyōka fades from the novel midway through, but resurfaces toward the end in a revealing scene:

At that time, Seizō enjoyed reading the war reports that had begun appearing in “True Chronicles of the Russo-Japanese War,” written by Hara Kyōka, who had been deployed as a member of the press unit of the Second Army. This writer, who wrote of love, depicted young women, and who had devoted his life to fantasy, now used his brush to depict his various feelings as he stood in scenes such as a field full of cannon smoke, or in a trench lined with corpses, or atop a hill with the deafening roar of machine guns. It was enough to transport Seizō’s imagination there. When Seizō thought that the man with the chic Italian straw hat who had come to the Hanyū temple three years ago, who had got drunk and chanted poetry, who had wound up hitting the wooden block and ringing the bell in the main hall—that this man was part of the Second Army’s command unit, and stood now amid that confused maelstrom of war, he felt that the article became that much more clearly visible to his eyes.64

Just as Tayama Katai read Kobayashi’s diary, here Seizō reads Hara Kyōka’s war reports, supplements them with his own first-hand observational experience, and thereby succeeds in recreating a vivid sensory experience he has in fact never had; he can imagine Hara’s figure in the field as though it is “clearly visible to his eyes.” The scene is thus like a photographic negative, an inverted simulacrum in miniature that covertly gestures toward the novel’s structure and compositional method.

Recreation
In his analysis of shishōsetsu, Edward Fowler places Tayama Katai’s advocacy of saigen, a term Fowler translates as “duplication,” in the context of Katai’s supposed turn toward autobiographical confession:

[Art] was simply the “duplication of phenomena” (genshō no saigen), and the artist was not to blame for revealing embarrassing truths, whether about himself or those he knew. A writer had but one task: to record his own experience faithfully. . . . Naturalism taught Katai only what he wanted to hear. It advocated the recording of “truth”: what could be truer than the events and feelings one had witnessed and experienced oneself? It rejected narrative contrivance: what could be more “natural” than one’s own life plainly described? . . . Writing, then, was an experiment in self-portraiture, and the author became his own hero.65

Like Kobayashi Hideo and Nakamura Mitsuo, Fowler postulates that Katai’s purported inward turn in Futon was the inevitable result of his own theories of literary methodology. He finds the ostensible equation of author and hero to be

64 Tayama 1909a, p. 205.
the transition that established the *shishōsetsu* genre, and interprets Katai's understanding of *saigen* in that light.

Yet, as I have discussed, Katai's writing, and *Inaka kyōshi* in particular, resists such a reading. As revealed in the tension between Hayashi Seizō's diary, letters, and poetry, on the one hand, and the novelistic narrative in which these texts are cited, *Inaka kyōshi* makes the contrast between the narrator's discourse and the protagonist's one of its most fundamental features. The discrepancies in fiction, content, and scope of these two discourses not only separate narrator and protagonist, but also serve to illustrate what Katai understood to be the constitutive elements of the novel. In contrast to Seizō's diary, the novel's narrative makes use of colloquial language, attempts to represent faithfully characters' speech, employs unvarnished description, and adopts a universal perspective not identical to that of any single individual. It attempts to recreate the sensory experience of observation that Katai understood to be the fundamental method of novelistic writing. At the same time, however, it attempts to remove the author's own private life and narrow subjectivism from the center of narrative subjectivity.

A look at Katai's critical writings, moreover, shows that to take *saigen* as the "duplication" of the author's own private life, and consequently as the basis for the author becoming his own hero, does not accord with Katai's interpretation of the term. In his history of Meiji literature, for example, Katai uses the term to argue strongly against such introspective self-portraiture:

Although [Ozaki] Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 and, of course, [Kosugi] Tengai 小杉天外 stressed *shasei*, [Hirotsu] Ryūrō 広津柳浪 just stayed cooped up in his room and wrote about what he himself had experienced, or could imagine from his experience. His is a realism devoid of sketching and has no possibility of reaching the deep core. It is no surprise that it stops at the level of monotonous abstraction, and rather than making one taste deeply of life, it doesn't get beyond titillating lowbrow readers with its immediacy (*jikkan* 実感). . . . The sense one gets from his work is that it appeals to the reader's feelings; it has none of the artistic sense of recreating life (*jinsei no saigen* 人生の再現).66

As this passage shows, *saigen* for Katai was much more than merely writing about one's personal life. Though Katai indeed thought the artist's task was to "record his own experience faithfully," we must not interpret "experience" in a limited way. Katai's criticism of Ryūrō clearly shows that abstract chronicling of one's life experiences was no guarantee of "recreating life"; the key, rather, was observation. In other words, what Katai meant by "experience" was the experience of making careful observation, not staying locked in a study to reflect on one's personal life.

The restrictive interpretation of *saigen* as "duplication" of the author's life is actually much closer to Kume Masao's use of the term in his 1925 essay defend-
ing the *shishōsetsu*. As we have already seen, Kume wrote in this later formulation that since “the foundation of all art is the self,” he could not imagine art as the creation of another’s life; it could only come from the “recreation (saigen) of the one life that a person has led.” Yet such a narrowly defined circumscription of art was utterly foreign to Katai’s use of the term. Indeed, he specifically faulted those authors whose spheres of experience were so solipsistic: in “Shōsetsu e no futatsu no michi” he writes, “Inasmuch as one is a novelist, writing only about one’s own experience—i.e., writing only Ich-Roman—is extremely unsatisfactory. Somehow, one wants to make all the different kinds of people come to life on the page.” To write only about one’s internal scenery is “insufficient as a novel.”

Even in the years after he wrote *Futon*, Katai was far from the staunch apologist for confessional writing he is now thought to be. In May 1910, for example, he wrote:

> I would never even dream that art would take the *individual* as its object. If you think of art in the same way you think of editorials or gossip columns, there’s no way you’ll be able to see the true essence of life, and you certainly won’t be able to depict it. This word “confession” that is so popular of late is utterly meaningless, but if [Tokutomi] Roka really wrote *Yadorigi* with that meaning in mind, then I think this work should be repudiated.

The evidence of Katai’s own literary and critical writing suggests the need to reconsider the equation of his writing with autobiographical confession established by Kobayashi Hideo and Nakamura Mitsuo. In 1937, in a brief essay contributed to an edition of Katai’s complete works, Nakamura Murao, himself the author of one of the first essays critical of the *shishōsetsu*, already noted as much. While conceding that Katai’s humanity, life, and state of mind are to some degree discernable from his work as a whole, Nakamura concludes that Katai is not a writer who makes his personal life the subject of his fiction:

> As is well known, Tayama is a writer who... stressed the objectivity of the literary work to an extreme degree. He detested the direct appearance of the author’s mind and figure in his works, and endeavored to hide himself in the background and place the work itself in front. It doesn’t matter if no one knows who wrote the work. No, he was a writer who tried to make this unknown, who thought the finest work formed its own independent world floating in space.... If you want to know about Tayama’s background, then I recommend *Tōkyō no sanjūnen*. In this work, Katai, who never reveals his own life or his own background directly... very frankly shows himself before us.

Nakamura Murao alludes here to his own criteria for distinguishing between

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67 Kume 1925, p. 53.
68 These quotations come from Tayama 1920, pp. 372–73.
69 This quotation, from a piece entitled “Shinryoku no mura yori” published in *Bunshō sekai*, is cited in Wada 1968, p. 381.
*honkaku shōsetsu* and *shinkyō shōsetsu*: whether or not the author’s private life is important in evaluating the work. Nakamura’s placement of Katai in the category of those authors for whom such information is irrelevant seems at first glance ironic, but it is only so when seen through the lens of the *shishōsetsu* discourse that has retroactively reinterpreted and reshaped Katai’s literary project.

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