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## Intimate Alienation: Japanese Urban Rail and the Commodification of Urban Subjects

*It is a puzzling fact that boys take such an extraordinarily intense interest in things connected with railways, and, at the age at which the production of phantasies is most active . . . use those things as the nucleus of a symbolism that is peculiarly sexual. A compulsive link of this kind between railway-travel and sexuality is clearly derived from the pleasurable character of the sensations of movement.*  
(Freud 68)

*T*he protagonist in Tayama Katai's 1907 short story "Shôjobyô" ["Girl Crazy"] is thirty-seven-year-old Sugita Kojô, a man who, as husband and father of two young children, exhibits exactly the compulsion linking sexuality to railway identified by Freud. At one time a promising writer of girls' fiction, Sugita is now a lowly, salaried worker at a publishing house that produces cheap magazines. Unable to let go of what has become an obsession with schoolgirls and young women, his working hours are spent in reveries of his encounters with them during his morning commute.<sup>1</sup> The commute provides the only relief from an otherwise dreary life, as he stealthily observes the young women who enter his compass of scrutiny, eavesdropping, for example, on the conversation of a schoolgirl whom he has inspected at close quarters in the crowded trains, noting everything from a small birthmark behind one ear to the coquettish lilt in her conversation with a friend (170):

*There was a reason he was certain that she must recognize him, and why she was so familiar to him [literally, mi-shitte iru]. . . ; she would board the train at Yoyogi station every day at the*

*same hour to go as far as Ushigome. He had never spoken to her, but sitting across from her he would think, “such a bountiful figure, with such fleshy cheeks, ample bosom, . . . what a splendid young woman.” (168)*

Ishihara Chiaki and his co-authors aptly observe that this odd sense of familiarity arises from repeated encounters with people who nonetheless remain strangers. Katai’s compound verb *mi-shitteiru*—to know (thoroughly) by sight—signifies a new relationship born of repeated sightings in close quarters, one that does not involve or lead to conversation, friendship, or even visible signs of mutual recognition and acknowledgement.

We are told that earlier in his career, Sugita had experienced some success as a writer of popular girls’ fiction [*shôjo shôsetsu*]. The rise of this genre in Japan around the turn of the century had coincided with sudden and widespread social awareness of young girls, who had been given a new identity as students with the passage of mandatory education laws. The popularity of these works would fall rather quickly, only to rise again with renewed vigor in the early decades of this century, but the protagonist Sugita continues to write even after the genre has lost its appeal. His obsessive interest invites only scorn and ridicule from the literary establishment. Already a man whom the times have left behind, Sugita is a tired, white-collar worker who punctually commutes from his shabby rental home on the outskirts of the city to his office, and the tale focuses on his obsession with young women who ride his commuter trains.<sup>2</sup> From Sendagaya station—just one stop closer to the very heart of Tokyo from what would become the site of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics—his daily commute begins and ends with a walk alongside cultivated fields and groves of zelkova trees, past imposing gates of *daimyo* mansions, beyond the cattle ranches, down an oak-lined path, to his rented house in the shadow of a little knoll. This bucolic scene of 1907 Sendagaya is marred, however, by the effluent spewing out of smokestacks at nearby factories. There are no scenes of Sugita with his family or with friends (if he has any), and his co-workers make an appearance only to tease him for having what they see as the sickness that serves as the title, *shôjo-byô*. His life has been reduced to the repetition of sightings; thus a young woman approaching the train station in a chestnut-peach, Japanese-style crepe coat [*haori*], brand new *tabi*<sup>5</sup>, and a ribbon the hue of the cuckoo is occasion for almost uncontainable excitement.

This story of “intimate alienation”—to which I shall return in due time—takes place mostly in the confines of the commuter trains that in the span of a few decades would help transform Japan from a rural agricultural land into a modern metropolitan society. Long-distance trains would play a crucial role in unifying the nation, while outside its borders, appropriation of the South Manchurian Railroad and extensive rail development in Taiwan and other colonized lands anchored Japan’s imperial mission. In short, railways keyed Japanese modernity and its constituent imperialism. The present essay is primarily concerned with urban commuter rail and its role in privatizing the modern Japanese landscape; its more specific focus is on how these railways helped formulate the habits of everyday life in Japan. As Japanese private railway companies began colonizing metropolitan space in earnest during the early decades of the twentieth century,<sup>4</sup> the very space of the railway cars that mediated the transitions from work-school-errands-and-pleasure to home also proved to be a form of subjection to a social space defined by the logic of capital. These railways dramatically redefined the way time and space were experienced by urban Japanese, and in displacing agrarian rhythms with the iterative repetition of railway commuting, the privately run commuter rail—one part of a larger nexus of residential development, amusement center construction, electricity provision, and many other rail company efforts to integrate people into new orders of daily living—served not only the instrumental function of transportation, but also as a Lefebvrian space of cultural production.

This essay is part of a larger project that attempts to complement what has become a thick body of work that examines the “official” sectors of the nation-state and its role in shaping subjects and their social relations in modern Japan. The 1920s and 30s, often deemed the age of mass culture, represent a transformative moment for Japanese capitalism. Scholarly concern with this era frequently becomes either a celebration of popular culture and various forms of mass urban entertainment, or a prehistory to the turn to militarism and fascism that culminates in the Fifteen-Year Pacific War (1930–45). But the inseparability of capitalism from modernity, whether we think of Japan or of Euro-American cases, requires us to consider commercial forces together with the nation-state in thinking through modern Japanese life. This look at railway culture and its effects on social relations in a decidedly capitalist moment represents an attempt to rectify our tendency to conceive modern Japanese society as an effect of official policies.

Almost a century and a half after Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy brought Japan into what was already an international, if not global, economy, the phrase "Japanese culture" continues to evoke such practices as the tea ceremony and wood-block printing, as well as geisha, samurai, and sumô. For everyone from preteens to twentysomethings, *anime* [animation], *manga* [comic books], 32-bit computer games, and ephemera like "pokemon" are what define Japanese culture today. But if our interest in culture is motivated by the desire not so much to find some distinctive artefact or practice that, according to Lefebvre, might be seen as yet another example of the (dominating) logic of visibility, but rather to locate a widely shared practice that virtually defines a nation's everyday life, then looking to something like metropolitan rail will bring the greater reward. Cutting through the gap that separates cultural artefacts associated with "tradition" from contemporary technomodern cultural forms (more commodity than practice) is a space that has been at the center of Japanese city life since the early decades of the twentieth century: the commuter train. Technological innovations would be necessary before electric rail could supersede either the relatively slow, noisy, and dirty steam-powered long-distance trains or the horse-drawn trolleys that entered the city center. As a new, clean, and fast mode of urban transport, trains would play a decisive role in reshaping what would come to be the city as vast metropolitan hub of both intensified industrial production and mass entertainment. If networks of urban rail—public and private trains, streetcars, elevated lines, and later subways—redefined the landscape through which they ran by carving up, linking, and reordering it, then the interior of the train also served as an important site of new cultural formations. Not simply moving compartments used for the conveyance of people, commuter trains would also serve as moving space that would produce distinctive cultural practices that, in turn, helped create a new urban dweller defined as much by the commute as by her/his work or play. Flanerie both shaped and reflected the sensibilities of mid- and late-nineteenth-century Parisians. The train commute would play a similarly important role in creating what has been identified in earlier studies of modern Japan as the citizen- or consumer-subject, and what I am now identifying as the commuter-subject of mass society in 1920s and 30s Japan.

Private urban railway development in the early part of this century, and particularly the interior of commuter trains, would contribute to the production of popular culture in urbanizing Japan. Henri Lefebvre's

well-known *The Production of Space* urges us to conceive of space itself as being produced through social relations, and accordingly, to view it as a place (moment?) wherein “fresh actions . . . occur” (73). According to Lefebvre, “any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships—and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (83). Like Marx, Lefebvre seeks to uncover the social relationships embedded in things—or in his case, space—to see in dialectical relationship what the ideologically dominant practice of separating and fragmenting keeps us from seeing. The unit of spatial analysis that concerns Lefebvre is typically much larger in every way—whether it be the city, a society, or nation—than the enclosure of the commuter train. The latter is also an obviously compressed space in literal ways, bringing strangers into close proximity. While the experience of anonymity suggests a canvas of mass humanity that we do not recognize, it should also be understood as a new texture of urban living, an “effect” that is produced through rapid and recurring alternations of the “visually familiar” and the unfamiliar. (We will return later to Sugita, who fantastically reassembles women from fragments, and this is a “product” of such anonymous knowing.)

Critics such as Guy Debord and Lefebvre take modernity as a moment wherein life has been colonized by visuality:

*A further important aspect of spaces of this kind is their increasingly pronounced visual character. They are made with the visible in mind: the visibility of people and things, of spaces and of whatever is contained by them. The predominance of visualization (more important than “spectacularization,” which is in any case subsumed by it) serves to conceal repetitiveness. People look, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. (Lefebvre 75)<sup>5</sup>*

Lefebvre’s words belong to a critique directed at a broad range of linguistic, visual, and other practices that result in the domination of representation. Though we might take issue with the totalizing dimension of his analysis, the observation that “[p]eople *look*, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself” deserves attention. Recent studies have shown just how powerfully film as a mass medium has altered visuality as sensibility and practice. To the new visual experiences that characterized metropolitan life of the 1920s, such as department store display windows and counters and film, we must add the commuter train. We witness how, in the somewhat unlikely space of metropolitan commuter railways early in the century,

seeing in close, anonymous quarters begins to substitute “for life itself” for the protagonist of “Girl Crazy.” The interior space of the train might be seen as the site of “incidental culture,” where certain conditions of production or, put differently, where habituation to new social relations of mass anonymity shapes the production of writing, seeing, fantasizing—all of which become constitutive of the modern subject.

Before turning to Katai’s work and a few other dramatizations of such visual “deformations” in literary works from the first decade of this century, let us consider the role played by private metropolitan rail development in decisively reconfiguring the urban landscape of modern Japan. For the almost wholesale appropriation of space by private railway lines in the early decades of this century is surely connected—not in any clear causal relationship, but related nonetheless as effects of the same mode of production—to the culture and social relations produced by and in the interior space of the commuter train.

### *Tokyo’s Urban Rail Network: The City and Its Suburbs*

Private enterprise has always played a vigorous role in Japanese rail development, even during its early years in the late-1870s, but 1906 marks a decisive moment in transforming such railway companies into the highly diversified private corporations that effectively came to realize a frightening level of vertical integration of virtually all aspects of their riders’ everyday lives. This was the year when the seventeen major long-distance or “trunk-line” railway companies disappeared due to the nationalization of railways, and, largely in response, the year when short-distance electric railway companies, especially in the Kansai region,<sup>6</sup> would opt to diversify. The years following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 were characterized by outward development of rail away from the city center. The patchwork of agricultural expanse, villages, and towns with distinctive character and histories was rapidly becoming linked by private rail lines to what would become terminal stations at the new gateways to the inner city—stations such as Umeda in Osaka; Ryôgoku, Ueno, and Shinjuku in Tokyo. For the large stretches of peripheral agricultural and uncultivated land dotted with villages and hamlets, this spelled the inauguration of a new era of dependency on Tokyo. Without intending to diminish or trivialize the term, “colonization” seems to have currency in describing this process of “suburbanization,” a euphemism that masks the processes of land conversion that almost

never refers to the transformation of *unused* land. Suburbanization was eerily reminiscent of real events that were depicted in both film and literary accounts as “Ôhinata mura” [“Sunshine Village”], works that effectively evoked the hidden violence of *kaitaku* [reclamation or cultivation]: the opening up of, in this case, foreign lands under Japan’s policy of resettling parts of the East Asian continent (Kawamura 28–36). Years of almost famine-inducing crop failures and attendant poverty in rural Japan had made Japanese farmers and villagers easy prey for government officials and profiteering middlemen who lured them into emigrating to the Asian continent under the oddly contradictory claim of “open land ready for cultivation.” The rude awakening for these emigrant farmers came upon their arrival and with the discovery that these “open” lands were “readied” for cultivation through the prior violent removal of native Korean and Manchurian farmers who had for generations worked the land—land which they had also cleared. Suddenly, the transplanted Japanese villagers had to confront the fact that continued violence—at least on the part of Japanese troops—would be the necessary cost of holding onto land that was neither theirs, nor the rightful property of the Japanese government or the opportunistic middlemen who promoted their emigration. The “integration” of Tokyo’s periphery, on the other hand, was carried out not so much by overt physical force as by the power of capital and political power wielded differently. Tensions between native villagers and farmers in these still very rural lands west of Tokyo and the newly arrived white-collar suburbanites enticed to new housing developments along the train lines are tellingly conveyed in Ozu Yasujirô’s 1932 film, *Umarete wa mita keredo*,<sup>7</sup> in Kunikida Doppo’s short story “Take no kido” [“The Bamboo Gate”], and in a wave of work that reflects the reordering of lands that are never really new.

A spate of recent studies, both in English and in Japanese, have collectively helped glamorize the private rail companies that began in the first decade of the century to diversify with entrepreneurial vigor and flair: Thomas Havens’s study of the Tsutsumi family and the Seibu-Saison empire, Lesley Downer’s book on the two brothers, and numerous books in Japanese—such as Hirô Sakata’s *Waga Kobayashi Ichizô: Kiyoku tadashiku utsukushiki*, Takeshi Hara’s *Minto Osaka tai teito Tokyo: Shisô to shite no Kansai tetsudô*, and Takehiko Fujii’s *Dôshitemo Seibu ni katenai Tôkyû no kenkyû*—all appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. What these Japanese language studies, along with other works, make particularly clear is that the Kansai region—the metropolitan area anchored by Osaka, Kôbe, and



Kyoto—was, well into the early decades of the Meiji era and up until the turn of the century, the more economically and structurally developed metropolitan center of Japan. In everything from local and regional market development to various other measures of urban vitality, the Kantô region, which comprises the Tokyo-Yokohama-Kawasaki metropolitan area, was a clear second; this extended to the development of urban and suburban railway development and expansion.<sup>8</sup>

Unsurprisingly in a nation built upon railways, one finds a highly developed sensitivity to the culture of trains, and while many Japanese today may even be aware of Tokyo's status as a relative latecomer in its urban rail development (though few in the Osaka region would labor under this misconception), most would likely identify Hankyû as the pioneering company that led the high-profile strategy of diversification, which in turn led in the first decades of the twentieth century to what we might today call the transformation of suburban and metropolitan intercity lands into extended company towns. Hankyû's reputation as the pioneering railway in this regard comes largely through one of its lasting ventures, the Takarazuka Amusement Park, and particularly its all-female Takarazuka Review, which would go on to exceed its function as a destination for amusement at the end of a rail line to become one of the most popular and enduring forms of popular theatre in Japan. (As if to perpetuate the enduring competition between Tokyo and Osaka, for many years now there has been a Takarazuka theater group in both cities.) It should be noted in passing that the strategy of vertically integrated development of new towns, mass developments, provision of electricity, recreational destinations, and the like was actually pioneered by Hankyû's older and more prestigious rival, Hanshin Railways.<sup>9</sup>

Private rail lines in metropolitan areas were initially built to capitalize on the popularity of bathing resorts, seasonal nature viewing, and pilgrimages to shrines and temples. When the new railway law of 1906 nationalized numerous trunk-line railways, according to Isao Ogawa, "short-distance electric railway companies in the Kansai era daringly changed their articles of association to start management of amusement parks and other ventures in earnest" (30). Hanshin Railways led the way in directly managing and later building amusement parks, baths, and other attractions designed to increase passengers. Under the leadership of Imanishi Rinzaburô, Hanshin would build the first electric railway connecting Osaka to Kobe, and in 1907 would open Kôrô-en Amusement Park, modeled after similar parks in the U.S. and in Europe. Euro-American

ideas of green belts and garden towns [*den'en toshi*] had caught the attention of government authorities and businessmen alike. In addition to building new towns, Hanshin published a pamphlet promoting suburban living in 1908, following up with the magazine *Suburban Life* in 1914. But if Hanshin took the lead, it was Hankyû under Kobayashi Ichizô's leadership that aggressively diversified, engaging in such enterprises as electricity provision, recreational facilities management, and land and building leasing and sale along its railway corridor. Its primary attraction, Takarazuka Amusement Park, included restaurants, fishing ponds, tent shows, and athletic grounds before the establishment of a hot springs in 1911. A fashionable indoor swimming pool, however, was closed shortly after it opened because the water was too cold, and because people could not warm to the idea of mixed bathing (Ogawa 53). But Ichizô stumbled upon an enduring hit when he "emulated the boys musical band at Mitsukoshi Department Store" and established the all-female Takarazuka Music and Dance Review in 1914.<sup>10</sup>

In Tokyo, private rail development followed the lead taken by the Kansai lines in aggressively developing the lengths of their railway lines. (Kobayashi Ichizô would move from Hankyû in Osaka to Tôkyû in Tokyo to replicate his rail-centered entrepreneurship). In part because the material obstacles to running new lines through the center of Tokyo prevented further incursions, private railway building shifted to the development of peripheral areas by the first decade of the century. By 1904, the Kôbu Railway (later nationalized and renamed the Chûô Line, this is the train line that figures in Katai's story) ran from Ochanomizu in the city center, through Shinjuku, and out to what was then the western periphery, Nakano (Harada 157). As far back as 1889, Kôbu had been providing service from Shinjuku, the western gateway of Tokyo, to Hachiôji, further to the west, by steam engine. In short order, such private railway companies as Ôji, Keisei, and Keiô Denki Kidô would provide electric street-rail service in 1911, 1912, and 1913 respectively, building routes radiating out into the suburbs (Harada 162). Thereafter, only subways would be built into the city center until after the end of World War II. Tokyo station opened in 1914, and the economy, kick-started by World War I, would direct the nation toward intense suburban rail development well into the 1920s. What would later become Tôkyû Dentetsu would develop the upscale garden city of Den'en Chofu in 1918, and the years just before the earthquake of 1923 saw smaller scale, lower profile land development and real estate proliferate along the suburban rail lines. A relative latecomer

following such lines as the Keiô, Keisei, and Tokyû was Seibu, known today for its many high-profile ventures in the world of art and high fashion, as well as for promoting youth culture and events. The railway had its beginnings as the Kawagoe tetsudô, a commercial transport line hauling human waste and industrial materials, which by 1927 was providing passenger service all the way into Takadanobaba. It was the Kantô earthquake that marked the takeoff point for relative latecomers Tôkyû and Seibu.

True to the dictum regarding the positive force played by destruction in capitalism, Tokyo would pivot around the 1923 earthquake and rebuild its lost infrastructure as well as its population. An immediate exodus resulted from the quake's destruction of half a million homes and the concomitant loss of one hundred thousand lives. Before the earthquake Tokyo's population numbered almost 2.2 million, compared to a suburban population of nearly 1.2 million. The quake led to a population drop by a third, but by 1930, some seven years after the quake, the inner city had grown back to 2.1 million. By then, the suburbs boasted a population of nearly 3 million (Harada 175). Japan in the twenties is typically depicted as experiencing a modernity co-temporal with its Euro-American counterparts, with *moga* [modern girls] and *mobo* [modern boys] strutting along the Ginza arm in arm, shopping in department stores, and frequenting movies and dance halls. An earthquake of that magnitude, however, spells a decisive break from life as usual. The writer Yumeno Kyûsaku was dispatched by a newspaper in southern Japan where he was working as a journalist to capture postquake Tokyo, and he would depict a landscape full of shanties [*barakku*]—"shantytown life" [*barakku seikatsu*], "shantytown sensibilities" [*barakku-shumi*], "the mood of the shantytown" [*barakku-kibun*], even "shantytown clothing" (84). As he scans the rooftops of the sea of shacks from Ueno to Hirokôji, in the eastern stretch of the city, the hues change to a gaudier register, but the particularly down-and-out ones, he observes, are the colors given off by the shacks in Fukagawa, suddenly home to those who fell from the high-pitched energy of Kyobashi and Nihonbashi to become those refugees on the far side of the river. A color-coded palette of the *barakku* would precisely calibrate occupation and class differences in the chaos of Tokyo after the quake, and Yumeno was equally curious about the quake's effects on one of the defining features of metropolitan life—the network of rail transport. Three things keep increasing in Tokyo, he noted: its size, its population, and the number of trains (97).

Gonda Yasunosuke, the astute critic of urban life, argued back in 1931 that the great Kantô earthquake of 1923 marked a turning point for Japanese capitalism. Around the turn of the century, the Sino- and Russo-Japanese Wars (1895–95 and 1904–05, respectively) proved to be both symptomatic and constitutive of Japan's efforts to compete with Western capitalism, with its attendant imperialism, and helped by such powerful "stimulants" as World War I, the nation would veer sharply away from what was still an agrarian economy and toward a society reorganized around capital-based production. This first stage of Japanese capitalism, Gonda observed, was dominated by the ethos of production [*seisan no shisô*] (4). For government officials, quake-ravaged Kantô represented an unprecedented opportunity to reshape Tokyo much the way decades earlier George Haussmann had reconfigured the streets of Paris. Particularly if measured in terms of boulevard and roadway design, Tokyo's efforts would fall short of the Parisian example, but if the rapid establishment of private railways both in and around the city of Tokyo are considered, this was a moment of concentrated development of Tokyo as a metropolis. Gonda and others saw the earthquake as a turning point for Japanese capitalism. The first stage, he observed, was dominated by the ethos of production [*seisan no shiso*]. Even as the quake occasioned rebuilding of infrastructure, this second stage was characterized by mass consumption. More specifically, it was the pursuit of entertainment [*goraku*] that drove postquake consumption. At the same time, well beyond the 1920s and up to the end of World War II, Japan would remain a rather poor nation. As Barbara Hamill Sato notes, "because affordable commodities for mass consumption still remained limited, the social aspects of *modanizumu* reflected the *fantasies* identified with consumerism" (35). Even if the average city dweller would have to make do to meet the exigencies of daily life, the new era would be defined not by cottage industry shops, factories, or the institutionalization of centralized markets, but by the pursuit of recreation and leisure that we associate with the emergence of forms of mass entertainment: cinema, radio broadcasts, popular music, science and industry fairs, museums, department stores, dance halls, cafes, wide-circulation newspapers.

Express train service linking periphery to central city began with the earthquake-induced massive population shift to the suburbs, a trend possible only with large infusions of capital for land development, electrification of Tokyo's periphery, and of course, the extension and intensification of rail service throughout these areas. As much as it repre-

sented the material opening up of land, it was, of course, a “cultivation” of areas not for agricultural purposes, but for conversion and integration into the political economy of the central city. To that end, the rail lines would alter the nature and recalibrate the value of land, first by distance from Tokyo, and later, with the arrival of express trains, by commuting time. The trains, then, helped give new value to space whose use and worth up until then had been determined locally, in the process converting them to commodities with more abstract exchange value. What was lost was very much like that which the technology of reproducibility had wrested from earlier, one-of-a-kind images, which Wolfgang Schivelbusch put like this:

*The regions, joined to each other and to the metropolis by the railways, and the goods that are torn out of their local relation by modern transportation, shared the fate of losing their inherited place, their traditional spatial-temporal presence or, as Walter Benjamin sums it up in one word, their “aura.” . . . The aura of a work of art is “its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” (41)<sup>11</sup>*

Just as formerly local land was transformed into space revalued for its production function, whether as housing development for commuting workers or as factory sites, the commute served to homogenize passengers, regardless of their pursuits, to common rhythms of city life. As an efficient means of mass transportation urban rail is viewed as a convenience, but the very technology that makes longer-distance commuting a possibility also creates an activity that makes significant claims on the calendar of everyday life. The commute, in this sense, is an *activity*, a qualitatively new part of everyday life that had hitherto not existed. The ambivalence we feel toward it as convenience and *inconvenience* reflects our awareness that such transport primarily serves the ends of increased production of goods, surplus labor, and profits. The concentration of private, for-profit railways in metropolitan areas of Japan, and the history of such development as largely private railways, helps reveal the status of the rider ever more clearly in these terms, for the means of conveyance—even as they are means of “public” transport—were built, planned, and developed by private railway companies according to the profit motive. Surely these trains were means of public transport, but that function consistently remains secondary to the generation of profit through a highly integrated process of moving people to and through the new temple

of consumption activities—from department stores to amusement parks. If Marx was right in seeing the transfer of goods from the worker's shop to the market as a process of commodification, the commute must be seen as a form of transfer that subjects the commuter to its rigid temporal and spatial requirements—converting them into commodities in the process. The train was also part of an extended “discipline” that typically terminates at another site of discipline—the factory, office, school, or other place of business. The “public” function of the railways, to transport people to school and work, was disciplinary as it contributed to production, while the private agenda called for the conversion of workers into consumers.

Technology devised for utilitarian ends also gives rise to new shapes and deformations of sensibility, pleasure, desire, and fetishism. In the context of the train compartment, theft, groping, reading, eating, silent gesturing, talking, eavesdropping, and a host of other behaviors can take on the characteristics of what de Certeau called “tactics”: calculated actions taken by those lacking institutional forms of power, actions “articulated in the details of everyday life.” In a now very familiar move, de Certeau argues that creative, resourceful initiative can transform passive consumption into the production of “unintended” consequences that subvert the intended uses of the consumed thing (xiv). Two clear examples associated with these early years of urban rail use come immediately to mind. In a biographical work, Ken Namie recalls that in the thirties, train cars on the main lines were patrolled by “mobile police” [*idô keisatsu*] who would take those found reading Marxist literature straight to the police station (73).<sup>12</sup> Spilling out of the train compartment itself, Maeda Ai identifies the role played by innercity rail and streetcars in enabling mass demonstrations such as the Hibiya Riot of 1906, which erupted as strong popular sentiment against the unexpectedly unfavorable settlement provisions for the Russo-Japanese War. Aside from such “willful” uses that challenged the authorities, the trains were far more frequently the space of privatized and increasingly commercialized sensibilities. If Gonda would see in postquake Tokyo a capitalism centered more and more around the pursuit of pleasure, literary works in the prequake years reveal social relations defined increasingly by fantasy. Not by accident, the train compartment would also engender the production of ever more commercial forms of literary production. Two examples from contemporary Japan will help us see the trajectory launched by these early years of train culture.

*The Train Compartment as the Space of  
Cultural Production*

As in the rest of the postindustrial world, in Japan today reading has declined and visual media have come to dominate the use of leisure time. Publishers have suffered severe losses, even as Japan remains by both absolute and per capita measures the most “literate” and text-consuming nation in the world. Given that riding commuter trains is a fact of life for most urbanites and suburbanites in Japan,<sup>15</sup> it is not surprising that they have played and continue to play a significant role in shaping the act of reading as a cultural practice. For example, the Japanese novel, for which the commonly used term of equivalence is *shōsetsu*—literally, “short account,” though a more accurate rendering would be prose narrative<sup>14</sup>—is generally viewed as having been conscientiously modeled upon turn-of-the-century British, French, German, Russian, and American literary conventions, but in recent years it has come to be seen more as a product of an expansive set of conditions we subsume under the term modern.<sup>15</sup> The *shōsetsu* (henceforth, novel) very explicitly departs from earlier *monogatari* [tales] and Tokugawa-era frivolous fiction called *gesaku*—literally, “playful” fiction, those popular genres whose topics ranged from melodramatic tearjerkers to accounts of life in the licensed pleasure quarters—in everything from language and style to focus and choice of topic. While relatively unexplored, there is little doubt that the Japanese novel was largely shaped by the mass circulation newspaper, which itself was just becoming commonplace in metropolitan life around the turn of the century. Again, Osaka would take the lead, though the major papers would quickly launch Tokyo editions. That virtually all of the novels later attaining something like canonical status were written for serial publication in these newspapers has everything to do with the traits we associate with them: short, episodic chapters; redundancies and contradictions that generally get eliminated with later publication as a completed work; discursiveness rather than Aristotelian form. Needless to say, newspapers were staples for the train commute, and whether these novels appeared in newspapers or in paperback, the compass of the commute helped spawn short, episodic, or segmented works easily consumable in the rhythms of transfers and train riding.

Whether it be via Ian Watt’s now classic look at the novel in relation to worldly conditions, or Karatani’s more recent views regarding



the construction of interiority as an effect of such processes as novelization (45–75), this genre has come to be linked closely to the complex articulations of modernity and to the modern private subject. As we think of the commuter train as a kind of representative space within which harried urbanites experience lives of alienation, it might make some sense to backtrack to a moment that the literary and social critic Maeda Ai referred to as the creation of the modern, solitary reader.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the Tokugawa period, which ended shortly after Commodore Perry helped open up Japan to the world economic system in the 1860s, and especially from around the nineteenth century, when a vigorous merchant-based city life had helped produce popular fiction [*gesaku*], the reading of literature was a spirited activity for family members, neighbors, and other communal groupings. The practice of reading and performance, including group recitation of inspiring literary works, would persist well into the 1870s and 80s, especially among students living in dormitories. But by the 1880s, the combined effects of mandatory education, the concomitant rise of literacy, the viability of commuting, and other developments associated with modern urban life helped produce novels that clearly anticipated reading as an act of solitary consumption. Melodramatic, adventure, and love stories, the staple of *gesaku*, would endure well into the 1890s, but would then give way to pensive, ruminative works reflecting a prevailing concern for the cultivation of the inner life. Metropolitan trains would never become a space for communal or group readings, serving instead as the container for commuters in transit singly reading news and serial novels from the mainstream dailies—in effect, shaping the experience of “anonymity” in the daily commute.

The trajectory taken by the intersection of literature and commuter trains takes us to the 1990s, a period that has produced some oddities in literature—where literature is viewed as a practice involving writer, reader, publisher, and the many venues where reading takes place. I am indebted to Ann Sherif, whose own perceptive work on the *nakazuri shôsetsu* [sandwiched prose] alerted me to these novellas, prose works printed on train posters hung throughout the interior of the JR railway trains in 1990–91.<sup>17</sup> The JR East railway company commissioned eight authors to write stories having train motifs, works that were then serialized over six to ten installments that would change every week. (To any American readership, perhaps the only recognizable author selected for this series would be Banana Yoshimoto.) The term *nakazuri*—literally, shaved or printed in the middle—is intended to impart the reality of



literary text sandwiched amidst a sea of advertisements that ring the interior of the railway cars.<sup>18</sup> Back in 1923, Kawabata Yasunari had given the title “palm-of-the-hand stories” to his very short prose stories, which he viewed as an exercise that extended the generic conventions of literary expression.<sup>19</sup> This time publisher and publication venue effectively produce a new format—not an anthology of collected short stories, but a series of eight serialized stories whose motif (i.e., the train) and form were largely determined by the interior of the commuter train. The interior of the urban commuter train assumes the role given to such “formats” as the paperback, the “classic,” and the thematic collection. Clearly, one of the “selling” points of these works is the way they appear in a format identical to the advertisements that surround them: the publisher’s brief afterword describes the works as “serialized hanging poster novels” [*nakazuri posutaa rensai shôsetsu*]. Inserted within a space, or linguistic system, normally reserved for advertisements, these works obtain much of their value from their identification with what they are ostensibly *not*—i.e., advertising posters inside a commuter train. In this instance, the train serves as a space with a captive audience, but the literary text—quite at home amidst the ribbons of advertisement posters with which it shared space above the windows of the train compartment—is read not aloud to the group as a whole, but by riders singly reading or ignoring the text as they choose. If it seems inappropriate to view the *nakazuri-shôsetsu* as a genre of fiction—for it did not spawn a wave of others to follow—it was clearly “produced” by the space for which it was conceived, particularly in the way it plays off of other advertising posters.

Commerce and literature were handmaidens, according to Yôichi Komori, back in the early 1920s when the “one-yen novel”—*enpon*, or literally, one-yen book—made literature accessible in an affordable format that was issued on a monthly basis (80–84). This literary boom in collected works of single authors or collections of many writers would reflect the rise of literacy, the naturalization of vernacular writing (which took several decades to take firm root), and the increasing popularity of varying forms of popular fiction. What eludes Komori’s otherwise expansive concern with the social conditions of the culture of literacy is the swift rise of these anthologies, mass magazines, and the like precisely on the heels of the 1923 earthquake, and the subsequent steep rise in the development of private metropolitan rail lines. The transformation of the novel and other reading material into such commercial products as the *enpon*, serialized newspaper novels, and magazines like *Kingu*, with a circulation

exceeding one million back in 1925 (Komori 85), represents the emergence of what Gonda had called a capitalism geared for entertainment. The railway commute, which claimed a significant part of the day for worker and student in postquake Japan, was important to the rise of such literary-commodity forms—even more important than cafes, cheap restaurants, or other familiar sites.

The inextricability of literature from commercial interest, as mediated by the train commute, endures well into contemporary Japanese life, as seen in the example of *nakazuri-shôsetsu*. In the first half of 1999, a new variant of commuter train literature that represented another step in the direction of literature-as-commercial appeared in serialized form. Four prominent, now elderly writers were commissioned by Happôen—one of the high-end wedding palaces where those highly choreographed extravaganzas, Japanese packaged weddings, are held—to contribute a short essay on marriage.<sup>20</sup> Appearing under the heading of “Serialized Advertisement: What is Marriage?”, where the term “serialized” is designed to convey literariness, the poster-length commercials appeared in the following order: “Cherish the Happiness of Your Own Choosing” by Miyuki Iida, “Four-Legged Race” by Yoko Kirishima, “The Joy of Doing One’s Best” by Masajo Suzuki, and “Both Love and Faith” by Shizue Katô. With the kind of candor that age sometimes brings, each author recounts thoughts on marriage largely wrapped around her own, often multiple marriages. (None of them, it turns out, has experienced a marriage of lifelong devotion to one husband.) In a nation where divorce rates have been soaring, particularly as baby boomers have begun in large numbers to shed marriages that in many ways must have been victim to the postwar ethos of workaholism, these reflections on marriage by respected elder stateswomen must be appealing for the mold-breaking “individualism” imparted by the essays. For over two decades now, copywriting has represented a glamour profession in Japan, as many copywriters have become television personalities and highly marketable and marketed commodities. In this case, respected writers have been enlisted to present their reflections in essays serving as advertising copy—working together to help infuse the beleaguered institution of Japanese marriage in the late-1990s with new cachet calculated to stem its demise. The literary conceit achieved through the use of established women of letters and the term “serialization” is employed to nudge advertising copy into a hybrid literary form; but it works only within the confines of the commuter train compartment, where serial publication, enabled by a captive audience

and the practice of changing ad-strips (never viewed as “serial”), produces the merging of teleology (literature) and repetition (advertisement).

### *Visuality and Commodification in the Train*

While the present essay is concerned with suburban-urban trains, it is instructive to briefly consider literature in relation to long-distance railways, which preceded the development of commuter lines. In Sôseki Natsume’s *Sanshirô* (1908), which opens with the protagonist en route from Kumamoto to Tokyo, where he will study at the Imperial University, Sanshirô’s attention is drawn to a rube who jumps onto the train and strips to the waist, exposing unsightly scars from moxa treatment on his back. The social historian Harada Katsumasa notes that Sanshirô’s judgmental gaze directed at the moxa-scarred man represents the reaction of someone who has internalized new codes of conduct promoted in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), codes that made such behavior a misdemeanor (93).<sup>21</sup> Sanshirô’s tacit disapproval of stripping to the waist is context specific; such behavior would have been acceptable during a festival or in some other informal venue. Here, the new public space of a train compartment functions as a mobile “civilizing” space traversing the length of western Japan. Railways also dramatically increased the possibilities of encounters with strangers (a distinct feature of modern life), and the episode of Sanshirô sharing a room at an inn with a young woman while he is headed for Tokyo seems like a male writer’s fantasy engendered by a technology—long-distance train travel—novel enough (then, and even now) to arouse a sense of the extraordinary and of adventure.

The story of a young man moving to the capital to seek a place in society is simultaneously a tale of lost innocence in the Marxian sense. Modern transport, Marx noted, affects our perception of material goods: “the bringing of the product to the market, which is a necessary condition of its circulation . . . could more precisely be regarded as the transformation of the product *into a commodity*” (qtd. in Schivelbusch 40). Within the productive system of capitalism, an analog to the transformation of material goods into commodities might be seen in the worker who is transformed by the alienation felt by the altered conditions of her/his labor. Alan Trachtenberg describes the role played by the technology of rail transport in this situation:

*The “railway journey” which fills nineteenth-century novels as an event of travel and social encounter was at bottom an event of spatial relocation in the service of production. . . . It was a decisive mode of initiation of people into their new status within the system of commodity production: their status as object of forces whose points of origin remained out of view. Just as the path of travel was transformed from the road that fits itself to the contours of land to a railroad that flattens and subdues land to fit its own needs for regularity, the traveler is made over into a bulk of weight, a “parcel.” (xiv)*

While the metaphor of flattening is an arresting one, it does not apply so much to the long-distance journey of the kind made by Sanshirô, for example, as it does to the regularization of railway commuting within the thicket of dense, urban living. In fact, most of Sôseki’s “mature” works labor under the city’s heavy requirement that one reshape one’s daily life through measurement, calculation, and rational thinking.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, however, we are struck by the prominence of Soseki’s protagonists—from Sensei in *Kokoro* to Daisuke in *Sore kara* [*And Then*—who live outside of these regimes of modern regulation, most notably, outside of the requirement to work for a living. Benjamin has noted resistance to such requirements among Parisians, who expressed their contempt for such regimentation by making it fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades (qtd. in Harvey 18). Many of Sôseki’s protagonists, while not exactly members of a wealthy leisured class, still have the means to “respond” to their alienation from a rationalized workaday life by shunning work altogether.

A neglected topic that is surely worthy of at least a measure of serious research is the relationship between modes of travel and the rise of a ubiquitous and delightful feature of Japanese regionalism: the *meibutsu* or local specialty. Alongside birthplaces of famous figures and historical events, *meibutsu* occupy a prominent place in the social imaginary we call Japan. Toyama has its itinerant vendors of Chinese medicine; varieties of special pickled delicacies are tied to many regions, with Kyûshû in southern Japan being particularly distinguished in this regard; and wooden *kokeshi* dolls stand for Sendai in northeast Honshû. With the advent of suburban railway to Tokyo came the unofficial designation of overflowing trains as a specialty of the city—memorialized by essays like Terada Torahiko’s “Densha no konzatsu ni tsuite” [“On Overcrowding in the Trains”

(1922)] and the popular hit song of the period, “Tokyo bushi,” whose lyrics are worth quoting:

*Packed trains, the specialty of Tokyo*  
*No matter how long you wait you just can't board*  
*It's a life and death struggle just to get on*  
*And at last, when an empty one finally comes along*  
*The driver waves his hand and keeps on going*  
*Rats, a broken down wreck of a train. (Harada 155)*

For many women, these packed trains were no laughing matter, and unfortunately the indignities and discomfort suffered by many a female rider on crowded commuter trains continue to this day. Already in 1912, the headmaster of the Peers College at Gakushûin, Nogi Maresuke—an erstwhile commander of Japanese troops in the debacle of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05—was moved to request (unsuccessfully) female-only train cars during the commuting hours between Nakano and Masahira-bashi station (qtd. in Ishihara 182).

Let us return to the train as space where “unintended” effects help produce subjecthood in similarly unpredictable ways. Back in the late-Tokugawa era (1600–1863), the codes of erotic representation in *gesaku* literature called for attending to finely articulated details—of a lover’s dress, for example, from its particular pattern of fabric and color, to manufacturing processes that result in certain characteristics of such material—to subtle gestures, and to artefacts of daily living chosen to express one’s sensibilities and even character. Katai’s “Shôjo-byô” [“Girl Crazy”] displays a similar attention to detail—be it the detail of a woman’s clothing, an article she possesses, or part of her body—calculated to suggest that such metonymic connections inadequately convey the allure of the whole girl or woman. What emerges in this short story is a protagonist consumed both by the disconnected encounters he has with women on the train and around the station—the sightings, the overheard conversations—and the flights of fantasy they engender. Perhaps the most telling scene comes not in the train but at Sugita’s office. Some of his cohorts begin to tease Sugita once again about his former work writing *shôjo*

novels. Reduced to a hobby of writing florid paeans to *shôjo*, but accustomed to this kind of treatment by his fellow workers, he retreats into fantasy:

*As if to ward off the wretchedness of the dark, cheerless interior of the publishing firm, Sugita drew deeply on his cigarette and gazed intently at the pale bluish haze of the smoke that trailed into the distance. From within the hazy smoke the young woman from Yoyogi station, that schoolgirl, the beauty from Yotsuya station, and still others began to emerge, first as hopelessly entangled images, then reforming quickly into a single [arresting] figure. (188)*

Prior to this scene, Sugita is shown appreciating whatever part of a young woman he might find appealing, be it the glossiness of her skin, the whiteness of her upper arms, or her firm sensuous lips. In the passage just quoted, Sugita takes a flurry of images and reassembles them into a single image. The women he has seen over the course of his commute are, in effect, the object of his own creation—he remembers them in different contexts, for different body parts, and in different series—but he does not recognize this. In *Capital*, Marx had explained the power of fetishistic attachment to religious belief by the mechanism of forgetting. The familiarity and the sense of discovery regarding “God” are made all the more powerful by forgetting that the god so discovered is in fact of her/his own creation. The intensity of his fetishistic attachment to these women is explained by Sugita’s failure to recognize *his own role in having created or produced them* (Marx and Engels 321). He has assembled them through the smell of their perfume or the fecundity of their figures, through snippets of gossip whose very nature imparts a shared familiarity, even though he does not know these women. The daily routine of riding the commuter trains has effectively concatenated an object of obsessive desire that is at once this woman and that one, or at other times an eye from one, an upper arm from another. Such free assembly, of course, characterizes fantasy, but in this instance, the train plays a significant role in stitching together, through repetition, newly assembled figures that do not exist.<sup>25</sup> (Guy Debord would see in somewhat related fashion “the manufacture of an ever-growing mass of image-objects” in the advanced capitalist nations of the late 1960s [16].)

The train as a vehicle of crowded movement through space also serves as a mechanical “aid” for intensifying Sugita’s obsession. For

we are told that “nothing excited his senses as much as the sight of a beautiful young woman inside a crowded train—bliss he had experienced many times before. The softness of the kimono, the sweet scent of perfume, the delicious sensation from coming in contact with warm flesh—together, they gave rise to indescribable thoughts” (Ishihara 184). In much the same way that peeping [*nozoki*] into a room—either by moistening a finger and making a hole in its sliding papered door, or by listening through the thin wood and paper barriers—offered titillation in premodern circuits of desire for many a *gesaku* work, the crowded train and the contradictory sensation of “mass anonymity” provided a new, urban venue for the expression of lust and desire. The titillation of peeping required the observer to know in advance the object of her or his spying; in modern city life, on the other hand, a “mass-ive” anonymity would provide an extra measure of illicitness. In an impersonal compartment used for mass transit of total strangers, people are thrown together in a space that provides no excuse or framework for establishing social relations. If urban life helps produce anonymity through sheer numbers, the space of the train provides both large numbers and propinquity. This apparent contradiction—close physical contact with people whom one does not know, or whom one knows only visually—alienation, in a word—provides a new “logic” of sensual arousal. Put differently, alienation is what produces Sugita’s montage. Kristin Ross alerts us to a similar effect of modernity, albeit in the register of language, in a scene from France just a few decades earlier, in describing Emile Zola’s novel *The Ladies’ Paradise*: “Readers are presented with a flux of rapidly described part objects: both goods and body parts. . . . Zola’s phrases and clauses crowd together, eclipsing the verb, creating the impression of syntactic blocks as movable or interchangeable as any of the counter displays in Mouret’s store” (qtd. in Friedberg 43).

Katai’s “Shôjo-byô” ends tragically in line with the reading that is suggested for this work as an illness over which Sugita had little control. The scene quoted earlier becomes a hallucinatory prefiguring of an obsession that drives its subject—teased by his colleagues and frustrated by the utter hopelessness of ever realizing his fantasies—to consider suicide. With a heavy heart, he leaves the office for the commute home, and although he is disappointed when his swift inspection of the train yields no suitable woman to gaze upon, the train itself has the capacity to deliver him from his depression: “Yet, just boarding the train comforted

him, and he settled in and reveled in anticipation of the trip home as his own personal experience of paradise” (190). Inside the train, which is swollen with extra people returning from an industrial exposition, he spots a refined young woman whom he recognizes from earlier encounters that had led him to hope for more. His excitement is captured in an inarticulate cataloguing of her parts: “beautiful eyes, beautiful hands, beautiful hair . . . —how could such a lovely creature exist in such a vulgar world?” (191). As the train abruptly lurches forward, Sugita, who is mesmerized by the beautiful woman, is cast out of the train by the force of the other passengers thrown off balance, and a train coming from the other direction takes his life.

Katai’s portrayal of Sugita as a superfluous man who is seen by other characters as awkward, pathetic, and sick (the effects of translated Russian works by Gogol and Turgenev, and of Futabatei’s appropriation of Russian literary conventions in his novel *Drifting Clouds* are clearly present) makes us temper our evaluation of the protagonist, who repeatedly dissects and objectifies young women.

If the railway commute plays an integral role in making the city center the hub for industrial production, it also plays a direct role in creating Sugita’s “disease.” The celebration of erotic pleasures found in Tokugawa-era *gesaku* fiction have been transformed into a modern-day illness—a “disease” that issues from the changes that have also reformulated the canvas of everyday life from mostly rural to largely urban landscapes. That transformation represents the conjuncture of government and commercial forces; if we have become accustomed to viewing post-Restoration Japanese “women” as a singular creation of government fiat, as in the ideology of *ryôsai kenbo*, we must regard the *shôjo* as a combined effect of commercial and official imperatives. Recent studies have helped us understand the complex status of the *moga* [modern girl], ambiguously and alternately an iconic figure of modernity, a consumer-subject, a worker-agent, and a rebel. Here, the fragmentation of young women into their body parts and their fantastic recreation tellingly speaks to the logic of commodity production within which Sugita and the young women have been inserted. For if government fiat conferred the role of commuting student to boys and girls, the shift from female student [*jogakusei*] to *shôjo* spelled the creation of a commodified subject—and more often, as is true in this story, a commodity-object. Recast in literary terms, this matter was posed as a question: what intervention creates the gap between Tokugawa eroticism and modern disease? This paper looked



to private railways that engender the pronounced separation of work and domicile, produce encounters of intimate alienation, and interpellate their riders into extensive “networks of consumption,” as one way to explain this distance.

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## Notes

- 1 See Ishihara, et al. for a jointly authored commentary on this now notorious short story, written by Tayama Katai in 1907. Katai figures prominently in modern Japanese literature for his confessional work entitled *Futon*. Modern literary histories attribute to this work the trend toward the inwardly focused, confessional works that would come to be called the I-novel. The protagonist of this work has a one-sided relationship, which is fantasy on his part, with his live-in student, who fancies herself a free-spirited and modern literary woman. *Futon* ends with the student forced to return to the countryside and the protagonist wallowing in self-pity, clutching bedding scented with her fragrance, which she has left behind. An English translation of *Futon* is available in *The Quilt and Other Stories*.
- 2 The term *shôjo* overlaps such terms as maiden, girl, and young woman. Spearheaded by the Educational Edicts of 1886, which decisively reformed public education in Japan, institutions for girls would begin to proliferate in the next decade. As Ishihara, et al. indicate, passage of the Girls' Higher Education Code in 1899 would re-ignite interest in women's education and lead to the establishment of such prominent institutions as Japan's Women's College, the Tsuda English Language Academy, and the Women's Medical School (171). The emergence of the school girl as a new subject in modern Japan would quickly lead to her sensationalization as “the star of the new era” (171); she would become the subject of literary works, photo contests, and news stories. The newspapers capitalized on the school girl's celebrity status, publishing in dizzying succession such scandal-focused pieces as “The Fall of the School-girl,” “The Seamy Side of Youth,” and “Rumors About Schoolgirls in Metropolitan Tokyo.”
- 3 Traditional white Japanese “socks” designed to be worn with clogs.
- 4 Their legacy, if not similar in its specifics, nonetheless parallels the effort by American automotive interests to systematically strip American cities of extant rail service, and to ensure its absence in cities such as Los Angeles. See Goddard.
- 5 The criticism of visuality by both Lefebvre and Debord is addressed in Jay 418–54.
- 6 The Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe corridor in western Honshû, the largest of Japan's four major islands.

- 7 See Inoue's cogent discussion of this film in relation to tensions in suburban development issues.
- 8 For those who read Japanese and are interested in examining the way private railway development was wrapped around a national policy of distinguishing Osaka, the "people's capital," from Tokyo, the new imperial capital, see Hara.
- 9 The rivalry between Kantô and Kansai (Tokyo and Osaka) as it wraps around private railways finds vigorous expression in journalistic books with such titles as "The Tôkyû that Just Can't Beat Seibu" (Takehiko Fujii) and "The People's Capital Osaka Versus The Imperial Capital Tokyo: The Mental Landscape of Kansai Private Railways" (Hara).
- 10 Katoh writes that after the Great Depression and the great Kantô earthquake, the "systematic development of housing was launched by private capital, i.e., railway companies, trust companies" (108).
- 11 For the original Benjamin, see *Illuminations* 220.
- 12 I am indebted to Sharon Domier for alerting me to this work.
- 13 While train ridership in Japan remains among the very highest in the industrialized world, like elsewhere in the world, it has steadily lost its share of transportation use to the automobile. In 1965 for example, rail accounted for almost sixty-seven percent of all transport in Japan. The same year, the U.K. was second at twenty-nine percent and the U.S. was at less than two percent (qtd. in Mizutani 12).
- 14 See Miyoshi.
- 15 See my *Complicit Fictions*.
- 16 His masterful study entitled "Ondoku kara mokudoku e: kindai dokusha no seiritsu" ["From Communal Performance to Solitary Reading: The Rise of the Modern Japanese Reader"] is due for publication in an anthology I am presently editing. Readers of Japanese will find the extended version of this essay in *Maeda Ai chosaku-shû, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu*.
- 17 See her unpublished manuscript, "The Yoshimoto Legacy in Modern Japanese Literature." The eight serialized works were anthologized in *Nakazuri shôsetsu*.
- 18 Sherif's essay astutely attends to these and related commercial implications of these *nakazuri* short stories.
- 19 See Kawabata.
- 20 The writers, in order of appearance, were Iida Miyuki, Kirishima Yôko, Suzuki Masajo, and Katô Shizue.
- 21 As the first military victory of an Asian nation over a Western power, the Russo-Japanese War was a landmark event for Japan as it sought worldwide recognition in entering the realm of the international political economy.
- 22 As David Harvey puts it, "the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the birth of innumerable professions that had a deep and vested interest in a rigorous definition and measurement of time" (10).
- 23 In Mori Ogai's short story of 1910 entitled "The Train Window" ["Densha no mado"], the protagonist engages in an extended fantasized conversation with a woman who is sitting directly in front of him on the train. It is this woman's eyes—literally *hitomi*, or "pupils"—that

speak to him. Though beyond the scope of this paper, the role given to visuality in city life (in everything from the compressed stimuli of large populations crisscrossing metropolitan space to the swift ascendance of movies and commodity pleasures) and

the production of fantasy—as in Katai's Sugita, or Ogai's narrator—might lead us to view the I-novel as being as much a literature of male fantasy as it is a group of confessional works devoted to the revelation of their authors' thoughts and feelings.

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