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The Tree of Life: The Politics of Kinship in Meiji Japan (1870-1915)

by

Elizabeth Hofmann Reade

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Japanese Language

and the Designated Emphasis

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Alan Tansman, Chair

Professor Grace Lavery

Professor Andrew Jones

Professor Daniel C. O'Neill

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Elizabeth Hofmann Reade

# Abstract

The Tree of Life:

The Politics of Kinship in Meiji Japan and Victorian Britain (1870-1915)

by

Elizabeth Hofmann Reade

Doctor of Philosophy in Japanese Language  
and the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Alan Tansman, Chair

This dissertation examines writings by transnational Japanese literary writers around the turn of the 20th century, showing how they drew upon the languages of the Victorian sciences in order to imagine broader forms of literary kinship outside the framework of a single national canon. I define “transnational Japanese writers” as writers who were registered by the state as Japanese citizens, but whose peripatetic careers and multilingual streams of influence make a compelling case for positioning their work outside of the frame of a single national literary canon.

The primary argument of this dissertation is that Japan’s transition from nation to empire during the late 19th and early 20th centuries depended heavily upon the conflation of nationalist and familial rhetoric; yet, simultaneously, Japanese writers and thinkers were bound up in a transnational circuit of Victorian scientific discourse that posed serious challenges to the naturalness of the nuclear family form. From anthropological accounts of alternative kinship systems in the colonies, to Marxist critiques of the nuclear family as an upholder of private property, to Galtonian technologies of eugenics, Japan’s encounter with the British empire deeply challenged traditional notions of family, as well as the equation of family and state.

The four chapters of this dissertation follow the writings of Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Koizumi Yakumo, né Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), whose ambiguous position as Japanese subjects caught between the borders of nations afforded them a unique vantage point from which to criticize the language of kinship invoked by the state. By showing how these writers employed literary language to forge bonds of belonging between distant subjects not necessarily related by blood, my dissertation reveals how literary writing itself was imagined by these writers to constitute its own form of reproduction that ensured the continuity of one’s identity across space and time.

In Chapter One, I read Natsume Sōseki’s *Kokoro* (1914) through the figure of blood, tracing the ways in which Sōseki imagines a form of kinship that transcends the boundaries of

biology and/or nationhood. Although the metaphor of blood was frequently used by the Japanese state to invoke notions of racial purity, Sōseki complicates this metaphor by repeatedly describing literary language itself as a kind of blood—implying that a bond of kinship may be forged between readers and writers who may not share a biological or ethnic tie. Situating *Kokoro* in the context of early 20th century scientific debates on heredity and kinship, many of which cast doubt on the durability of the nuclear family form, I argue that Sōseki challenges the triangulation of family, property, and state central to the project of Japanese empire.

In Chapter Two, I read Natsume Sōseki’s “The Carlyle Museum” (1905). Focusing on the institution of the house museum, in which the former private residences of deceased national literary writers were refurbished into public museums after their death, I argue that Soseki’s account of his visit to the former residence of Thomas Carlyle imaginatively transforms the institution of the home, the mainstay of the British nuclear family, into a transnational site of exchange, fostering a spontaneous bond of kinship between readers and writers who shared a strange intimacy: on the one hand occupying distinct spatial and temporal dimensions, and on the other, knowing and gaining familiar and familial details about each other’s lives. Further, I draw on contemporaneous anthropological theories of the fetish to show how the objects in Carlyle’s home are endowed with magical properties akin to relics or fetishes, which create an alternative lineage by acting as agents of transmission between Carlyle and Soseki.

In Chapter Three, I read Lafcadio Hearn’s references to composite photography, scattered throughout his writings and letters on Japan, alongside Francis Galton’s writings on eugenics and heredity. Composite photography was a photographic technique invented in the late 19th century, wherein multiple portraits of different individuals were layered on top of each other in order to form a single “composite” image. As an Anglophone writer who was eventually naturalized as a Japanese citizen, I argue that Hearn’s frequent allusions to composite photography can be read as an attempt to grapple with his transnational identity. Although Hearn has often been read as a prime example of a 19th century “Orientalist” writer, I argue that his writings, as well as his naturalization as a Japanese citizen, ultimately destabilize the notion of a “Japanese” identity altogether.

In Chapter Four, I circle back to Natsume Sōseki’s *Kokoro* by reading it alongside Lafcadio Hearn’s own *Kokoro* (1896), a collection of essays on Japanese ancestor worship. I show how Hearn combined his research in evolutionary theory and Japanese ancestor worship in order to critique the Victorian nuclear family as a limited and ultimately inferior social form incapable of fostering a broader capacity for empathy generated by kinship systems that included the living as well as the dead. By reading the two *Kokoros* together, I reflect on Sōseki and Hearn’s collective attempts to sketch out a theory of transnational kinship that straddles spatial as well as temporal boundaries, reflecting on their legacy for Japanese literary studies as the first two lecturers of English literature at Tokyo Imperial University.

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Any failures, errors, or infelicities in this work are mine.



“All Life is figured by them as a Tree. Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence, has its roots deep down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole Universe: it is the Tree of Existence. At the foot of it, in the Death-kingdom, sit Three Nornas, Fates,—the Past, Present, Future; watering its roots from the Sacred Well. Its "boughs," with their buddings and disleafings?—events, things suffered, things done, catastrophes,—stretch through all lands and times. Is not every leaf of it a biography, every fibre there an act or word? Its boughs are Histories of Nations. The rustle of it is the noise of Human Existence, onwards from of old. It grows there, the breath of Human Passion rustling through it;—or storm tost, the storm-wind howling through it like the voice of all the gods. It is Igdrasil, the Tree of Existence. It is the past, the present, and the future; what was done, what is doing, what will be done; "the infinite conjugation of the verb to Do." Considering how human things circulate, each inextricably in communion with all,—how the word I speak to you today is borrowed, not from Ulfila the Moesogoth only, but from all men since the first man began to speak,—I find no similitude so true as this of a Tree.”

-Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*

# Introduction

“Does kinship itself rest upon a certain disruption?” Judith Butler asks in her critique of the politics of kinship.<sup>1</sup> The question would seem to harbor a paradox, for what is meant by kinship is precisely continuity through common origin, a biological origin in particular. How could such a continuity, rooted in the very helices of our DNA, rest upon a disruption? Butler nevertheless shows us that kinship is anything but natural. She notices, for one, that the characters in Greek tragedy—the literary genre that, more than any other, stakes its claims on the politics of kinship—are “regularly confused about who is related to whom,” “whether someone is one’s mother or father,” or “whether the beast one has just killed is really one’s son.”

At what moment, she asks, is someone recognized to be kin? Could it be that kinship only ever gets conferred retrospectively, in response to a breach or crisis? That order, rule, and law always arrive belatedly to respond to this breach? Does Oedipus’s father, in other words, only really become his father at the moment of murder? It is not until these moments of crisis occur in the plays that the characters realize who their true kin are. Butler thus shows us that kinship has not only to do with biology but with knowledge and recognition. The characters in Greek tragedy always have to be *persuaded* that someone is their kin; that is, kinship is always forged through narrative. In this sense, she concludes, every kinship is a mode of *belated knowledge* in response to a breach, and it is precisely in this breach that kinship is established. Kinship, Butler concludes, is a mode of “passionate unknowingness.”

Butler is writing in response to recent debates over same-sex marriage, particularly those arguments that take the *biological* relation between parent and child to be the defining factor in legitimating kinship ties. However, she wonders how we might delimit the domain of kinship if we refuse to define it through reproduction alone.<sup>2</sup> If we take kinship to mean relationships that articulate “basic human bonds” and their organization through time and space, modes of “intimate alliance” or “broader modes of belonging” that may not take conjugality or reproduction as their defining modes, then an expanded definition of kinship may be possible. Such modes of intimate alliance, this dissertation argues, might also be formed through the transmission of narrative experience between readers and writers who, though separated by vast chasms of space and time, nevertheless create networks of alliance at odds with traditional forms of family.

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<sup>1</sup> See Judith Butler’s talk on “The Notion of Affinity” with Helen Cixous at the European Graduate School: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/judith-butler/videos/the-notion-of-affinity/>

<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler, “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies* 13.1 (2002)

In this dissertation, I take up the concept of kinship as it emerged (or was “invented”) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through the newly established fields of anthropology and evolutionary science. Sarah Franklin describes the “invention” of kinship in the following way:

A different technology was invented in the nineteenth century to describe the organization of human reproductive substance—and the disciplining of reproductive outcomes—namely, the concept of kinship. In the work of Darwin, as both Gillian Beer (1983) and Marilyn Strathern (1992a) have shown, the idiom of kinship performed a function of translation—importing the aristocratic technology of pedigree into natural history to ground a new theory of the biological relatedness of all organic life through shared descent—that is, through shared reproductive substance. It was by this very means, Foucault argues, that a new definition of life, as a natural system, acquired an organic and conceptual unity and gave rise to the modern scientific discipline of biology (Foucault 1973). Once it became lawlike and systemic, Foucault argues, biology also came to be understood as a new apparatus of social and political control, at both the individual and the species level—inaugurating what Foucault describes as biopower.<sup>3</sup>

The paradox of kinship, as Franklin notes here, was that it was simultaneously seen as a model for the interconnection of all human beings according to the schema of evolutionary theory, as well as a series of diverse systems by which individual societies conceptualized the relations of their members across space and time. Kinship systems, (European) anthropologists and ethnographers discovered during this time, not only were *not* universal, but in fact acted as a kind of “grammatical structure” for a particular society, determining everything from its communication systems to its courtship and marriage rituals to its religious beliefs.

This discovery that kinship systems were vast, diverse, and evolving over time was simultaneously at odds, however, with the age of high imperialism, in which numerous empires (including the British, American, and Japanese empires) drew upon a rigid and seemingly timeless discourse of “the family” in order to justify its project of colonization. As Ann McClintock notes: “Projecting the family image onto national and imperial progress enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree. Imperial intervention could thus be figured as linear, non revolutionary progression that naturally contained hierarchy within unity: paternal fathers benignly ruling over immature children. The trope of the organic family becomes invaluable in its capacity to give state and imperial intervention the alibi of nature.”<sup>4</sup>

In Japan specifically, the discourse of the family and the state were intimately bound up in the notion of the *Ie* (家) system: referring at once to the concept of a household as well as to

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Franklin, *Biological Relatives: IVF, Stem Cells, and the Future of Kinship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013) 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Imperial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 45.

the physical space of the home, the concept of the *Ie* during the Meiji period (1868-1912) was tied to the idea of Japan itself as a kind of family unit, headed by the paternalistic figurehead of the emperor. Ironically, prior to the Meiji period, the *Ie* system had been based upon much looser ties, referring to a family's continuity through time, which extended to ancestral members long dead as well as those yet to be born.<sup>5</sup> It did not consistently practice primogeniture (inheritance through the line of the eldest son) or even patrilineality, since it was not uncommon, especially in rural areas of western Japan, for families of farmers and merchants to organize themselves through matrilineal lines of descent. Adoption of sons, son-in-laws, and even married couples was common in order to secure an heir, and womanhood was not primarily equated with motherhood or childrearing, nor was it always defined biologically.<sup>6</sup> Since the household was considered an *economic* unit of production, it was not unusual for several generations to live under one roof and collectively participate in tasks crucial to the household's survival, childrearing included.<sup>7</sup>

During the Meiji period, however, the family, and the concept of blood to which it was now tied, underwent a renewal of political meaning. Now, all individuals in Japan were registered in a stem family based on biological kinship ties (unlike the feudal household, which had been more flexible in the inclusion of servants, adoptees or children born out of wedlock).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, allegiance to the family was considered a kind of moral obligation, and was explicitly tied to an allegiance to the emperor, who was portrayed as a kind of national father figure. Within this framework, this dissertation asks: how might Japanese literary writers who traversed multiple national terrains during this historical moment have imagined forms of kinship that that extended beyond the spatio-temporal boundaries of the Japanese nation state? From a literary historical perspective, what types of narrative devices might they have used in order to write these extended scales of kinship and belonging into existence? How might their critiques of the family form and the imperial ambitions of Japan have overlapped in their writing?

To answer these questions, this dissertation examines novels, vignettes, ethnographies, and essays by two transnational Japanese literary writers around the turn of the 20th century, asking how the experience of writing from multiple geographical centers during a moment of heightened nationalism and imperialism led to a critique of literary structures tethered to the form of the nuclear family. I define "transnational Japanese writers" as writers who were registered by the state as Japanese citizens, but whose peripatetic careers and multilingual streams of influence make a compelling case for positioning their work outside of the frame of a single national literary canon. I thus situate their writing within a circuit of transnational, transpacific Victorian writing not confined to a single national tradition. Taking up Butler's idea that kinship does not structure our experience a priori, but must always be established in

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<sup>5</sup> *House and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation*, ed. Richard Ronald and Allison Alexy (New York: Routledge, 2011) 1.

<sup>6</sup> Gail Lee Bernstein, ed. *Recreating Japanese Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan*. ed. Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Woehr (New York: Routledge, 2014) 3.

response to a “breach” or “crisis,” I argue that it was precisely the “crises” of exile and displacement as transnational figures that propelled them to think critically about the various forms that kinship could take, particularly in regard to the circulation of literary texts.

Paying particular attention to the works of Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Koizumi Yakumo, né Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), I show how these writers in particular grappled with their transnational status by making narrative interventions into the ideology of the nuclear family that was so central to the logics of nationalism at this historical moment. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan quickly began translating and assimilating Western scientific theories into its burgeoning empire as it sought to catch up with the European powers after centuries of diplomatic isolation. And as the borders of the Japanese empire expanded, the Japanese state increasingly drew upon the language of biological kinship: largely through its investment in the “ie” or “family” ideology, which compared the Japanese emperor to a “father” and the Japanese populace to his “children,” in justified an imperial project rooted in ethnic nationalism.

Although many turn-of-the-century Japanese literary writers drew upon the ideology of the family to structure their narratives along conventional marriage plot lines, oftentimes drawing implicit parallels between the virtues of the family and that of the nation, the trope of the family plays a different role in the works of Sōseki and Hearn. For both writers, their abiding interest in Victorian scientific and anthropological texts, particularly those that questioned the ideological basis for the nuclear family, led them to search for alternative forms of kinship in their writing practice. By imagining new kinds of family forms in their writings, ones not tied inherently to the imperial state and its demand for biological reproduction, Sōseki and Hearn also self-reflexively make room for themselves to exist within literary lineages not confined to a single national canon.

In their reading and research habits, both Sōseki and Hearn expressed a deep interest in themes of kinship and the family throughout their careers. This makes sense historically, since the late 19th century in many ways witnessed the birth of anthropology as a new discipline, founded on the discoveries made by Charles Darwin in the 1840’s on descent and evolution. By the turn of the 20th century, the view that kinship rested solely upon a biological basis began to give way.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the “discoveries” of Euro-American ethnographers and anthropologists that various indigenous societies in the colonies often had distinct conventions, ceremonies, rituals, and even terminology for defining kinship made it obvious that social facts do not always align with biological ones. Lewis Henry Morgan laid many of the foundations for the study of kinship with the publication of his *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1870), based on his decades-long research into the kinship terminology of the Iroquois of North America. This research, in turn, provided the basis for Friedrich Engels’ now classic critique of the nuclear family, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), which

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<sup>9</sup> Schneider, David Murray. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984)

argued that kinship structures were determined by the economic structures of a particular society, and that the nuclear family in particular existed in order to sustain a system of private property.<sup>10</sup>

These and other texts such as James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which exerted a tremendous effect on turn of the century literary writers, circulated within a transpacific network of Victorian scientific knowledge that found its way into the hands of Sōseki and Hearn. I argue that these accounts, filtered through the lens of literary writing, challenged the homology between the nuclear family and the nation state that the Japanese empire relied on so centrally to strengthen its ideology. By casting doubt on the nuclear family as an eternal form, these accounts also implicitly challenged the project of nation and empire building that Japan was engaged in.

As such, the dissertation is organized around two major literary writers—Natsume Sōseki and Lafadio Hearn—whose ambiguous position as Japanese subjects caught between the borders of nations afforded them a unique vantage point from which to criticize the biologically essentialist language of kinship invoked by the state. By showing how these writers employed literary language to forge bonds of belonging between distant subjects not necessarily related by blood, my dissertation reveals how literary writing itself was imagined by these writers to constitute its own form of reproduction that ensured the continuity of one's identity across space and time.

The first chapter, “Jus Sanguinis: Blood Transfusions in Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*,” focuses on the figure of blood in the literary and theoretical writings of Natsume Soseki, a Japanese novelist and literary theorist whose formative years as a writer were spent in Victorian England. At least since the postwar era, Soseki has been elevated in Japan to the status of a canonical national literary writer. This chapter aims to challenge the identification between Soseki and the national literary canon by positioning him as a writer who was deeply uneasy with the idea of a singular national identity. To do this, I trace the way that Soseki employs the metaphor of blood—particularly in his canonical 1914 novel *Kokoro*—to imagine a form of kinship that transcends the boundaries of biology and nationhood. Although the metaphor of blood was frequently used by the Japanese state to invoke notions of racial purity, Soseki complicates this metaphor by repeatedly describing literary language itself as a kind of blood—implying that a bond of kinship may be forged between readers and writers who may not share a biological or ethnic tie. Situating this novel in the context of early 20th century scientific debates on heredity and kinship, many of which cast doubt on the durability of the nuclear family form, I argue that Soseki's novel directly challenges the triangulation of family, property, and state central to the project of Japanese empire.

The second chapter, “Natsume Sōseki's ‘The Carlyle Museum’: The House Museum in the Age of Victorian Transnationalism,” focuses on a short literary sketch written early in Sōseki's career called “The Carlyle Museum” (1905), which chronicles his visit in 1901 to the erstwhile home of Thomas Carlyle, a major figure of Victorian letters whose writing Sōseki read and admired over the course of his career. Specifically, I investigate the setting of the story—the

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<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan*. 1st ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1972)

house museum—a phenomenon in which the former private residences of deceased national literary writers were refurbished into public museums after their death. I argue that Sōseki’s account of his visit to Carlyle’s house transforms the institution of the home—the mainstay of the 19th century middle class nuclear family—into a transnational site of exchange, fostering a spontaneous bond of kinship between readers and writers who shared a strange intimacy: on the one hand occupying distinct spatial and temporal dimensions, and on the other, knowing and gaining familiar and familial details about each other’s lives. Although the institution of the house museum was often imbued with nationalistic overtones, I argue that Sōseki repurposes it in order to imagine a new type of transnational Victorian literary canon not confined to the contours of a single national identity.

The third chapter, “Francis Galton’s Composite Photograph: The Case of Lafcadio Hearn / Koizumi Yakumo,” focuses on the role of composite photography in the writings and essays of Lafcadio Hearn. Composite photography was a photographic technique invented in the late 19th century by Francis Galton, wherein multiple portraits of different individuals were layered on top of each other in order to form a single “composite” image. Galton, a major Victorian scientist and inventor, was also a strong advocate of eugenics, and believed that composite photography could function as a technology to predict the average facial features of those allegedly predisposed to crime—according to contemporaneous theories of phrenology and heredity. I argue that Hearn’s frequent allusions to composite photography in his ethnographic sketches of “Japanese life” can be read as a complex projection of Hearn’s idealized fantasy of Japan as both an insider and an outsider to the culture. As Hearn was an Anglophone writer who eventually became a naturalized Japanese citizen and even took on a Japanese name (Koizumi Yakumo), I argue that his references composite photography becomes a way to grapple with his status as a transnational subject, as well as to critique what he understood to be the limitations of the nuclear family form.

Finally, the fourth chapter, “Victorian Necromancy: Reading Ghosts in Two *Kokoros*,” focuses on the figure of ghosts in the writings of Lafcadio Hearn / Koizumi Yakumo. During the late 19th century, ghosts were central to a movement called Spiritualism, a form of pseudo-science that helped spread evolutionary theories in and among popular Victorian occult circles, which often engaged new and emerging forms of media—particularly photography—as a means of communicating with the dead. This chapter tracks the intertwining of evolutionary theories with Spiritualist discourses to show how Hearn drew upon the figure of ghosts in his writings on Japan. Focusing on a collection of ethnographic essays that Hearn wrote in 1896 called *Kokoro*, I show how he combined his research in evolutionary theory and Japanese ancestor worship to critique the Victorian nuclear family as a limited and ultimately inferior social form incapable of fostering the broader capacity for empathy generated by non-western kinship systems that included the living as well as the dead. I argue that Hearn sketches out, in these essays, an outline of a theory of transnational kinship that straddles spatial as well as temporal boundaries. I end with a meditation on the uncanny themes and continuities between Sōseki’s *Kokoro* and Hearn’s *Kokoro*.

The pairing of literary texts and theories of kinship in this dissertation draws inspiration from several theoretical models which suggest that kinship structures are narratively, rather than biologically determined. Judith Butler's work, for instance, thinks through the ways in which so-called "biological" bloodlines are also a species of narrative fiction, since they must be recounted to us retrospectively. For Butler, kinship and bloodlines never possess the ontological determinacy of a natural entity, since our origins are never empirically verifiable by us, but must always be *narrated* to us retrospectively. For her, kinship is a species or even genre of narrative, rather than a biological fact. In this sense, for Butler, kinship is always already removed from the sphere of "nature" or the "natural." Tackling head-on the classic Hegelian interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone* as a play that represents an irreconcilable conflict between the family and the state, the natural and the political, Butler instead argues that whatever "familial" or "natural" force *Antigone* might be said to represent has already been deeply de-naturalized from the beginning, as *Antigone* herself is a product of her father Oedipus's incestuous transgression of the laws of kinship.<sup>11</sup> For Butler, "the family" is not, as Hegel would have it, confined to the sphere of nature or to the pre-political, but rather is always already political from the beginning.

This relationship between kinship and narrative, indeed, of kinship *as* narrative, is also echoed in Christopher Flint's seminal work on 18th century British prose fiction and its relationship to domestic ideology, in which he notes:

The word 'relation' has historically conveyed the dual significance of consanguinity and storytelling with which the book is concerned. From the Latin *referre* meaning to refer (literally to be thrust [*ferre*] back in between [*re*]), the word 'relation' originally designated a signifying act by which an object or person was classified or referred... With use it eventually served, in addition to its taxonomic function, as a synonym for narrative activity, presumably because a well-told tale brought disparate events into cogent relationship, putting episodes logically between others. Subsequently it was also used in conjunction with the family, to describe an individual's subordinate place in a network of social and biological connections or to designate a determinate set of resemblances. As in the word 'family,' which derives from the Latin word for servant (*famulus*), 'relation' bears the etymological traces of a process whereby an alien aspect of what appears to be an easily contained and classifiable condition is made to seem normal—that our 'blood' should predispose us to people we had never met, that telling one's story required being thrust back between others...<sup>12</sup>

Flint's observation that to "relate" a story is to create relationships between different facts or events, drawing them into proximity, and further, that to relate something to someone is, in a sense, to create a relationship to them, extends beyond the canon of 18th century texts of British domestic fiction that constitutes his archive. This dissertation relies heavily on the idea that kinship and narrative are inextricably intertwined. At the same time that narrative transmission

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<sup>11</sup> Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Flint, *Family Fictions: Narrative and Domestic Relations in Britain, 1688-1798* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 5.



between readers and writers creates its own structure of kinship, however, these narrative lineages do not always follow the pattern of descent inscribed within traditional models of family.

Queer theorists such as Kevin Ohi have pointed to a series of Victorian texts by writers such as Oscar Wilde and Henry James, in which narrative transmission is paradoxically founded on absence rather than presence. He points to moments of failed pedagogy in these texts in which a relationship between a teacher and a student is concretized precisely through a failure of communication, a missed lesson, or the reduction of a text to incoherent fragments. For Ohi, literary transmission is rendered “queer” when precisely that which the text wants to communicate is unspeakable, thus relying on a kind of productive absence in order to transmit itself. Ohi’s model of narrative kinship, then, challenges the idea that something necessarily gets “reproduced” within an act of narrative transmission.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, this dissertation takes its cue from the work of theorists such as Caroline Levine and Wai Chee Dimock, who explicitly critique of the nation-state as a model for organizing literary studies. Levine’s insistence that we pay attention to “patterns of circulation rather than rootedness, zigzagging movements rather than stable foundations,” alerts me to the importance of broadening the scope of Japanese studies beyond the naturalized form of a national entity. Her insistence that we refrain from categorizing or canonizing a literary text based on the author’s place of birth alone proves especially pertinent here. She writes:

It is not the nation as a place or a political institution that has most powerfully organized literary studies, but the more mystifying and troubling category of autochtony—the notion that writers and texts are linked to the land of their birth...Birth has in fact long been the primary organizing principle for the institutionalization of literature in the university. The Victorian canon has not traditionally included, for example, William Wells Brown, the author of the first African American novel *Clotel*, first published in London in 1853. Routinely we have put Washington Irving in American literary studies, though he lived and published in Europe for almost two decades. Most English literature scholars have never heard of the Venezuelan-born poet and legislator Andres Bello, sometimes called the artistic liberator of Spanish America, who spent nineteen years in London and wrote his most famous poem there in 1826, miserably far from home. Conversely, we do not exclude Anthony Trollope from the English canon, though he wrote some of his novels about a consummately English Englishness aboard ships bound for the Caribbean...If a British subject born in 1800 spends her whole life overseas reading texts only in French, her books are Victorian. If a French writer born in 1700 writes books ignored in his own time but enthusiastically taken up by Victorian readers, he remains an 18th century French writer. National canons as we know them routinely privilege birth over location.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kevin Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission*. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2015)

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Levine, “From Nation to Network.” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2013. pp. 647-666. 650.

When I refer to both Sōseki and Hearn as transnational Japanese writers, I do so with the aim of putting their life and work into conversation with a number of other texts and writers of the late Victorian period, rather than exclusively to their Japanese contemporaries. The epithet “transnational” might be applied with controversy to Sōseki, since he only spent a total of two years away from Japan. However, the two years he spent in London were not only formative to the rest of his literary career, but the texts he immersed himself in there—particularly 18th century British fiction and contemporary scientific writings on anthropology, sociology, and biology—arguably exerted a greater influence on his ideas than what we in the 21st century consider to be, self-evidently, “the” canon of Japanese literature.

For Hearn, the adoption of a Japanese name (Koizumi Yakumo) after marrying into his wife’s family, along with his dizzyingly peripatetic career (from Greece to England to Ireland to France, then to the United States, Martinique, the French West Indies, and finally to Japan) seem genuinely to call for the status of a transnational Victorian writer, since, apart from his writing in the English language, there seems to be no possibility of placing his work into any “national” literary tradition. Indeed, Hearn is not generally included in any general overviews of 19th century British or Victorian literature; he is sometimes included in the realm of “American Studies,” and in Japan, read in Japanese translation but not regularly included in the “canon” of modern Japanese literature. More than determining which national tradition they “really” belong to, I am interested in following the dizzying archival trail of transpacific Victorian scientific texts through which Soseki and Hearn create their oeuvre, and how they drew upon such texts to navigate their literary statelessness.

In this sense, I find Wai Chee Dimock’s model of kinship through “deep time” useful for conceptualizing the contours of this project. She argues that, when we follow the transmission of literary texts across “deep time,” the networks of readers and writers we find patterned within such transmissions do not follow the neat boundaries of family or nation:

“Kinship is anything but straightforward here. It is oblique, centrifugal, laterally extended, taking the form of arcs, loops, curves of various sorts: complex forms of temporal and spatial displacement. Non-adjacency is the unexpected ground for kinship. Cross-fertilizing takes place when far-flung arcs meet at distant points. Since this is the case, since it is these far-flung arcs that integrate the globe, that turn distant populations into distant cousins, we might want to rethink the meaning of ancestry itself. Rather than being land-based, patrilineal, and clannish, it is here oceanic, flotational, a large-scale and largely exogenous process of drifting...ancestry has less so to do with origins than with processes. Transmutation rather than transmission is its lifeblood.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)

# Chapter 1

## Jus Sanguinis: Blood Transfusions in Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*

In the preface to his 1906 *Theory of Literature*, also known as *Bungakuron* (文学論), Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) writes: “I closeted myself in my room...I shut away all books of literature in my wicker trunk. To read literary works to try to learn what literature was, I believed, was the same as trying to wash blood with blood.”<sup>16</sup> It is a curious line that, for one reason or another, Sōseki scholars have never paid particularly close attention to—for even if one is unfamiliar with the phrase “to wash blood with blood,” the meaning that the author seeks to convey here can be easily gleaned by way of inference.<sup>17</sup> Reading through the rest of the preface, it is obvious that Sōseki means to say something like the following: reading literature in order to understand what literature is, is an impossible task, because one cannot understand the nature of a thing by way of that thing alone. Thus, just as using blood to wash away blood is futile, so is reading literature in order to understand the nature of literature. Rather, one must use something that is *not* literature—in Sōseki’s case, science—in order to reach a more fundamental understanding of it. However, a closer historical examination of the phrase “to wash blood with blood”—in Japanese, *chi de chi wo arau* (血で血を洗う)--leads to a number of further questions which complicate this seemingly simple analogy.

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<sup>16</sup> Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*. trans. Michael Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, and Joseph A. Murphy. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). 44. In the original Japanese, the line reads: 「余は下宿に立て籠りたり。一切の文学書を行李の底に収めたり。文学書を読んで文学の如何なるものなるかを知らんとするは血を以て血を洗ふが如き手段たるを信じたればなり。」 see Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, vol. 1. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014)

<sup>17</sup> To my knowledge, no Sōseki scholar has been able to explain why Sōseki uses this particular metaphor in the context of his preface to *Theory of Literature*. Komori Yōichi makes note of it, but simply remarks that the “extremity” (過剰) of the metaphor illustrates how deeply Sōseki had immersed himself in the problem of defining literature: 「血を以て血を洗ふが如き手段という比喩は、かなり過剰な言い方ですが、それだけ金之助が、既存の文学という枠組の中に身を置いていては、文学に対する根本的問いかけが不可能であることを強く認識していたことを明らかにしているといえます。」 See Komori Yōichi, *Sōseki wo yominaosu*. (Tokyo: Seikōsha, 1995), 73.

## Blood Feuds

According to intellectual historian Tomomi Nishida, the earliest known use of the phrase *chi de chi wo arau* (血で血を洗う) in Japan occurs in a copy of the Book of Tang (旧唐書), one of the Twenty-Four Official Histories (正史) of China compiled from official court records during the Five Dynasties period (907-960 A.D.). In the Genkyū den (源体伝), one of the two hundred chapters comprising the Book of Tang, “to wash blood with blood” is listed as an idiomatic phrase, or kanyō hyōgen (慣用表現) meaning “to enact revenge upon someone for a wrongful deed, particularly a murder, using the same means by which they hurt you.”<sup>18</sup> In English, we might look to the roughly equivalent phrase, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” meaning that a person who has injured another ought to be punished to the same manner and degree of harm that he originally caused his victim.

During the Edo period (1603-1868) Nishida notes that there was another, more popular usage of the phrase that also circulated in Japan prior to and around the late 17th century. In this usage, the phrase “to wash blood with blood” referred to a fight, dispute, or quarrel between family members.<sup>19</sup> By way of example, Nishida cites an entry from a text called the Yamaga Gorui (山鹿語類), written during the mid-17th century by the Confucian scholar and philosopher Yamaga Sokō (山鹿素行). In a section of this text titled “On Siblings,” Yamaga explains: “Siblings have a rare relationship (得難い関係), and therefore it is inhumane (非人道的) when they fight with one another in the manner of enemies (敵同士であるかのように争う) over a trifling matter. Even more so when they slander one another (中傷し合う), each claiming that his reasoning alone is correct, this is called washing blood with blood.”<sup>20</sup>

Nishida notes that this more popular usage of “to wash blood with blood,” which might be roughly translated into English as a “blood feud,” occurs in the texts of the famous Edo period ukiyozōshi writer Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693), in which family feuds, particularly disputes over

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<sup>18</sup> Tomomi Nishida, *Chi no Shisō: Edo jidai no Shisei kan* (Tokyo: Kenseisha, 1995). 71. Tomomi renders the original classical Chinese text in modern Japanese as: 「悪事とりわけ殺傷に対して同じ手段で対抗、報復する血なまぐさい有様のたとえに使われた。」

<sup>19</sup> Nishida, 72. 「血族同士が相争う意味でも使われるようになっていた。」

<sup>20</sup> Nishida, 72. Nishida’s rendering of this passage into modern Japanese reads: 「兄弟とは非常に得難い関係なのに、わずかばかりの利害をめぐって敵同士であるかのように争うようなことをするのは、非人道的である。ましてや、どちらが正しいか理屈を言い合い、お互いに中傷し合うのは、血で血を洗うというものだ。」 In the original classical Japanese, the passage reads: 「天下得難きの兄弟にして、僅の利害を争て仇敵の如くならんこと、人倫の大にかくる處なり、況や是非を論じて理を立、互に毀譽をなさん、血を以て血を洗ふためしとも云べし。」 see Furukawa Kōichi, ed. *Yamaga Gorui*, vol. 2. (Tokyo: Kokushokan Kōkai, 1910) 272.

matters of property, often comprise the dramatic tension of the story. In one of Saikaku's stories dating to 1686, *Honchō Ōin Hiji* (本朝桜陰比事), a shopkeeper from Kyoto takes his relative, a poor man from the countryside, to court, where the two of them enter into a legal dispute over a piece of family property. The chapter in the text describing this episode is called “Chi wo chi de arau Zaishogawa,” (血を血で洗う在所川) or “The River Zaisho, where Blood is Washed with Blood.” Nishida notes that whereas the river Zaisho refers to a geographical location in the text, Saikaku's use of “washing blood with blood” here refers to the content of the episode, which describes a quarrel between two family members.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the meaning of “to wash blood with blood” shifts again during the 18th century, ultimately broadening in scope to refer not only to quarrels within the family, but also to the affective sentiments attached to such quarrels. Nishida cites a Confucian scholar named Kamata Issō (鎌田一窓), who observes in a philosophical text from 1788 called *Ama no Harema* (雨のはれ間): “Is shame ever, in the end, one's own alone? That is like washing blood with blood—if one tries to wash away blood with blood, the original blood cannot be removed. The blood one uses to wash the original blood will soil it again. The shame of the hand is also the shame of the foot, and the shame of the foot is also the shame of the hand. Thus, the shame of the older brother is also the shame of the younger brother, and this shame even extends to his parents.”<sup>22</sup>

Here, the affective sense of shame caused by the actions of one family member circulates among all of the members of the family like blood which courses through and connects individual parts of the body (“the shame of the hand is also the shame of the foot.”) What Kamata emphasizes here is the uncontainable and even contagious nature of blood, which is here portrayed as seeping, spreading, and circulating in the same way that a sense of shame carried within the individual self ultimately spreads to contaminate or defame the entire family name.

Returning to the memorable passage from the preface to *Theory of Literature*, then, we are left with several questions. First, why would Sōseki compare literature to blood (“To read literary works to try to learn what literature was, I believed, was the same as trying to wash blood with blood”), and in what sense was he doing so? Should we think of blood as a figure of lineage and continuity (blood in the sense of one's blood relatives, or kin), as a figure of violence (blood in the sense of shedding blood), or both? In short, why blood, at all? Secondly, why would Sōseki would use an expression that refers to family feuds in order to describe an

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<sup>21</sup> Nishida, 74.

<sup>22</sup> Nishida, 74. Nishida's rendering of this passage into modern Japanese is as follows: 「恥が自分ひとりのものであることがあろうか。それは血で血を洗うというものであり、血で血を洗っても、はじめの血が落ちることはない。あとの血でまた汚すことになる。手の恥は足の恥で、足の恥は手の恥である。兄の恥は弟の恥であり、弟の恥は兄の恥になる。その恥は、両親にまで及ぶのである。」 The original passage in classical Japanese reads as follows: 「其恥辱一身の恥辱ならずや、血で血を洗ふといふものにて、血で血を洗はば、先の血は除もせん、跡の血でまたよごす、手の恥は足のはじ、足の恥は手の恥なり、兄の恥は弟の恥、弟の恥は兄の恥、其恥辱父母に及ぼす。」 See Takimoto Seiichi, ed. *Nihon Keizai Daiten*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Meiji Bunken, 1979). 279.

*epistemological* problem: namely, how to define the nature of literature? While notions of family or kinship are not specifically mentioned in the preface to *Theory of Literature*, it is highly unlikely that Sōseki would have been unaware of the familial connotations of the phrase “washing blood with blood,” given that his primary and secondary education was rooted in a thorough knowledge of the Chinese classics.<sup>23</sup> And given that almost all of his later novels revolve around family conflict—specifically, around problems of inheritance—what theories of literature might Sōseki be attempting to work out in his use of the phrase “washing blood with blood?”<sup>24</sup>

The task of this chapter, then, will be to address the following questions: what is the link between Sōseki’s reference to blood in his preface to *Theory of Literature* and the centrality of blood as a recurring thematic image in his novels at large, especially in his late novel, *Kokoro*? Given the politically charged rhetoric surrounding the concept of blood amidst Japan’s rise to empire, how might Sōseki have endeavored to repurpose it toward new ends in his writing? What alternative structures of family, kin, and belonging did Sōseki believe literary writing could create? How might literary texts themselves, specifically the transmission of texts between readers and writers across extended scales of time and space, constitute a different form of blood, or kinship, from the one being promoted by the Japanese state at this time?<sup>25</sup> Finally, what does it mean for Sōseki’s theory of literature that *blood is both a figure of continuity and of violence*?

## Blood Money

At least since Japan’s postwar era, Sōseki has been elevated to the status of a canonical national literary writer—and his novel *Kokoro* in particular has been included in official Japanese textbooks and issued as assigned reading to secondary school students across the country. When one adds to this the fact that, beginning in 1984, an image of Sōseki’s face was printed on the Japanese one thousand yen bill, the image of Sōseki as *the* canonical literary writer of modern Japan would seem to be almost irrefutable, at least in the popular imagination.

Yet it was clear that Sōseki was deeply uneasy with the idea of a singular national identity. Briefly stated, the driving impetus behind Sōseki’s decision to write *Theory of*

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<sup>23</sup> Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*. trans. Michael Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, and Joseph A. Murphy. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Ishihara Chiaki, “Chōnan no kigōgaku,” *Sōseki Kenkyū*, vol. 5, 1995. 160-171. Specifically, Ishihara points out that the central problem in many of Sōseki’s novels revolves around the process of inheritance (家督相続), whereby the oldest son (長男) inherits the family property and becomes the new head of household (戸主). In Sōseki’s novels, however, the process of inheritance goes awry in one way or another, thus propelling the narrative in directions atypical for the standard Meiji katei shōsetsu.

<sup>25</sup> The idea of literary texts creating their own distinctive structures of transmission, lineage, and kinship as they circulate through the hands of readers and writers who may not occupy identical spatial or temporal zones is largely inspired by Wai Chee Dimock’s reading of American literature. See Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

*Literature* was to determine what literature was as a universal concept, outside of any particular linguistic or cultural context. Since his youth, he had been brought up with the understanding that literature (文学) referred to the Chinese classics—a canon of philosophical Confucian texts that most Japanese boys from a higher social rank would have studied and memorized as part of their primary education.

However, when Sōseki encountered English literature for the first time during his graduate studies at the University of Tokyo, he was forced to confront the fact that “literature” in the English sense (represented by the novels of Dickens, Eliot, and Carlyle) was nothing like the literature he had known up to this point. While the Chinese classics were for the most part philosophical, moral, or political texts that taught leaders how to rule a populace or best defeat an enemy in military combat, English literature as Sōseki encountered it in the late 19th century was defined, for the most part, by historical and psychological fiction. Thus, he wanted to define for himself what literature at its core actually was—“the psychological and sociological reason for its emergence, existence, and decline”—in order to heal the epistemological split with which he had been confronted.<sup>26</sup>

As Komori Yōichi notes, the confusion—perhaps one could even say, feud—that Sōseki describes in his preface to *Theory of Literature* regarding literature in the classical Chinese sense, and literature in the English sense, was necessarily bound up with the global struggle for empire and resources during the late nineteenth century. When Sōseki was born in 1867, one year before the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of imperial rule, Japan still remained within a fundamentally Sinocentric world order. Komori reminds us that the “Chinese classics” which Sōseki mentions here did not refer to literature from China proper—rather, it referred to the canon of Confucian philosophical texts, written in classical Chinese, that circulated within an transnational East Asian sphere of literati communities, all of whom had the ability to read classical Chinese texts although they spoke different languages orally.

In sum, Sōseki, in his youth, still lived and breathed within an “empire of signs” of Chinese writing that united East Asia as a whole.<sup>27</sup> However, with the British defeat of the Qing Empire in the First Opium Wars (1840-1842), Japan began shifting away from this Sinocentric worldview into a new world order defined by the British empire. Like Chinese characters, the English language was also becoming a transnational tool of empire that exceeded the national boundaries of England. English was becoming a *world* language.<sup>28</sup> In addition, during Sōseki’s

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<sup>26</sup> In the original Japanese text, this line reads: 「余は心理的に文学は如何なる必要あって、この世に生まれ、発達し、頽廢するかを極めんと誓へり。余は社会的に文学は如何なる必要あって、存在し、隆興し、衰滅するかを究めんと誓へり。」 see Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, vol. 1. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014), 20.

<sup>27</sup> 「共有された漢字表記と漢文の文法をもとに、漢学と総称しうる国際的な言語、思想体系がアジア一帯に形成され、漢という国家が消滅しても、永い間大漢学字帝国とでもいべき帝国が行き続けてきたわけです。」 See Komori Yōichi, *Sōseki wo yominaosu*. (Tokyo: Seikōsha, 1995), 90-91.

<sup>28</sup> Komori, 93.

time as a student in London, Japan would sign the Anglo-Japanese alliance (日英同盟) in 1902, ensuring mutual cooperation of the Japanese and British empires against the incursion of Russian influence in Asia.<sup>29</sup> The Anglo-Japanese alliance would subsequently be crucial to Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war, perhaps the event that propelled them onto the world stage more than any other.

It is unsurprising, then, that the two years Sōseki spent in London immersed in the study of English literature were literally funded by blood money. Throughout the early Meiji period the Japanese government typically sent more or less twenty scholars abroad to Europe and the United States annually to study military and scientific matters, in an effort to build up the political power of the fledgling modern state. However, by the year 1900, when Sōseki was sent to England by the Ministry of Education, this number had risen to thirty-nine per year, and this was primarily made possible by the indemnities that the Japanese government had received in its victory during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895).<sup>30</sup>

This war, which was fought between the Qing Empire and the Empire of Japan primarily over influence of Korea, marked an unprecedented shift in East Asian regional dominance from China to Japan, as the prestige of the Qing Empire suffered a major blow at the hands of the rapidly modernizing Japanese military. It was the financial gains from this victory that funded Sōseki's scholarship to England from 1900-1902. Thus, the fact that Sōseki was forced to confront an epistemological shift in the definition of literature from one rooted in the Chinese classics to one defined by the Victorian novel was inseparable from Japan's quite literal military and political shift away from a Sino-centric worldview and toward one governed by the British empire.

## Blood, Sweat, and Tears

But how, exactly, did the rhetoric of nationalism come to be tied up with the discourse of the family? Politically, the figure of blood was mobilized by the Japanese state in complex and sometimes contradictory ways throughout its rise to empire (1895-1940). As anthropologist Jennifer Robertson notes: "The link between blood and nationality is certainly not unique to Japan, but it was inflected in ways that distinguish the Japanese phenomenon from others...blood was and remains an organizing metaphor for profoundly significant, fundamental, and perduring assumptions about Japaneseness and otherness; it is invoked as a determining agent of kinship, mentality, national identity, and cultural uniqueness."<sup>31</sup>

Significant to note here is the fact that the figure of blood was *not* typically used to denote lineage, race, or ethnicity in Japan before the mid-19th century—in other words, this conception of blood was a specifically modern invention. Historically in Japan, blood relations

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<sup>29</sup> Komori, 93.

<sup>30</sup> Komori, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer Robertson, "Biopower: Blood, Kinship, and Eugenic Marriage." *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 329.



were not particularly significant in terms of defining social continuity—instead, other types of social intimacy, such as adoption (useful for choosing a male heir when a biological did not exist), or discipleship (wherein Buddhist monks chose a male disciple to whom he would transit his teachings) often took precedence.

Jennifer Robertson, drawing on Tomomi Nishida's work, reminds us that before the 17th century, the dominant symbolism of blood was overwhelmingly negative, as it was associated with the ritually polluted female body. Within the Shinto and Buddhist traditions, blood was associated with menstruation and the uncleanness of the female body, which was considered dangerous to men of priestly stature.<sup>32</sup> However, in the mid-19th century, the terms *ketsuen* (血縁), or blood relation, *kettō* (血統), or blood line, and *ketsuzoku* (血族), or blood relative, began appearing in a wide range of literary sources, indicative of a more positive, affirmative meaning of blood.

Concurrent with this shift, the Meiji state also created a new Civil Code (民法) in 1896, which normalized patrilineality as the dominant mode of household succession through the establishment of the modern *Ie* system (家制度). In doing so, it also made blood—that is, biological connection to a registered stem household—the criteria for citizenship, and by extension, the basis for a person's basic civic and legal rights.<sup>33</sup> While the concept of the *Ie*—which traditionally referred both to physical dwellings and the stem-families that inhabited them—had existed well before the Meiji period, it had a looser meaning during the premodern era: it referred to a family's continuity through time, which extended to ancestral members long dead as well as those yet to be born.<sup>34</sup> It did not consistently practice primogeniture (inheritance through the line of the eldest son) or even patrilineality, since it was not uncommon, especially in rural areas of western Japan, for families of farmers and merchants to organize themselves through matrilineal lines of descent. Adoption of sons, son-in-laws, and even married couples was common in order to secure an heir, and womanhood was not primarily equated with motherhood or childrearing, nor was it always defined biologically.<sup>35</sup> Since the household was considered an *economic* unit of production, it was not unusual for several generations to live under one roof and collectively participate in tasks crucial to the household's survival, childrearing included.<sup>36</sup>

During the Meiji period (1868-1912), however, the family, and the concept of blood to which it was now tied, underwent a renewal of political meaning. Now, all individuals in Japan were registered in a stem family based on biological kinship ties (unlike the feudal household, which had been more flexible in the inclusion of servants, adoptees or children born out of

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<sup>32</sup> Robertson, 330.

<sup>33</sup> Robertson, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *House and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation*, ed. Richard Ronald and Allison Alexy (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Gail Lee Bernstein, ed. *Recreating Japanese Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Bernstein, 7.

wedlock).<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, allegiance to the family was considered a kind of moral obligation, and was explicitly tied to an allegiance to the emperor, who was portrayed as a kind of national father figure:

An important achievement of the Meiji government was to establish the principle of filial piety in law, and extend obligations and loyalty associated with the family to the emperor, the nation, and consequently, the state. A critical point was the appropriation of Confucian morals in a way which confounded the notion of filial piety with national loyalty. The code gave priority to family ethics over any other form of ethics, and made familialism subject to national ethics. This positioned the emperor as the ultimate head of all Japanese families, situating him in an equivalent regard to the people as that between a father and his children. The general population was expected to be loyal to him and his representatives, the state, just as family members were filial to the head of the family.<sup>38</sup>

Under the new term *kazoku-kokka* (家族国家), literally “family-state,” Japanese ethnic and national identity were fused under the metaphor of family, as if to naturalize a recent historical invention by inscribing it into the figure of the family tree. Anne McClintock’s observation on the naturalization of the family trope in the context of the British empire could equally apply to modern Japan:

The power and importance of the family trope was twofold. First, the family offered an indispensable figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Because the subordination of woman to man and child to adult were deemed natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. The family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of social progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimizing exclusion and hierarchy within non-familial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial thus depending on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children. Second, the family offered an invaluable trope for figuring historical time. Within the family metaphor, both social hierarchy (synchronic hierarchy) and historical change (diachronic hierarchy) could be portrayed as natural and inevitable, rather than as historically constructed and therefore subject to change. Projecting the family image onto national and imperial progress enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree. Imperial intervention could thus be figured as linear, non revolutionary progression that naturally contained hierarchy within unity: paternal fathers benignly

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<sup>37</sup> *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan*. ed. Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Wöhr (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

<sup>38</sup> *House and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation*, ed. Richard Ronald and Allison Alexy (New York: Routledge, 2011), 5.

ruling over immature children. The trope of the organic family becomes invaluable in its capacity to give state and imperial intervention the alibi of nature.<sup>39</sup>

The link between blood, family, and nationalism would become even clearer when the Japanese state invoked the law of *jus sanguinis* (right or law of blood), which made individuals eligible for citizenship based on their ability to prove that they were the biological descendants of one or more parents who were already citizens of the state.

Born in Japan just one year before the restoration of imperial rule in 1868, Sōseki was necessarily caught up in the shift from a looser to a stricter, blood-based notion of family and kinship. As a child, he was shuttled back and forth between several different households, only one of which he had biological ties to. As the eighth child born to a formerly prosperous merchant family, he was deemed superfluous and quickly sent to a foster family (for this reason, Komori Yōichi notes, Sōseki sometimes punned on his own pen name, written with the characters 漱石, with the alternate characters 送籍, which, under the prewar family registry system, referred to the phenomenon by which someone's name was sent to a different family's koseki, or family register, usually due to marriage or adoption). However, he was subsequently brought back to his original family when an older sister discovered that he was being neglected. The following year, he was legally adopted into yet another family, the Shiobara family, thus becoming Shiobara Kinnosuke (塩原金之助). Finally, Sōseki was returned to his birth family in 1876, following the dissolution of the Shiobara's marriage.

Sōseki's adoption(s) would not have been an especially strange phenomenon during the late Edo and even early Meiji periods, when biological relations between parent and child were not as important as having a proper successor for the family line. And yet, the instability of his family ties, and the uncertainty around the nature of his "true" biological relatives, clearly left a lasting impression on him, as evidenced by the recurring themes of adoption, inheritance/disinheritance, and familial conflict in almost all of his novels. Sōseki's account of his own biography also suggests that the ontological uncertainty of his biological ties left him reliant upon narrative to structure this knowledge: upon returning to his birth family after having been sent to two separate foster families throughout the course of his childhood, Soseki recounts that he was no longer sure which of his adult relatives were his own father and mother. It wasn't until a maid surreptitiously informed him that the couple he believed to be his grandparents were, in fact, his parents, that Sōseki understood just who was related to whom.<sup>40</sup>

Of significant note in this anecdote is the fact that, in the absence of a strict, nuclear family structure, narrative becomes the primary medium through which one gains access to a knowledge of origins. Sōseki's uncertainty as to "which of his adult relatives were his own father and mother," and the subsequent description of the maid who "surreptitiously informs him" who his true parents are hints already hints at a linguistic, rather than a biological notion of kinship:

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<sup>39</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 45.

<sup>40</sup> Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*. trans. Michael Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, and Joseph A. Murphy. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 3.

since our own origins are never empirically verifiable by us, they must always be narrated to us retrospectively. In this sense, kinship seems closer to a linguistic practice, even a narrative genre, rather than an pre-determined ontology.

It seems possible, then, that Sōseki had himself experienced the ways in which narrative structures our relation to the past, and that our relationship to kin is mediated in more meaningful ways through language rather than biological certainty. That he would use the phrase “washing blood with blood,” in his preface to *Theory of Literature* in order to describe the task of defining literature seems to imply that, already in 1905, he might have been thinking of literature—the reading and writing of literary texts—as a practice constituting its own form of kinship. At the same time, the fact that the phrase “washing blood with blood” suggests both futility, violence, and intra-familial strife seems almost uncannily to foreshadow the central themes of his most canonical novels, the 1914 *Kokoro*, in which each of the main characters are alienated from their biological families, leading them to form textually mediated forms of kinship with one another through a series of “testaments” which constitute the text of the novel.

Yet violence (bloodshed), specifically in the form of suicide, creates the very condition of possibility for the transmission of these testaments, since it is death that activates the writing of these testaments in the first place. In a historical moment in which familial and national rhetoric were often conflated, the unfinished project of defining literature outside of a specific national canon was akin to violating the law of familial form. In Sōseki’s oeuvre, specifically in *Kokoro*, the law of blood would become a spontaneous force that disrupts conventional social order, as opposed to a regulative bio-political instrument that grounds familial identity within nationhood.

## Heart Palpitations

In *Kokoro*, blood rarely flows in the direction it is supposed to. Far from denoting vertical conceptions of lineage, blood in *Kokoro* circulates, spills, and most importantly, is *transfused* from one heart to another. That this transfusion of blood is coded as a transmission of language—in the most famous passage of the novel, the character Sensei compares the writing of his life testament to blood, which must take up “new life” in the heart of his reader—speaks to the way in which blood in *Kokoro* is denaturalized from the ideological function it was serving for the Japanese state at this moment. Rather than demonstrating an anxiety over racial purity, as the rhetoric of blood often did during the rise of the Japanese empire, blood in *Kokoro* functions as a homoerotic substance that binds men together at the exclusion of women. In this sense, blood in *Kokoro* creates an alternative temporality, one that stretches sideways and backward rather than forward in time.

After all, to *transfuse* blood from one body to another is quite a different thing from simply inheriting the blood of one’s ancestors by biological means. Instead, the concept of a blood transfusion threatens to rewrite lineage altogether by rerouting the flow of blood to an unexpected body which deviates from the biological line. Likewise, the act of reading, and the transmission of knowledge that occurs in such an act, always implies the potential to disrupt conventional notions of literary continuity along national and familial lines. Yet at the same time that blood stands in for generational continuity through the medium of language, it is also a

figure of violence: In *Kokoro*, blood is not only transfused and transmitted, but also shed, specifically in the suicide of the character K. A paradox thus stands within *Kokoro*'s relationship to blood: on the one hand, it serves to connect the disparate minds of readers separated by space and time; on the other hand, it also the substance that separates them, for within the context of the novel, it seems that nothing can be transmitted or communicated between characters without an act of violence. In *Kokoro*, blood takes on homoerotic overtones as a material substance that paradoxically creates continuity, lineage, and kinship through rupture and death.

*Kokoro* is divided into three parts titled, respectively, "Sensei and I," "My Parents and I," and "Sensei's Testament." The first part, "Sensei and I," begins with a nameless narrator who simply calls himself "I," or, in the original Japanese text, Watakushi (私). Writing from a retrospective first person perspective, he looks back on an encounter and subsequent friendship he once developed with an older man, who he simply refers to as his teacher, or Sensei (先生).

Watakushi recalls how he noticed Sensei one summer in Kamakura and felt inexplicably drawn to him. As the two slowly develop a friendship with one another, Watakushi becomes aware that Sensei is burdened by an unspeakable secret from his past, which he keeps hidden within himself. Though the nature of the secret is not revealed to Watakushi, over the course of their conversations he begins to see Sensei as a surrogate father figure, someone who provides the kind of spiritual education and guidance that neither his professors, nor his biological father, cannot provide.

The second part of the novel, "My Parents and I," tells of Watakushi's return home to the countryside, away from the metropolis of Tokyo, to visit his ailing biological father. There, Watakushi becomes increasingly aware of his feelings of alienation from his own family, especially as he contrasts their traditional beliefs with Sensei's worldview, conditioned by his thorough knowledge of Western philosophical ideas. He explicitly compares his father to Sensei, and realizes that he feels a greater sense of kinship with the latter than the former.

As his father is on his deathbed, Watakushi receives a weighty letter in the mail addressed to him from Sensei. He opens it with great alarm, and, too impatient to read the letter all the way through, flips to the last page of the letter, in which Sensei informs him that he will have committed suicide by the time Watakushi reads the letter. It is this letter which constitutes the third part of the novel, "Sensei's Testament," which begins not in Watakushi's but in Sensei's own first-person narrative. Sensei calls his letter a testament, or *isho* (遺書) because through it, he passes on his experience to Watakushi, the reader of the letter, in a manner analogous to the way property or genetic material is transmitted (遺伝) from generation to generation.<sup>41</sup> Yet he also compares his experience—in its written, literary form—to blood, suggesting that the act of reading is at its core an act of transmission, the establishment of a "blood line" analogous to a hereditary lineage:

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<sup>41</sup> Note the identical characters in the Japanese word for "testament," or *isho* (遺書), and "genetic transmission" or *iden* (遺伝)

In the end, you asked me to spread out my past like a picture scroll before your eyes. Then, for the first time, I respected you. I was moved by your decision, albeit discourteous in expression, to grasp something that was alive in my soul. You wished to cut open my heart and see the blood flow. I was then still alive. I did not want to die. That is why I refused you and postponed the granting of your wish to another day. Now, I myself am about to cut open my heart, and drench your face with my blood. And I shall be satisfied if, when my heart stops beating, a new life lodges itself in your breast.<sup>42</sup>

The events that constitute the plot of *Kokoro*, that is, the events that lead the characters to form affiliative bonds with one other, are motivated by their sense of estrangement from their biological families. It is this sense of being cut adrift from a biological lineage which leads them to eventually construct an alternative, literary lineage with one another through the transmission of texts. In the opening scene of *Kokoro*, Watakushi describes the circumstances that led to his meeting Sensei one summer, when he was invited by a friend to visit the seaside in Kamakura. Already in this opening scene the theme of familial strife is placed front and center:

It was at Kamakura, during the summer holidays, that I first met Sensei. I was then a very young student. I went there at the insistence of a friend of mine, who had gone to Kamakura to swim. We were not together for long. It had taken me a few days to get together enough money to cover the necessary expenses, and it was only three days after my arrival that my friend received a telegram from home demanding his return. His mother, the telegram explained, was ill. My friend, however, did not believe this. For some time his parents had been trying to persuade him, much against his will, to marry a certain girl. According to our modern outlook, he was really too young to marry. Moreover he was not in the least fond of the girl. It was in order to avoid an unpleasant situation that instead of going home, as he normally would have done, he had gone to the resort near Tokyo to spend his holidays. He showed me the telegram, and asked me what he should do. I did not know what to tell him. It was, however, clear that if his mother

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<sup>42</sup> Natsume Soseki, *Kokoro*. trans. Edwin McClellan (Tokyo: CE Tuttle, 1978) 129. The original Japanese reads: 「その極あなたは私の過去を絵巻物のように、あなたの前に展開してくれと逼せまった。私はその時心のうちで、始めてあなたを尊敬した。あなたが無遠慮に私の腹の中から、或る生きたものを捕つらまえようという決心を見せたからです。私の心臓を立ち割って、温かく流れる血潮を啜ろうとしたからです。その時私はまだ生きていた。死ぬのが厭であった。それで他日を約して、あなたの要求をしりぞけてしまった。私は今自分で自分の心臓を破って、その血をあなたの顔に浴せかけようとしているのです。私の鼓動が停まった時、あなたの胸に新しい命が宿る事ができるなら満足です。」

was truly ill, he should go home. And so he decided to leave after all. I, who had taken so much trouble to join my friend, was left alone.<sup>43</sup>

As this passage demonstrates, it is the friend's attempt to break with the wishes of his parents—specifically, his refusal to marry and continue the family line—that indirectly enables Watakushi's chance meeting with Sensei: had the nameless friend not gone to Kamakura to escape the demands of his parents that he marry and continue the family line, Watakushi himself would never have gone to Kamakura or met Sensei. In this sense, we can read the space opened up by the break in biological lineages as opening up the space of writing, which literally fills in and repairs this breakage through a textual mediation.

The narrator's nameless friend never makes a re-entry into the novel after this anecdote; like the mysterious westerner with whom Sensei arrives at the beach, he plays no obvious role in the development of the plot. And yet, the circumstances which Watakushi recounts here—the fact that his parents have been pressuring him to marry a certain girl whom he has no desire to marry—will of course be repeated in the story *Sensei* later tells Watakushi about his own past, when, after the death of his father, his uncle pressures him to marry his own cousin in order to manipulate the young Sensei into relinquishing the property that has been rightfully handed down to him:

My uncle and aunt had more than once tried to persuade me, who had only just entered college, to marry. The first time they mentioned marriage to me, I was somewhat shocked, for the subject had been introduced suddenly: the second time, I positively refused to consider it; and the third time, I was forced to ask them why they wanted to discuss such a thing...[later] his reasons for wanting to see me get married were the same as those he gave the previous year. But this time, he had someone in mind for me, which

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<sup>43</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 2. 「私が先生と知り合いになったのは鎌倉である。その時私はまだ若々しい書生であった。暑中休暇を利用して海水浴に行った友達からぜひ来いという端書を受け取ったので、私は多少の金を工面して、出掛ける事にした。私は金の工面に二に、三日さんちを費やした。ところが私が鎌倉に着いて三日と経たないうちに、私を呼び寄せた友達は、急に国元から帰れという電報を受け取った。電報には母が病気だからと断ってあったけれども友達はそれを信じなかった。友達はかねてから国元にいる親たちにすすまない結婚を強いられていた。彼は現代の習慣からいうと結婚するにはあまり年が若過ぎた。それに肝心の当人が気に入らなかつた。それで夏休みに当然帰るべきところを、わざと避けて東京の近くで遊んでいたのである。彼は電報を私に見せてどうしようと相談をした。私にはどうしていいか分らなかつた。けれども実際彼の母が病気であるとすれば彼は固もとより帰るべきはずであった。それで彼はとうとう帰る事になった。せつかく来た私は一人取り残された。」

made the matter all the more embarrassing. The person that he suggested as a suitable bride was his own daughter, my cousin.<sup>44</sup>

The repetition of experience that is figured here between the characters—that each, in his own way, repeats the process of disinheritance undergone by his predecessor—suggests a lineage bound by discontinuity rather than presence and continuity: the characters become linked to one another precisely by what they have lost, which then propels them into the act of writing. That is, breaks in biological lineage constitute the condition of possibility for writing, which then lays the foundation for a new kind of continuity, a new kind of *literary* kinship.

Just as Sensei has to negotiate a process of estrangement from his biological family early in life, his friend K, one of three central figures in the book, is shuttled back and forth between his biological family and his foster family, ending up in a similar state of confused exile from his kin. We are told that although he was originally the “second son of a priest from the Shinshū sect,” he “was sent as an adopted son to the house of a certain doctor” during his first few years of life.<sup>45</sup> Later, K is disowned by his biological family after he secretly uses his foster family’s financial support to study religion and philosophy rather than medicine, the subject which they had demanded he pursue:

In the end K decided to become officially a member of his original family once more. They arranged to pay back to K’s late foster parents the money spent on his education so far. However, beyond this, his family would do no more. They had washed their hands of him, they said. He was, I suppose, ‘expelled from his father’s house,’ to use an old-fashioned phrase. On the other hand, perhaps his family did not intend to be so final in their treatment of K; but *K, at least, felt that he had been disinherited*. K was motherless, and it is more than likely that a part of his character was the result of his having been brought up by a

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<sup>44</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 136. 「ただ一つその夏の出来事として、私の心にむしろ薄暗い影を投げたのは、叔父夫婦が口を揃そろえて、まだ高等学校へ入ったばかりの私に結婚を勧める事でした。それは前後で丁度三、四回も繰り返されたでしょう。私も始めはただその突然なのに驚いただけでした。二度目には判然断りました。三度目にはこっちからとうとうその理由を反問しなければならなくなりました。彼らの主意は単簡でした。早く嫁を貰ってこの家へ帰って来て、亡くなった父の後を相続しろというだけなのです。家は休暇になって帰りさえすれば、それでいいものと私は考えていました。父の後を相続する、それには嫁が必要だから貰う、両方とも理屈としては一通り聞こえます。ことに田舎の事情を知っている私には、よく解ります。」

<sup>45</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*.



stepmother. I cannot but feel that had his real mother been alive, such a wide gulf might not have come to exist between him and his family.<sup>46</sup>

The use of formal legal and financial terminology in this passage (復籍, 弁償, 勘当) highlights the extent to which K's ties with his family have been stripped of any natural qualities. The entwinement of money and kinship relations, illustrated in this passage through the description of K's biological parents reimbursing (弁償) his foster parents for the money he had squandered on his philosophy studies, is a variation on a common theme running throughout Soseki's novels. Here it renders K an object of exchange between two groups. K's "nature" thus comes to be shaped by an "unnatural" break from his biological kin. Yet, it is this foundational act of disinheritance that provides the motor force behind K and Sensei's friendship, and, by extension, the plot of the novel itself. Disinheritance, and the tension between natural and unnatural filiation, becomes the driving force in the characters' quests to forge an alternative definition of kinship, one in which the testament (遺書) replaces biological heredity (遺伝), and the written word replaces the gene.

Finally, the narrator's own story traces his process of estrangement from his biological family. As he meets Sensei and gets to know him, we learn that his own biological father, living in the countryside, is slowly dying. The narrator visits his father out of obligation, after his mother sends him a telegram informing him that the father is ill. When he arrives, however, he finds that he feels deeply estranged from his father, who lacks the intellectual and philosophical outlook on life that he has come to admire in Sensei:

To help my father forget his boredom, I often played chess with him. We were both by nature very lazy. We would sit on the floor with a foot warmer between us, and a large quilt covering the foot warmer and our bodies from the waist down. We would then place the chessboard between us on the frame of the foot warmer... Whether he won or lost, my father always wanted to play another game. It seemed he would never tire of playing chess. At first I was willing enough to play with him. It was a novel experience for me to while away the time thus, as if I were an old man in retirement. But as the days went by, I began to weary of this inactive life. I was too full of youthful vigor to be contented with

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<sup>46</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 171. 「最後にKはとうとう復籍に決しました。養家から出してもらった学資は、実家で弁償する事になったのです。その代り実家の方でも構わないから、これからは勝手にしろというのです。昔の言葉でいえば、まあ勘当なのでしょう。あるいはそれほど強いものでなかったかも知れませんが、当人はそう解釈していました。Kは母のない男でした。彼の性格の一面は、たしかに継母に育てられた結果とも見る事ができるようです。もし彼の実の母が生きていたら、あるいは彼と実家との関係に、こうまで隔たりができずに済んだかも知れないと私は思うのです。」

the role of playmate for my father. At times, in the middle of a game, I would find myself yawning heavily.<sup>47</sup>

In this scene, the narrator sits down to play chess with his father, but he is not fulfilled by the activity. Chess, a highly intellectual and competitive strategy game which uses military figurines to represent movements of attack and defense between the players, is often associated with the cultivation of rationality and foresight. Earlier, the vocabulary of finance and law was used to describe K's relationship with his family; here the narrator's relationship with his father is described through an abstract game originally used to teach military strategy.

In both cases, what is emphasized is the fact that each of the young men feels no sense of natural kinship with their biological families—instead, their relationships are mediated through a set of abstract rules or institutions, such as chess or money.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, while the narrator's father is simply interested in playing the game for the sake of sheer amusement—that is, for the goal of passing time with his son—the narrator himself is interested in serious competition and a match of wits. Although the narrator is amused by this for a certain amount of time, he quickly grows bored as he craves the more rigorous philosophical debates that Sensei provides him. Thus, in his reverie, he begins to compare his father to Sensei explicitly, eventually concluding that he feels Sensei to be his father in the truer sense of the term.

I thought of Tokyo. And it seemed that with each heartbeat, the yearning within me for action increased. In a strange way, I felt as if Sensei was by my side, encouraging me to get up and go. I compared my father with Sensei. Both were self-effacing men. Indeed they were both so self-effacing that as far as the rest of the world was concerned, they might as well have been dead. They were, from the point of view of the public, complete non-entities. But while my chess-loving father failed even to entertain me, Sensei, whose

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<sup>47</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 46. 「私は退屈な父の相手としてよく将碁盤に向かった。二人とも無精な性質たちなので、炬燵にあたったまま、盤を櫓の上へ載せて、駒を動かすたびに、わざわざ手を掛蒲団の下から出すような事をした。時々持駒を失なくして、次の勝負の来るまで双方とも知らずにいたりした。それを母が灰の中から見付みつけ出して、火箸で挟み上げるという滑稽もあった。「碁ごだと盤が高過ぎる上に、足が着いているから、炬燵の上では打てないが、そこへ来ると将碁盤は好いね、こうして楽に差せるから。無精者には持って来いだ。もう一番やろう」父は勝った時は必ずもう一番やろうといった。そのくせ負けた時にも、もう一番やろうといった。要するに、勝っても負けても、炬燵にあたって、将碁を差したがる男であった。始めのうちは珍しいので、この隠居じみた娯楽が私にも相当の興味を与えたが、少し時日が経つに伴つて、若い私の気力はそのくらいな刺戟しげきで満足できなくなった。私は金や香車を握った拳を頭の上へ伸ばして、時々思い切ったあくびをした。」

<sup>48</sup> Estrangement from biological kin is a theme that flows through the entirety of Sōseki's oeuvre. See, for example, *Grass on the Wayside*, in which the main character, Kenzō, notes of his sibling: "They were connected by blood, but there was no feeling of kinship between them." 「血が続いていても姉弟という心持は全くしなかった。」

acquaintance I had never sought for amusement's sake, gave me far greater intellectual satisfaction as a companion. Perhaps I should not have used the word 'intellectual,' for it has a cold and impersonal sound. I should perhaps have said 'spiritual' instead. Indeed it would not have seemed to me then an exaggeration to say that Sensei's strength had entered my body, that his very life was flowing in my veins. And when I discovered that such were my true feelings toward these two men, I was shocked. For was I not of my father's flesh?<sup>49</sup>

The narrator's comparison of his true father with Sensei is mapped onto the types of deaths that each of them suffer later in the novel. Whereas the narrator's "natural" father appropriately dies a *natural* death—he dies slowly, from the weakness brought on by old age—the narrator's "unnatural" father, Sensei, dies an unnatural death—Sensei commits suicide shortly after he transmits his life story to the narrator in the form of a testament. This dichotomy between natural and unnatural fathers and natural and unnatural types of death is foreshadowed in the conversation the narrator has with Sensei shortly after he returns from the countryside:

Sensei smiled faintly. "Surely there are many men who die suddenly, yet quietly, from natural causes. And then there are those whose sudden, shocking deaths are brought about by unnatural violence." "What do you mean by unnatural violence?" "I am not quite sure; but wouldn't you say that people who commit suicide are resorting to unnatural violence?"<sup>50</sup>

The narrator's natural father dies a natural death (よくころりと死ぬ人), but he doesn't transmit his experience onto his son. By contrast, although the narrator's unnatural father is a person who ends up dying an unnatural death by suicide (あつと思う間に死ぬ人), it is paradoxically this unnatural and violent act which generates the text of Sensei's testament—the text that also generates the novel itself, since the narrator's own testament is an extension of Sensei's. Thus, it is Sensei's experience that is transmitted to the narrator, not his father's. Although they are not related by blood, Sensei and the narrator have a feeling of spiritual kinship with one another, and thus establish alternative bonds with one another through the transmission of texts. These literary bonds enable the transmission of experience which has been foreclosed by the broken biological lineages that they have become estranged from.

## Hematophors

The figure of blood appears a total of seventeen times throughout the text of *Kokoro*. Ken Itō argues that the prevalence of blood imagery in *Kokoro* is a symptom of the novel's inherently

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<sup>49</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 50.

melodramatic character, and he insists on a strict separation of the literal and figurative uses of blood within the text. He observes:

As is well known, the imagery of blood suffuses Sensei's narration. Sometimes the blood is real, like the blood from K's carotid artery against the sliding doors, a sanguinary reminder of the violence that erupts in melodramatic novels at moments of unsupportable emotional pressure. At other times, it is figurative, as in the famous passage where Sensei speaks of the transmission of knowledge through narration as a transmission of blood... The extravagance of figuring knowledge or information as blood emphasizes the intensity of the extraordinary encounter between Sensei and his younger friend. The violent, sacrificial transmission that occurs here gives a new twist to the image of blood, which is identified by [Peter] Brooks as a major melodramatic sign that 'renders the world expressive of moral sentiments.' For Brooks, the celebrated topos of the 'voix du sang' enacts the secret impulse by which parents and children and siblings are irresistibly drawn to one another despite mistaken and lost identities. In *Kokoro* the 'voix du sang' speaks out not to identify lost relations but to create new ones. The novel attempts a redefinition of blood relations.<sup>51</sup>

While there is a melodramatic component to the architecture of *Kokoro* as a novel, it is questionable whether the "real" and "figurative" uses of blood in the text can be justly kept apart in any categorical way. Commenting on the ways in which material qualities of blood are always necessarily bound up in its larger symbolic or religious meanings, Janet Carsten notes:

...It is frequently difficult to disentangle the material qualities of blood from its metaphorical attributes: Often the distinctions between the physical stuff [of blood] and its metaphorical allusions seem porous and difficult to disentangle... themes of bodily connection, contagion, violence, transformability and vitality are also associated with literal or physical attributes of blood.<sup>52</sup>

Underscoring Carsten's insistence that the distinctions between the physical properties of blood and its metaphorical allusions often seem porous and difficult to disentangle, the references to blood in *Kokoro* demonstrate that blood is never *just* a metaphor, but that its materiality is necessarily an integral part of its social, cultural, and literary meaning. Hence, I want to suggest that the so-called figurative uses of blood, in which it is treated as a medium capable of transmitting experience, depend for their efficacy upon the shedding of literal blood, as writing becomes a substitute for a life unable to be lived in proper relation to others. This is particularly evident, for example, in a passage wherein the character Watakushi attempts to describe what sets Sensei apart from others in his mind:

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<sup>51</sup> Ken Itō, *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 245-246.

<sup>52</sup> *Blood Will Out: Essays on Liquid Transfers and Flows*, ed. Janet Carsten. (Chichester: John Wiley and Son, Inc., 2013).

Where did this awareness of others that Sensei always displayed come from? Was it simply a result of his having coolly engaged in self-reflection, and observed the events of the world? Sensei was the type of person to sit and think about something for a long time. Perhaps it was natural, if one had a mind like Sensei's, to take this type of contemplative attitude toward the world. Sensei's awareness was a living awareness. *It was not at all like the contours of a slab of stone which had cooled down after being held in fire.* In my eyes, Sensei was undoubtedly a thinker. However, behind the neat facade of that [intellectual] ideology (まとめ上げた主義), there was embedded a powerful truth (強い事実). Not someone else's truth, the kind that is cut off from the self, but the kind of truth that one has acutely experienced oneself (自分自身が痛切に味わった事実), *the kind of truth that makes the blood hot and the pulse stop*—that was the kind of truth embedded behind the facade (emphasis mine).<sup>53</sup>

Here, blood is associated with a particular kind of embodied truth, over and against an intellectual truth that is gleaned by ideas and book reading. Sensei, unlike Watakushi's professors who "hide behind the neat facade of intellectual ideology" and live out a truth that is "cut off from the self," embodies a "powerful truth" that grows organically out of his own experience. In short, blood here is associated with the real, the inner sense, the personal—as opposed to the false, the outer facade, the official. Yet there is also a contradiction in this, since the "truth" that Sensei embodies, at the same time that it is a "living awareness," also seems to promote death: "the kind of truth that makes the blood hot and the pulse stop." A truth that makes the pulse stop, in short, is a truth that kills.

This particular passage in *Kokoro*, in which Sōseki distinguishes between personal and official, or ideological, truth, is echoed in an essay he published in the *Asahi Newspaper* in 1910 called "The Merits and Demerits of —Isms" (イズムの功過). In that essay, he discusses the distinction between personal and ideological truth in the following way:

Most "—isms," ideologies, and things of that nature are ready-made objects (拵らえてくれたものである)--innumerable truths (事実) that have been methodically tied up into a single

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<sup>53</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 80. 「先生の人間に対するこの覚悟はどこから来るのだろうか。ただ冷たい眼で自分を内省したり現代を観察したりした結果なのだろうか。先生は坐って考える質の人であった。先生の頭さえあれば、こういう態度は坐って世の中を考えていても自然と出て来るものだろうか。私にはそうばかりとは思えなかった。先生の覚悟は生きた覚悟らしかった。火に焼けて冷却し切った石造家屋の輪廓とは違っていた。私の眼に映ずる先生はたしかに思想家であった。けれどもその思想家の纏め上げた主義の裏には、強い事実が織り込まれているらしかった。自分と切り離された他人の事実でなくて、自分自身が痛切に味わった事実、血が熱くなったり脈が止まったりするほどの事実が、畳み込まれているらしかった。」

bundle and tucked away neatly into a drawer of the mind. And yet, while these “—isms” are easily put away (一纏めにきちりと片付いている代りには), they are quite troublesome to take out again. Most “—isms” are like that: rather than providing direct guidance for our day to day lives, they only exist to satisfy our thirst for abstract knowledge. *They are not sentences, but dictionary entries.* Most “—isms” are simply the shape that information is congealed into (凝結した) after being filtered through a complex mind. Not so much a shape, perhaps, as a mere form or outline, since it has no content within. To throw away the content and only take the form of a thing is like exchanging several coins for a single bill—we do it simply because it is convenient (emphasis mine).<sup>54</sup>

Note the material qualities that Sōseki ascribes to different forms of truth here: ideologies, which he calls “—isms,” are portrayed here as solids: they are frozen, hard, congealed, bundled, pure form with no content. He is describing a form of truth that is ready-made, an *idée fixe* which has not been critically dissected by an individual but has simply been accepted and passed down as-is. This type of truth is more akin to a “dictionary entry” than a “sentence,” because it is a truth that has been removed from the flow of everyday life—it has had its use value abstracted from it altogether, and retains the rigidity of a definition, rather than existing within the flow of an organic sentence.

Ideological truth is also, curiously, compared here to money, a theme that recurs repeatedly in Sōseki’s oeuvre: specifically, it is compared to a bill rather than coins. In the same way that paper bills are a convenient but ultimately false substitute or placeholder for the “real” material value of coins—which actually embody the value of the metal they represent—so ideological or official forms of truth, which Sōseki calls “—isms,” act as a convenient substitute for truth gleaned by experience—specifically, personal experience. We see this association between official truth and the properties of coldness / hardness when Watakushi notes: “Sensei’s awareness was a living awareness. *It was not at all like the contours of a slab of stone which had cooled down after being held in fire.*” And indeed, throughout *Kokoro*, the properties of stone and ice and their association with coldness, hardness, frozenness, will serve to indicate a form of official, ideological, or abstract truth that has been cut off from experience and thus cannot truly be transmitted to others.

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<sup>54</sup> 「大抵のイズムとか主義とかいうものは無数の事実を几帳面な男が束にして頭の抽出しへ入れやすいように拵らえてくれたものである。一纏めにきちりと片付いている代りには、出すのが臆劫になったり、解くのに手数がかかったりするもので、いざという場合には間に合わない事が多い。大抵のイズムはこの点において、実生活上の行為を直接に支配するために作られたる指南車というよりは、吾人の知識欲を充たすための統一函である。文章ではなくって字引である。同時に多くのイズムは、零碎の類例が、比較的緻密な頭脳に濾過されて凝結した時に取り一種の形である。形といわんよりはむしろ輪廓である。中味のないものである。中味を棄てて輪廓だけを畳み込むのは、天保銭を脊負う代りに紙幣を懐ふところにすると同じく小さな人間として軽便けいべんだからである。」

As a late Meiji writer, Sōseki would have seen his fair share of “—isms” sweeping Japanese society as well as the late Victorian world at large. Political ideologies such as capitalism, socialism, anarchism, and even evolutionism, as well as literary movements such as romanticism, realism, and naturalism—all of these were simultaneously imported into Japan almost overnight, taking hold of intellectual circles like a fad and just as quickly being discarded. Sōseki made clear that he was always skeptical of “isms”—that is, truths that had been imported in a ready-to-use form rather than growing organically out of one’s experience. Once again, he criticizes these “—isms” in his lecture “The Civilization of Modern Day Japan,” wherein he distinguishes between “externally motivated” (外発的) and “internally motivated” (内発的) development of civilizations, arguing that European civilization had developed organically out of itself, whereas Japanese civilization had had modernity thrust upon it externally in an unnatural way, bombarded with a series of “—isms” to which it had not direct relation through experience.

Returning to “The Merits and Demerits of —Isms,” truth that has been experienced in the flesh, rather than in an abstract, intellectual way, is associated with liquidity, flow, or multiplicity. Hence Sōseki’s reference to “innumerable truths” (無数の事実) that exist in disarray and complexity before they are “tied up” into the “neat bundle” of ideology; and the “coins” (天保銭) which are exchanged for the “bill” (紙幣) of ideology. Indeed, it would make sense that Sōseki maintained a critical distance from naturalism, the style of literary writing that was most dominant in Japan during the height of his literary career. Although naturalism purported to take an objective view of the world by recording things “just as they were,” for Sōseki, in the end, it was simply another “—ism,” a superficial ideology that was not truly rooted in experience. More than the relationship between the writer and his external reality, Sōseki was interested in the relationship between the writer and the reader of a text. Jay Rubin notes that “Sōseki envisioned a mystical union of individual minds—the writer’s and the reader’s—in a successful work of fiction, not—as was the tendency in naturalist theory—a union between the author and the natural object of his observation.”<sup>55</sup>

Just as in Sōseki’s essay, “The Merits and Demerits of —Isms” he distinguishes between two different types of truth, so does the narrator of *Kokoro* distinguish between “the kind [of truth] that is cut off from the self” (自分と切り離された他人の事実) and “the kind of truth that one has acutely experienced for oneself... the kind of truth that makes the blood hot and the pulse stop” (自分自身が痛切に味わった事実、血が熱くなったり脈が止まったりするほどの事実). If truth-as-experience is figured as liquid blood, and truth-as-ideology is figured as a frozen form that is cut off from the body, then what Sōseki seems to suggest here is that only the former is truly heritable—that is, only truth-as-experience, as set down in language, is capable of being transmitted and thus connecting generation to generation. Sensei suggests as much in his testament when he tells Watakushi:

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<sup>55</sup> Jay Rubin, “Soseki as Lecturer: Autonomy and Coercion,” in *Kokoro and Selected Essays*. trans. Edwin McClellan and Jay Rubin (Lanham: Madison Books, 1992) 251.

Probably my reply dissatisfied you because you were bent on seeing things in terms of philosophical questions, and you found my answer trite. But I spoke from experience. I was upset at the time, I agree. But I believe that a commonplace idea stated with passionate conviction carries more living truth than some novel observation expressed with cool indifference. It is the force of blood that drives the body, after all. Words are not just vibrations in the air, they work more powerfully than that, and on more powerful objects.<sup>56</sup>

Once again, “passionate conviction” (熱した舌) and “cool indifference” (冷やかな頭) are set against one another in this passage, along with the insistence that words are not merely “vibrations in the air,” but something more powerfully akin to blood that moves the body. This characterization of personal and official forms of truth as hot and cold, Throughout the text of *Kokoro*, inner truth is associated with liquidity, warmth, and flow—and hence with blood; while ideological, external, or official forms of truth are associated with solidity, coldness, and rigidity. One of the lessons we learn as readers of *Kokoro* is that intellectual or ideological truth is not truly transmittable to others because it does not derive from lived experience. Hence Sensei’s friend K, whose tragic suicide constitutes the climax of the novel, is repeatedly associated with the qualities of rigidity and coldness, ice and stone, the antithesis of life and blood:

His Buddhist upbringing had led him to think that paying attention to comfort in the basic needs of life was immoral. Brought up on tales of worthy monks and saints, he tended to consider flesh and spirit as separate entities; in fact, he may well have felt that to mortify the flesh was to exalt the soul. I decided to do my best not to argue, however. My aim was to apply a sunny warmth that would thaw his ice. Once the melted water began to trickle, I thought, he would sooner or later come to his senses.<sup>57</sup>

K lives a life whose truth has been “cut off from the self”—he pursues a truth that is so abstract and intellectual that it cannot be communicated to others, congealing into a form akin to “ice” which Sensei spends the duration of their friendship attempting to “thaw” so that it might return

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<sup>56</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 140 「私の答えは、思想界の奥へ突き進んで行こうとするあなたに取って物足りなかったかも知れませんが、陳腐だったかも知れませんが。けれども私にはあれが生きた答えでした。現に私は昂奮していたではありませんか。私は冷やかな頭で新しい事を口にするよりも、熱した舌で平凡な説を述べる方が生きていると信じています。血の力で体が動くからです。言葉が空気に波動を伝えるばかりでなく、もっと強い物にもっと強く働き掛ける事ができるからです。」

<sup>57</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*, 150 「仏教の教義で養われた彼は、衣食住についてとかくのぜいたくをいうのをあたかも不道德のように考えていました。なまじい昔の高僧だとかセントだとかの伝を読んだ彼には、ややともすると精神と肉体とを切り離れたがる癖がありました。肉をべんたつすれば霊の光輝が増すように感ずる場合さえあったのかも知れませんが。私はなるべく彼に逆わない方針を取りました。私は氷を日向へ出して溶す工夫をしたのです。今に融て温かい水になれば、自分で自分に気が付く時機が来るに違いないと思ったのです。」



to “melted water.” We are told that although K was originally the “second son of a priest from the Shinshū sect,” he “was sent as an adopted son to the house of a certain doctor” during his first few years of life. Later, K is disowned by his biological family after he secretly uses his foster family’s financial support to study religion and philosophy rather than medicine, the subject which they had demanded he pursue. It is this drama of disinheritance, a break in the structure of familial kinship, that draws K and Sensei into a brotherly bond, since Sensei himself had severed ties with his own biological family.

Yet ironically, it is precisely Sensei’s attempts to “thaw” his friend’s icy, stoic, intellectual demeanor, to melt it into water so that life and blood might flow through him again, that ultimately leads to the latter’s death:

His [K’s] sights were fixed on far higher things than mine, I’ll not deny it. But it is surely crippling to limp along, so out of step with the lofty gaze you insist on maintaining. My most important task, I felt, was somehow to make him more human. Filling his own head with the examples of impressive men was pointless, I decided, if it did not make him impressive himself. As a first step in the task of humanizing him, I would introduce him to the company of the opposite sex. Letting the fair winds of that gentle realm blow upon him would cleanse his blood of the rust that clogged it, I hoped.<sup>58</sup>

Here, K is characterized as having blood that is “rusted” and “clogged,” thus ceasing to flow altogether. K lives a kind of death-in-life, and Sensei hopes to revivify him by introducing him to Ojōsan, the daughter of the landlady with whom they board, thinking that contact with “a member of the opposite sex” will “humanize” (人間らしくする) his friend. Yet this project, in which to “humanize” K entails forcing him into the heteronormative structure of the nuclear family, ends in failure. Ultimately, Sensei develops feelings for Ojōsan, thus leading to K’s despair and ultimate suicide—at least, this is one way to interpret the events of the novel. On the other hand, we might also read K’s suicide as a refusal to be locked into the heteronormative structure of the nuclear family that a marriage to Ojōsan would ultimately entail. His despair at the apparently increasing emotional closeness of Sensei and Ojōsan might just as well be read as despair over the loss of his bond with a male friend, rather than the affections of a woman.

In either case, the description of blood at the scene of K’s suicide is not one of continuity, life, and vitality—as it has often signified throughout the text of the novel. Instead, it is one of violence and futility:

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<sup>58</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro*. 「彼の眼の着け所は私より遙はるかに高いところにあつたともいわれるでしょう。私もそれを否いなみはしません。しかし眼だけ高くって、外ほかが釣り合わないのは手もなく不具かたわです。私は何を措おいても、この際彼を人間らしくするのが専一だと考えたのです。いくら彼の頭が偉い人の影像イメージで埋うずまっても、彼自身が偉くなってゆかない以上は、何の役にも立たないという事を発見したのです。私は彼を人間らしくする第一の手段として、まず異性の傍に彼を坐らせる方法を講じたのです。そうしてそこから出る空気に彼を曝さらした上、錆付きかかった彼の血液を新しくしようと試みたのです。」

K had slit his carotid artery with a small knife and died immediately. It was his only wound. The blood on the paper doors, which I had glimpsed by the dreamlike half-light of his lamp, had spurting from his neck. Now I gazed at it again, in the clarity of daylight. I was stunned at the violent force that pulses blood through us.<sup>59</sup>

Although Sensei will also end up repeating the fate of his friend in his own suicide, indicated at the end of his testament, the blood he sheds is not in vain, for ultimately it takes up “new life” in the heart of his reader, Watakushi, who has, through reading Sensei’s testament, received the latter’s blood in the form of narrative experience. By contrast, K’s blood is not transfused into anyone else’s heart, but simply remains splattered on the paper door. His experience is left uncommunicated, mute, untransmitted: indeed, the language of K’s suicide note is brief and “abstract” (手紙の内容は簡単でした。そうしてむしろ抽象的でした)--precisely the qualities of language that Sōseki ascribes to official or ideological language in his essay, “The Merits and Demerits of —isms.” (一纏めにきちりと片付いている代りには、出すのが臆劫になったり、解くのに手数がかかったりする、いざという場合には間に合わないことが多い)

It is worth lingering on Sōseki’s use of the term “katazakeru” (片付ける) here. Again, in his essay on —isms, he writes: “While “—isms” are easily put away, they are quite troublesome to take out again.” (一纏めにきちりと片付いている代りには、出すのが臆劫になったり、解くのに手数がかかったりする). The term “katazakeru” (片付ける) most commonly means: to tidy something up, to put something in order, to straighten something up or put something away. However, it also carries a number of slightly different but related meanings, such as: to settle a problem, to clear a dispute, to finish something or bring something to an end, or to do away with someone. It also carries the meaning of marrying someone (e.g. a daughter) off to another family, as when the landlady (Okusan) in *Kokoro* conveys to Sensei that she would like to have her daughter (Ojōsan) married off as quickly as possible (それがお嬢さんを早く片付けた方が得策だろうかという意味だと判然した時、私はなるべくゆっくらな方がいいだろうと答えました。) In English, we might say: to tie up loose ends, to settle down. With this sense of an ending, it might also mean: to die, as when Sensei speculates that he will likely die before his wife:

Sensei suddenly turned to her. “Do you think you’ll die before me, Shizu?”

“Why?”

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<sup>59</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro* 「Kは小さなナイフで頸動脈けいどうみやくを切って一息に死んでしまったのです。外にきずらしいものは何にもありませんでした。私が夢のような薄暗い灯で見た唐紙の血潮は、彼の頸筋から一度にほとぼしたものと知れました。私は日中の光で明らかにその迹を再び眺めました。そうして人間の血の勢いというものの劇しいのに驚きました。」

“No particular reason, I’m just asking. Or will I move on before you do? (それとも己の方がお前より前に片付くかな) The general rule is that the husband goes first, and the wife is left behind.”<sup>60</sup>

The word “katazakeru,” along with the imagery of blood, is one that appears again and again throughout Sōseki’s oeuvre. It has to do with the problem of endings—the resolution of a problem, complication, or relationship, the end of a story or narrative, and ultimately, the end of a life. The overlapping meanings of resolving a problem, getting married, and dying in the term “katazakeru” are highly suggestive here, since it is precisely Okusan’s desire to “marry off” her daughter which sets in action a chain of events that leads to K’s death, and ultimately to the end of the novel as we have it. In a traditional marriage plot, the “resolution” comes precisely with the consecration of the heteronormative marriage, which naturally brings the novel to an end. It is almost as though marriage indicates the death of the plot, for events as we understand them cease to exist after the telos provided by the promise of marriage no longer moves the story forward.

And yet, *Kokoro* not only does not resolve itself in a marriage, but the formal architecture of the novel is such it does not truly “end.” For as soon as we finish Sensei’s testament, which constitutes the third and final section of the novel, we are taken right back to the “beginning” of the novel, which, temporally speaking, occurs later than the events narrated to us in Part Three, or Sensei’s Testament. It is almost as though true literary language, when derived directly from experience, cannot be “wrapped up” or contained within a tidy series of beginnings and endings. The narrative of *Kokoro*, like the blood imagery that recurs within it, literally circulates in a never-ending loop, rather than traveling linearly through time from one point to another. At the end of another novel involving broken family relations which Sōseki wrote just one year after *Kokoro*, *Michikusa* (Grass by the Wayside, 1915), the main character, Kenzō, famously sums up the impossibility of endings (both of “ending” a relationship, and “ending” a novel) when he tells his wife:

*Hardly anything in this world obtains real closure* (世の中に片付くなんてものは殆どありやしない). Once something happens, it keeps on happening forever. Only we don’t realize it as such because it keeps evolving into different forms (emphasis mine).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Natsume, *Kokoro* 「静、お前はおれより先へ死ぬだろうかね」

「なぜ」

「なぜでもない、ただ聞いてみるのさ。それとも己の方がお前より前に片付くかな。大抵世間じゃ旦那が先で、細君が後へ残るのが当り前のようになってるね」

<sup>61</sup> Natsume Sōseki, *Grass on the Wayside*, trans. Edwin McClellan (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969) 「世の中に片付くなんてものは殆どありやしない。一遍起こった事は何時迄も続くのさ。ただ色々な形に変わるから他にも自分にも解らなくなるだけのことさ。」

Remarkably, Sōseki's contemporary Henry James would formulate a theory of narrative identical to this, stating:

Really, universally, *relations stop nowhere*, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so. He is in the perpetual predicament that the continuity of things is the whole matter, for him, of comedy and tragedy; that this continuity is never, by the space of an inch or an instant or an inch, broken, and that, to do anything at all, he has at once intensely to consult and intensely to ignore it... The prime effect of so sustained a system, so prepared a surface, is to lead on and on; while the fascination of following resides, by the same token, in the presumability somewhere of a convenient, of a visibly-appointed stopping place. Art would be easy indeed if, by a fond power disposed to patronize it, such conveniences, such simplifications, had been provided. We have, as the case stands, to invent and establish them, to arrive at them by a difficult, dire process of selection and comparison, of surrender and sacrifice.<sup>62</sup>

As Kent Puckett notes, James suggests that 'life,' the matter out of which he forms his narratives, is naturally continuous, unbroken, and total, and that any effort to form that life, to give it a meaningful shape, will amount to an imposition or limitation of its full scope. For both James and Soseki, then, the paradox of literature and literary form specifically is that it must impose a violent limit on the "matter" of life in order to render it communicable, that is, literary, at all. Literary form is both necessary to render an experience communicable, and, at the same time, limits it inherently. Thus the rhetoric of blood in *Kokoro* is functions as both a figure of continuity and violence. Blood is the force that animates narrative, and and at the same time, a kind of "death" is necessary for that narrative to be retold, recommunicated, and retransmitted to a future reader.

## Anthropology and/of Kinship

A narrative which doesn't formally "end" or resolve is perhaps truer to lived experience, more honest: if the figure of blood "signifies" anything in the text of *Kokoro*, this would perhaps be it. Language is either "alive" (blood) or "dead" (ice) according to whether it can be narrated to someone else, and thus, transmitted, preserved, resisting closure thereby. In regards to his use of the word "katazakeru," it is worth remembering that, in preparation for his work on *Theory of Literature*, Sōseki had spent several years in London reading contemporaneous, texts on anthropology and sociology (inflected and informed by evolutionary theory) which cast

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<sup>62</sup> Kent Puckett, *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 127-128

significant doubt on the durability of the nuclear family form—and, by extension, the ability of the familial form to shape and contain novelistic narratives themselves.

The rise of anthropological research made possible by the spread of European colonialism had sparked interest in the contingency of kinship systems—numerous ethnographies had shown that forms of kinship systems other than the bourgeois nuclear family existed in different societies, and their research expanded the possibilities of what might count as kin. In other words, these ethnographies showed that the kind of kinship structures long thought by Europeans to be universal were in fact highly contingent and variable across time and space. And it was these alternative accounts of kinship which were used to construct some of the most radical critiques of Western society around the turn of the century.

Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), an anthropological study of Iroquois kinship structures, showed that the bourgeois family had its foundation in private property relations, and thus was subject to change based on the kind of property relations underpinning a specific society.<sup>63</sup> Among Morgan's closest readers were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*, published after his death, reveal the extensive notes he took on Morgan's *Ancient Society*, which Engels later incorporated into his own work, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Engels proclaiming that Morgan's work was "as definitive for the study of society as Darwin's was in the case of biology."<sup>64</sup> For Marx and Engels, Morgan's *Ancient Society* provided an effective *historicization* of the family form, and, with it, the demolition of the bourgeois myth that the modern, monogamian, nuclear household had existed since the dawn of human society and was the only 'natural' form for human relations. Instead, Morgan confirmed that the family had evolved out of earlier groupings of tribes and clans in correlation with shifting patterns in the ownership of the means of production. Thus, it was the tribe and its *communal* forms of land ownership and family structure that must have been the first family structure.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Believing that the study of kinship was the key to illuminating the laws that held society together over time, Morgan collected and compared a vast sample of the variety of the world's kinship terminologies in *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871); and in *Ancient Society* (1877), he suggested that, as civilizations move through different stages based on successive enlargements of their sources of subsistence, the structure of the family changes along with it. Thus, in the stage of savagery, when land was still shared in common, communities also shared partners in common: at this stage, he suggested, a "consanguine" or polygamous system of group marriage was practiced, in which "unrestricted sexual freedom prevailed, every woman belonging equally to every man and every man to every woman." In the next stage of civilization, which he called the stage of barbarism, the clan-based society emerged, and with it, the "pairing" family in which pairs married and lived in communal kin-based households. This system developed in tandem with the development of private property: because private property necessitates the transmission of that property to an heir, and since without monogamy it is impossible for a man to identify his biological son, the pairing system was the a priori condition for the transmission of private property. Finally, the stage of civilization signaled the end of kin-based households, and the ascent of the modern, nuclear family.

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Engels. *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010) 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

Similarly, ethnographic accounts of the Australian totemic system allowed Emile Durkheim to construct his theory of religious feeling, or the worship of an animal ancestor from which the clan believed itself to have been descended, as the basis for the concept of “society” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). It was precisely the idea of a “symbolic” ancestor (a totem), gleaned from reading these ethnographies, which gave Durkheim the idea for a real, though intangible entity called “society.” Likewise, James George Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890), an account of the origin of kingship in primitive societies and myths, became the foundation for Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913), a highly speculative account of the origin of the oedipus complex which claimed that the totem, the representation of an animal ancestor, was the organizing principle around which a clan was organized, and that the symbolic bonds holding these clans together was ultimately stronger than biological blood relations.<sup>66</sup> The totem functioned as a reminder of the clan’s having banded together to kill and devour the father out of jealousy over his possession of women, and thus served as a “taboo” against having sexual relations within the clan.

These questions, among others, contributed to what Thomas Trautmann has called “the invention of kinship” as a cornerstone of modern anthropological research. Although the existence of kin relations in every society had always been acknowledged, it was in this period that the formal study of kinship using the comparative method originated. Johann Jakob Bachofen’s *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), Henry Summer Maine’s *Ancient Law* (1861), Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges’ *La Cité Antique* (1864)—Coulanges would later become Émile Durkheim’s teacher—and John Ferguson McLennan’s *Primitive Marriage* (1865) were among the first works to lay the foundation for the formal study of kinship in Europe. One of the premises common to these works was the belief that the formal arrangement of one’s relationships in terms of kinship systems had been one of the earliest acts of human intelligence—that is, the oldest and most primitive expression of the human being’s attempt to impose order on his world.

That Sōseki was reading many of these types of ethnographies during his time in London suggests that they had some sort of bearing on his use of the “blood” concept, both in *Theory of Literature* as well as in *Kokoro*. In the catalogue of books that he read and annotated closely we find, for example, the works of Charles Letourneau (1831-1902), a French anthropologist who was the first to translate the evolutionary biologist Ernst Haeckel into French. Of his works Sōseki had evidently read *The Evolution of Marriage and the Family* (1888) and *Property: Its Origin and Development* (1892). LeTourneau, heavily influenced by Darwin but arguing against Spencer, believed that the institutions of marriage and property were based on a biological instinct for self-preservation, and thus favored egoism rather than altruism. He advocated for

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<sup>66</sup> James George Frazer (1854-1941), a Scottish anthropologist working in the tradition of comparative mythology. Starting from the belief that all societies shared basically similar ‘habits of mind,’ Frazer argued in *The Golden Bough* (1890) that the succession of kingship in many early societies had been determined not by biological heredity alone, but by the transmission of the king’s aura to another human ‘vessel’ by means of sympathetic magic. Ultimately, he argued that all societies passed through several stages—the mythological, in which thought was governed by the laws of sympathetic magic, to the religious, to the scientific—and that all of these stages were continuous with one another. Drawing on accounts in ethnographic journals, memoirs of colonial administrators, observations of missionaries, and even classical texts, Frazer sought to reconstruct the earliest form of mythological thinking via the laws of kinship.

alternative types of social structures that would promote altruism, warning that the structure of the family would eventually lead to the downfall of society: “Large and complicated societies can be maintained without the institution of the family,” he notes. “We are not, therefore, warranted in pretending, as is usually done, that the family is absolutely indispensable, and that is the ‘cellule’ of the social organism.”<sup>67</sup>

Sōseki had also read Henry James Sumner Maine’s *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society and its Relation to Modern Ideas* (1861), which surveys the history and development of the earliest legal codes. Yet much of Maine’s book is also an analysis of evolving kinship systems and the emergence of various legal codes out of family ritual. As such, he emphasizes the relatively loose structure of the ancient Roman family:

The family then is the type of an archaic society in all the modifications which it was capable of assuming; but the family here spoken of is not exactly the family as understood by a modern. In order to reach the ancient conception we must give to our modern ideas an important extension and an important limitation. We must look on the family as constantly enlarged by the absorption of strangers within its circle, and we must try to regard the fiction of adoption as so closely simulating the reality of kinship that neither law nor opinion makes the slightest difference between a real and an adoptive connection.

Finally, we find Sōseki had read and annotated carefully the work of Scottish journalist and dramatist J.F. Nisbet, particularly his *Marriage and Heredity* (1890). Here, Nisbet argues, in line with many of his contemporaries that the nuclear family form will eventually phase out of existence with the development of larger group collectives under socialism:

In a word, the paternal character among modern Englishmen may be said to have lost all its majesty, and to have become trivial, or at least politically unimportant. The maternal relationship has been of necessity more stable than the paternal from the earliest times, but even that appears to be losing ground, sons and daughters of the Anglo-Saxon race being careful nowadays to emancipate themselves, and what is more important, being allowed to do so, from almost all paternal restraint. In a still greater degree than it has yet done, paternal authority is likely to pass from the individual to the State... The family is too small a unit for the purposes of scientific experiment; the head of the family must subordinate himself to the head of the community. (211)

Sōseki’s *Kokoro*, as well as his *Theory of Literature*, is predicated on a similar critique of the universality of kinship. Since the natural and social scientific works that Sōseki was reading challenged the concept that kinship and heredity were necessarily biological phenomena, it would have made sense for Soseki to extend this idea to the concept of literature—to conceive of a new model of literature that was not simply based on the artificiality of national traditions—themselves modeled on the structure of the family. In other words, if kinship systems need not be

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<sup>67</sup> Charles LeTourneau, *The Evolution of Marriage and the Family* (London: Hogarth Press, 1850)

based on filiative bonds, then literary systems need not be based on national, i.e. filiative traditions or continuities between writer and reader.

Returning to the passage in the preface to Sōseki's *Theory of Literature*, in which he states that reading literature in order to understand the nature of literature is "like washing blood with blood," we might provisionally conclude the following: that the themes of revenge, of family quarrel (especially in the form of sibling rivalry) and of violence included within the historical meanings of the phrase "like washing blood with blood" all make their appearance in the text of *Kokoro* suggests that the novel itself is, in some way, one answer to Sōseki's unfinished theoretical project, as well as his question: what is literature? Or, to put it another way: what makes language literary?

That blood functions as a figure of violence and of continuity in *Kokoro* seems to suggest that absence, death, or to use Butler's language, disruption, produces the conditions necessary for the transmission of literary language. For it is Sensei's death, and his concurrent desire to live on in the mind of his pupil, that propels the writing of his testament. Without the specter of death, no such testament would have been written, and no sense of kinship with his pupil would have been formed. In the next chapter, I turn to a literary sketch composed by Soseki early in his career, "The Carlyle Museum," which similarly describes a form of literary kinship based upon a writer's *absence*, articulating just how the death of an author first makes a certain type of literary kinship possible.



## Chapter 2

# Natsume Sōseki's "The Carlyle Museum": The House Museum in the Age of Victorian Transnationalism

Moving from the trope of blood to the trope of house and home, this chapter explores a short literary sketch written early in Sōseki's career called "The Carlyle Museum," a semi-fictional travelogue based on an actual visit he paid in 1901 to the former home of the recently deceased writer Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). We know that Sōseki visited Carlyle's house a total of four times during his stay in London from 1900-1902, and composed the text of "The Carlyle Museum" from his notes several years later. This text, in the original Japanese titled simply "Kārairu Hakubutsukan" 「カーライル博物館」 was then published in 1905 in a journal called *Gakutō* (学灯), a fairly elite Tokyo literary magazine operated through the bookstore Maruzen, along with a complete catalogue of books in Carlyle's study, which Sōseki seems to have copied for scholarly purposes.<sup>68</sup>

Like his other early London writings, namely "Tower of London" (倫敦塔), Sōseki's "The Carlyle Museum" is part essay, part memoir, part travelogue, speckled with flights of intertextual fantasy; yet "The Carlyle Museum" distinguishes itself primarily by the narrator's intense engagement with a single historical figure, in this case, that of Thomas Carlyle who, by the time of his death at the turn of the 20th century, had already achieved a reputation as the quintessential "sage" figure in the Victorian imagination—an eloquent prophet who, despite his at times outrageously reactionary and outdated opinions, garnered public attention through the deliberate cultivation of an eccentric personality and style, sometimes referred to as "Carlylese." Carlyle's "Great Man" theory of history, his belief that history progresses primarily through the achievements of exemplary moral figures rather than abstract laws or principles, certainly would have appealed to Sōseki's predilection for truth as derived from experience, over and above abstract truths or "—isms."

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<sup>68</sup> For more on the publishing history of "The Carlyle Museum," see Tsukamoto Toshiaki, *Soseki to Eibungaku: yōkyoshū no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyū*. (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2003) 545, and Komori Yōichi, "Sekai Bungaku to shite no Natsume Sōseki," in *Sekai Bungaku to shite no Natsume Sōseki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2017) 8-11.

The focus of this chapter is on the setting of Sōseki's story—the “house museum”—a phenomenon whereby a literary writer's house (in this case, Carlyle's) was converted into a public museum after their death. Asking how and why the institution of the house museum emerged in Great Britain during the late 19th century, I ask what it meant for Sōseki as a Japanese subject to inhabit such a space at this particular historical juncture. What role did the ideology of the home and the institution of the museum play during the Victorian period, and what did it mean to transform a private, domestic space into a museum for the purposes of public, visual consumption? What kinds of identifications were visitors of these “house museums” encouraged to project onto their surroundings, and how might Sōseki's presence in such a space have disrupted and/or further consolidated that mission? Finally, how does the narrator re-construct the figure of Carlyle by way of the various material objects scattered throughout the house museum, which are supposed to stand in metonymical relation to the author himself?

In the previous chapter, I explored the ways in which Sōseki repurposes the rhetoric of blood in *Kokoro* to put forth a theory of kinship at odds with the one being promoted by the Japanese state around the turn of the 20th century. In this chapter, I will argue that Sōseki's depiction of the house museum as the primary setting for his story transforms the institution of the 19th century middle class British home—in which domesticity and national identity often reinforced one another—into a transnational site of exchange, fostering a spontaneous bond of kinship between readers and writers who shared a strange intimacy: on the one hand occupying distinct spatial and temporal dimensions, and on the other, knowing and gaining familiar and familial details about each other's lives.<sup>69</sup> As blood is repurposed in *Kokoro* in a way that is distinct from its function as an ideological and symbolic tool to promote a timeless definition of the family and the nation, so the house in “The Carlyle Museum”—an object overlaid with powerful notions of domesticity and civic virtue—is transformed into a space in which kinship might be imagined along multiple temporal and geographical planes, rather than simply within the sphere of the nuclear family.

In the latter half of the chapter, I then turn to the material objects that the narrator of Sōseki's text encounters in Carlyle's former residence, and which he describes in great detail. Drawing on contemporaneous anthropological theories of the fetish, I show how these objects, formerly belonging to the deceased Carlyle and put on display in the house museum, are transformed by the narrator into historical relics or fetish objects, which come to act as agents of transmission between Sōseki and Carlyle, creating an alternative literary kinship between them

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<sup>69</sup> See: Toshiaki Tsukamoto, “Sōseki to Kārariu: Kārariu hakubutsukan wo chūshin ni” in *Sōseki to Eibungaku: Yōkyoshū no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyū*. (Tōkyō : Sairyūsha, 2008); Kiyoshi Ōmura, “Kārariu hakubutsukan ni okeru Sōseki no kyokō” in *Sōseki to Eigo* (Tokyo: Hon no Tomosha, 2000); Oka Saburō, “Kārariu hakubutsukan ni okeru jijitsu to mōsō,” *Aoyama gakuin daigaku bungakubu kiyō*. No. 16, March 1975; Shōka Matsumura, “Kārariu hakubutsukan to Carlyle's House,” *Kanda jogakuin daigaku ronshū*. Vol. 23 No. 1, 1976.

foreclosed by the organization of national literary canons.<sup>70</sup> At the same the “relic” objects of Thomas Carlyle’s life come to stand in metonymically as relics of the Victorian period as such, raising the question of how Sōseki, as a Japanese subject arriving late on the scene, might mourn the end of an era he never lived.

## The Public Home

Although it has become somewhat commonplace over the course of the twentieth century, especially in Japan, to commemorate a writer’s life by preserving their physical home after their death and opening it to the public as a museum, the house museum was actually a fairly new phenomenon during the time in which Sōseki was living in London, from 1900-1902.<sup>71</sup> As stated earlier, the “house museum” was a phenomenon whereby the house of a recently deceased national hero—more often than not a national literary writer—was purchased by independent proprietors or small historical societies, refurbished, and opened to the public as a museum.

As an explicitly nationalist project that attempted to promote civic identification with the nation through the glorification of national literary heroes, it was no coincidence that the house museum as a historical phenomenon first gained traction in Great Britain in the late 19th century, at the height of the British Empire.<sup>72</sup> As well, literature as the privileged bearer of British national identity was well established in the public sphere by the middle of the 19th century, and the figure of the national literary hero became a convenient channel through which British citizens could concretely and personally identify with the abstract ideal of the nation, thus furthering literature’s nationalist capacity.<sup>73</sup> As Linda Young notes: “The house museum is a type of museum that peculiarly demonstrates and promotes national identity or local identity. As the homes they once were, house museums symbolize individuals and families, as the homeland symbolizes the nation. As museums, they provide a visible and visitable form to a domestic vision of a national ideal...and the domestic scope of the house emerges as the vehicle of larger narratives about the character of the nation or the locality.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> ‘Fetisso’ [pidgin word] derives from the Portuguese feitiço, which in the late Middle ages meant ‘magical practice,’ or ‘witchcraft’ performed, often innocently, by ‘ignorant classes.’ Feitiço in turn derives from the Latin adjective facticius, which originally meant ‘manufactured’ or ‘man-made.’ See William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish I.” RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, No. 9 (1985) 5-17. 5.

<sup>71</sup> House museums in Japan, now called bungakukan (文学館) or kinenkan (記念館), did not become an established tradition until the postwar period. See Nakamura Minoru, *Bungakukan wo kangaeru: bungakukan gakujosetsu no tame no esukisu* (Tokyo, Seidōsha, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> See Linda Young, *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom: A History*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2017) 40.

<sup>73</sup> Young, 61.

<sup>74</sup> Young, 7.

Effectively, then, the figure of the writer, the home (and by extension, the family) and the nation each functioned as overlapping symbols of nationalist fantasy, for which the house museum functioned as a point of convergence. Young notes that this conflation between family and nation, home and museum, private and public, is made possible in the institution of the house museum precisely because it lends institutional significance to the mundane details of ordinary life: “House and museum may seem at first to be opposite ideas, yet pairing them contains a counterfactual expression of the separation between the private and the public, the particular and the universal, the mundane and the exceptional. Connecting house and museum requires either domesticating the institution or institutionalizing the home...Precisely because the home normally shapes home life, the house museum offers a personal take on the theme of the museum, whether the topic is the lives of individuals, the forms within which domestic lives are lived, or the crossover of collecting from institution to home. At the same time, the aura of the museum suffuses the house museum with institutional authority, validating the domestic story as something of significance to public interest.”<sup>75</sup>

The emergence of the house museum as a historical phenomenon can be attributed to many factors, but historians generally agree that the desire on the part of middle class readers to pay personal visits to the houses of deceased national literary writers can, at least in part, be attributed to an anxiety about the erosion of intimacy between reader and writer in an age of mass readership and publishing. In an era in which literature was increasingly subscribing to the impersonal demands of the capitalist market, and the relationship between reader and writer was beginning to mirror that of a consumer and producer engaged in an economic transaction, readers wanted to authenticate a genuine relationship with a literary author by paying a visit his or her personal domestic space. In her work on British literary tourism in the 19th century, Nicola Watson notes: “The portability and malleability of the published book seems to have induced since the late 18th century a desire to *authenticate* the reading experience in a more personal way, to reinforce an incompletely intimate and unsatisfactorily vicarious reading experience. This results in a desire to re-experience the text by interpolating the reader’s body into an imperfect dialogue with the dead author. The reader goes to pay homage to the dead, goes to see the author—to follow in their footsteps, to see with their eyes, to inhabit, however briefly, their homes and haunts.”<sup>76</sup>

Ironically, however, this desire on the part of middle-class British readers to establish a personal and intimate relationship with the literary writer in an age of mass publishing only further commodified him: with the rise of house museums as a new form of tourism, literary writers in Great Britain around the turn of the century essentially became the property of the state. Whereas in previous decades a sense of public moral outrage might have ensued when a writer’s right to privacy was violated after his death by opening up his private home to the public, by the 1880’s “the preservation movement was beginning to overcome the scruples of privacy; those who believed in publishing private letters began to outnumber those who would

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<sup>75</sup> Young, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 13.

burn them after a writer's death. All the carefully collected remains of genius were to be handed over to the nation."<sup>77</sup>

As the physical property (house, furniture, books) of the deceased literary writer literally became the property of the state, the experience of visiting the former homes of national literary writers became, for middle class readers, a way of consolidating their hold on the cultural capital that such knowledge produced. Thus, the physical remains of the literary writer's domestic life came to function simultaneously as a form of personal property, state property, and intellectual/affective property that served to reinforce a personal identification with national British culture. Watson again notes: "The practice of literary pilgrimage allowed travelers to make themselves imaginatively at home across the nation through the medium of literature... One of the prime effects of literary tourism was this expansion of intellectual property within a national landscape—having read the 'classics' and visited the 'homes and haunts,' a reader's grip on national / Anglophone culture is expanded... They have a sense of holding affective property in the nation via literary texts."<sup>78</sup>

## Homes and Haunts

The emerging phenomenon of the house museum, and the industry of literary tourism that accompanied it, also gave rise to a new kind of literary genre, what Alison Booth refers to as the genre of "Homes and Haunts." These pamphlets of writing, which publishers began publishing as written accompaniments to tourists interested in visiting the house museum of a literary writer, were a hybrid genre that combined factual record with fantasy and personal memoir in order to give the tourist a context for the literary writer's life and works. Alison Booth notes that "once popular tourism had been established, publishers began by the mid-19th century to issue narratives of pilgrimage to authors' shrines... this genre blends various modes of writing that readers enjoyed, from travel memoir to biography, with realist description like those found in novels. Some passages might be read as memoir, advice or self-help, ethnography, Gothic fiction, Romantic essays, elegy, paranormal research, criticism, or interview."<sup>79</sup>

Consider, for example, this pamphlet published in 1857 called "Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets, with Forty-Two Illustrations," by William Howitt.<sup>80</sup> A quick look at the table of contents reveals this ambitious project to encompass more than forty canonical English writers, all the way from Chaucer and Spencer to Wordsworth and Tennyson, each of

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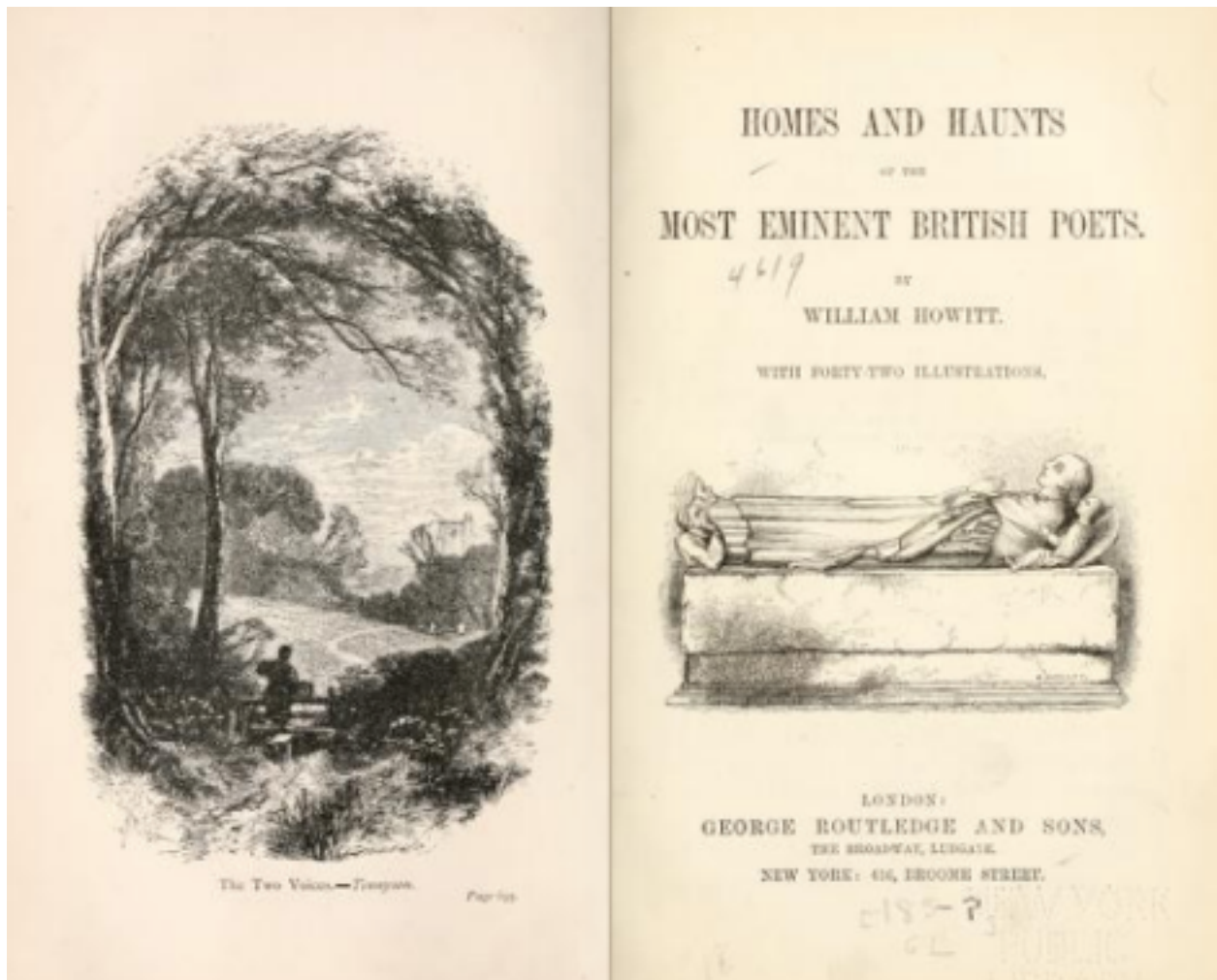
<sup>77</sup> Alison Booth, *Homes and Haunts: Touring Writers' Shrines and Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 210.

<sup>78</sup> Watson, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Booth, 209

<sup>80</sup> Source: <<https://archive.org/details/homeshauntsofmos00howi>>

whom has a chapter featuring illustrations of their house of residence, as well as a series of anecdotes—some quirky, some mundane—that give the reader (presumably a tourist of these writers’ homes) an intimate sense of the writer’s life and context. The purpose of these “Homes and Haunts” pamphlets, then, is to act as a kind of portable tour guide that middle class English tourists wanting to visit a famous writer’s home might take with them to entertain and edify themselves. To draw a contemporary analogy, these pamphlets might have functioned somewhat similarly to the audio sets one now receives at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which narrate a little story or anecdote about each painting in an exhibit, in order to enhance the museum-goer’s visit.



When we compare the text of Sōseki’s “The Carlyle Museum” to several of these “Homes and Haunts” pamphlets that circulated among the British middle class during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several points of stylistic similarity emerge. Specifically, the text of “The Carlyle Museum” can be read as a species of this emerging genre called Homes and Haunts in the interweaving of pedagogical description bordering on pedantry, and detailed anecdotes about the author’s life, in this case Carlyle’s, which provide the reader with contextual information about the object or room being described. What does it mean for Soseki as a Japanese writer to insert himself within the emerging tourist industry of the house museum? Moreover, who is the implied reader of such a text, given that it was written in Japanese, and published in Japan?

Before answering these questions, let us briefly review the contents of the text: “The Carlyle Museum” begins with a first person narrator—who may or may not be Sōseki himself—describing his daily walk near the river Thames bordering Carlyle’s old house in Chelsea, an affluent area of west London. Evidently the narrator is well acquainted with the life and works of Thomas Carlyle, since he seems to possess an abundance of knowledge concerning the mundane details of Carlyle’s life. He explains how, after Carlyle’s death, the author’s house, as well as his books and possessions, came to be preserved for posterity’s sake: “It was due to the initiative of a person of eminence that after Carlyle’s demise, the objects which he had used throughout his life were collected together, as well as his books and documents, and were distributed throughout the various rooms so that admirers or simply the curious would be able to visit this place at their leisure, or as their fancy took them.”<sup>81</sup>

The narrator then recounts how, after many weeks of passing by Carlyle’s house and admiring it from afar, he finally decided one day to enter it himself. On that day, a tour guide employed to staff the house, a “corpulent woman, of some fifty years of age,” opened the door and showed him in, requesting that he sign his name in a visitor’s registry. The narrator observes that his was the first and only Japanese name to appear in the visitor’s registry amid a sea of English names:

I recollect having paid four separate visits to this house during my stay in London and written my name in the book all four times. This was the first time. I wanted to sign my name as carefully as possible, but only succeeded in doing so in my customary poor writing. I looked quickly through the book and found that no Japanese name appeared. So I was the first Japanese here! This unimportant detail pleased me.”<sup>82</sup>(124)

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Natsume Soseki, “The Carlyle Museum,” trans. Sammy Tsunematsu in *Spring Miscellany and London Essays*. (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002) 121.

<sup>82</sup> Natsume, “The Carlyle Museum,” 124. 「余は倫敦滞留中四たびこの家に入り四たびこの名簿に余が名を記録した覚えがある。この時は実に余の名の記入きにゆう初はじめてであった。なるべく丁寧に書くつもりであったが例に因ってはなはだ見苦しい字が出来上った。前の方を繰りひろげて見ると日本人の姓名は一人もない。して見ると日本人でここへ来たのは余が始めてだと下らぬ事が嬉しく感ぜられる。」

The act of inscription to which the narrator calls attention here, particularly the way in which the exceptionalism of his name in the registry “pleased” him, could be read multiple ways: the “pleasure” of this inscription might be read as an assimilative pleasure, in which the narrator, via a registry book, is officially allowed membership into a microcosmic British community of readers / admirers of Thomas Carlyle; such an act of membership or inclusion, of course, would have been legally impossible at the level of citizenship at this particular historical juncture, and so the simple act of copying his name in the registry book of Carlyle’s House Museum perhaps momentarily makes possible such a fantasy of inclusion as a subject of the British empire. On the other hand, the “pleasure” of the inscription might be read as a pleasure of disruption or defiance; the narrator’s utterance—“So I was the first Japanese here!”—might be read as a kind of stubborn pride in disrupting the long flow of English names with the sudden and conspicuous appearance of a “Japanese name,” which, in recurring a total of four times, challenges the reader’s expectations of what a reader of Thomas Carlyle might look like. Throughout the rest of the piece, the narrator wanders in and out of various rooms in Carlyle’s old house, and the narrative voice weaves seamlessly between descriptions of the objects in the house (formerly belonging to Carlyle), flashbacks of anecdotes he has read about Carlyle’s life in other books, as well as excerpts from Carlyle’s own diary (which the narrator has evidently read and memorized). We never know why, in particular, the narrator has chosen to visit Carlyle’s house in particular, or the nature of his affinity toward him; there are also no particular concrete events that transpire throughout the course of the text. The narrative is almost pure description.

“Homes and Haunts” pamphlets, like Sōseki’s piece, use first person narrative to blend historical account, memoir, and literary fantasy to guide the reader through the personal life of a famous literary writer, thus forging a feeling of “intimate contact” between the tourist-reader and the writer whose house is being visited. The purpose of the “Homes and Haunts” pamphlets was to personalize a famous literary figure, not only by ushering the visitor into their home, but also by attaching a series of casual anecdotes about each of the rooms and objects in the house. In this way, a larger than life figure is brought “down to scale,” or down to the level of the common man.

In “The Carlyle Museum,” Sōseki achieves just this sort of “scaling-down” effect—of rendering Carlyle the author figure into Carlyle the human—by alternating between descriptions of Carlyle’s house, and detailed anecdotes from Carlyle’s life that pertain to the particular room or object in the house that he is describing, sometimes including direct quotes or whole passages from Carlyle’s diaries and letters. Here the narrator of the story, apparently culling details from Carlyle’s diary, recounts how Carlyle came to choose this particular house in Cheyne Row, making sure to emphasize the doubt, hesitation, and indecisiveness that Carlyle apparently exhibited during this process:

This, then, is the house that Carlyle finally discovered after a long and unsuccessful search when he found himself in London for the first time after leaving his countryside in the north. He searched in the south. He searched in the west and to the north of Hampstead, to no avail, before he finally found himself in Cheyne Row. He nevertheless lacked the determination to to make a firm choice. He who mocked not only the forty million simpletons who inhabited England, but also the entire world, had to send a



communication to to ascertain the wishes of his wife, although she too was included among the nincompoops. Here is the reply that Carlyle's wife addressed to her husband: "As regards your entry into accommodation, if the houses which you have seen are both to your liking I would wish that you would reserve them until I shall be in London. Nonetheless, if this be found not to be possible, I shall in no way reproach you, and I ask you to choose one of them yourself, without waiting upon my arrival in London." Thus, Carlyle, who maintained that he had need of no one else when drafting and revising his writings, was conscious of the necessity of asking his wife's opinion before making a definite choice of residence.<sup>83</sup>

There is a strange juxtaposition between, on the one hand, upholding the status of the literary writer as a kind of larger-than-life cultural icon or hero, and, on the other hand, a desire to witness with one's own eyes the mundane, everyday, insignificant aspects of his or her daily life and habits. The narrator of "The Carlyle Museum," for example, takes extensive note of the basin in which Carlyle washed, his bed-curtains, and the bed where he had slept:

In a corner of the room, Carlyle's bed indifferently barred the way. Blue curtains hung tranquilly down from the canopy, and the interior, now without purpose, was soundless in the half light. I do not know what wood was used for the manufacture of this bed, but it was hard to discern any special feature in it. All one can say is that the work was sober, if not actually plain... The basin in which he washed was placed beside it with the same respect that is accorded to the sacred treasures of the ancient court of China. Although the

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<sup>83</sup> Natsume, "The Carlyle Museum," 125 「これが彼が北の田舎いなかから始めて倫敦ロンドンへ出て来て探しに探し抜いて漸々ようようの事で探し宛あてた家である。彼は西を探し南を探しハンプステッドの北まで探してついに恰好かっこうの家を探し出す事が出来ず、最後にチェイン・ローへ来てこの家を見てもまだすぐに取りきめるほどの勇氣はなかつたのである。四千万の愚物ぐぶつと天下を罵ののしつた彼も住家すみかには閉口したと見えて、その愚物の中に当然勘定せらるべき妻君へ向けて委細を報知してその意向を確めた。細君の答に「御申越の借家しゃくやは二軒共不都合もなき様被存ぞんぜられ候えば私倫敦へ上のぼり候迄そろまで双方共御明け置願度おきねがいたく若もし又それ迄に取極め候そろ必要相生じ候節そろせつは御一存にて如何いかがとも御取計らい被下度候くだされたくそろとあつた。カーライルは書物の上でこそ自分独ひとりわかつたような事をいうが、家をきめるには細君の助けに依らなくては駄目と覚悟をしたものと見えて、夫人の上京するまで手を束つかねて待っていた。」

object was presumably intended for bathing, it was in fact nothing more than a large bucket.<sup>84</sup>

We can see in this passage the jarring juxtaposition of greatness and mundanity: Carlyle's basin, "in fact nothing more than a large bucket," is treated with "the same respect accorded to the sacred treasures of the ancient court of China." A cultural figure and literary hero as monumental as Thomas Carlyle is thus brought down to human scale in the form of a wash basin, and thus, made to seem within the purview of the literary tourist.

These (written) anecdotes become essential companions to the (sensory) experience of visiting the house museum, insofar as these anecdotes quite literally "fill" or "revivify" the writer's house with his presence, thus compensating for his bodily absence. It is the interaction of this written form with the physical observation of the house that allows the visitor to feel as though he or she obtains a kind of "contact" with the deceased author. This is highlighted in a particularly strong way when the narrator of the story is ushered by the tour guide into Carlyle's study, a small room that he had apparently constructed himself on the top floor of the Cheyne Row house. Although we as readers do not hear what the tour guide in the house museum says about the construction of the room (the narrator evidently does not find her commentary interesting enough to record), our access to the narrator's inner dialogue gives us a detailed account of the history of the room, and the reason for its construction in the first place:

Why was Carlyle obsessed with a desire to construct this room so close to the sky at such great expense? One need only read his writings to be convinced that he was a personality prone to flashes of temper. But it appears that his irascibility never left him any leisure to immerse himself in creation while remaining untouched by the many noises that invaded his surroundings... In a letter address to Mrs. Aitkin, he expresses himself like this: "Disturbed by the various noises which penetrate through my window, which I have left open all through the summer, I explored every possible means of remedying this evil, but in vain. Everything proved useless and I noticed not the slightest improvement. After careful consideration I reached the conclusion that I would have to construct at the very top of the house a square measuring six by six meters with double walls and let the light

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<sup>84</sup> Natsume, "The Carlyle Museum," 127. 「部屋の隅を見ると冷やかにカーライルの寝台ねだいが横よこたわっている。青き戸帳とぼりが物静かに垂れて空むなしき臥床ふしどの裡うちは寂然せきぜんとして薄暗い。木は何の木か知らぬが細工さいくはただ無器用で素朴であるというほかに何らの特色もない。その上に身を横えた人の身の上も思い合わさる。傍かたわらには彼が平生使用した風呂桶ふろおけが九鼎きゅうていのごとく尊げに置かれてある。」

and the air enter from overhead. This has now been achieved. Let the cocks of this vile world crow: I intend to be inconvenienced no longer.”<sup>85</sup>

The extensive use of direct quotations from Carlyle himself creates an uncanny effect, in which the dead author’s ghost is not only resuscitated but seems to blend with and even speak through the narrator’s own voice. During many points of the narrative, it is unclear what is the narrator’s perception (or description) of Carlyle’s house, and what is a memory of something he has read elsewhere about Carlyle or his house. In fact, it is at times difficult to distinguish between the narrator’s consciousness and Carlyle’s consciousness, since the narrator often quotes whole passages directly excerpted from Carlyle’s diary, which describe something in his house that the narrator is currently looking at. For example, while the narrator is standing at a particular window in Carlyle’s house and admiring the view of the city from there, he quotes a passage from Carlyle’s diary describing the same view from the same window thirty years prior. The narrator is disappointed, since the cityscape has changed so much that the scene Carlyle described just several decades prior is no longer recognizable to him:

Carlyle wrote, ‘The view from the window at the back of the house is limited to the green abundance of the grass in the fields and to the steep red roof outlined between the leaves. In this season, when the wind blows from the west, the countryside gives an impression of gratefulness and good cheer and creates a feeling of well-being.’ As I, for my part, was keen to see the rich foliage and the green fields, I leaned out of the window in question. I repeated the attempt, but in vain. No wealth of leaves presented itself to my gaze. I just saw houses, nothing but houses on all sides, above which loomed, as if

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<sup>85</sup> Natsume, “The Carlyle Museum,” 125 「カーライルは何のためにこの天に近き一室の経営に苦心したか。彼は彼の文章の示すごとく電光的人であった。彼の癩癩かんべきは彼の身边を圍繞いのようにして無遠慮に起る音響を無心に聞き流して著作に耽ふけるの余裕を与えなかったと見える。洋琴ピアノの声、犬の声、鶏の声、鸚鵡おうむの声、いっさいの声はことごとく彼の鋭敏なる神経を刺激して懊惱おうのうやむ能あたわざらしめたる極きよかついに彼をして天に最も近く人にもっとも遠ざかれる住居をこの四階の天井裏に求めしめたのである。彼のエイトキン夫人に与えたる書翰しょかんという「此夏中なつじゅうは開け放ちたる窓より聞ゆる物音に悩まされ候事そろこと一方ひとかたならず色々修繕も試み候えども寸毫すんごうも利目無之ききめこれなく夫それより篤とくと熟考の末家の真上に二十尺四方の部屋を建築致す事に取極め申候そろ是は壁を二重に致し光線は天井より取り風通しは一種の工夫をもって差支さしつかえなき様致す仕掛に候えば出来上り候そろ上は仮令たとい天下の鶏共一時に鬨ときの声を揚げ候そろとも閉口仕つかまつらざる積つもりに御座候そろ」

unwillingly, a sickly looking leaden sky. I drew back my head with some difficulty through the small gap left by the window.<sup>86</sup>

The text in this passage creates a temporal layering across the space of Carlyle's window, in which the narrator of Sōseki's story literally inhabits Carlyle's bodily perspective by attempting to describe the same visual scene from the same angle, only thirty years removed. The narrator attempts, in a sense, to momentarily *become* Carlyle, only to be frustrated in this attempt by the eruption of a kind of negative space into the view he had expected to find. Instead of seeing what is present through the space of the window, the narrator sees only what is *not* described by Carlyle: "No wealth of leaves presented itself to my gaze." In other words, he observes the world of the house through the expectations created by Carlyle's writing about the house, thus endowing him with a kind of double vision in which he shuttles continuously back and forth between his own and Carlyle's perspective.

In one sense, then, it seems that Sōseki is self-consciously placing himself within this new genre of "Homes and Haunts" writings. Like his British peers, he too is participating in the ritual of literary pilgrimage to the house of a famous British writer, thus reaffirming the canonicity of a Victorian sage writer. On the other hand, we know that the text itself is written in Japanese. Thus, although Sōseki is self-consciously participating in this ritual of British literary canon-formation, he also seems to look forward to a Japanese reading audience to whom he will transmit this particular set of experiences and knowledge. For Sōseki, unlike other British tourists in whose footsteps he was following when he visited Carlyle's house, was a tourist of more than just Carlyle's house. As a Japanese scholar who was sent to England on a government scholarship as a Meiji bureaucrat, he was also tasked with studying—that is, being a tourist of—British literature and culture *tout court*, an act that cannot be separated from Japan's larger empire-building project. Whatever his creative ambitions as a literary writer, there is no denying that, in some sense, Sōseki was in London as an arm of the Japanese state, which was rapidly becoming an empire in its own right.

In this light, I want to suggest, it becomes possible to interpret the narrator's position in the story—as a semi-colonial, racialized subject in a canonical British writer's house—quite differently: in "The Carlyle Museum," it is Sōseki, the racial other, who seems to be occupying the position of an imperial agent observing the "museum specimens" of Carlyle's life. Although the bulk of the literary sketch is comprised of Sōseki following a British tour guide through the

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<sup>86</sup> Natsume, "The Carlyle Museum," 126. 「カーライル云う。裏の窓より見渡せば見ゆるものは茂る葉の木株、碧みどりなる野原、及びその間に点綴てんてつする勾配こうばいの急なる赤き屋根のみ。西風の吹くこの頃の眺ながめはいと晴れやかに心地よし。余は茂る葉を見ようと思ひ、青き野を眺ながめようと思つて実は裏の窓から首を出したのである。首はすでに二返へんばかり出したが青いものも何にも見えぬ。右に家が見える。左ひだりに家が見える。向むこうにも家が見える。その上には鉛色なまりいろの空が一面に胃病やみのように不精無精ふしょうぶしょうに垂れかかっているのみである。余は首を縮めて窓より中へ引き込めた。案内者はまだ何年何月何日の続きを朗らかに読誦どくじゅしている。」

rooms in Carlyle's house, in several textual moments, Sōseki himself seems to be acting as the tour guide for a future Japanese reader, who may or may not visit Carlyle's house at a future date. Although within the context of the story, the British tour guide is supposed to occupy the position of the subject-who-knows, and the Japanese narrator is supposed to occupy the position of the subject-to-whom-knowledge-is-being-imparted, in these moments, the positions seem reversed. Instead, it is the narrator who seems to be giving the (implicitly Japanese) reader (of the story) a tour of British literary history, demonstrating his mastery of knowledge over British literary history and culture. His silence as a character in the story, contrasted with his loquaciousness as a narrator *of* the story, perfectly encapsulates his contradictory status as a Japanese subject in London around 1900: one who is both marked as a non-white, semi-colonial subject, *and* as an imperial agent who is “collecting” facts (and artifacts) of British literary history for the purposes of bolstering a Japanese imperial project.

This reading, I think, becomes even more probable when we consider Sōseki's use of the word 博物館 in the title of the piece. As historians and scholars of museums have shown, 「博物館」 was still a fairly new word and concept around 1905 when this piece was published, as it had only entered the Japanese lexicon in or around the 1870's. As historian Alice Tseng notes: “...*Hakubutsukan* is a translation word that approximates the meaning of Western museums as perceived by the first Japanese who encountered them in the 1860's and 70's. The term *hakubutsukan* is composed of three Chinese characters 博, 物, 館, which combine to mean literally ‘hall of diverse objects...’ In their diaries and records, the Japanese envoys conflated many functionally differentiated and specialized places under the heading of *hakubutsukan*—natural history museums, art galleries, international exhibits, zoological parks, botanical gardens...but these venues shared one prominent feature: display of a diverse range of objects for visual edification and spectacle within the confines of a physical space...providing that knowledge to the public for the betterment of the nation...The translation word maintained an emphasis on the tangible reality of the collection and its utility in the service of popular enlightenment.”<sup>87</sup> Especially given that a former writer's home open to the public would not have been referred to as a “museum” in English or Japanese in the early 20th century, it is clear that Sōseki's decision to name his piece 「カーライル博物館」 would not have been a neutral one at this historical moment, when the concept of the museum was so central to the project of empire-building.

Here, a few remarks should be made about the significance of the date—1901—on which Sōseki allegedly visited Carlyle's house in London. 1901 was the year of Queen Victoria's death, and thus it coincided exactly with the official end of the Victorian period. In fact, Sōseki himself attended the funeral of Queen Victoria, and even recorded the details of the funeral procession in his diary.<sup>88</sup> But this date also seemed to coincide with the end of the Victorian *literary* period, as

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<sup>87</sup> Alice Y. Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008)

<sup>88</sup> Tsukamoto, 540.

“by 1895... most of the big-name Victorian novelists, poets and sages were dead.”<sup>89</sup> The rise of the house museum as an institution around the turn of the century thus seemed to emerge within a general atmosphere of mourning and commemoration, along with a cultural obsession with preserving the past through its physical remains. As Alison Booth notes, “The late nineteenth century in Britain witnessed an explosion of printed life narratives, short or full-length, accompanied by an interest in preserving any objects or locations associated with cultural heroes... It became widely acknowledged that the truth about someone’s life should include personal details and private moments rather than polite generalizations...”<sup>90</sup>

Situated in this context, Sōseki’s literary sketch of his visit to Carlyle’s house can also be read in the genre of elegy, as a type of homage to a Victorian era which he, personally, never lived or experienced first-hand. What does it mean to mourn a historical period which you did not live through? What does it mean to commemorate a culture that is not yours? One possible answer may lie in the fact that the year 1901, in addition to marking the death of Queen Victoria, also marked the birth of the Japanese emperor Hirohito, the political figure who would preside over the most aggressive phases of Japanese imperialism and militarism on the Asian continent. Thus, from our historical vantage point, the year 1901—the year of Sōseki’s visit to Carlyle’s House—marks a perfect midway point between the the waning of British imperial power, and, simultaneously, the rise of the Japanese empire. I want to suggest, then, that we might read this particular literary sketch as occupying a precarious political position between the rise and fall of two major world empires.

## Homomaterial

Yet if we are to read “The Carlyle Museum” in the genre of elegy for the Victorian era, it is also at once an intensely personal elegy for the specific figure of Thomas Carlyle, and it is largely through the physical objects in his house that the narrator forges a sense of kinship with him. Indeed, if the figure of Carlyle in some sense stands in metonymically for the Victorian era as such, then so too do the material objects which the narrator describes and dwells upon in “The Carlyle Museum” function as metonymical agents of transmission between himself and the imagined figure of Carlyle. These objects, of which the most notable are: a knocker in the image of an ogre; photographs of the Carlyle couple; a library designed by Carlyle filled with books; a medal of silver and another of copper; a letter written to Carlyle by Bismarck; a Prussian cross; Mrs. Carlyle’s bed; blue curtains; a bathing bucket, carry the ability to transmit something of Carlyle’s life to the narrator of the story not by the information they supposedly contain, but by the mere fact that they have had physical contact with the living figure of Carlyle.

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<sup>89</sup> Booth, 7.

<sup>90</sup> Alison Booth, “The Lives of Houses: Woolf and Biography.” in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2016)

I looked up by chance and noticed on the wall the plaster mask that was made, it is said, at the moment of his death. *That certainly is his face, I told myself.* Yes, the face of the man who for forty years lay in this simple bed, contented himself with a ‘bath’ consisting solely of this bowl of the same height as the cage structure for a kotatsu, and who throughout his life never ceased to make his controversial observations (emphasis mine).<sup>91</sup>

The death mask is perhaps the perfect encapsulation of the way in which the objects in the house museum function metonymically--for the material of the mask bears the literal imprint of Carlyle's face at the moment of his death. In that sense, the death mask does not communicate any significant content about Carlyle's life—rather, it bears the mere imprint of that life. This sense of metonymical presence, of “having-been-there,” is operative throughout the entirety of “The Carlyle Museum,” and is the governing factor in the narrator's ability to sense a feeling of kinship with Carlyle the writer.

I then went up the second floor. Here again I found a large library with stacks of books. For me they were illegible, unknown, or useless. It appears that this room likewise once served as a drawing room. The exhibits included a letter written to Carlyle by Bismarck, together with a Prussian cross, no doubt obtained through the favor of the Emperor Frederick. Mrs. Carlyle's bed stood in this room. It was reduced to extreme simplicity and was bare of any ornaments.<sup>92</sup>

The sense of thrill that the narrator feels upon coming into contact with the various objects that bear the physical, metonymical traces of Carlyle's life and being, is explicitly set in contrast to the stream of dry, “official” information about the writer's life which is continuously being emitted by the tour guide of the house museum. The objects in the house museum transmit something of Carlyle's life to the narrator by acting as wordless physical extensions of his body and presence; it communicates through mere form. By contrast, the tour guide, though she inundates the narrator with informational content about the events of Carlyle's life,

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<sup>91</sup> Natsume, “The Carlyle Museum,” 128 「ふと首を上げると壁の上に彼が往生おうじょうした時にとったという漆喰しっくい製の面型マスクがある。この顔だなと思う。この炬燵こたつ櫓やぐらぐらいの高さの風呂に入はってこの質素な寝台の上に寝て四十年間やかましい小言こごとを吐き続けに吐いた顔はこれだなと思う。婆さんの淀よどみなき口上が電話口で横浜の人の挨拶を聞くように聞える。」

<sup>92</sup> Natsume, “The Carlyle Museum,” 126. 「それから二階へ上る。ここにまた大きな本棚があつて本が例のごとくいっぱい詰まっている。やはり読めそうもない本、聞いた事のなさそうな本、入りそうもない本が多い。勘定をしたら百三十五部あつた。この部屋も一時は客間になっておつたそうだ。ビスマルクがカーライルに送った手紙と普露西プロシアの勲章がある。フレデリック大王伝の御蔭と見える。細君の用いた寝台ねだいがある。すこぶる不器用な飾かざり気けのないものである。」

communicates nothing of significance, since it is depersonalized and rote, removed from the immediacy of Carlyle's embodied presence:

My guide resembled the guides of all countries. For a little while now, she had been inundating me with explanations concerning all the articles conserved in every room. This occupation had probably not been her speciality for fifty years, but she showed considerable competence. On such and such a day of such a month in the year so and so, the following happened... The words tumbled out of her mouth unceasingly. But that was not all. This eloquence showed variations, giving rise to a rhythm. As the tones were pleasant, one had only to listen, without any longer understanding what she said. At the beginning I did try to put questions to her, but in the end I found this exhausting, and I adapted the attitude of a person who looks at whatever he wants to see, making it clear to her that she was at liberty to deliver as many speeches as she wished but would be powerless to impede my freedom. For her part, the good woman patiently continued with her 'such and such a day of such and such a month' with an air of 'I give my explanations, whether people listen or not.'<sup>93</sup>

Soseki thus repeats here the theme of transmissible and intransmissible language that will later become the dominant theme of *Kokoro* via the imagery of blood. Information, —isms, and abstract language are not truly transmissible because they are not memorable, not being attached to a story, a narrative, or a lived experience. The language of the tour guide in "The Carlyle Museum" functions in much the same way as ideological language. By contrast, because the objects in the house museum are each attached to a lived experience that Carlyle had, and which Soseki has read about previously in Carlyle's diaries, they are able to activate a feeling of kinship between the two figures, though separated by space and time.

It is not the contents or meaning of the objects in Carlyle's house that are significant ("For me they were illegible, unknown, or useless"), but their mere materiality, the fact that they were once touched and used by Carlyle. In this sense, the objects are material extensions of the author's body and function somewhat like religious relics, which took on new significance in the 19th century as a resurgence of interest occurred in the ability of objects and artifacts to contain history rather than represent it per se. Relics were valued not because of the information encoded

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<sup>93</sup> Natsume, "The Carlyle Museum," 125. 「案内者はいずれの国でも同じものと見える。先さっきから婆さんは室内の絵画器具について一々説明を与える。五十年間案内者を専門に修業したものであるまいが非常に熟練したものである。何年何月何日にどうしたこうしたとあたかも口から出で任まかせに喋舌しゃべっているようである。しかもその流暢りゅうちょうな弁舌に抑揚があり節奏せつそうがある。調子が面白いからその方ばかり聴いていると何を言っているのか分からなくなる。始めのうちは聞き返したり問い返したりして見たがしまいには面倒になったから御前は御前で勝手に口上を述べなさい、わしはわしで自由に見物するからという態度をとった。婆さんは人が聞こうが聞くまいが口上だけは必ず述べますという風で別段厭あきた景色けしきもなく怠おこたる様子もなく何年何月何日をやっている。」



in their physical particularities, but simply because they had been associated with (had been owned by, participated in, or merely been physically contiguous to) an illustrious person or a major historical event...in the tradition of the religious relic, the historical relic transmitted some sense of the sacred power of its origins.<sup>94</sup>

It is a truism of house museums in general that objects formerly belonging to the author become elevated to the status of fetishes as soon as their owner has passed away. Suddenly, the pen the author used to write his works becomes endowed with an almost sacred aura, the book left open to the last page he read before his death takes on a heightened significance, and the chair he sat in every day are all taken out of their orbit as ordinary, mundane commodity items into the realm of the sacred. As many scholars have noted, however, this turn to material objects as repositories of the past was not a unique feature of house museums, but a larger trend in the transformation of historiography in the 18th and 19th centuries. As Teresa Barnett notes:

When the past was represented in museums and private collections before the 19th century, it was often through what Charles Sanders Peirce defined as iconic representation: through paintings and illustrations that offered a likeness of past events, but no material connection to it. In contrast to tradition iconic forms of representation, the association item as it emerged in the late 18th century *represented the past with an actual piece of the past*. Unlike paintings, relics called on the past as an entity that existed outside the presents' own capacity for representation. They asserted that the *having been there* of history was crucial, that by definition, *the past could only be represented by itself*.<sup>95</sup>

This “sameness” of matter that Barnett describes, whose perdurance through time serves to console the historical subject in the face of the constant passing and disappearing of time, strikes the narrator of The Carlyle Museum as “strange”:

The woman told me to follow her and gestured to me to open a door on the left, which gave access to a room looking onto the street. It appeared that in former times it had been a drawing room. It contained a variety of objects. Pictures and photographs hung on the walls, most of them portraits of the Carlyle couple. The next room contained a library which had been designed by Carlyle himself. It was filled with books, some weighty and others trivial. On some of them, time had left its patina, while there were others which for me were illegible. Likewise, on show were a medal of silver and another of copper which were struck on the occasion of Carlyle's eighteenth birthday. No gold medals seem to have been produced. To contemplate the time lag between the existence of these engraved medals, *imperturbable in their useless durability*, and the man to whom they

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<sup>94</sup> See Teresa Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in 19th century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 18.

<sup>95</sup> Barnett, 26.

were presented, whose life vanished as if in a puff of smoke, is to experience a feeling which, to say the least, is somewhat strange. (124) (emphasis mine)

Again, it was not the representational content of the relics that was significant, but instead the fact that they negotiated people's "affective transactions" with the past. It was assumed that a kind of "invisible essence" imbued the object, and could be transmitted to the person who encountered it in the present. In this sense, the relic was an example of what Susan Stewart, borrowing from Umberto Eco, has identified as 'homomaterial,' — that is, the metonymic equivalence by which a material piece of the past stands in for a larger event to which it was closely allied...the relic *created* a relationship with the past, rather than simply representing it. Barnett notes:

The relic's power was grounded in a certain conception of matter. Matter need not be assumed to bring its past with it or speak for the past...But those who valued relics proceeded as if, through having once been in propinquity to certain persons or events, a relic held the impress of those events as an indispensable property for as long as it existed. Matter's sameness—its identity with itself over time—served as the analogue and generator for other types of continuity and connection. And its perdurance or deterioration was seen as coextensive with the persistence or disappearance of the past itself.<sup>96</sup>

The function of the relic in the 19th century historical imagination was closely bound up with the rhetoric of the sacred, of sentimentality, and by extension, of the domestic home.<sup>97</sup> Barnett notes that "In sentimental discourse, 'sacred' designated not simply deep or solemn emotion, but the capacity for relatedness—the ties that bound selves to other selves...domestic and family relations were particularly invested in the quality of the 'sacred' as expressed in such phrases as 'wedlocks' sacred bonds' or 'the sacred title of mother.' In this vein, the middle class home, in its role as sanctuary from the industrialized working world, was also ipso facto sacred...the Victorian home was characterized as 'the sacred precincts of domestic affection.'<sup>98</sup>

Yet although the objects in the house museum function as sacred relics, the relationships they create are not tied to the ideology of the middle class home, or to the nuclear family that is supposed to inhabit it. In the house museum, as demonstrated in Sōseki's short literary sketch, the sacred function of the relics creates new networks of kin between readers and writers who do not occupy a shared spatial or even temporal terrain. Indeed, Barnett notes that "the function of the [19th century] historical relic was [also] that it allowed users to feel their way into relationships with people they and never known in life, and to create sympathetic bonds with

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<sup>96</sup> Barnett, 25.

<sup>97</sup> Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture* (1880-1930) (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2005).

<sup>98</sup> Barnett, 54

them across decades or centuries.”<sup>99</sup> In this sense, although they had never met one another face to face, Soseki’s encounter with the physical traces of Carlyle’s intellectual life reveals the intricate process through which a Japanese writer living in the heart of the British empire imagined himself to be an inheritor of its literary tradition, even as his experience within its borders was one of deep discomfort and racial subjugation.

## Carlylese

What type of affinity did Soseki have with the figure of Thomas Carlyle in particular that would draw him to this stranger’s house a total of four times over the course of his two-year stay in London? And what type of knowledge might the narrator of “The Carlyle Museum” be gathering in this museum that he might someday transmit to his own Japanese readership? Sōseki mentions Carlyle in his theoretical writings on literature, noting that the latter “commanded richer powers of expression than any other man of his era.”<sup>100</sup>

In his lectures delivered in 1903 at Tokyo University, posthumously published as “Theory of English Literary Form,” he notes: “Typically, texts that leave our *intellectual flow* undisturbed do so because their prose is not challenging; but while such prose has the benefit of being easy to understand, it also tends to become monotonous. By disrupting this monotony, Carlyle’s prose gives rise to a different sort of excitement. Instead of appealing to our intellect through the simplicity of his prose, Carlyle gives our intellect a slight shock, rousing our interest into a stopping and starting rhythm. This is the same experience as when, for example, a person leaps out of the shadows and startles us: once we figure out what is going on, the humor of the situation rises to the surface.”<sup>101</sup>

The personification of Carlyle’s literary style as “a person leaping out of the shadows and startling us,” thus invoking both surprise and amusement, strangely echoes the opening passage of “The Carlyle Museum.” The piece in fact begins with just such a scene, in which the narrator evidently is daydreaming about encountering the living figure of Thomas Carlyle while contemplating the outside of Carlyle house museum:

In a corner of the park, a man is haranguing the passersby. At the other end, an elderly man with bent shoulders, clad in a coat that has seen better days and holding in his hand a hat the shape of a sugar loaf, has stopped in his tracks to take a look at the speaker. The latter suddenly pauses in his speech and walks quickly over to the man with the air of some village dignitary standing opposite him. The speaker asks him in hoarse tones and with a rustic accent: “You wouldn’t be Carlyle by any chance?” “Indeed,” the learned

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<sup>99</sup> Barnett, 72.

<sup>100</sup> Natsume Sōseki, “Eibungaku Keishiki Ron” in *Soseki Zenshu* Vol. 13. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 222-224.

<sup>101</sup> Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*. ed. Michael K. Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, and Joseph A. Murphy. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 147.

man replies, "I am." The other continues: "Is it really you who are known as the Chelsea Sage?" "Yes, it would seem so." "And yet that's the name of a bird! A human being called that is something very rare! I've never come across that before!" With these words, the speaker gives a great burst of laughter and the great man replies, "True enough. If everybody is just a human being like all the others, to saddle a man with the nickname 'Sage' is to call him a bird. All things considered, it is preferable to be regarded as a normal human being." And he, in turn, bursts out laughing.

The story then continues with no explanation of who these figures are—whether the scene has been conjured by the narrator's imagination, dreamt, or read somewhere in a text.

It is well known that Carlyle was frequently referred to as the "sage" (as in a wise figure) of Chelsea (the area of London where he lived) During his lifetime, which spanned the better part of the 19th century, Carlyle became known as the quintessential Victorian sage writer, best remembered for his vivid historical retellings of the French Revolution and the life of Friedrich the Great, as well as for the role he played in introducing many of the major works of German romanticism to an Anglophone audience via his translations of Goethe.<sup>102</sup> Apart from one enigmatic experimental novel, *Sartor Resartus*, he wrote almost exclusively histories and biographies, albeit inflected with innovative literary techniques in point of view and narrative voice. He was also a proponent of the "Great Man" theory of history, according to which history can be largely explained by the impact of great men, or heroes; highly influential individuals who, due to either their personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom, or political skill used their power in a way that had a decisive historical impact. Carlyle stated that "The history of the world is but the biography of great men," reflecting his belief that heroes shape history through both their personal attributes and divine inspiration. . . . In his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Carlyle saw history as having turned on the decisions of "heroes," giving detailed an analysis of the influence of several such men (including Muhammad, Shakespeare, Luther, Rousseau, Pericles, Napoleon, and Wagner).

Yet the narrator here puns on the word "sage," which, in addition to a wise, prophet-like figure, also refers to a species of bird, the Greater Sage-Grouse of North America native to the western United States, as well as the territories of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada. In doing so, he creates a kind of hierarchy of being: the sage as a wise figure who has transcended the category of the "mere" human to become one of the "great men" of history, and the sage as a lowly animal who falls below the human on the evolutionary chain of being. In the story, Carlyle's response that it is perhaps "preferable to be regarded as a mere human being" sets the tone for the story: insofar as the purpose of a house museum is to commemorate the life of an exemplary figure, and, simultaneously to present him as a "mere human being" by putting the quotidian details and objects of his life on display. Then, too, to pun on the word "sage" as both philosopher and bird suggests the possibility of a transmigration of souls, according to the widespread belief that the soul takes the form of a bird after death. In this sense, the passage

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<sup>102</sup> For an incisive account of Carlyle's conservative, even reactionary politics, especially surrounding the abolition of slavery, and attempts by Emerson and other contemporaries to read him in spite of these tendencies, see Elisa Tamarkin, "Why Forgive Carlyle?" *Representations* 134, Spring 2016, 64-92.

anticipates the house museum itself as a site of transmigration, in which the soul of the writer is reborn amidst the various objects attached to his life—a site in which the writer is at once commemorated as *more* than human (the sage) as *merely* human (in the preservation of his mundane household items), and even *less* than human (the house museum as a memorial or gravesite for a deceased figure).

If Sōseki imagined Carlyle’s style in particular to take the form of a “person leap[ing] out of the shadows and startl[ing] us,” giving our “intellect a slight shock,” then it would perhaps make sense to say that the figure depicted in the fantastical anecdote at the beginning of “The Carlyle Museum” is not Carlyle himself, but the physical embodiment of Carlyle’s prose style. For it is in his *style*, not the content of what he wrote, that the soul of Carlyle resides, and to which Soseki clearly feels an affinity. In fact, Soseki had noticed and written on Carlyle’s style even before his career as a writer had begun. The first time Soseki mentions Carlyle in his oeuvre is in an essay he wrote in 1889 called “My Friends in the School.”<sup>103</sup> Although this essay seems to have been a mundane assignment that Soseki wrote early on in his career while he was still a student, his discussion of Carlyle here is revealing insofar as it gives us some insight into the complexities of literary style and colonial mimicry. In the essay, Soseki recounts an episode in which Carlyle appeared to him in a dream. That day, Soseki had fallen asleep at his desk while doodling some pictures on a piece of paper during a bout of writer’s block. In the dream, he awoke to a light tapping on the door, and when he went to open it, a tall, thin man in ragged clothes appeared there. Although he had a harsh form to his face, there was also something kind in his expression too. When Soseki asked what his name was, the man looked surprised, and then replied: “Don’t you recognize your old friend? You always listened with rapture to what I had to say. Just a few days ago, your English teacher warned you not to imitate my style.”

In the dream, Soseki remembered that his teacher had, in fact, warned him during class never to imitate Carlyle’s style. Still, he noted, he couldn’t believe that the man standing before him was actually Carlyle—for the year was 1889, and Carlyle had already been dead for eight years. Just then, the visitor said: ‘In the natural world, earth, water, fire, and wind clamor together / material things break, and the world collapses, but spirits never endure even a scar, and live on forever.’ Soseki thought to himself: so is this the spirit of Carlyle? And if so, why did he appear to me like this? In reply to his question, the spirit answered: “I appeared in order to warn you of the dangers of imitating me. After all, Carlyle’s prose style is most un-English, and it’s a

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<sup>103</sup> Natsume Soseki, “My Friends in the School” 「3つの部分から成る英作文。第2部、第3部の末尾には、それぞれ1889年5月24日、同年6月15日の日付が付されている。第1部では「「アヒル」というあだ名のついた頑健で屈強」の友人、第2部では「顔はまるで、子どものように純朴で、心は哲学者のように成熟してい」（『漱石全集』第26巻）る友人について述べられている。第3部では、夢にカーライルが現れ、漱石に「ぼくを真似すること」は危険だと忠告する。漱石は「偉人の作品を読み、偉人の卓見に同感し、偉人の才能を畏敬する者は、偉人の友なのではあるまいか。ならばカーライルこそわが友、カーライルこそわがヒーローだ」（同）と記している。漱石は英国留学中にカーライル博物館を訪れ、後に短編「カーライル博物館」を書いた。（漱石文庫）」 See <<http://www.library.tohoku.ac.jp/collection/collection/soseki/intro-01.html>>

style that is *impossible to imitate*. Even if you try to draw a tiger, all you'll end up with is a scruffy cat, he said, and promptly disappeared. So—Soseki thought—Carlyle had appeared to me to warn me of the dangers of imitating (猿真似) him.”<sup>104</sup>

Although this fascinating early essay, which, to my knowledge, has yet to be theorized in relation to “The Carlyle Museum,” can be read as a kind of anxiety of influence on the part of a budding Japanese writer vis-a-vis a canonical Victorian literary figure, there is also something else that this statement reveals about Carlyle the writer. Carlyle’s prose style was, in fact, notorious, even to an Anglophone audience, for being so dense and convoluted as to be practically impenetrable—so much so that Carlyle’s style was famously referred to as “Carlylese.” The complexity and strangeness of Carlyle’s prose can be attributed in part to the fact that he spent much of his career translating the major works of German romanticism into English, and was singlehandedly responsible for introducing many canonical authors of German idealism (most famously Goethe) to an Anglophone audience. It is said that as a result of these translations, Carlyle’s English came to take on the rhythm and cadence of German, so that the resulting English ended up sounding like a foreign language, although the words he used were English.

It was for this reason, perhaps, that Soseki’s teacher had warned him in his dream not to imitate Carlyle’s prose style—the idea perhaps being that, as a student of English, he ought to pick a model whose style more closely resembled that of “standard” English prose, since imitating Carlyle might lead to writing in a way that sounded, paradoxically, un-English. One might read Soseki’s affinity for Carlyle in part, then, as a recognition of the way in which Carlyle destabilizes the borders of the English language from the inside out, making it strange to, or estranged *from*, itself. After all, this was a historical moment in which languages, too, were conceived in terms of “families.” Carlyle’s English, at once supremely English and at the same time so un-English as to provide a “bad example” of English for foreign students learning the language (such as the young Soseki), provides a small breach, a disruption within the sealed unit of the English literary canon, that leaves room for Soseki to imagine himself as one of its unlikely inheritors.

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<sup>104</sup> Summarized in Tsukamoto, 551.

## Chapter 3

# Francis Galton's Composite Photograph: The Case of Lafcadio Hearn / Koizumi Yakumo

In a letter he addressed to his friend Basil Hall Chamberlain in 1895, Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) writes: “Properly, however, there is no such thing as an individual, but only a *combination*—one balance of an infinite sum. The charm of a very superior man or woman is the ghostliness of all conceivable experiences. For the man or woman in question can in a single evening become fifty, a hundred, two hundred different people—not in fancy but in actual fact.”<sup>105</sup> Hearn’s insistence that “there is no such thing as an individual” was quite literal. Heavily steeped in contemporaneous theories of evolution, heredity, and organic memory—particularly the ideas of Herbert Spencer—Hearn firmly believed that the ancestors comprising an individual’s hereditary lineage were quite literally alive, residing in his or her cells at a biological level. He would affirm the literalness of this idea in an essay from 1897 where he again expresses skepticism at the idea of the individual at a scientific level:

For what is our individuality? Most certainly it is not individuality at all: it is multiplicity incalculable. What is the human body? A form built up out of billions of living entities, an impermanent agglomeration of individuals called cells. And the human soul? A composite of quintillions of souls. We are, each and all, infinite compounds of fragments of anterior lives. And the universal process that continually dissolves and continually constructs the personality has always been going on, and is even at this moment going on, in very one of us. What being ever had a totally new feeling, an absolutely new idea? All our emotions and thoughts and wishes, however changing and growing through the various sensations of life, are only compositions and recompositions of the sensations and ideas and desires of other folk, mostly, of dead people. Cells and souls are themselves recombinations, present aggregations of past knittings of force.”<sup>106</sup>

Not only in the theory of evolution and heredity, but also in the Shintō folk beliefs and traditions of rural western Japan, where Hearn spent the last decades of his life, would he find this idea of

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<sup>105</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn, Including the Japanese Letters*, Vol. II, ed. Elizabeth Bisland (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1906), 354.

<sup>106</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, “Dust” in *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*. (Boston : Houghton, Mifflin, 1897) 71.

the “composite” soul or individual confirmed. In his writings on Japan, which comprise the bulk of his literary corpus, Hearn would continuously blend together his readings on evolution and heredity with his observations of both Shintō and Buddhist attitudes toward death, particularly reincarnation and ancestor worship, and he continued to insist on the continuities between evolutionary theory and Japanese ancestor worship, as when, in a series of lectures he delivered on “Victorian Philosophy” at Tokyo University, he said:

[Herbert] Spencer boldly stated that many of the enigmas of sensation and thought had nothing to do with the present life of the person experiencing them—the riddles were to be read only in the light of heredity. Instinct and intuition were not of the individual except as inheritances of past lives. Instinct was actually memory of past lives—*composite memory*, or as Spencer more significantly calls it, organic memory. This theory, the most interesting of all Spencer’s theories, and wonderfully supported by the researches of Galton and others, brings the system of synthetic philosophy into line with Oriental philosophy at almost every important point (emphasis mine).<sup>107</sup>

The task of this chapter will be to ask what implications this idea of “compositeness” had for Hearn’s writings on Japan in general, and for his theorization of kinship in particular. Tracing the idea of “compositeness” throughout Hearn’s letters, essays, and journalistic writings, it will focus specifically on Hearn’s references to composite photography, in which he showed great interest throughout his career.

Briefly put, composite photography was a technique invented in the late 19th century by Francis Galton (1822-1911), wherein multiple photographic portraits of individuals belonging to a similar racial or social group were layered on top of each other in order to form a single “composite” image, thus providing something like a statistical average of that group in visual form. Galton’s intentions for this technology were motivated in large part by his belief in eugenics—it was he, in fact, who coined this term in 1883. By identifying the traits most common to the members of a given social or racial group, he believed, the technology of composite photography could help predict who might be prone to particular kinds of social deviancy, and thus, eventually, be eliminated through “selective breeding.”

Galton’s technology then found its way to Japan through the writings of the anthropologist Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863-1913), who introduced the technique to the Japanese public via his lectures at Tokyo Imperial University during the 1890’s.<sup>108</sup> For Shōgorō, an imperial bureaucrat of the emerging Japanese empire, composite photography provided a visual model for what he believed to be the coming of a multiethnic Japanese empire, wherein a new, superior Japanese “type” might be created out of the interbreeding of Japanese and colonial subjects. Tsuboi was one of the leading proponents of the “mixed-nation” theory of race at the time of Jpaa’s imperial expansion, and the technology of composite photograph aided him in

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<sup>107</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Victorian Philosophy* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1930), 17

<sup>108</sup> Inhye Kang, “Visual Technologies of Imperial Anthropology: Tsuboi Shōgorō and Multiethnic Japanese Empire.” positions 24:4, 2016. 761-787.



providing a visual justification for the Japanese empire as a composite of multiple ethnic nations.<sup>109</sup>

The last two chapters explored the imagery of blood and home in Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro* and "The Carlyle Museum," respectively, showing how, despite the Japanese state's attempts to fuse the ideologies of nationalism and the family within the rhetoric of blood and home, Soseki repurposes these tropes to imagine forms of literary kin and affinity that do not proceed along such state-sanctioned lines. In *Kokoro*, blood becomes transfused from reader to reader through literary language, disrupting the flow of conventional biological lineages; in "The Carlyle Museum," the trope of the house is transformed from a private, bourgeois, domestic sphere, a symbol of the nuclear family form, into a public museum, in which distant readers and writers, through the medium of relic objects, imagine themselves into new forms of kinship with one another across distant spatial and temporal boundaries.

Building off of these chapters, this chapter shows how Hearn similarly transforms a trope or figure associated with racial purity, eugenics, and empire-building—and repurposes it in his writing to re-imagine new structures of lineage and descent that deviate from such norms. Given Hearn's status as a transnational writer who inhabited multiple cultural traditions—and eventually becoming nationalized as a Japanese citizen toward the end of his life—how might this notion of "compositeness" have aided him in imagining forms of relatedness that did not necessarily proceed along vertical lines of descent? Moreover, how might the technology of composite photography—which, by capturing a statistical average in visual form, paradoxically registering a realistic image that *does not exist*—have served as a *literary* technique in Hearn's own written depictions of Japan?

Since Hearn was not primarily a novelist, but instead wrote descriptive vignettes and essays based on his training as a journalist and amateur ethnographer, his writing, though undoubtedly *literary* in nature, has often been difficult to classify under any particular genre heading. Yet it is clear that Hearn also borrows heavily from the techniques of late Victorian realism, particularly in his rendering of typology and the "typological" or "statistical" person. Given this, how might Galton's composite photograph, in its striving to depict the "average" or ideal "type" of a particular phenomenon, rather than a particular instantiating of it, have offered Hearn a visual analogue for his own writing practice, a method of seeing and reproducing reality through a process of subtraction and absence, rather than through continuity or fidelity?

Although Hearn and Sōseki did not know one another personally, I argue that there is a shared concern that emerges in their literary oeuvre over the status of kinship and the family. I am arguing that both Soseki and Hearn were emblematic of a late Victorian cultural moment in which the concept of kinship and biological continuity in particular had come into crisis, and that each of them viewed literary language as one mode of repairing this crisis. Moreover, each of them found, within the discourse of the Victorian sciences, a vocabulary for articulating their status as transnational writers who often came into conflict with the conflation of familial and nationalist rhetoric that the Japanese government sought to expound.

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<sup>109</sup> Kang, 763.

## A Wandering Ghost

In order to make sense of Hearn's interest in the technology of composite photography, a preliminary overview of his own "composite" biography—nonlinear, peripatetic, and highly irregular—will first be necessary. Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904)—who later changed his name to Koizumi Yakumo (小泉八雲)—was an itinerant Victorian writer whose national identity is not easily classifiable. Hearn was born in 1850 on the island of Lefkada, one of the Ionian islands off the coast of Greece, and for which he was later named.<sup>110</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century, Lefkada was under French rule but came under British occupation in 1815 after the British began aggressively expanding their imperial rule over that region, finding the Ionian islands made useful naval bases. Hearn's Irish father, Major Charles Bush Hearn, was stationed in the upper ranks of the British army occupying Greece around the time of Hearn's birth. It was then that he met and married Hearn's mother, a local Greek woman named Rosa Antoniou Kassimatis. Soon after Hearn's birth, the family moved to Ireland, where, shortly after their arrival, Hearn's father abandoned him and his mother. Rosa, illiterate and unable to speak English, was sent to an insane asylum, and Hearn was transferred to the guardianship of a distant aunt.

Although Hearn would not have contact with either of his parents beyond infancy, his mixed origins shaped his outlook on race, identity and culture in significant ways. Although Hearn is often referred to as a "Western" writer and observer of Japanese culture, we can see from his biography that he was also, in a sense, himself a product of British imperialism. Hearn's abiding interest in and identification with his Greek origins in particular seemed to drive him toward empathizing and identifying with marginal and vanishing cultures, sometimes in particularly extreme or excessive ways. Hearn's Greek origins not only shaped his internal identification with marginal cultures—externally, as well, his darker, Mediterranean complexion sometimes, bizarrely, led to him being mistaken for "an Oriental" during the decade or so that he lived in the United States.<sup>111</sup> When his Irish aunt became unable to care for Hearn due to her own financial difficulties, he was sent to Cincinnati at the age of nineteen with the promise of further support from a family friend, only to be denied said support upon his arrival. (In true *Oliver Twist* style, he notes: "I was dropped moneyless on the pavement of an American city to begin life.") Hearn slept in streets and stables and worked a series of odd jobs until he finally found work as a journalist. From 1872 to 1875 he wrote for the *Cincinnati Daily Inquirer*, where he became known for his lurid accounts of local murders, quickly developing a reputation as the paper's premier sensational journalist.

From Cincinnati, Hearn moved to New Orleans in 1877, where he began working on literary translations of French authors, such as Zola, Gautier, and Maupassant. Yet he also

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<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Cott, *Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn*. (Tokyo; Kodansha International, 1992)

<sup>111</sup> In fact, this would not have been altogether unusual within the matrix of late 19th century racial categories, when "Greeks" were still considered to be more or less a species of "Orientals" by many Western Europeans. See Roy Starrs, "Lafcadio Hearn as Japanese Nationalist." *Japan Review*, Vol. 18, 2006. 181-213.

continued his work as a journalist, writing primarily for the Daily City Item and the Times Democrat, and wrote book reviews and occasional editorial pieces for Harper's. Hearn's writings on New Orleans for national publications such as Harper's and Scribner's not only launched his career as a writer, but helped singlehandedly create the popular reputation of New Orleans as a place with a distinct culture more akin to the Caribbean than the U.S.

Beginning in 1877, Hearn was sent by Harper's as a correspondent to the French West Indies (also called Martinique), where he produced two books of his own: *Two Years in the French West Indies* and *Youma, The Story of a West-Indian Slave*. Finally, in 1890, he was sent as a correspondent to Japan, with the commission to write a series of essays on Japanese life for an Anglophone audience. Although he terminated the contract not long after his arrival, he remained in Japan, and would remain there until his death in 1904, acquiring teaching posts at Matsue, Kumamoto, and finally at the Imperial University in Tokyo. He would also marry a Japanese woman, Setsu Koizumi, in 1896, with whom he had three children. Because the Meiji koseki, or household registry laws, dictated that a Japanese woman marrying a foreign man must renounce her Japanese citizenship, Hearn chose instead to be adopted by Setsu's family, thus renouncing his own citizenship, becoming a subject of the Japanese emperor, and taking on a Japanese name. Hearn's biographer, Elizabeth Bisland, describes the marriage in the following way:

It was celebrated by the local rites, as to have married according to English laws under the then existing treaties would have deprived Setsu of Japanese citizenship and obliged them to move to one of the open ports. But the question of the legality of the marriage and of her future troubled Hearn from the beginning and finally obliged him to renounce his English alliance and become a subject of the mikado in order that she and her children should never suffer from any complications or doubts as to their position. This could only be achieved by his adoption into the wife's family. He took their name, Koizumi, which means Little Spring and for a personal title chose the classical term for Izumo province, Yakumo, meaning Eight Clouds, also being the first word of the oldest known Japanese poem.<sup>112</sup>

Although in his numerous essays and writings on Japan Hearn undoubtedly, at times, exhibits perspectives and attitudes that could only be described now as Orientalist, it is also worth noting that, from a legal perspective, Lafcadio Hearn was, at least by the end of his life, a Japanese writer. David Lurie observes: "Although Hearn was undeniably of his time in his Orientalist posture and conceptualization of the non-Western 'other,' his self-positioning in his published writings is not as simple... Hearn repeatedly toyed with the possibility of a non-Western self—of a shift in authorial identity that would parallel the shift in national identity marked by his becoming Koizumi Yakumo in 1896."<sup>113</sup> Moreover, what does it mean that his marriage to

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<sup>112</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn, Including the Japanese Letters*, Vol. II, ed. Elizabeth Bisland (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1906), 354.

<sup>113</sup> David Lurie. "Orientalism: The Insect Literature of Lafcadio Hearn," in *JAPANimals: History and Culture in Japan's Animal Life*, ed. Gregory M. Pflugfelder and Brett L. Walker, University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Koizumi Setsu was (legally) enacted in the form of an adoption (a traditionally common practice among queer couples who often had no other means of receiving benefits from the state?) In numerous ways, Hearn's positionality within official structures of kinship was far from straightforward. Given these histories and experiences, it is not difficult to imagine why Hearn would have been suspicious of the concept of the individual as a stable entity tethered to a singular national, ethnic, and familial tradition.

## Quintillions of Souls

Hearn would encounter Francis Galton's writings on composite photography sometime in the late 1870's, during his New Orleans period, likely by way of his readings of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)—the philosopher, biologist, anthropologist, and sociologist who had more influence on Hearn's thought than any other figure. Although Spencer's legacy is that of the classical liberal Victorian political theorist who adapted the theory of evolution to the mechanical workings of capitalism, and indeed, even used Darwin's theory of evolution to justify capitalism as necessary for the "survival of the fittest," he also theorized extensively on the role of ghosts, spirits, and other invisible phenomenon in "primitive" cultures. Hearn specifically latched on to Spencer's idea that the primitive belief in ghosts, and the cult of ancestor worship in the family, was the basis of all religious thought.

Spencer's research overlapped with Galton's considerably, particularly concerning the latter's interest in eugenics, and the concept of composite photography was even said to have arisen in a conversation between the two of them. In a speech he delivered to the British Anthropological Institute in 1886, in which he first described his experiments with the technology of composite photography publicly, Galton notes:

Having obtained drawings or photographs of several persons alike in most respects, but differing in minor details, what sure method is there of extracting the typical characteristics from them? I may mention a plan which had occurred both to Mr. Herbert Spencer and myself, the principle of which is to superimpose optically the various drawings, and to aggregate the result. Mr. Spencer suggested to me in conversation that the drawings reduced to the same scale might be traced on separate pieces of transparent paper and secured one upon another, and then held between the eye and the light. My own idea was to throw faint images of the several portraits, in succession, upon the same sensitized photographic plate...I have found, as a matter of fact, that the photographic process of which I speak enables us to obtain with mechanical precision a generalized picture on that represents no man in particular, but portrays an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men. These ideal faces have a surprising air of reality. Nobody who glanced at one of them for the first time would

doubt its being the likeness of a living person, yet, as I have said, it is no such thing; it is the portrait of a type and not an individual.<sup>114</sup>

Francis Galton, like Spencer, was a Victorian polymath—among his remembered roles he was a statistician, sociologist, psychologist, anthropologist, inventor, and meteorologist—half cousin to Charles Darwin and best known for his studies of heredity and eugenics in particular. Profoundly influenced by the publication of his cousin Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859, Galton quickly became fascinated with the study of variation in human populations (everything from mental characteristics to height, facial images to fingerprint patterns) and he was convinced that the survival and betterment of the human species depended upon our ability to manipulate these variations. For Galton, the original impulse behind the development of [composite photography] was quite practical: by creating a “composite” photograph out of numerous images of people belonging to a particular racial or social category (“the criminal,” “the Jew,” etc.), one could predict the “average” or “ideal type” of that particular category of people. Here is the method he developed in the period around 1876-1877:

Galton would begin by gathering photographs of people who were instances of the particular type he wished to examine. He rarely took these photographs himself. Rather, he collected them together, sometimes even taking out advertisements for them, soliciting the readers of journals to send him photographs they did not need... While Galton produced composites from as few as two and as many as hundreds of component photographs, we shall say here that he works with ten portraits, a common number for him. In order to produce a useable composite of these images, all the shots would have to be from the same angle. Partly because of its ease of definition, the composite’s constituent photographs are usually simple, frontal poses... In his first experiments, he hung the images one in front of the other, “in such a way that the eyes of all the portraits shall be as nearly as possible superimposed; in which case the remainder of the features will also be superimposed nearly enough.” Although photographic plates allowing rapid exposures had come into being by the late 1870’s, Galton used plates with slower exposures... Then, if Galton worked with ten portraits, all he had to do was expose each one on the same spot of the sixty-second plate for six seconds each. In this way, Galton ensured that each image contributed the same amount to the final composite.<sup>115</sup>

Composite photography was something like an early form of photoshop, in which multiple exposures on a single photographic plate allowed a photographer to superimpose several images on top of each other. When this technique was practiced with photographs of human faces, the result was one in which a single image of a phantasmagoric human face emerged out of the average of all the faces that had been projected onto the plate. In other words, the composite

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<sup>114</sup> Francis Galton, “Composite Portraits,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 8 (19 April 1878), 132.

<sup>115</sup> Josh Ellenbogen, *Reasoned and Unreasoned Images: The Photography of Bertillon, Galton, and Marey* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) 113.

photograph was a technology that, while capturing reality—the individual portraits—through the lens of the camera, ultimately produced an image—the composite portrait—that was *nowhere to be found in reality*.

This paradox of the composite photograph—of being at once fictional and representational—was summed up by Galton when he noted that he intended to “obtain with mechanical precision a generalized picture: one that represents no man in particular, but portrays an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men.”<sup>116</sup> In essence, Galton was, to use Daniel Novak’s words, “making photographic fiction into photographic science—a non-existent body into a type derived with scientific accuracy, a photographic science fiction.”<sup>117</sup> Galton underscores the uncanniness of the composite portrait when he notes that the figure is neither living nor dead, real nor unreal, but a pure type: “These ideal faces have a surprising air of reality. Nobody who glanced at one of them for the first time would doubt its being the likeness of a living person, yet as I have said, it is no such thing. It is the portrait of a type and not of an individual.”<sup>118</sup>

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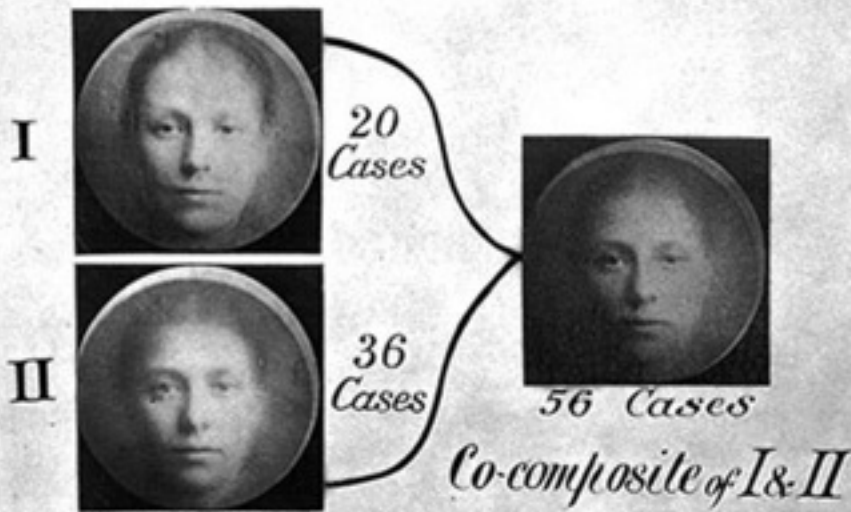
<sup>116</sup> Galton, “Portraits,” 133.

<sup>117</sup> Daniel Novak, “A Model Jew: Literary Photographs and the Jewish Body in Daniel Deronda.” *Representations* 85:1, No. 1 (Winter 2004) 58-97. 58

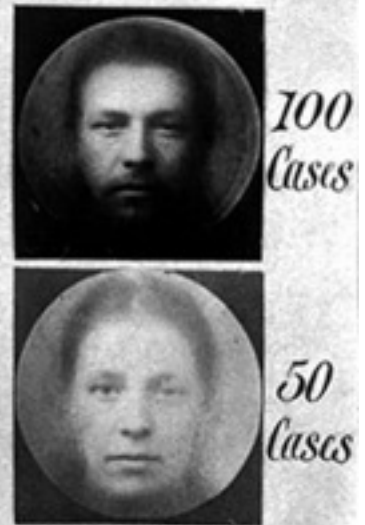
<sup>118</sup> Galton, “Portraits”



# SPECIMENS OF COMPOSITE PORTRAITURE PERSONAL AND FAMILY,



*Consumptive Cases.*



*Not Consumptive.*



FATHER'S BROTHER



FATHER



MOTHER



FATHER'S NEPHEW



SONS



DAUGHTERS



COMPOSITE OF MEN



CO-COMPOSITE



COMPOSITE OF WOMEN



A perfect average of separate features, the composite photograph thus had, according to Galton, profound implications for the study not only of heredity but also criminology: Galton saw composite photography as most useful in its ability to reveal the *mental* characteristics of individuals as expressed in their physical traits. He notes:

If a certain group of individuals shared a particular mental trait, and this was somehow reflected in their physical appearance, the common features might be extracted by superimposing photographs of their faces on one another. This should factor out the unique features and emphasize shared attributes, a photographic mean or average as it were.<sup>119</sup>

Over several decades, Galton examined thousands of photographs of thieves, murderers, and other “deviant types,” hoping that composite photography would reveal features that typified different groups of criminals. Of course, it comes as no surprise that the discourse of heredity and eugenics was based squarely in the racial hierarchies established by the imperial world order of the 19th century. As such, composite photography, while not a long-lived or particularly influential invention, was nevertheless conceived with eugenic goals in mind—i.e. the elimination of those populations deemed physically “inferior” in class, race, or ability.

Yet Galton’s justification for the ability of composite photography to show us the “average” or “type” of a particular group or class of people was also rooted in a specific theory of mind: he believed that the technological process of producing a composite photograph mimicked the physical processes of the human mind in forming abstract concepts out of concrete observations of phenomena. He believed that, much like a photographic plate which registered multiple and, importantly, *cumulative* impressions of any phenomenon—say, dogs, or plants—the mind finally arrived at an abstract concept of “dog” or “plant” by a process of subtraction, in which it discarded the anomalous details of any particular “dog” or “plant” and retained the traits that all dogs or plants had in common:

Galton believes that the process by which a composite photograph comes to be is analogous to that by which memories are blended in the mind. If we produce a composite photograph of either ‘the criminal’ or ‘the criminal Jack’ the process of doing so closely follows what goes on in the human mind when it blends together its stored impressions of the various criminals it has seen, or the various views it has had of a particular criminal. Such overlap between photographic technology and mental function served as the main justification for Galton’s imagistic practice. The overlap consisted in two points. First, Galton believed that, like a camera, the human mind functions as a registration service, on which on which images of objects impress themselves... “A composite portrait represents the picture that would arise before the mind’s eye of an individual who had the gift of pictorial imagination in an exalted degree.” Second, the way the mind moves from

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<sup>119</sup> Nicholas W. Gillham, *The Life of Sir Francis Galton from African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 7.

different individual impressions to general ideas of objects follows composite photography. For Galton, the mind takes general concordance between the creation of abstract ideas and composite portraits. “I doubt, however, whether abstract idea is the correct phrase in many of the cases in which it is used, and whether cumulative idea would not be more appropriate. The ideal faces obtained by the method of composite portraiture appear to have a great deal in common with these so called abstract ideas. The composite portraits consist of numerous superimposed pictures forming a cumulative result in which the features that are common to all the likenesses are clearly seen.”<sup>120</sup>

Hearn maintained an abiding interest in the mechanisms of evolution and heredity throughout the course of his career, and though he, like Galton, believed that the technological process of composite photography revealed something about the workings of the human mind, he arrived at a conclusion significantly different from his. Whereas Galton was interested in gathering multiple photographic portraits in order to extract a single average image out of all of them, Hearn was interested in just the opposite: namely, the way in which a single composite photograph could be broken down into its component parts. Theorizing that an individual human face could, at any moment in time, be broken down into the hundreds of faces of ancestors that comprised its hereditary lineage, he found, in composite photography, an illustration of the mechanisms of heredity over time.

In other words, just as a single composite photograph of a face is an amalgam of many distinct photographic portraits, so an individual, at any given moment in time, is technically a composite of all of the ancestors in its lineage, a “living composite.” Thus, while the composite photograph for Galton was a technology oriented toward the future, insofar as it had a predictive function, for Hearn the composite photograph was a technology oriented toward the past:

If we could photographically *decompose* a composite photograph so as to separate in *inverse order* all the impressions inter-blended to make it, such process would clumsily represent what really happens when the image of a strange face is telegraphed back — like a police photograph — from the living retina to the mysterious offices of inherited memory. There, with the quickness of an electric flash, the shadow face is decomposed into the ancestral types that combined it and the resulting verdict of the dead, though rendered only by indefinable sensation, is more trustworthy than any written certificate of character could ever be (emphasis mine).<sup>121</sup>

While the building block of Galton’s composite photograph is the *individual* face, for Hearn any given individual face is always *already* a composite of “quintillions of souls.” Hence his belief that “there is no such thing as an individual.” Although Hearn shares with Galton the belief that the composite photograph mimics something about the otherwise invisible mechanisms of the human mind, he is more interested in the diachronic, rather than the synchronous, process by

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<sup>120</sup> Ellenbogen, 114.

<sup>121</sup> Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*, 73.

which such an image is formed: “Such a process would represent what really happens when the image of a strange face is telegraphed *back*—.” For Galton, the composite photograph revealed the process of a single human mind forming a single abstract concept out of the myriad visual impressions it received. For Hearn, the composite photograph revealed the process of a single hereditary line which, with each new generation, produces a cumulative average of all of the generations of faces that has come before it. This is a mechanism that would take place over hundreds of years, rather than in a single lifetime. In an essay he published in 1898 called “First Impressions,” Hearn writes:

I wonder why the emblematic significance of the composite photograph has been so little considered by the philosophers of evolution. In the blending and coalescing of shadows that make it, is there no suggestion of that bioplasmic chemistry which, out of the intermingling of innumerable lives, crystallizes the composite of personality? Has the superimposition of images upon the sensitized plate no likeness to those superimpositions of heredity out of which every individual must shape itself?<sup>122</sup>

The function of the “sensitized plate” upon which the images of a composite photograph are exposed in Hearn’s analogy here, again, is distinct from Galton’s. While for Galton the photographic plate is a metaphor for the mind receiving impression after impression of external visual phenomena, for Hearn the “sensitized plate” is a metaphor for that “bioplasmic chemistry” which mixes and mingles the genetic information of multiple ancestors over time. This analogy between mechanical reproduction and biological reproduction was more than metaphorical—Hearn seemed to take it quite literally that the process of superimposing images one upon the other mimicked the process by which time layered the physical characteristics of one generation upon another.

Hearn continues to use metaphors related to photography in order to discuss the workings of heredity and especially hereditary memory, observing that: “Every human face is *a living composite* of countless faces—generations and generations of faces superimposed upon the sensitive film of life...”<sup>123</sup> Then, too, the taste, impulses, ideals, predilections of any given individual—all of these were, for Hearn, akin to “composites” of the predilections of his or her ancestors:

The normal being inherits some ideal of beauty. It may be vivid or vague; but in every case it represents an accumulation of countless impressions received by the race — countless fragments of prenatal remembrances crystallized into one composite image within organic memory, where, like the viewless image on a photographic plate awaiting development, it remains a while in darkness absolute. And just because it is a composite

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<sup>122</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Exotics and Retrospectives*. (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1898), 55.

<sup>123</sup> Hearn, *Exotics and Retrospectives*, 57.

of numberless race memories of individual attraction, this ideal necessarily represents, in the superior mind, *something above the existing possible*.<sup>124</sup>

## On Beauty and Averageness

There is one point, however, upon which Galton and Hearn seemed to agree, or at least converge, with respect to the technology of composite photography. That is, for both thinkers, there was an *aesthetic* value to the concept of an average, or abstract “type” that rendered it superior to any particular instantiation of it. Galton repeatedly observes that the composite photographs he create not only appear typical or average or similar to statistics, but *beautiful* as well, presenting faces “more handsome than any of their individual constituents.”<sup>125</sup> Galton had remarked upon his own composite photographs that:

All composites are better looking than their components because the averaged portrait of many persons is free from the irregularities that variously blemish the looks of each of them.<sup>126</sup>

Josh Ellenbogen notes that the overall aesthetic effect of Galton’s composite photographs—specifically in their blurry, faded quality--was in keeping with a particular strain of late 19th century Victorian discourse on photography which held that photography could only approach the level of true art insofar as it depicted an abstract type, rather than a mere accumulation of material details.<sup>127</sup> The idea was that, since it took no particular aesthetic training, discernment, or skill for someone to indiscriminately capture or register all of the details in front of them, photography could not be considered a true art form—only a “mechanical” reproduction of facts. On the other hand, what made something a work of art was the artist’s *selection* of some details over others, his or her ability to depict the abstract type or form of a thing rather than its particular instantiation. Ellenbogen notes:

When nineteenth century observers criticized photography as a merely mechanical proceeding...they imagined photography on the model of what one might call low mechanism, as a mindless and servile form of handwork...camera as unreasoning machine. Photography’s purpose is to provide cheap, prompt, correct facts, give evidence of facts, of any visual detail that happened to be before the camera’s lens...mere manual correctness without any employment of artistic feeling.

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<sup>124</sup> Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*, 201.

<sup>125</sup> Ellenbogen, 115

<sup>126</sup> Ellenbogen, 115.

<sup>127</sup> Ellenbogen, 131

For art critics of the late 19th century, photography was a useful instrument of science, insofar as it had the ability to capture “the utmost detail attainable.” Yet such comprehensiveness of detail did not make a good work of art, since “fine art seeks to elevate the imagination by lofty images derived from nature in her most agreeable forms. Nature may be and is much more conventionalized in the noblest and highest art, the abstract is given without the minutiae. In photography this is reversed; breadth being sacrificed to detail. For purposes of science the utmost detail attainable in a photograph is advantageous; but the artist will not descend to minutiae: he desires breadth of effect.”<sup>128</sup> A work of art, then, must have “all the attributes of nature without her particularities.” A camera cannot produce a work of art, since it can “only give the individual, not the type of a class.”

One critic distinguishes between the abstracting power of the artist and the mere copying of the machine in the language of biological reproduction:

Correctness of drawing, truth of detail, and absence of convention, the best characteristics of photography, are qualities of no common kind, but the student who issues from the academy with these in his grasp stands on the threshold of art... *The power of selection and rejection*, the living application of that language which lies dead in his paint box, *the marriage of his own mind with the object before him, and the offspring, half stamped with his own features, half with those of nature, which is born of the union*—whatever appertains to the free will of the intelligent being, as opposed to the obedience of the machine—this, and much more, constitute that mystery called art.<sup>129</sup>

This denigration of detail, particularly detail that had not been filtered through a discerning mind, was also prevalent in the discourse of late Victorian literary realism. Citing the writer G.H. Lewes, companion of George Eliot, Daniel Novak notes that “true” realism, unlike the “vulgar” realism of the Naturalist movement, was distinguished by the fact that it did not slavishly attempt to “copy” reality as it is, but showed a guiding intelligence behind the selection of details, thus demonstrating an ability on the part of the realist writer to extract the universal type of a character from the myriad particular instantiations of it:

The comparison [of writing] to Dutch painting or to photography was meant to denigrate the inherent grotesqueness and vulgarity of a mode of realism that failed to ‘select’ the proper elements and combine them with organization and design — a critique also offered in 1865 by Eliot’s companion GH Lewes, when he attempts to distinguish a true realism of selection and a photographic ‘detailism’ in contemporary literature (eg Naturalism)<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ellenborggen, 115

<sup>129</sup> Ellenbogen, 116.

<sup>130</sup> Daniel Novak, “A Model Jew: Literary Photographs and the Jewish Body in Daniel Deronda.” *Representations* 85:1 (Winter 2004) p. 58-97.

It seems, then, that what was a photographic technology invented for the purposes of scientific research, was also a species of literary technology that emerged around the same late Victorian moment: “This amorphous yet seemingly individual figure, this spectral and typological body, is both the product of a technological novelistic vision and a literal reproduction of visual technology into age of photography.”<sup>131</sup>

## Phenomenology of the Glimpse

In 1897, Hearn would write an essay called “On Faces in Japanese Art” in which he describes just the kind of abstractive process that Galton sought in his composite photographic portraits, as well as the type of abstractive realism praised by Lewes. Curiously, Hearn ascribes this tendency toward abstraction to the Japanese artist, and invents his own theory as to why “Oriental” art eschews the particular detail in favor of the general form.

A partial explanation of the apparent physiognomical conventionalism in Japanese drawing is just that law of the subordination of individualism to type, of personality to humanity, of detail to feeling, which the lecturer, Mr. Edward Strange vainly tried to teach the Japan Society something about. The Japanese artist depicts an insect, for example, as no European artist can do: he makes it live; he shows its peculiar motion, its character, everything by which it is at once distinguished *as a type—and all this with a few brushstrokes*. But he does not attempt to represent every vein upon each of its wings, every separate joint of its antennae: *he depicts it as it is really seen at a glance, not as studied in detail. We never see all the details of the body of a grasshopper, butterfly, or bee in the moment that we perceive it perching somewhere; we observe only enough to make us decide what kind of a creature it is. We see the typical, never the individual peculiarities*. Therefore the Japanese artist paints the type alone. To reproduce every detail would be to subordinate the type character to the individual peculiarity. A very minute detail is rarely brought out except when the instant recognition of the type is aided by the recognition of the detail; as, for example, when a ray of light happens to fall upon the joint of a cricket’s leg, or to reverberate from the mail of a dragonfly in a double-colored metallic flash. So likewise in painting a flower, the artist does not depict a particular, but a typical flower: he shows the morphological law of the species, or, to speak symbolically, *nature’s thought behind the form*.<sup>132</sup>

Here the temporality of the gaze is contrasted with what Hearn refers to as the *glance*. Rather than a sustained and steady attention that takes in every detail of an object for the purposes of gathering knowledge, the glance seems to profit from its quickness, its elimination of as much detail as possible. For Hearn, the purpose of looking is to typify, rather than dissect. “*We never*

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<sup>131</sup> Novak, 61.

<sup>132</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, “About Faces in Japanese Art,” in *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*. (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1899)

*see all the details of the body of a grasshopper, butterfly, or bee in the moment that we perceive it perching somewhere; we observe only enough to make us decide what kind of a creature it is."*

Hearn's use of the words "glance" and "glimpse" come up repeatedly in his writings, particularly of Japan, as in his "Glimpses of Japanese Life." Glimpse, from the high German "glimsen," originally implied to glimmer, shine faintly, intermittently, to catch a flash of something. It thus seems to indicate for Hearn a non-narrative moment, a view of something that is brief, incomplete, and transitory rather than comprehensive.

Given Hearn's belief in the "compositeness" of phenomena, its containment of the past *within* the present at all times, we can venture to say that his problem with "vulgar" realism (which he ascribes to the "European" artist) is that it is a depiction of reality that is biased toward presentism—for Hearn, "present" reality is always haunted by and layered over by the past, and description, in order to be truly accurate, must account for the "composite" nature of phenomena. The only way that this could be possible, for Hearn, was to depict the type over the details:

Or look at his color studies of sunsets and sunrises: he never tries to present every minute fact within range of vision, but offers us only those great luminous tones and chromatic blendings which, after a thousand petty details have been forgotten, still linger in the memory, and therefore recreate the *feeling* of what has been seen."<sup>133</sup>

The particular type of realism that Hearn employs in his essays, vignettes, and ethnographies, then are a concerted attempt to capture in language not only the object or phenomenon he is describing, but also the invisible, genealogical forces that have brought that phenomenon into being. As far back as Hearn's ethnographic writings of New Orleans, he is already beginning to resort to this kind of typification: whether he is describing a landscape, a street corner, or a human face, he is always seeking not so much the accumulation of details as the subtraction of them into an ideal type, one that transcends the particular qualities and shows us "nature's thought behind the form." So here is an example, I think of the composite layering occurring in his description:

It is not an easy thing to describe one's first impression of New Orleans; for while it actually resembles no other city upon the face of the earth, yet it recalls vague memories of a hundred cities. It owns suggestions of towns in Italy, and in Spain, of cities in England and in Germany, of seaports in the Mediterranean, and of seaports in the tropics. Canal street, with its grand breadth and impossible facades, gives one recollections of London and Oxford street and Regent street; there are memories of Havre and Marseilles to be obtained from the Old French Quarter; there are buildings in Jackson Square which remind one of Spanish-American travel. I fancy that the power of fascination which New Orleans exercises upon foreigners is due no else to this peculiar characteristic than to the tropical beauty of the city itself. Whencesoever the traveler may have come, he may find

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<sup>133</sup> Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*, 109.



in the Crescent City some memory of his home—some recollection of his Fatherland—some remembrance of something he loves.”<sup>134</sup>

Hearn sees not the city itself in all its particularities, but the genealogical forces that have shaped the city. In so doing, the New Orleans in his ethnographies becomes, much like the composite portrait forged out of the layers of individual portraits, at once no place and every place: “for while it actually resembles no other city upon the face of the earth, yet it recalls vague memories of a hundred cities.” Once again, in his essay on composite photography, Hearn would say something quite similar, namely “In every normal face, whole generations of types do certainly, by turns of mood, make flitting appearance. Any mother knows this. Studying day by day the features of her child, she finds in them variations *not to be explained by simple growth*. Sometimes there is a likeness to one parent or grandparent, sometimes a likeness to another, or to remoter kindred; and at rarer intervals may appear peculiarities of expression that no member of the family can account for. Through youth and manhood and far into old age these mutations continue—though always more slowly and faintly—even while the general characteristics steadily accentuate; and death itself may bring into the countenance some strange expression never noticed during life.”

In other words, Hearn demonstrates in his adaptation of typological realism a kind of non-sequential account of genealogical time, in which the past always threatens to override the present. What might such a paradigm have indicated for Hearn’s ideas of kinship and the family, particularly the idea of the family as wedded to a certain species of national ideology? What alternative structures of kinship and descent might the composite photograph have suggested to Hearn? Put another way, how might compositeness and simultaneity, rather than linearity and succession, been a useful way of picturing kinship for Hearn?

## Composite Kinship

Throughout his writings, Hearn remains interested in kinship and family systems, and viewed the nuclear family as a limited, even outdated Western form that would eventually be superseded by alternative structures of kin relations. Is there a model of simultaneous descent, a kind of past-in-present, at work in the composite photograph that is important for Hearn’s envisioning of alternative kinship systems?

Insofar as the composite photograph seems to represent, for Hearn, a kind of non-sequential account of genealogical time, what happens to the notion of the family when the individual is always already an unstable multitude of “quintillions of souls?” Throughout his body of work, a recurring theme for Hearn was this idea that the dead do not really die, but go on living in some altered form in the present. This idea was confirmed for him not only in the theory of heredity—which, via a related strand of evolutionary theory which emerged in the late 19th century called organic memory, posited that an individual inherited the memories, tastes, and

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<sup>134</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*. ed. S. Frederick Starr. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 7.

predilections of its ancestors—but also, curiously, in the Japanese notion of ancestor worship, which Hearn discovered through his readings of Shinto after he arrived in Japan in the 1890's. While most theorists of evolution at this historical moment, including Herbert Spencer, surmised that ancestor worship was merely a primitive form of religious sentiment, Hearn took the opposite view. For him, there was nothing primitive about the idea of ancestor worship, or the dead communicating with the living—rather, it preemptively confirmed the later findings of evolutionary theory and heredity. In *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, perhaps Hearn's most ambitious work, in which he attempts to write a Japanese version of Fustel de Coulanges's *La Cite Antique*, he describes the originally cult of the family in Japan in a way that echoes his writings on composite photography:

Of the three forms of ancestor-worship above mentioned, the family cult is the first in evolutionary order,—the others being later developments. But, in speaking of the family-cult as the oldest, I do not mean the home-religion as it exists today;—neither do I mean by "family" anything corresponding to the term "household." The Japanese family in early times meant very much more than "household": *it might include a hundred or a thousand households*: it was something like the Greek {Greek génos}; or the Roman gens,—the patriarchal family in the largest sense of the term. In prehistoric Japan the domestic cult of the house-ancestor probably did not exist;—the family-rites would appear to have been performed only at the burial-place. But the later domestic cult, having been developed out of the primal family-rite, indirectly represents the most ancient form of the religion, and should therefore be considered first in any study of Japanese social evolution.

What, for Hearn, is a family or a household that contains “a hundred or a thousand households?” It is a family form that regards the dead as still present within the form of the family. For Hearn, it is this ability for the family to conceive of itself as including the dead as well as the living, the invisible as well as the visible, that leads to the idea of an individual as a “composite.” If for Galton the composite photograph is an abstraction of a *type of person in general* (the criminal, the Jew, etc.), then for Hearn it is the abstraction of a *familial form*—a photograph of an entire hereditary line, the rendering of a diachronic process (heredity) into a single, synchronous snapshot. Ultimately, then, for Hearn, every living individual is the abstraction (and condensation) of a process unfolding through time called the family. We will see in greater detail what implications this idea of the family as a social process had for Hearn's conception of himself as a transnational writer in the next chapter, where we will examine Hearn's most sustained critique of the western nuclear family form—his collect of essays called, *Kokoro*.

## Chapter 4

# Victorian Necromancy: Reading Ghosts in Two *Kokoros*

This chapter examines a collection of essays on Japan called *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (1895) by Lafcadio Hearn. Hearn focuses at length in his essays on Japanese ancestor worship, and the relations between the living and the dead that he observes in Japanese customs, rituals, and folklore. Although many Westerners had seen the persistence of ancestor worship in late 19th century Japanese culture as an anachronistic residue of pre-modernity amid its otherwise rapid scientific and military progress, Hearn saw no contradiction in this. Instead, he believed that "the doctrines of Shinto...offer some very striking analogies with the scientific facts of heredity," since in both "the world of the living is directly governed by the world of the dead," and he strived to reconcile his readings of 19th century evolutionary science with his observations of Japanese kinship relations.<sup>135</sup> In fact, he went further than trying to reconcile them—he held up the Japanese practice of ancestor worship and the temporally expanded notion of kinship that it gave rise to as morally superior to the Western nuclear family, believing that it was through “the teachings of evolution” that “the West” would eventually come to recognize its “duty to the past” in a similar way as the “Far East.”

It is through the teachings of evolution that there will ultimately be developed in the West a moral recognition of duty to the past like that which ancestor-worship created in the Far East. For even to-day whoever has mastered the first principles of the new philosophy cannot look at the commonest product of man's handiwork without perceiving something of its evolutionary history. The most ordinary utensil will appear to him not the mere product of individual capacity on the part of carpenter or potter, smith or cutler, but the product of experiment continued through thousands of years with methods, with materials, and with forms. Nor will it be possible for him to consider the vast time and toil necessitated in the evolution, of any mechanical appliance, and yet experience no generous sentiment. Coming generations must think of the material bequests of the past in relation to dead humanity.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Press, 1896), 18.

<sup>136</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*.

As this passage demonstrates, the “moral superiority” demonstrated by the belief in ancestor worship, which Hearn observed with great admiration in Japan, was for him intrinsically connected to the ability to recognize objects—or, we might say, commodities—as congealed forms of labor, rather than for their use value alone. For Hearn, objects, like people, have “evolutional histories,” and although any particular object might appear to be singular in form, the ability to see that they were in fact reflections of generations of human labor unfolding in time was key to the new morality which Hearn sought out. Just as every individual is a “living composite,” an agglomeration of all the ancestors that comprised his hereditary line, so an object, too was a form of composite, having passed through “thousands of years...of methods, materials, and forms.” What were the political stakes for Hearn in extending this idea of “compositeness” to objects / commodities, as well as to people? And what were the political stakes in promoting a particular concept of the family that included the living as well as the dead?

For Hearn, like other 19th century theorists—most prominently Friedrich Engels—there was a direct correlation between the form of the family and the social system of property that upheld it. Engels had famously argued in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that the purpose of the bourgeois nuclear family was to maintain and transmit private property; conversely, he surmised from his readings of anthropological accounts of societies which did *not* practice monogamy, nor maintained a nuclear family structure, that they would also not subscribe to a system of private property. Hearn, following this line of thinking, would argue that the family was a social *process* rather than a static substance or entity. A society whose concept of the family was limited to a nuclear form—in other words, a concept of family that included only the living but not the dead—would value products over processes, commodities over the labor that produced them. Only a society who interpreted the present as a product of the labor of the dead, and thus felt a sense of indebtedness to the past, would be able to conceive of the dead as in some sense alive, through the effects that their labor continued to have on their living ancestors.

*Kokoro* is a series of interconnected essays on Hearn’s personal reflections on what he had gleaned of Japanese “inner life,” and it has thus ultimately been dismissed as the work of a mere Orientalist, or budding Japanese nationalist, or both. Indeed, there are textual moments throughout the essays in which Hearn, in keeping with the ideological rhetoric of the rising Japanese empire, seems to conflate the concepts of family and nation in somewhat dangerous ways. However, I argue that this conclusion hinges on what, precisely, Hearn means by “the family.” I conclude with some remarks on the continuities and discontinuities between Hearn and Soseki as well as their reflections on kinship as transnational Victorian writers in “the two *Kokoros*.”

## Ghostly Sympathy

In *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life*, Hearn takes up a passionate critique of the Western nuclear family when he complains of its practically “disintegrated” form, contrasting it to the temporally and spatially expansive form of the Japanese family. He argues that our [Westerners’] “powers of sympathetic representation” are in direct correlation with the extensiveness of the family unit. Since the Japanese family, according to Hearn, includes not only its immediate living members but also “grandparents and their kindred, and great grandparents, and all the dead behind them,” the Japanese have developed a capacity for deeper and broader sympathy; whereas the impoverished form of the Western nuclear family, limited to a small number of individuals, has rendered “us” unable to exercise our powers of sympathy “except within a very narrow circle:”

It is not only because we think the dead cannot hear, but because we have not been trained for generations to exercise our powers of sympathetic mental representation except within a very narrow circle,—the family circle. The Occidental family circle is a very small affair indeed compared with the Oriental family circle. In this nineteenth century the Occidental family is almost disintegrated;—it practically means little more than husband, wife, and children well under age. The Oriental family means not only parents and their blood-kindred, but grandparents and their kindred, and great-grandparents, and all the dead behind them, This idea of the family cultivates sympathetic representation to such a degree that the range of the emotion belonging to such representation may extend, as in Japan, to many groups and sub-groups of living families, and even, in time of national peril, to the whole nation as one great family: a feeling much deeper than what we call patriotism. As a religious emotion the feeling is infinitely extended to all the past; the blended sense of love, of loyalty, and of gratitude is not less real, though necessarily more vague, than the feeling to living kindred.<sup>137</sup>

In drawing a direct correlation between the form of the family and the capacity for what he calls “sympathetic mental representation,” Hearn puts a new twist on the classic Enlightenment concept of sympathy, first elaborated by Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). For Smith, the capacity for sympathy is highly individuated, and depends upon the *interchangeability* of one perspective for another. I can feel sympathy toward you if I can imaginatively inhabit your circumstances, to imagine that I am you, to become, as Smith puts it, “in some measure the same person” as you:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation [. . . ] [I]t is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations [. . . ] By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, *we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him*, and thence form some idea of his

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<sup>137</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*.

sensation, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. [. . .] That this is the source of our fellow-feeling for the misery of others, that it is by changing places in fancy with the sufferer, that we come either to conceive or to be affected by what he feels, may be demonstrated by many obvious observations . . . (1759: 47-8)<sup>138</sup>

For Smith then, and traditionally in the history of Western thought and philosophy, sympathy is based on the idea that individuals and their circumstances have the capacity to become *interchangeable* in the imagination. For one person to sympathize with another, they must, in a sense, become anonymized, believing that a particular fate could befall them just as easily as anyone else. For Hearn, however, at least according to this passage, sympathy is not based on a contract between otherwise anonymous individuals, but rather on the extensiveness of their relations with concrete others, and the expansiveness of their criteria for who count as “kin.” In other words, the capacity for sympathy is not based on whether one can imaginatively inhabit another’s perspective or circumstances, but rather the criteria by which they consider someone else’s existence to be dependent upon, or tied up with, their own.

Hearn argues that for a Westerner brought up in the “impoverished” form of the nuclear family, accustomed only to sharing intimacy with a handful of people, the fate of a stranger is unlikely to awaken his sympathy, since he is so unused to extending it beyond such a narrow perimeter. If I do not consider you to be related to me, that is, having some relation to me in which we mutually depend upon one another for the “reproduction of life and the demands of death,” to use Judith Butler’s words, then I cannot in a true sense sympathize with you, no matter how much I might inhabit your perspective. Whereas for Smith sympathy is a faculty that *could*, in theory, be used by anyone toward anyone else, for Hearn sympathy is a capacity, something like a muscle, which must be practiced, over and over, on concrete individuals. It is not innate, as it is for Smith. Notice, again, Hearn’s use of the word “training” to refer to the capacity for sympathy when he notes: “It is not only because we think the dead cannot hear, but because we have not been *trained* for generations to exercise our powers of sympathetic mental representation.”<sup>139</sup>

However, for the Japanese subject, Hearn argues, the spatial and temporal extensiveness of the family form also implies a more frequent extension of sympathy to a greater number of individuals, even and especially if those individuals are not visibly or immediately present. If for Smith sympathy is a “faculty,” then for Hearn it is a “training,” a “practice.” And if for Smith sympathy is contingent upon our ability to “become in some measure the same person as him,” to merge inward from two to one, then for Hearn it is rather about an expansion outward toward

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<sup>138</sup> <https://www.iep.utm.edu/emp-symp/#SH3b> A better and perhaps more incisive summation of Smith’s theory of sympathy: In “The Theory of Moral Sentiments” (1759), Adam Smith defines sympathy as the effect that is produced when we imagine that another person’s circumstances are our own circumstances, and find their reaction to the circumstances to be reasonable. In so doing, we respond by experiencing a smaller-scale version of their feelings, even though we do not share the circumstances that incited their response. Smith refers to this also as ‘fellow-feeling’. He asserts that sympathy is part of human nature, and thus is not an expression of virtue, but is rather a passion that is exhibited by humanity.”

<sup>139</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*.

more and more people. In the latter scenario, it is not that we have to imaginatively inhabit another's circumstance, perspective, or fate in order to sympathize with him; rather, we have to imagine ourselves as bound up in the *same* fate as him. We must be able to imagine a relationship of necessity to him; in short, we must imagine ourselves to be kin.

Significantly for Hearn, it is the *temporal* extension of the Japanese family, its inclusion of "not only parents and their blood-kindred, but grandparents and their kindred, and great-grandparents, and all the dead behind them" that then lays the groundwork for one's ability to have a spatially expansive sense of kin in the present, to sympathize with others in the here and now: "the emotion belonging to such representation may extend, as in Japan, to many groups and sub-groups of living families, and even, in time of national peril, to the whole nation as one great family." To feel a sense of kin with the dead, however, means not only to sympathize with them in the sense of Adam Smith's definition of the term, but to feel a sense of *dependency* on them, to feel as though one's well being depended on their well-being. Hearn discusses this sense of the living's dependence on the dead, and the dead's dependence on the living, in his most academic and theoretical work, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*:

The great general idea, the fundamental idea, underlying every persistent ancestor-worship, is that *the welfare of the living depends upon the welfare of the dead*. Under the influence of this idea, and of the cult based upon it, were developed the early organization of the family, the laws regarding property and succession, the whole structure, in short, of ancient society,—whether in the Western or the Eastern world.<sup>140</sup>

We might contrast this passage to a similar passage in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which the dead are discussed in terms of the faculty of sympathy. For Smith, however, unlike Hearn, sympathy for the dead amounts, again, to merely *inhabiting* their perspective—in short, to imagining *what it would be like to be dead*—rather than, e.g. Hearn, believing that their presence continues to shape and influence the present. For Smith there can be no sense of mutuality with the dead, because their circumstances can no longer be changed. Here is Smith's passage:

We sympathize even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them, we are chiefly affected by those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence upon their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered so dreadful a calamity. The tribute of our fellow-feeling seems doubly due to them now, when they are in danger of being forgot by every body; and, by the vain honours which we pay to their memory, we endeavour, for our own misery, artificially to keep alive our melancholy

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<sup>140</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*. (New York: MacMillan, 1904).

remembrance of their misfortune. That our sympathy can afford them no consolation seems to be an addition to their calamity; and to think that all we can do is unavailing, and that, what alleviates all other distress, the regret, the love, and the lamentations of their friends, can yield no comfort to them, serves only to exasperate our sense of their misery. *The happiness of the dead, however, most assuredly, is affected by none of these circumstances*; nor is it the thought of these things which can ever disturb the profound security of their repose.”

For Smith, the dead sleep. For Hearn, the dead are awake, and speak back: “For the Japanese never think of an ancestor as having become “only a memory”: their dead are alive.”<sup>141</sup> Whereas for Smith, death is “miserable” and signals the beginning of being “obliterated...from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relatives,” for Hearn death is “the most important act” of a person’s life, the moment when “his personal existence can be properly considered to begin”:

His death may be said to be the most important act of his whole life. For then only can his personal existence be properly considered to begin. By it he joins the great company of ancestors who are to these people of almost more consequence than living folk, and of much more individual distinction. Particularly is this the case in China and Korea, but the same respect is paid the dead in Japan. Then at last the individual receives that recognition which was denied to him in the flesh. In Japan a mortuary tablet is set up to him in the house and duly worshipped; on the content the ancestors are given a dwelling of their own, and even more devotedly revered.<sup>142</sup>

Hearn thus suggests that, at least within the Japanese family and the system of ancestor worship that he observes, death elevates a person in importance. His visible absence increases his consequence, lifts him up to the force of a law. Whereas for Smith, death is an irreversible “calamity” and “corruption,” a diminution of power absolutely.

## Hearn/Yakumo : Orientalist/Nationalist

There is one sentence in the originally quoted passage from Hearn’s *Kokoro* that cannot be overlooked, and to which we now turn, which is his rather sinister equation of family and nationhood: “This idea of the family cultivates sympathetic representation to such a degree that the range of the emotion belonging to such representation may extend, as in Japan, to many groups and sub-groups of living families, and even, in time of national peril, *to the whole nation as one great family*: a feeling much deeper than what we call patriotism.” There is much to puzzle over in this sentence, particularly the strange contradiction of the statement that “this

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<sup>141</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*

<sup>142</sup> Hearn, *Soul of the Far East*



[‘Oriental’] idea of the family...may extend...in time of national peril to the whole nation as one great family: a feeling much deeper than what we call patriotism.”

Indeed, the idea of the “whole nation as one great family” is precisely what patriotism consisted of at this particular historical juncture in Meiji Japan. Hearn’s *Kokoro* was published in 1896, just two years after Japan’s victory in the Sino-Japanese war, and just one year after Japan’s invasion of Taiwan. Japan was well on its way to becoming an empire by this time, and the rhetoric of the nation as family arguably played a strong ideological and moral justification for Japan’s expansion overseas. Why would Hearn insist that such a sentiment was not only “deeper than patriotism,” but even go so far as to call it a “religious emotion?” Either he means that the feeling of sympathy extending to the entire nation is something categorically different from patriotism; or he means that this is a deeper type of patriotism, bordering on “religiosity.”

In either case, Hearn’s conflation of family and nation would seem to render him guilty of succumbing to the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism, and indeed, scholars have made the case for Hearn as one of the originators of *Nihonjinron* (日本人論), an ideological belief in the uniqueness of the Japanese people as a racial or ethnic group. *Nihonjinron*, somewhat like the theory of “Aryan” superiority used by the Nazis, was indeed used to promote and justify some of the most aggressive phases of Japanese imperialism. Hearn would first arrive in Japan in the 1890’s, just as this type of rhetoric was on the rise; and although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish, at least at the textual level, between his “exotification” of a culture foreign to him, and a professed belief in the uniqueness of the Japanese race, he was undoubtedly, at least in part, swept up in the rhetoric of nationalism taking hold of Japan at this moment.

Roy Starrs, addressing the question of Hearn’s Japanese nationalism directly, argues that Hearn’s attitude toward nationalism in general underwent a profound transformation during the last fourteen years of his life, which he spent in Japan from 1890-1904. Being himself somewhat of an “internationalist,” a lifelong vagabond and outsider to almost every environment he found himself in throughout his life, Hearn had always demonstrated an affection toward, as well as a tendency to romanticize, marginal cultures on the verge of disappearance. Although this is originally how Hearn thought about Japanese culture as well, Starrs argues that Hearn’s mere ‘appreciation’ for the uniqueness of Japan’s traditions takes a turn for the militaristic as the years go by:

Before his arrival in Japan the only kind of nationalism evinced in his writings was in the gentle tradition of the old romantic Herderian school, a purely cultural nationalism—more specifically, a nostalgic attachment to dying folk cultures such as those of the American and Caribbean Creoles. But his encounter with Meiji Japan turned him into an aggressive modern state nationalist, to the extent even that he adopted the Japanese cause against China and Russia.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Roy Starrs, “Lafcadio Hearn as Japanese Nationalist.” *Japan Review*, Vol. 18, 2006. 181-213.

There is much evidence to affirm this position, undoubtedly. Hearn's agreement with the Japanese nationalist scholars in assigning a central place to the native religion of Shinto in shaping "Japanese character"; his frequent use of terms such as "national character," "national beliefs," "Japanese soul" "race-feeling," "race-genius," etc., and, perhaps most frightening of all, Hearn's evident enthusiasm for Japan's aggressive imperialist wars against China and Russia, all provide ample evidence that Hearn did not remain unaffected by the rising discourse of Japanese nationalism and militarism.

And yet: Hearn is a writer full of many contradictions. For as many times as we find the words "race-genius," "Japanese soul, or "Japanese character" speckled throughout his writings, we find that he frequently and repeatedly conflates this type of hyper-specific rhetoric of Japanese uniqueness with the universalism of evolutionary theory by explaining a particular phenomenon—e.g. ancestor worship—by means of *both* the particularity of culture and the universality of science! What are we to make, for example, of his belief that Japanese ancestor worship is both expressive of the Japanese national character, *as well as an illustration of a universal law*—that is, the idea that the dead reside within and control the living via the mechanisms of hereditary transmission? For Hearn, the Shinto notion of ancestor worship, the belief that the dead continue to exert a concrete influence on the present, was clearly proven as true by the biologic fact (at least as it was propounded by Spencer, Haeckel, and others) that memories, instincts, tastes, and habits resided in the body at the cellular level and were transmitted from generation to generation.

Thus, it seems, to the extent that Hearn believed in the cultural uniqueness of Japan, he did so only to the extent that it illustrated a universal biological law. For Hearn, specificity and universality cannot be held apart. Indeed, the more one reads of Hearn, the more it becomes obvious that a large part of his enthusiasm for and fascination with the cultures and practices of Japan is that they seem to confirm, in advance, many of the ideas that western scientific knowledge had only begun to uncover in the 19th century, via the findings of evolution and heredity:

Science fully justifies the Buddhist position that what we call self is a bundle of sensations, emotions, sentiments, ideas, memories, all relating to the physical experiences of the race. Science even supports the Buddhist denial of the permanence of the sensuous ego.<sup>144</sup>

This is a theme Hearn will repeat throughout his work—that whatever "particularities" Shinto and Buddhist doctrines might reveal about Japanese society or culture, they are also for him universal, scientific evidence of the laws of evolution at work:

Whether our dead do or do not continue to dwell without us as well as within us,—a question not to be decided in our present undeveloped state of comparative blindness,—certain it is that the testimony of cosmic facts accords with one *weird* belief of Shinto: the belief that all things are determined by the dead,—whether by ghosts of men or ghosts of

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid*

worlds. Even as our personal lives are ruled by the now viewless lives of the past, so doubtless the life of our Earth, and of the system to which it belongs, is ruled by ghosts of spheres innumerable: dead universes,—dead suns and planets and moons,—as forms long since dissolved into the night, but as forces immortal and eternally working.<sup>145</sup>

Hearn's use of "weird" here, one of his favorite recurring lexical tropes, expresses an older meaning and usage of the word. "Weird," from the Old English "wyrð," originally referred to fate, chance, fortune, derived from an even older, proto-Germanic "wurthiz" meaning: that which is to come, thus the high German "werden," meaning "to become." The association between "weird" and the sense of uncanny or supernatural developed from the middle English use of the phrase "weird sisters" to refer to the three Fates—the goddesses who controlled human destiny, and who make an appearance in Macbeth, for example. By 1815-1820, "weird" had taken on the modern connotations of "odd, strange, or disturbingly different."

Hearn's repeated use of the word "weird" to describe the practice of Japanese ancestor worship reveal something significant about his contradictory position. For Hearn, the practices he observes in Japan are "weird" in several senses. First, they are literally strange to him, in the sense of foreign, or unknown. Second, and at the same time, they *are* known—just not consciously. Despite their foreignness, these practices seem to echo uncannily some universal truth about the laws of inheritance and evolution, and in the way in which experience and memory are passed down biologically. In one of his sketches, Hearn describes an experience of watching a well-known child prodigy who was miraculously able to write calligraphy as if he were a practiced master. Hearn sees in this both a cultural particularity and a universal law of inheritance at work, and describes the sensation, again, as "weird":

Still, it was not the beauty of the thing in itself which impressed me, but the weird, extraordinary, indubitable proof it afforded of inherited memory so vivid as to be almost equal to the recollection of former births. Generations of dead calligraphers revived in the fingers of that tiny hand. The thing was never the work of an individual child, but beyond all question the work of ghosts—the countless ghosts that make the compound ancestral soul. It was proof visible and tangible of psychological and physiological wonders justifying both the Shinto doctrine of ancestor worship and the Buddhist doctrine of preexistence.<sup>146</sup>

We might read Hearn as "simply" a Japanese nationalist if we ignored all of the references to science scattered throughout his writings, and further, ignored the fact that it was largely his fascination with the mechanisms of heredity that seemed to fuel his interest in Japan. At the very least, Hearn's interest in science cannot be separated from his position and attitude toward Japan. And if his statement on the "whole nation as one great family" echoes the rhetoric of Japanese

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<sup>145</sup> Hearn

<sup>146</sup> Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*

nationalism and militarism at this historical juncture, everything hinges upon what Hearn meant by “the family.”

## The Specter of Capital

For Hearn “the family” was a social process, ephemeral and ever-evolving in time, rather than a static substance. Kinship was an active negotiation between the visible and the invisible, between the material world and “a world of ghosts”—only this definition of kinship, which understood the present as well as the people who inhabited it as extensions of the past, had validity for him. Significantly, this ability to see phenomena as processes rather than substances was also tied up in his critique of capitalism and the commodity. In a rhetorical leap rare for Hearn, he argues that a society which does not value the work of the dead, nor sense a feeling of debt or obligation to the ways in which they shaped the present, is also a society which values commodity objects over the labor of the worker who produced it:

In the West, after the destruction of antique society, no such feeling [of reverence for the dead] could remain. The beliefs that condemned the ancients to hell, and forbade the praise of their works,—the doctrine that trained us to return thanks for everything to the God of the Hebrews,—created habits of thought and habits of thoughtlessness, both inimical to every feeling of gratitude to the past. Then, with the decay of theology and the dawn of larger knowledge, came the teaching that the dead had no choice in their work,—they had obeyed necessity, and we had only received from them the results of necessity. And today we still fail to recognize that the necessity itself ought to compel our sympathies with those who obeyed it, and that its bequeathed results are as pathetic as they are precious. *Such thoughts rarely occur to us even in regard to the work of the living who serve us. We consider the cost of a thing purchased or obtained to ourselves;—about its cost in effort to the producer we do not allow ourselves to think:* indeed, we should be laughed at for any exhibition of conscience on the subject. And our equal insensibility to the pathetic meaning of the work of the past, and to that of the work of the present, largely explains the wastefulness of our civilization,—the reckless consumption by luxury of the labor of years in the pleasure of an hour,—the inhumanity of the thousands of unthinking rich, each of whom dissipates yearly in the gratification of totally unnecessary wants the price of a hundred human lives.

Hearn makes a rhetorical move that echoes his earlier sentiment: “the Oriental family,” because it is extended over large scales of time (“The Oriental family means not only parents and their blood-kindred, but grandparents and their kindred, and great-grandparents, and all the dead behind them”) can also then be extended over large scales of space (“This idea of the family cultivates sympathetic representation to such a degree that...the range of the emotion belonging to such representation may extend, as in Japan, to many groups and sub-groups of living families, and even, in time of national peril, to the whole nation as one great family”).

Here, he makes a similar and counterposed argument about the Western nuclear family: because the limited form of the western nuclear family does *not* extend across large scales of time (“The doctrine that trained us to return thanks for everything to the God of the Hebrews,—created habits of thought and habits of thoughtlessness, both inimical to every feeling of gratitude to the past”), so it also does *not* promote a capacity for extended sympathy or kinship to others in the present (“Such thoughts rarely occur to us even in regard to the work of the living who serve us. We consider the cost of a thing purchased or obtained to ourselves;—about its cost in effort to the producer we do not allow ourselves to think”).

Yet, whereas in the example of the “Oriental” family and its relation to extended scales of space Hearn makes reference to the nation (“the whole nation as one great family”), in the example of the “Western” family his immediate example of reference is the commodity (“We consider the cost of a thing purchased or obtained to ourselves;—about its cost in effort to the producer we do not allow ourselves to think”). We can extrapolate from Hearn’s analogy that *price*, or monetary value (“We consider the cost of a thing purchased or obtained to ourselves”) is akin to a kind of presentism; whereas *labor* (“About its cost in effort to the producer we do not allow ourselves to think”) is akin to the ability, like ancestor worship, to see the past as having a relation with and exerting a material influence, on the present. If the Western nuclear family can only consider as kin those who are visible, concrete, and present—i.e. alive—then, similarly, it can only view objects in terms of their abstract price—not the concrete labor that produced them.

In this schema, the ghost becomes a kind of laborer for Hearn. If the “Oriental” family form is one that is able to extend temporally backward and forward in time to include the ancestral dead as well as the living, then it is because it sees the dead as having worked on, and thus meaningfully shaped, present circumstances.

All our knowledge is bequeathed knowledge. The dead have left us record of all they were able to learn about themselves and the world—about the laws of death and life,—about things to be acquired and things to be avoided,—about ways of making existence less painful than Nature willed it,—about right and wrong and sorrow and happiness,—about the error of selfishness, the wisdom of kindness, the obligation of sacrifice. They left us information of everything they could find out concerning climates and seasons and places,—the sun and moon and stars,—the motions and the composition of the universe. They bequeathed us also their delusions which long served the good purpose of saving us from falling into greater ones. They left us the story of their errors and efforts, their triumphs and failures, their pains and joys, their loves and hates,—for warning or example. They expected our sympathy, because they toiled with the kindest wishes and hopes for us, and because they made our world. They cleared the land; they extirpated monsters; they tamed and taught the animals most useful to us.

Significant here is that Hearn’s comparison of the dead to workers, and of objects as the products of human labor, seems to echo Marx and Engels’ discussion of the commodity form and the dialectical process:

The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of *processes*, in which the things, apparently stable no less than their mind images in our heads, the concepts, go through *an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away*...For dialectical philosophy, nothing is final, absolute, sacred. *It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it, except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away*, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher.<sup>147</sup>

Further on in *Kokoro*, Hearn tells an anecdote he has once heard about the Edo shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543—1616) in order to illustrate what he sees as a subset of Japanese thinking: the ability to see commodities for the labor that produced them, rather than simply for their abstract value, processes over substances. Once again, we see that Hearn simultaneously conflates Japanese uniqueness with a general or universal law: the sayings of Ieyasu both reveal something about “the Japanese mind,” or the “Oriental sentiment,” and, at the same time, a scientific truth—that commodities are reified forms of human labor:

“Two sayings of Ieyasu exemplify the Oriental sentiment. When virtually master of the empire, this greatest of Japanese soldiers and statesmen was seen one day cleaning and smoothing with his own hands an old dusty pair of silk hakama or trousers. ‘What you see me do,’ he said to a retainer, ‘I am not doing because I think of the worth of the garment in itself, but because I think of what it needed to produce it. It is the result of the toil of a poor woman; and that is why I value it. *If we do not think, while using things, of the time and effort required to make them,—then our want of consideration puts us on a level with the beasts.*’ Again, in the days of his greatest wealth, we hear of him rebuking his wife for wishing to furnish him too often with new clothing. ‘When I think,’ he protested, ‘of the multitudes around me, and of the generations to come after me, I feel it my duty to be very sparing, for their sake, of the goods in my possession.’”<sup>148</sup>

As Hearn describes him, Ieyasu sees not simply a pair of silk trousers, but a whole chain of invisible processes that has been crucial to the production of those trousers. “I am not doing this because I think of the worth of the garment in itself, but because I think of *what it needed to produce it*. It is the result of the toil of a poor woman; and *that is why I value it*.” The anecdote about Ieyasu is connected to Hearn’s discussion of ancestor worship, insofar as he understood ancestor worship as a subset of a larger way of thinking (“the Oriental sentiment”) that value processes over essences, that valued objects and beings for the labor that had shaped them over time, rather than for their immediate, sensuous forms. Just as the value of a commodity such as a pair of silk trousers must be measured by the labor of the individuals that went into making it, so the worth of an individual human being cannot be separated from the lives of all of his or her ancestors.

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<sup>147</sup> V. I. Lenin, *On the Question of Dialectics: A Collection* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980)

<sup>148</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*, 45.

Generally speaking,” says Hearn in his introduction to *Kokoro*, “we (Westerners) construct for endurance, the Japanese for impermanency. Few things for common use are made in Japan with a view to durability. The straw sandals worn out and replaced at each stage of the journey; the robe consisting of a few simple widths loosely stitched together for wearing, and unstitched again for washing; the fresh chopsticks served to each new guest at a hotel; the light shoji frames serving at once for windows and walls, and repapered twice a year; the mattings renewed ever autumn,—all these are but random examples of countless small things in daily life that illustrate the national contentment with impermanency.<sup>149</sup>

Thus, the notion of kinship as extended over time and space is connected for Hearn to the ability to see the extended social life of commodities, how they circulate between generations and through various hands. That is, the ability to value material objects for the invisible labor that went into their creation over time, is part and parcel of the ability to hold the dead present in one’s mind, as an extension of one’s present, living kin. Hearn’s description of the impoverished form of the Western nuclear family recalls Engels’ “complex of ready-made things,” as opposed to the expansive view, generated by an apparently greater power of “sympathetic mental representation” of kin as including those ancestors past and offspring yet to come, who exercise a force of influence in the present despite their physical absence: “That intimate sense of relation between the visible and the invisible worlds,” Hearn continues, “is the special religious characteristic of Japan among all civilized countries. To the Japanese the dead are not less real than the living.”<sup>150</sup>

If we take seriously Hearn’s comparison of the life of commodities to the (after)lives of the dead, the logical conclusion we come to is that Hearn views heredity itself as a form of social *labor*. When Hearn says that “The most ordinary utensil will appear to him not the mere product of individual capacity on the part of carpenter or potter, smith or cutler, but the product of experiment continued through thousands of years with methods,” he is drawing an explicit connection between the labor theory of value, the implications of the findings of evolution/heredity, and the practice of ancestor worship. He frequently draws upon the trope of the specter and the ghost to illustrate the idea that the unique existence of every object or person is conditioned by an invisible chain of processes that have brought it into being:

“Figuratively we may say that *every mind is a world of ghosts*...and that the spectral population of one grain of brain-matter more than realizes the wildest fancies of the medieval schoolmen about the number of angels able to stand on the point of a needle. Scientifically we know that within one tiny living cell may be stored up the whole life of a race, the sum of all the past sensation of millions of years; perhaps even of millions of dead planets.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Hearn, *Kokoro*, 18.

<sup>150</sup> Hearn, 269

<sup>151</sup> Hearn, 272.

It is here that Derrida's description of the ghostliness of capital in his *Specters of Marx* becomes useful; for Hearn, too, frequently draws upon the tropes of spectrality and ghostliness when remarking upon the invisible processes that shape and condition sensuous objects. Hearn uses the trope of the "ghost" to refer not merely to the spirits of ancestors worshiped by Japanese families, but also in a broader sense, to describe the difficulty of drawing sharp boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the sensuous and the non-sensuous.

The ghostly in Hearn's account comes to stand in, I argue, for what Derrida calls "hauntology," or an existential condition that describes the state of temporal, historical, and ontological disjunction in which the ostensible immediacy of presence is replaced by "the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive."<sup>152</sup> The concept of hauntology draws on Derrida's deconstruction of Western philosophy's logocentrism, which critiques the idea that being necessarily entails presence. Asserting that there is no temporal point of pure origin but only an "always-already absent present," deconstruction identifies "haunting as the state proper to being as such."<sup>153</sup>

We can hear echoes of Derrida's skepticism of origins in Hearn's essays when he notes: "Modern science assures us that the passion of first love, so far as the individual may be concerned, is 'absolutely antecedent to all experience whatever.' (Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*) *In other words, that which might well seem to be the most strictly personal of all feelings, is not an individual matter at all...* the first sight of the beloved quickens in the soul of the lover some dormant prenatal remembrance of divine truth. Science is even the more positive on this point: it states quite plainly that the dead, not the living, are responsible. *There would seem to be some sort of ghostly remembrance in first loves.*"<sup>154</sup>

Here, Hearn seems to draw attention to the impossibility of localizing an origin or a beginning for any experience—every experience is always already inscribed in an invisible chain of earlier experiences that have formed, shape, and made possible the current one. He also draws, no doubt, upon contemporary beliefs in the scientific community about the ability of experiences to be passed down genetically, and thus determine one's fate. In this respect, Hearn's remarks are similar to those of Derrida's who claims that the 'I am' is always haunted by itself, that it never perfectly coincides with itself because "time is always out of joint"—a line he draws from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "*But this Ego, this living individual, would itself be inhabited and invaded by its own specter. It would be constituted by specters of which it becomes the host and which it assembles in the haunted community of a single body. Ego = ghost. Therefore 'I am' would mean 'I am haunted': I am haunted by myself who am (haunted by myself who am haunted by myself who am...and so forth).*"

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<sup>152</sup> Derrida, 74.

<sup>153</sup> Derrida, 12.

<sup>154</sup> Hearn, 155.



I want to suggest that it is this idea of seeing complexes of *processes* rather than ready-made things that Hearn calls “the Oriental sentiment,” and he devotes the greatest portion of his essays to exploring the way in which this sentiment manifests itself in the Japanese understanding of kinship, which, unlike the enclosed, immediate, even “ready-made” complex of the Western nuclear family, unfolds as a complex of mediated processes that connect the living and the dead over many generations. What might such a theory have meant for Hearn’s own positionality vis-a-vis the late 19th century Japan in which he lived, given his own transnational status as a writer? A notion of kinship as labor, and of the ghost as laborer, might have suggested to Hearn that one way in which the dead do go on shaping the living is through the labor of the written word. That he would extend his theory of ancestor worship to the life of objects also suggests that one such object on his mind was the literary object: *We consider the cost of a thing purchased or obtained to ourselves; about its cost in effort to the producer we do not allow ourselves to think*. If the “thing purchased or obtained” is a text, and the “producer” the author, or ancestor whose cost in effort to produce it we *should* be allowed to think, then Hearn makes room for a type of social kinship constructed between readers and writers, though they might be separated by vast chasms of time and space.

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