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"Shōjobyō" is a short story by Tayama Katai (1872–1930), originally published in the magazine *Taishō* (The sun) in May 1907.¹ Its plot, narrated in the first person, concerns Sugita Kojō, a 37-year-old man who has a wife whose career is failing as he commutes from his home to his job at a publishing house, where he is employed to carry out chores such as proofreading magazines. Sugita's personality is defined by the condition shōjobyō that gives the story its title: a strong attraction to young women (*shōjo, missus*), which the narrator and other characters in the story describe with terms such as "bad habit" (*wari i kase*), "bizarre" (*fushigi da*), and "to the point of being an illness" (*yomas de ar hodo de aru*).² This attraction rarely

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1. Keiji G. Henshaw translates the story under the title "The Girl Watcher" in *Japan's Kawaii Queen: A Reader* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan-sho, 1991), pp. 185–81.

2. It is not clear if Sugita's age of 37 in the original corresponds to Western or Japanese traditional reckoning. Most translators have opted for the first interpretation. In the latter case, Sugita would actually be 38 or 36.

3. Yūzō and the story were published in *Taishō*, as reproduced in Ishizuka Chikū et al., "Shōjobyō o yomu," *Bungaku*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1993), pp. 159–93. The *Taishō* text presents *furigana* readings, not necessarily added by the author, for every *kunji*. There is no

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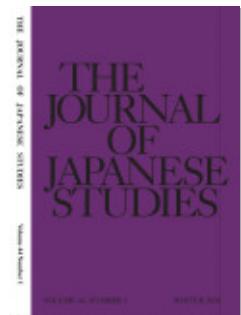


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“Shōjobyō” is a short story by Tayama Katai (1872–1930), originally published in the magazine *Taiyō* (The sun) in May 1907.¹ Its plot, narrated in the third person, describes a day in the life of 37-year-old Sugita Kojō,² a writer whose career is fading, as he commutes from his home to his job at a publishing house, where he is employed to carry out chores such as proof-reading magazines. Sugita’s personality is defined by the condition *shōjobyō* that gives the story its title: a strong attraction to young women (*shōjo*, *musume*), which the narrator and other characters in the story describe with terms such as “bad habit” (*warui kuse*), “bizarre” (*fushigi da*), and “to the point of being an illness” (*yamai de aru hodo de aru*).³ This attraction rarely

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results in direct interactions with the objects of Sugita's attention; in fact, Sugita appears to feel content simply to watch young women. Sugita's location of choice to perform these acts of vision is Tokyo's urban transportation system, used daily by both Sugita and the objects of his gaze.

My analysis of this story is focused on the discourses and representations pertaining to the domains of the senses (perception, sexuality, the experience of beauty: the multiple realms covered by the word "aesthetics") that shape it. The acts of vision performed by the protagonist, his sexual inclination (designated as *shōjobyō* in the title of the story), and his interactions with modern technologies and female subjects are all elements suggesting that the senses play a crucial role in this story as constituents of or mediators in the experience of modernity.

Making Sense of "Shōjobyō"

The five-section story opens on a spring morning with Sugita, clad in his "Western-style clothes," walking from his home to Yoyogi station, where he will board the Kōbu line train to Ochanomizu and change to the Sotobori tram line. Following Sugita's movements, the narrator describes the acts of vision that Sugita, with consummate technique, directs at the young women he happens to see on the train, evokes in flashbacks previous episodes of interaction with some of them, and presents Sugita's thoughts and fantasies (sections 1, 2, and 4). Sugita particularly cherishes the memory of an "abso-

consensus on how to translate the name of the main character's condition and, therefore, the title of this story; it clearly represents a challenge for translators. Henshall uses a new translation of the title, "Girl-Sickness," in *In Search of Nature: The Japanese Writer Tayama Katai (1872–1930)* (Leiden: Global Oriental, 2013), p. 103. "The Girl Fetish" is the translation used by Alisa Freedman in *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), while Indra Levy uses "maidenitis" in *Sirens of the Western Shore: The Westernesque Femme Fatale, Translation, and Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 152. Also noteworthy are "Girl Crazy" and "Nymphettomania," proposed by William F. Sibley in Maeda Ai, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, ed. James A. Fujii (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 331. Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit uses "Girl Fever," based on the German "Mädchenfieber," in *Rituals of Self-Revelation: Shishōsetsu as Literary Genre and Socio-Cultural Phenomenon* (Cambridge MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1996), p. 49. Peter Pörtner's German translation of this story, published in *Kagami: Japanscher Zeitschriftenspiegel*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1985), pp. 145–60, opts for "Krank nach jungen Frauen," while Verena Werner renders it as "Krank nach Mädchen," in *Das Verschwinden des Erzählers: Erzähltheoretische Analysen von Erzählungen Tayama Katais aus den Jahren, 1902–1908* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 15. Jean-Jacques Tschudin's French translation is entitled "Le malade de beauté," in *Anthologie de nouvelles japonaises contemporaines*, Tome 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), pp. 69–88. In Italian, "La passione per le ragazzine" is found in Tayama Katai, *Il foton*, trans. Ilaria Ingegneri (Venice: Marsilio, 2015), p. 44.

lutely beautiful girl, who had all the air of being the demoiselle of a noble family [*kazoku no reijō*],” who after getting on the train at Shinanomachi “had traveled next to him as far as Ushigome”⁴; Sugita has not seen her since.

Frustrated by his professional situation, Sugita seems equally unhappy about life with his wife and children. A description of Sugita’s home in the outskirts of Tokyo while he is out at work, which is notable for the deployment of the literary techniques of the naturalism of which Katai is usually considered a major exponent, appears in section 3. In that same section, we see a discussion among some of Sugita’s friends about the possible causes of his peculiar inclination.

In the fifth and final section, Sugita gets off the tram in Nishikichō Sanchōme in the Kanda neighborhood and goes to his workplace, a fictional publishing house called Seinensha (literally, “young men company,” a name not devoid of ironic overtones). Here, he is the object of jokes and comments by his editor-in-chief (*henshūchō*) and colleagues (*henshūin*) who know about his passion for young women. Previously, the narrator had noted that, despite a promising start, Sugita’s career as a writer had come to a standstill, citing his inclination as one of the main reasons. Both Sugita and his coworkers appear to be aware of the negative effect that Sugita’s condition has had on his career.

After completing his working day of trivial tasks punctuated by fantasies about the young women he had seen previously, Sugita leaves Seinensha and reverses his route from that morning, full of despairing thoughts about his life. In Ochanomizu, he transfers to the Kōbu line and, in a coach so crowded that he has to stand in the “guard’s section . . . on the outside of the right-hand door,”⁵ he finally catches glimpses of the long-awaited demoiselle from Shinanomachi, who is traveling on the same train. As he holds on to the brass pole on the coach’s external platform, Sugita loses himself in his contemplation of the young lady inside the carriage. Being in an unstable position, he loses his balance because of the train’s sudden acceleration, falls onto the rails, and is killed by a train coming from the opposite direction.

“Shōjobyō” is considered one of Katai’s “most promising early works.”⁶ Japanese scholars have often focused on how the story tells us something about Katai himself: Sugita and the empirical author of the story bear a number of incontrovertible similarities. Although authoritative, this approach,

4. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 176; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 182.

5. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 180; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 190.

6. Maeda, *Text and the City*, p. 331.

which likely derives at least partly from the traditional reading paradigms of the *shishōsetsu* (“I-novel”) genre, is not explored in this article.⁷

Recent studies of this story have also shown that “Shōjobyō” contains a number of self-reflexive elements regarding the processes of literary and social modernization in Japan. Indra Levy has produced an insightful analysis of the narrative techniques in this story, comparing them with those used in *Futon* (The quilt), a 1907 novella published some months after “Shōjobyō,” which is considered today the most important and representative of all of Katai’s works. In “Shōjobyō,” the rhetorical conventions of naturalist narration (omniscient third-person narrator, use of personal pronouns, internal monologue, etc.) are combined with an economy of gazes and viewpoints that results, in Levy’s words, in a “palpable tension between public and private gazes, external appearances and internal visions, that lends ‘Shōjobyō’ its basic structure and source of interest; its narrator is distinguished, within Katai’s oeuvre, by a singular ability to animate both gazes at once.”⁸

The analysis of the gazes and acts of vision performed in the text represents one of the privileged approaches in the study of this story. This aspect is often associated with another feature of “Shōjobyō”: the novelty of its sociotechnological setting of modern urban transportation, so that, Alisa Freedman notes, the story thematizes “the intrusion of the gaze into this new kind of daily space.”⁹ In her study on “Shōjobyō,” Freedman reconstructs the historical and social context of Katai’s story, highlighting not only the train’s role as a new narrative trope but also the novelty of the story’s characters as representatives of the new urban categories of the *sarariiman* (salaried white-collar worker) and *jogakusei* (young female student), who emerged as distinct types after the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War. “In many ways,” notes Freedman, Sugita “is a prototype of the salaryman characters that would increasingly appear in 1920s stories and sketches,”

7. By assuming as “patently obvious, from the minutiae as well as the overall character, that the protagonist was a representation of Katai himself,” Kenneth Henshall for instance considers “Shōjobyō” the “beginning of [Katai’s] catharsis,” a “poignant cry from the heart,” and, with particular reference to its finale, “an attempt by the author to ‘kill off’ his old self” (Henshall, “Introduction” to Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 18–19). Henshall reiterates this interpretation and elaborates on it in *In Search of Nature*, pp. 103–7. Both Edward Fowler and Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, in their seminal studies on the I-novel, notice the self-critical and parodic effects produced by the similarities between Sugita and Katai: Edward Fowler, *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 121; and Hijiya-Kirschner, *Rituals of Self-Revelation*, pp. 48–49. I believe that my reading, which is focused on the elements that shape “Shōjobyō” as a narrative construction involving a series of aesthetic elements, works whether we consider Sugita a textual simulacrum of the empirical Katai or a completely fictional creation.

8. Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, p. 150.

9. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, p. 30.

while the *shōjo* he stares at are part of a coalescing new type of female subjects “both idealized as model modern women and eroticized as sexual objects.”¹⁰ Freedman does not limit her reading to the social aspects of “this very visual story”¹¹; she also offers a formal analysis that examines the stylistic correlatives of the effects produced by modern means of transportation with their speed and acceleration on sensory perception. In her opinion, the story even appears to mimetically incorporate these new modes of perception in its very prose style, which “reflects the speed and rhythm of a moving vehicle.”¹² Levy also notices the “protocinematic deployment of the train as a site of moving images, repeatedly compared to a ‘shadow lamp’” in the story, and connects it to the pleasurable experiences of visual observation and mental recollection of the “Westernesque women that the protagonist carries around like a secret stash of opium.”¹³

While subscribing to Freedman’s and Levy’s interpretations of “Shōjobyō,” my focus is the modes of sensory perception described in Katai’s story, which I analyze in their relation to two elements: the sexual “illness” (*yamai, byō*) of the protagonist, and the mediation or alteration of perceptions produced by modern technological devices. Both elements can be considered tropes within the contemporary discourses on the constitutive elements of modern subjectivities and their perceptual and sensory faculties.

There is also another layer in Sugita’s acts of vision. As Saeki Junko notes, the historical meanings of the word “aesthetics,” which can be traced to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s thought, imply an interplay between sensory knowledge and the experience of beauty:

In fact, the expression “aesthetics” as used in the West, which served as Japan’s model, was not so old, having been coined by Baumgarten in the eighteenth century in Germany. Feeling the need to set up a science of aesthetics that would complement the study of the intellect with an inquiry into the sensuous cognition of feelings of pleasure, Baumgarten authored a work titled *Aesthetica* (part 1, 1750; part 2, 1788). According to his definition, aesthetics is the “science of sensory knowledge” and therefore is poor in objectivity. Compared to logic, it is “an inferior form of knowledge”

10. Ibid., pp. 35, 45. The metonymical attributes of modernity attached to the *jogakusei* and *shōjo* are also extensively discussed by Levy, who introduces the concept of the “Westernesque femme fatale.” Often including the “Meiji schoolgirl,” these new kinds of “culturally hybrid” female identities emerged as “the alluring embodiments of Japan’s cultural assimilation of the modern West” in the writings of major exponents of Meiji vernacular literature such as Futabatei Shimei (1864–1909), Shimamura Högetsu (1871–1918), and Tayama Katai (Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, pp. 2–9).

11. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, p. 49.

12. Ibid., p. 53.

13. Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, p. 151.

(*gnoseologia inferior*), “the art of the analog of reason” (*ars analogi rationis*). Moreover, the Latin word “aesthetica” was the translation of the Greek adjective “aisthetiké” (sensitive), which is based on the Greek noun “aisthesis,” meaning “sensibility,” “feelings.” Thus the etymological meaning of “aesthetics” is “the sensibility of feelings.” When we look at the original meaning of the Greek word, and at Baumgarten’s usage, then the Japanese translation should be something like “sensibility” (*kanseigaku*) or “sensitivity” (*kankakuron*).¹⁴

Etymologically speaking, then, the very word “aesthetics” can refer both to the “science of sensory knowledge” (*kanseigaku*, one of the two terms indicated by Saeki, is also commonly used to translate the first part of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781; 2d ed. 1787], which is devoted to that kind of knowledge) and, in a broader sense, to an ensemble of “theories and discourses on the senses” (a more literal translation of the word *kankakuron*), including domains such as sensual pleasure, subjective sensibility, and the appreciation of beauty.

Besides their function of gathering knowledge through the senses, then, the acts of vision that Sugita directs at young female travelers, however mundane and slightly comical, also have another function: the enjoyment of sensual pleasure and the apprehension of beauty (from a lexical standpoint, the adjective *utsukushii*, “beautiful,” appears several times in the story, and the noun *bi*, “beauty,” three times; both words mostly refer to the young women, parts of their bodies, or clothes). These acts thus pertain, broadly speaking, to the domains of aesthetic experience. But what kind of aesthetic experiences are Sugita’s? Utilizing the stratified meanings of “aesthetics” (*kanseigaku* and *kankakuron*), I discuss the crucial connections between the perceptual and aesthetical functions of the senses in this story.

My main argument is that the treatment of the domains of the aesthetic, as deployed in “Shōjobyō,” reveals a specific idea of modernity that informs this story. Such treatment is historically situated at the convergence of two tendencies: the inscription of the domains of the aesthetic in the human body (mediated by the powerful tropes of contemporary medical and physiological discourse) and the ascription of new epistemological centrality to sensory knowledge in the contemporary philosophical debate (and its reverberations in *fin-de-siècle* and modernist literary works).

14. Saeki Junko, “Longing for ‘Beauty,’” in Michael F. Marra, ed., *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), pp. 39–40. *Kankakuron* usually translates the name of the empiricist doctrine of sensualism, but here Saeki is pointing to a more generic meaning of the word (the one that also interests me), hence Marra’s translation as “sensitivity.”

Aesthetics, Senses, Modernity

I argue that “Shōjobyō” adopts an empiricist and physiological notion of the aesthetic experience and pleasure. This is a notion in which the fields connected to the senses (from perception to the management of sexuality) do not fall under the domain of the decorporealized intellectual or moral substance of the subject but pertain to the subject’s body, impulses, and responses to stimuli—its very biology and the mechanics of its sense organs.

From a historical standpoint, this view is connected to a process of progressive inscription of a number of human faculties (starting with those associated with perception) in the body, which has been discussed by numerous scholars, having Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) as a landmark. This process came to full development in the second half of the nineteenth century, together with the establishment of practices and disciplines such as experimental and clinical psychology, neurology, and sexology that were among the most powerful brokers of legitimate discourses on human bodies and senses. Cultural historians who explored this cultural landscape have highlighted the discursive interplay between these disciplines and contemporary representations of the modern condition, including those provided in literary works. At the end of *Le Roman expérimental* (1880), Emile Zola famously announced the death of “metaphysical man” in literature and his replacement by “physiological man”; an increasing number of studies has shown how the developments and variations of this new paradigm pervaded the literatures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail, for instance, have argued that the discourses on modernity produced in that period (including those articulated in literary writings) should be explored as something “symbiotically related, complexly co-generative”¹⁵ with those of neurology. In many ways, they argue, modernity was constructed as the condition in which human beings—configured by contemporary discourses as bodies, organisms, and loci of nervous reflexes, stimuli, physiological processes, electrical impulses, and chemical reactions—are subjected to a constant state of overstimulation.

The ever-accelerating pace of urban life, new practices of production and consumption, and unprecedently fast means of transportation and communication were all main factors in this condition. As demonstrated by the proliferation of discourses on the negative effects of the exposure to modern life, including modern maladies such as nervous exhaustion or

15. Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail, “Introduction,” in Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail, eds., *Neurology and Modernity: A Cultural History of Nervous Systems, 1800–1950* (Hounds-mills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1. For an exhaustive presentation of the state of this field of study, see Susie Christensen, “Neurology and Modernist Literature,” *Literature Compass*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2014), pp. 279–92.

“neurasthenia” (a trope that became popular in Japan as well, as Christopher Hill has shown¹⁶), the “experience of being modern” came to be “linked to a nervous system placed under increasing strain.”¹⁷

In a parallel fashion, as authors working in the newfound fields of experimental and physiological aesthetics remarked in those years, the correct amount and quality of stimulation was believed to be an essential prerequisite to the successful aesthetic experience. Possibly one of the most radical authors in this field, the Canadian science writer Grant Allen summed up this idea in his *Physiological Aesthetics* of 1877: “The aesthetically beautiful is that which affords the Maximum of Stimulation with the Minimum of Fatigue or Waste, in processes not directly connected with vital functions.”¹⁸ Even if, in the early years of aesthetics as a discipline in Japan, idealist conceptions of aesthetics (epitomized by the elaboration by Mori Ōgai [1862–1922] of Eduard von Hartmann’s aesthetics) were prevalent by most accounts, empiricist and psychologically oriented trends began to gain currency in academic quarters and in the *bundan* by the early twentieth century.¹⁹ In this respect, the essay “Bikan ni tsuite no kansatsu” (Observations on the sense of beauty), originally published by Takayama Chogyū (1871–1902) in *Teikoku bungaku* (Imperial literature) in May 1900, is a representative example of this coexistence of different trends. Although firmly steeped in the Kantian characterization of aesthetic pleasure, the essay relies significantly on Western experimental aesthetics and the works of Ōnishi Hajime (1864–1900), an academic aesthetician who pioneered the introduction of physiological and psychological aesthetics in Japan.²⁰ Chogyū’s approach echoes a neurological-physiological paradigm in describing the process by which aesthetic pleasures are produced:

Pleasures of sense related to hearing and sight are usually called aesthetic pleasures [*bikan*]. . . . We should not reject the idea that at the root of aes-

16. Christopher Hill, “Exhausted by Their Battles with the World: Neurasthenia and Civilization Critique in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” in Nina Cornyetz and J. Keith Vincent, eds., *Perversion and Modern Japan: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 242–58.

17. Salisbury and Shail, “Introduction,” p. 5.

18. Grant Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1877), p. 39.

19. See Makoto Ueda, “Yūgen and Erhabene: Ōnishi Yoshinori’s Attempt to Synthesize Japanese and Western Aesthetics,” in J. Thomas Rimer, ed., *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals during the Interwar Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 283–87.

20. It has been pointed out that Ōnishi’s aesthetics had a significant impact on the romantic group that gathered around the journal *Bungakai* (1893–98) and was led by Kitamura Tōkoku (1868–94); this group also had the young Katai among its sympathizers. See Watanabe Kazuyasu, “Ōnishi Hajime: Criticism and Aesthetics,” in Marra, ed., *History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, p. 101, note 9.

thetic pleasure there are pleasures of sense which are related to the senses [*kannōjō no kaikan*]. But as soon as they turn into aesthetic pleasures, they should not be felt any longer as pleasures of sense deriving from the senses. To say it from the point of view of psychology, pleasures of sense adhere to the affected part of the body without being retained by it. Moving forward, they shake our entire nervous system [*shinkei keitō*] and become an essential element of our ideas.²¹

This part of the essay is significantly entitled “Bikan no shinshin no zenbu ni hibikiwataru koto” (The resounding of the sense of beauty in body and mind). As we see later, the metaphor of body and mind (both subsumed under a “nervous system”) as resonance chambers where sense impressions, feelings, and thoughts can reverberate (*hibiku*) is also present in “Shōjobyō.” Interestingly, the first volume of *Chogyū zenshū*, which contains a reprint of this essay, was published in 1906 shortly before “Shōjobyō” by Hakubunkan, the publishing house in whose editorial department Katai was working at the time. However, I am not suggesting here a direct connection between “Shōjobyō” and this essay by Chogyū, a writer of whom Katai—as can be gathered from his memoirs—was not particularly fond.²² I am pointing out how pervasive this psycho-sensual paradigm, however often tempered by or hybridized with some form of transcendental idealism, was in contemporary accounts of the relationship between senses, aesthetic pleasure, and modern subjectivities.

In its representation of the relationship between subjectivity and sensory knowledge, “Shōjobyō” appears to jibe not only with a representation of the modern subject shared by many industrial capitalist countries in which the discourses of scientific and experimental disciplines dealing with the body had become pervasive but also with those trends in the philosophy of perception and knowledge that were variously nurtured by anti-idealistic, empiriocritical, pragmatist ideas or by analytical methods coming from experimental psychology.²³ To use Jesse Matz’s words, these trends occupied

21. Takayama Chogyū, “Observations on Aesthetic Pleasure,” in Michael F. Marra, ed., *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), p. 105. Original text in *Chogyū zenshū*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1906), pp. 39–43. I follow here Marra in his translation of *bikan* as “aesthetic pleasure,” but it should be noted that the literal meaning of *bikan* is more similar to “sense of beauty” or “aesthetic sense.” Marra himself uses the former translation in *History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, p. 123.

22. Tayama Katai, *Literary Life in Tōkyō, 1885–1915: Tayama Katai’s Memoirs (“Thirty Years in Tōkyō”)*, trans. Kenneth G. Henshall (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 178.

23. Philosopher-scientists such as Ernst Mach and philosopher-psychologists such as William James were among the most influential voices in a process of empiricist revision of the statutes of positivist thought in which a reconceptualization of sensation and sensory experience played a crucial role. For an outline of this period’s “new psychologies,” see Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 6–22.

a space in the history of ideas “beyond [David] Hume but prior to [Edmund] Husserl,”²⁴ that is, beyond traditional or naive empiricism but before the rejection (represented by Husserlian phenomenology in Matz’s formula) of inductive and experimental psychologism. It is within this framework that, as evidenced by Judith Ryan in her classic *The Vanishing Subject*, late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century writers faced, as described by Martin Jay, a “withdrawal from the world of stable objects and a new preoccupation with the perceiving subject, a subject in crisis, absorbed by its own dissolution, fascinated and sometimes bewildered by the flux of sensations flooding in from without.”²⁵

These trends also circulated in the Japanese cultural and literary world in the first decades of the twentieth century. Gregory Golley has described with great acumen the persistence of “sensory literalism” and the “equation of knowledge with the ‘experience of the senses’” in the late Meiji and early Taisho cultural world.²⁶ Literary practice appropriated transversally this epistemological attitude that assumed knowledge through the senses (*kankaku*), performed by an embodied, innervated subject, as the main (if not the only) way to access “pure experience,” or sense impressions (*inshō*) as the building blocks of mental representation and ideation, or sensations themselves as the ultimate constituents of all knowable reality. This influenced naturalism, the poetics of impressionist writing,²⁷ and even certain strains of symbolism. The works of Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), such as his treatise *Bungakuron* (The theory of literature, 1907) or his conference “Gendai Nihon no kaika” (The civilization of modern Japan, 1911), in which Sōseki palpably deploys an approach to cultural and literary criticism influ-

24. Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 29.

25. Martin Jay, “Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism,” in Mark S. Micale, ed., *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 360.

26. Gregory Golley, *When Our Eyes No Longer See: Realism, Science, and Ecology in Japanese Literary Modernism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), pp. 15–16, 33–39.

27. As Jesse Matz observed, literary impressionism is a highly problematic category. From a formal point of view, impressionism is commonly associated with a taste for “the sketch, the fragment, the moment, the surface, the sense” (Matz, *Literary Impressionism*, p. 1), and again, “atmosphere and mood” (p. 14), “vivid atmospheres, diminishment of conceptual order, and concrete detail” (p. 50). In reference to Japanese literature, this category is mainly evoked in discussions of poetry genres. In prose, the genre of *shaseibun* (literary sketch) and the later works of naturalist writers such as Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943) have been associated with some form of impressionism. For Tōson’s case, see Michael K. Bourdaghs, *The Dawn That Never Comes: Shimazaki Tōson and Japanese Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 109–10.

enced by the radically empiricist psychology of William James, are among the best-studied cases.²⁸

Another telling case in point is that of the revisionist trends of naturalism. Attempts at reconfiguring the statutes of naturalist literature along vitalistic or psychologicistic lines punctuated the years after the Russo-Japanese War. Many tried to salvage the experimental and heuristic powers originally attributed to naturalist writing by dissociating them from positivism and injecting into them concepts such as “life,” “affirmation of the self,” and “activism.” Katai himself was involved in this process.²⁹

This happened in a cogenerative relationship with a growing interest in the *bundan* in what were perceived in Japan as representatives of new trends in European late naturalism and postnaturalism, among them French-language writers such as Guy de Maupassant, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Maurice Maeterlinck, and German-language *fin-de-siècle* authors. These writers provided examples of the renewed centrality of senses and sensations as constitutive of modern subjectivities and of radically new representations of this nexus. Moreover, Maupassant and Huysmans represented fascinating examples of writers who had transitioned from Zolaistic naturalism to a highly subjective form of impressionist naturalism tinged with mysticism and (in Huysmans’s case) décadentism, and were in fact among Katai’s favorite authors (albeit Huysmans in a later stage of Katai’s career).³⁰ On the other hand, the works of Arno Holz, Detlev von Liliencron, Richard Dehmel, Hermann Bahr, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and others were influentially discussed in landmark articles by critics such as Katayama Koson (1879–1933) and Sakurai Tendan (1879–1933).³¹

28. *Bungakuron* was published as a volume in the same month as “Shōjobyō.” For translations of selections from this volume, see Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, eds. Michael Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, and Joseph Murphy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 37–152. See also the special issue of *Japan Forum* devoted to *Bungakuron*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2008). “Gendai Nihon no kaika” is discussed as a document of such philosophical trends in Golley, *When Our Eyes No Longer See*, pp. 10–15.

29. Henshall, *In Search of Nature*, pp. 95–98. The naturalist critic Shimamura Hōgetsu, a former student of Ōnishi Hajime who was well read in philosophical aesthetics, was a representative figure in this process of reconfiguration of naturalism.

30. Ibid., pp. 194–96.

31. Katayama published his articles on the latest German-language “literature of the nerves” (*shinkeishitsu no bungaku*) in *Teikoku bungaku* between June and September 1905 and in December 1905. In a June 1908 article in *Waseda bungaku*, the Germanist Sakurai Tendan provided a detailed presentation of the latest trends in German literature and in particular of “Doitsu no jojōshi ni okeru inshōteki shizenshugi.” This article, in which Sakurai presented the experiments in impressionist and telegraphic lyricism of writers such as Holz and Liliencron (the former already briefly mentioned by Katayama Koson in his 1905 articles), has been recognized as highly influential on the exponents of naturalist *shi* (poetry in nontraditional forms), such as Kawaji Ryūkō. See Chiba Sen’ichi, *Gendai bungaku no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyū: Modānizumu no shiteki dōtai* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1978), p. 120. As

Relying on Johannes Volkelt's *Ästhetische Zeitfragen* (Current questions in aesthetics, 1895), a treatise on aesthetics that Mori Ogai had already presented in Japanese in 1898–99, Katayama noted that these new tendencies, which he designated by resorting to a number of labels, comprising “symbolists” (*shōchō-ha*), “décadents” (*dekadansu*), “impressionists” (*inshō-ha*), “new romantics” (*shin romanchikku*), and “literature of the nerves” (*shinkeishitsu no bungaku*), shared in fact a number of epistemological tenets with naturalism (*shizen-ha*):

[T]hey are for a certain part a reaction [to naturalism]; however, for another part, they also manifested themselves when *Sensation*, a legacy of naturalism, took new shapes. And for another part again, they are the result of the development of naturalist tendencies to their extreme consequences.³²

Focusing on sensation as a pivotal concept, Katayama offered a neat account of the interrelation between naturalist and antinaturalist trends in German-language literature, gesturing toward the exposure of, to use Fredric Jameson's words, “the intimate dialectical relationship between this properly positivist ideology of the sense datum and the accompanying notion of ‘consciousness’ . . . as well as a whole aesthetic movement ordinarily thought to be in opposition to it (and in fact profoundly antipositivist in spirit), namely impressionism.”³³

While Katayama subscribed to Volkelt's criticism of this new emphasis on sensation as a sign of the excessive refinement or degeneration of contemporary civilization,³⁴ he also illustrated the main tenets of this new poetics to the benefit of Japanese readers. He provided an ample paraphrase of Hermann Bahr's influential ideas on the “overcoming of naturalism” (*Überwindung des Naturalismus*); according to Bahr, *die Nervosität* (*shinkeishitsu* in Katayama's translation) was key to access *die Moderne*, and he advocated the creative method of the *décadents* who

do not seek feelings [*Gefühle, kanjō*] but only moods [*Stimmungen, jōchō kyōshu, kokoromochi*]. They disdain not only the external world but also everything in the interior self that is not mood. They attach little impor-

Henshall notes in *In Search of Nature*, Katai was relatively well acquainted with German naturalism. See also Hoshino Shin'ichi, “Gaikan: Doitsu bungaku to Nihon kindai bungaku,” in Fukuda Mitsuharu et al., eds., *Öbei sakka to Nihon kindai bungaku: Doitsu hen* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shuppan Sentā, 1975), pp. 33–38.

32. Katayama, “Shinkeishitsu no bungaku,” in *Saikin doitsu bungaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1909), p. 47. *Sensation*, a word left in the German original in this passage, is translated shortly before as *shigeki*, a word firmly established for current use as an equivalent to “stimulus.”

33. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 213.

34. Katayama (“Shinkeishitsu no bungaku,” p. 47) translates a passage from Volkelt's *Ästhetische Zeitfragen* (Munich: Beck, 1895), p. 159.

tance to thinking, feeling, and willing and want to express and communicate only the stock they each find in their nerves . . . they seek the inner man, but what they want to express is not spirit [*Geist, seishin*], nor feeling, but the nerves [*Nerven, shinkei*].³⁵

Shi (poetry in nontraditional forms) was one of the genres in which this approach became more noticeable in the late Meiji period. The experiments in naturalist poetry by Kawaji Ryūkō (1888–1959) and Sōma Gyofū (1883–1950), rich as they were in sensorial details and crudely depicted objects (a heap of rubbish, a stray dog, etc.), inaugurated around 1907–8 a poetological approach in which the poet was to become all sensations, posturing like a seismograph, a telegraphic receiver, or a *tabula rasa* that transcribed his or her impressions in poetry, with little conceptual mediation. This trend also informed the *kibunshi* (mood or *Stimmung* poems) pursued, for instance, by the poets contributing to the journal *Shizen to inshō* (Nature and impressions, 1909–10) and a strain in symbolist poetry, especially the vividly sensualistic style of Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942) and the *décadent* taste of Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885–1945) (who was also a translator of Hofmannsthal).

Although some of these Japanese authors had only partial (or even nonexistent) access to the philosophical ideas that nurtured these trends in European literature, they did elaborate on them, epiphenomenally, by engaging those European writers who had appropriated them into literature.³⁶ Katai himself, in his memoir and study on the history of modern Japanese literature entitled *Kindai no shōsetsu* (Modern fiction, 1923), lists Bahr, Maupassant, Maeterlinck, and Holz (along with many others) among the writers of “new foreign literature” that he and his colleagues in the *bundan* were reading in the years after the Russo-Japanese War.³⁷ Therefore, while it is uncommon to find actual discussions of the philosophy of perception of authors such as Ernst Mach in the Japanese literary periodicals of this period, the introduction of literary trends based on these very philosophical trends, often presented under the label of “impressionistic naturalism” (*inshōteki shizenshugi*) took place conspicuously in the local literary discourse. The pervasiveness of these epistemological paradigms transcended the canonical boundaries between literary camps, as these trends struck

35. Hermann Bahr, *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loening, 1894), pp. 20–21, 23. I added in brackets the terms used by Katayama in his translation of this passage (“Shinkeishitsu no bungaku,” pp. 25, 27). In this part of his article, Katayama discusses Bahr’s book, also providing summarized translations of two chapters, “Die Décadence” (from which my quotation comes) and “Symbolisten.”

36. Judith Ryan resorts to a similar line of reasoning while referring to the writers she studies in *The Vanishing Subject*, p. 4.

37. Tayama Katai, *Kindai no shōsetsu* (Tokyo: Kindai Bunmeisha, 1923), pp. 139–42.

a chord equally among “naturalists” like Katai and “antinaturalists” like Sōseki and Hakushū.

To summarize, then, Katai wrote “Shōjobyō” in an era with a high density of discourses that explored the combined domains of “aesthetics,” ranging from the fields of academic aesthetics and philosophy of knowledge to physiology and literary theory. The senses had been increasingly constructed as one of the fields in which the modern condition could be effectively grasped and represented. My analysis will show how this paradigm also emerges in “Shōjobyō.”

Accidental Death of a Girl Watcher

The protagonist of “Shōjobyō,” Sugita Kojō, is defined in the text through a series of characteristics that comprise his professional and social condition, his age, his physical appearance, his household, his literary products, and his position in the sociogeographic space of the city. All these elements combine to characterize him as a prototypical middle-aged man in crisis, a writer who, after enjoying some notoriety at the beginning of his career, “ha[s] sunk banally below the horizon of the literary world.” According to the narrator, the main reason for this situation is Sugita’s passion for young women. At the beginning of his career, Sugita established his name by writing “a great number of so-called girl novels” (*iwayuru shōjo shōsetsu*)—sentimental stories in a flowery style (*bibun*) that appealed to the “youth of the day,” the generation influenced by the Japanese romantic movement. It is suggested by the narrator that his passion for young women helped him in this task, possibly because this literary genre offered him a way to sublimate his desire for *shōjo*. However, because literary tastes had changed, “he and his thing about girls became the laughingstock of the literary world [*bundan no waraigusa no tane*], and his novels and other writings were all laughed down.”³⁸ Ironically, what at the beginning of his career was an important asset for his literary practice had become almost a stigma for Sugita.

The etiology of his professional and human failure is thus located in the condition that is called *shōjobyō*, which is presented as directly affecting the discriminating faculty of this otherwise perceptive writer. The narrator notes revealingly:

But there was a reason [*gen'in*] for this course of events. He had been the same for years, actually, but he had this bad habit of getting obsessed with young women [*wakai onna ni akogareru to iu warui kuse*]. Every time he saw a beautiful young woman [*wakai utsukushii onna o miru to*],

38. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 173; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 176.

*his otherwise relatively sharp powers of observation [wariai ni surudoi kansatsugan] lost all authority [ken'i].*³⁹ (emphasis added)

Kansatsugan is a standardized expression meaning “power of observation.” In this *kanji* compound, literally meaning “observation-eye,” the word “eye” is used with a catachrestic meaning that does not necessarily refer to the concrete organ of sight. However, one wonders if in Sugita’s case the literal meaning of “-eye” (-*gan*) can be reactivated so as to indicate his otherwise sharp powers of *visual* observation. In the story, Sugita’s eyes are in effect described as representative of his personality. It is said elsewhere that “he had something kind and gentle about his eyes, which always seemed as if entranced by something” and that he possessed “sharp eyes” (*binshō na me*).⁴⁰

Both *kansatsu* (observation) and *kansatsugan* (power of observation) can be interpreted as categories for literary evaluation, especially in the naturalist camp with which Katai is commonly associated. This is also alluded to by the narrator, who, shortly after this passage, points out that Sugita’s “girl novels” were “devoid of observation [*kansatsu*] and thought [*shisō*].”⁴¹ However, Sugita’s loss of power of observation and analytical eye is not limited to his literary activity. As the phrasing of the italicized sentence in the above passage suggests, this loss takes place with the theorematic consistency implied in the conditional conjunction *to* “every time he [sees] a beautiful young woman.” In other words, *shōjobyō* systematically causes an alteration in Sugita’s faculties of discernment, especially those related to the visual domain (as suggested by the *gan* in *kansatsugan*).

In the final scene of the story, Sugita is riding back home on the outside of the train door, forgetful even of himself, and cannot turn his gaze away from the beautiful young lady from Shinanomachi; he erroneously perceives the distances and forces produced by the train, which eventually causes his fatal fall:

maybe also because [*tame demo arō*] two or three passengers that were next to him lost their balance and started to fall toward him [*taorekakatte kita*], the hand of the man, who was absorbed in the beauty of the demoiselle, came away from the brass pole.⁴²

In the last analysis, it may well be said that *shōjobyō* causes more or less directly the death of the protagonist. More than as the consequence of some moral defect, his death is presented as the outcome of failed perception of

39. Ibid.; I have slightly adapted Henshall’s translation.

40. Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 168, 180; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” pp. 164, 190.

41. My translation. Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 176.

42. My translation. Ibid., p. 192.

imminent danger, as a perceptual and cognitive error. The story of Sugita's death can be seen as recording the manifestation of a pathological condition and its most extreme consequences.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the narrative style of the ending of the story seems to realign with the contemporary naturalist precepts of a "plain" or "raw" description devoid of subjective and sentimental traits, a topic that had a crucial place in Katai's theoretical writings⁴³:

The hand of the man ogling the beautiful girl came away from the brass pole, and his large frame described a perfect somersault as it tumbled rolling onto the track, just like some large ball. "Watch out!" yelled the conductor, but at that moment a city-bound train came along, shaking the ground, and in a mere instant the big black mass was dragged slitheringly for some ten yards or more, and a crimson trail of blood stained one of the rails.

The emergency whistle rent the air with a piercing blast.⁴⁴

The depiction of Sugita's death, in other words, requires the dryly denotative language of a medical report or a judicial procès-verbal, to the point of downgrading the omniscient narrator to the original ignorance of the identity of that Humean bundle of perceptions, a "big black mass," that is, Sugita's body after the accident. This is an example of a mode of writing in which, as Sara Danius notes in her analysis of European high modernism, the narrator "keeps to what he perceives, not what he knows is there,"⁴⁵ thus divorcing the mere collection of data from their knowledge-producing interpretation, or the "sensory" from the "epistemic."⁴⁶

Shōjobyō as Distorted Aesthesia

What is, exactly, Sugita's *shōjobyō*? This inclination is variously defined in the story. Some of the terms used by the narrator or the characters belong to the domain of pathology and are articulated in physiological, psychological, and sexological terms, while others like *warui kuse* (bad habit) are further removed from it. To the first domain belong *byōki* (illness), used twice during the debate among Sugita's friends, and *byōteki* (pathological, referring to the habit of masturbation), also uttered by one of Sugita's friends. The narrator notes that Sugita's "craving for *shōjo* is to the point of

43. On the interpretive issues raised by Katai's literary theories, and in particular on his idea of *heimen byōsha* (flat plane depiction), see Henshall, *In Search of Nature*, pp. 151–62.

44. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 181; Ishihara et al., "'Shōjobyō' o yomu," p. 192.

45. Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 155.

46. Ibid., pp. 105–6.

being an illness” (*shōjo ni akugareru no ga yamai de aru hodo de aru*).⁴⁷ But nowhere in the story is Sugita’s condition defined as *shōjobyō*, a term reserved for its title.

Levy is right to highlight the nature of this condition as a literary object with fictional and ironic components. In this sense, she describes the ironic correlation between Sugita’s inclination and his literary production consisting of girl novels and modern-style poetry (*shintaishi*), all examples of what is defined in the story as *bibun* (flowery, beautified literature). Levy concludes: “By suggesting a pathological connection between the attachment to stylistic ornamentation and Sugita’s fatal weakness for young women, ‘Shōjobyō’ gives rise to an image of *bibun* as a symptom of effeminacy,” attuned to the symbolic “emasculcation” of the protagonist.⁴⁸

However, the fictional and at times even self-parodic characterization of Sugita’s *shōjobyō* does not necessarily invalidate the fact that it still is a product of specific discursive formations that were reproduced in both Japanese and transnational contexts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As part of my intention to explore the discourses on the senses incorporated in “Shōjobyō,” I connect the pathological condition described in this story to what Michel Foucault has described as *scientia sexualis*,⁴⁹ one of the most pervasive discourses related to modern senses and bodies. This “modern and scientific-minded discourse of sex”⁵⁰ was operating in Japan, as elsewhere, by the second half of the nineteenth century.

In this respect, one of the most relevant passages in “Shōjobyō” is located in the second half of the third section. The narrator reports that “rumor had it that it [the contrast between Sugita’s sturdy physical appearance and his fondness for young women and “girl” literature] might well be a freak of nature [*zōka no tawamure*].”⁵¹ As Oshino Takeshi notes, it appears that since the late 1870s the term *zōka* (nature) had a certain diffusion in Japanese sexological discourse, especially through translations of European sexological texts and their adapted rewritings for the general public.⁵²

Immediately after this narratorial comment, a conversation involving an unspecified number of “friends” (*yūjin*) of Sugita takes place. Oshino shows that this dialogue fundamentally sets two positions against each other: one that interprets Sugita’s inclination in modern pathological and sexological

47. My translation; Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 180.

48. Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, p. 153.

49. Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

50. Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 6.

51. My translation; Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 177.

52. Oshino Takeshi, “Metafā no seikimatsu. ‘Byō’: Tayama Katai ‘Shōjobyō,’” *Kokubun-gaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, Vol. 40, No. 11 (September 1995), pp. 72–73.

terms, and the other that posits the rather abstract category of his *seishitsu* (character, fundamental personality) as the cause of his inclination. By the end of the exchange, which is not devoid of ironic overtones, the first opinion appears to prevail. The debate begins as follows:

That is bizarre [*dōmo fushigi da*]! Perhaps it's some sort of illness [*isshu no byōki kamoshiren yo*]. Sensei does nothing but yearn after [*akugareru*] [young women]. He thinks they're beautiful, and that's it. If it were us, in a similar situation, the force of instinct [*honnō no chikara*] would soon raise its head; it would in no way be satisfied [*manzoku ga dekin*] with just yearning after [them], don't you think?⁵³

The friends agree that Sugita's conduct is strange, anomalous, or weird (*fushigi da*). Strikingly, what is perceived as abnormal is not the fact that a 37-year-old married man yearns after women far younger than he—conduct that conforms to the heteronormative and patriarchal presuppositions of Sugita's friends—but the fact that he does not do more than that, seemingly finding satisfaction simply in looking and yearning. The first speaker immediately suggests a pathological interpretation, which he contrasts with a three-step normative psychosexual pattern that he characterizes as what would happen “if it were us”: identification of the object of desire → arousal of instincts → satisfaction of those instincts by way of physical interaction with the object of desire. While this is the normative presupposition that the parties share, what they discuss is the etiology of Sugita's deviation from it.

One of them suggests that Sugita's behavior may be due to a physiological lack or deficiency: “I wonder if, physiologically speaking, there is something missing somewhere [*seiriteki ni, dokoka rosuto shite irun ja nai kashiran*].” One of the speakers promptly locates the cause of this deficiency in masturbation: “I just wonder if he did too many self-indulgent things [*hoshibimama na koto*] when he was young He damaged his body too much by himself, I'm telling you. If this habit goes on for long, physiologically speaking, you end up losing a part [*seiriteki ni, aru hōmen ga rosuto shite shimatte*], and flesh and spirit [*niku to rei*] don't match properly.” When another friend objects that Sugita has children, the first speaker tries to validate his “assessment” (*kantei*) by invoking the notions passed on to him by a “doctor” (*isha*): “there can be different effects [of that habit], he told me. When they are severe, they impede reproduction, but when they are in the intermediate range, he said, they might well be as in Sensei's case, too.”

53. All the excerpts from this passage are my translations. Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” pp. 177–79.

The *seishitsu*-theory proponent is still skeptical: “What you say is a physiological catch-all [*seirigaku manno*], and you are overconclusive,” at which the first speaker, posing as an orthodox naturalist in a way that might carry some ironic overtones, lectures the group on the power of instincts. According to him, Sugita vainly tried to “fool his instincts” by sublimating them either by “posing as a theoretician of sacred and pure love [*ren’ai shinseironsha*]”—a reference to his embrace of the romantic poetics that informed his “girl novels”⁵⁴—or by unhealthily and vicariously releasing them via masturbation. Since “he ignored his instincts” (*honnō o naigashiro ni shita kara da*), he ended up like he is now, the “specimen of a *décadent*, of utter unhealthiness” (*fukenzan mo fukenzan, dekadan no hyōhon*). The stern lesson that he “eloquently enounce[s]” at the end is: “You are always attacking me for espousing the all-explaining theory of instinct [*honnō bannōsetsu*], but, as a matter of fact, instincts are of the highest importance for man. One can’t live if one doesn’t bow to his own instincts!”

It is difficult to say how much of this debate must be taken at face value and how much of it is a parody of the discourses on sexology and naturalism.⁵⁵ For instance, Verena Werner, while reporting the opinion expressed by Japanese scholarship that the entire conversation should be read as ironic based on the narratorial irony perceivable in the phrase “eloquently enounced” that seals the discussion, has found insufficient stylistic evidence to support this interpretation during her narratological analysis of “Shōjobyō.”⁵⁶

Just as Jim Reichert has shown in his analysis of Mori Ōgai’s novel *Vita sexualis* (1909),⁵⁷ in “Shōjobyō” there is also a contradictory stance, if less neatly articulated than in *Vita sexualis*, between a genuine belief in the heuristic power of the categories of contemporary discourse on medical sexology and a parody of those same categories. Be that as it may, the mere dissemination and reproduction of such categories and paradigms contributes to their reinforcement and naturalization, especially when, as in this case, they are invoked to grasp the inner nature of an individual, or in Foucauldian terms to “tell the truth of [one’s] sex.”⁵⁸ What is revealing in the use of these categories in “Shōjobyō” in terms of the aesthetic discourse deployed

54. The sacredness of love (*ren’ai*) had played a crucial role in the thought of the romantic ideologue Kitamura Tōkoku and his associates of the journal *Bungakukai*, to which Katai was also a contributor. See Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 74–76.

55. Textual correspondences between this conversation and contemporary texts on sexual hygiene are reported in Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 178.

56. Werner, *Das Verschwinden des Erzählers*, p. 146.

57. Jim Reichert, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 199–207.

58. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 57.

in this text is the presence of the physiological or nervous paradigm. According to this model, neuroses and sexual perversions can be explained less by exclusively psychogenic causes, as, for instance, held by psychoanalysis, than by postulating pathogenic (unhealthy, distorted) stimulations and responses of sexual and sensory organs.

From an intertextual and interdiscursive perspective, one of the most influential works for the dissemination of this paradigm outside scientific discourses, in Japan as elsewhere, was Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). In Krafft-Ebing's treatise on sexual perversions, the physiological paradigm still dominates, despite the fact that Anna Katharina Schaffner describes him as "a threshold figure located between biological and psychological models, who already gestures towards more psychological explanations of perverse sexual desires."⁵⁹ The now substantial literature on the dissemination and localization of sexological discourses in Japan⁶⁰ points out consistently that, in the years before the end of the Meiji period in 1912, the Ebingian paradigms were well known, if not quite mainstream, in Japanese medical and popular discourses on sexuality.

Krafft-Ebing and the conversation among Sugita's friends share an emphasis on masturbation as one of the main etiological factors in the development of sexual perversions. Krafft-Ebing's focus on this aspect is clear after one reads just a few pages from the sexual biographies collected as clinical cases in his magnum opus. It must be noted that in his terminology, sexual perversions are not classified by resorting to the now prevalent suffix of *-philia* but by the more telling one of *-aesthesia*. Sharing the same etymological root as "aesthetics," Krafft-Ebing's nomenclature of sexual perversions is in fact consistent with a sensory-neurological paradigm.

More precisely, when he discusses what he calls "cerebral neuroses," Krafft-Ebing classifies these perversions as *paradoxia* ("sexual excitement" occurring in those periods of a person's life when it is not expected to occur, as in childhood or old age), *anaesthesia* ("absence of sexual instinct"), *hyperesthesia* ("increased desire, satyriasis"), and *paraesthesia* ("perersion of the sexual instinct, i.e., excitability of the sexual functions to inadequate stimuli"). In the summary that precedes the singular in-depth discussion of these conditions, they are described by resorting to the regis-

59. Anna Katharina Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 46.

60. This literature includes book-length works such as Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex*; Reichert, *In the Company of Men*; and Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), especially chapter 5.

ter of physiology, that is, by postulating the interplay of “organic, physical and sensory stimuli,” “impulses,” and “visual, auditory and olfactory sense impressions” on one side, with “sexual functions” and “organs” that may be endowed with quantitatively and qualitatively different levels of “impressionability” and “excitability” on the other.⁶¹

As it is problematic to place Sugita’s condition under any specific sexual perversion recorded in Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*,⁶² the challenge becomes finding the proper connection between “Shōjobyō” and the Ebingian paradigm. There is certainly the problem of a lack of symptomatic detail arising from the fact that the language in “Shōjobyō” is euphemized when it refers to sex and therefore less than abundant in diagnostic evidence. The only sexual act that is mentioned in the story (and that only indirectly) is male masturbation. Moreover, despite the fact that one of Sugita’s friends is positive not only about the fact that Sugita is in his present condition because he masturbated too much when he was young but also that “Sensei’s still going on with the habit even now,”⁶³ this practice is evoked only in putative terms. Indeed, in Katai’s story, with the exception of Sugita’s hypothetical masturbation, sex corresponds to a giant ellipsis which is expressed by way of “euphemisms and veiled literary codes.”⁶⁴

For instance, in his fantasies, Sugita scarcely imagines having physical contact, let alone sexual relations, with the young women who so captivate him. Nowhere in the story is it clearly stated, as Henshall explicitly glosses, that Sugita “longs to have sex with them.”⁶⁵ However, despite this narrative regime of reticence, the narrator manages to convey incontrovertibly that Sugita’s feelings are not merely platonic or romantic; one of his techniques is conjuring the richness and pervasiveness of the sensory stimulation that the young women produce on the protagonist, in what is likely to be the passage where the sexual component of *shōjobyō* can be most clearly detected:

Beautiful girls in crowded trains—there was nothing he enjoyed quite so much [*shumifukaku ureshiku kanzerareru mono wa nai*], and he had already experienced this pleasure [*ureshisa*] countless times. The feel of soft clothing, the elusive perfumes, the touch of warm flesh—he was stirred to indescribable thoughts. In particular, the smell of female hair aroused a

61. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study* (New York: Rebman, 1906), p. 52.

62. There is little doubt that Sugita’s *shōjobyō* is not at all a case of “paedophilia erotica,” as discussed in *ibid*. The *shōjo* he yearns after are nowhere characterized as children or child-like; they are all in a postpubescent age range and, according to Meiji mores and law, legally marriageable.

63. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 174; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 178.

64. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, p. 50.

65. Henshall, *In Search of Nature*, p. 105.

sort of violent desire [*isshu no hageshii nozomi*] in him, giving him inexpressible pleasure.⁶⁶

It is possible to interpret the preteritions inherent in expressions such as “indescribable thoughts” (*iu ni iwarenu omoi*) and “inexpressible pleasure” (*nantomo meijō serarenu yukai*) not only as stock hyperbolical expressions but also as an indication of narratorial self-restraint: the actual contents of Sugita’s “thoughts” and “pleasure” literally cannot be told because they would be too obscene. In the same sense, the literal meaning of the retort addressed by one of Sugita’s friends to a group member who does not seem to understand the allusions to Sugita’s “self-indulgent” practices also applies to the entire story: “Even if it is not said, you should still understand what I’m talking about!” (*Iwazu tomo wakaru ja nai ka*.) This rhetorical treatment deprives the reader of more specific details on the kind of sexual practices and interests in which Sugita might indulge; at the same time, however, it thematizes the role played by sensory perception in his sexual inclinations. However euphemized and elliptic, the sexual component in *shōjobyō* is therefore recognizable. Furthermore, it is regularly associated with perceptual and sensory elements, especially (but not limited to) those related to sight. Finally, the very nomenclature used to define Sugita’s condition, *shōjobyō*, suggested to contemporary readers a connection with the field of psychosexual pathologies and perversions. This signifier, even confused and blurred, could transitively and analogically evoke, in a very economical way and without mentioning it directly, the entire domain of sexual perversions.

In conclusion, even if a classification of *shōjobyō* according to contemporary sexological categories may appear contrived or problematic, its linguistic and rhetorical characterization resonates within precisely that discursive domain. Even more important, *shōjobyō*, in Ebingian terms, is certainly a special kind of “aesthesia”: the perceptual and libidinal economy of the senses plays a central role in its definition. This “aesthesia,” which has so distorted the perception of the protagonist that it provokes his death, appears to be part of the domain of *scientia sexualis* and can therefore be considered as modern as the discourses and mechanisms and structures of power and knowledge to which it is connected.

Glass Windows and Revolving Lanterns

I have shown that Sugita’s sensory faculties are simultaneously altered and characterized as modern because of his peculiar psychosexual pathology. Proceeding with the mapping of the discourses on the senses inscribed in this story, there is another element that deserves analysis, as it also serves

66. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 177; Ishihara et al., “*Shōjobyō’ o yomu*,” p. 184.

to articulate the modern sensorium of the protagonist. I refer to modern technology, as represented by two devices: the glass pane window and the train.

As we have already seen and as many commentators have pointed out, the acts of vision, the actual workings of the eye, are central to “*Shōjobyō*.” This emphasis on specific acts of sensory perception renders the story particularly fruitful for an aesthetic analysis. Even a superficial analysis of the acts of vision described in the story reveals their largely monologic nature; there is a striking asymmetry between Sugita’s acts of vision, which are by far the most numerous and often described in reifying and objectifying terms, and those performed by any other character or all of them as a group. For instance, the acts of vision ascribed to women are very limited, in terms of both number and agency.

Levy also notes that Sugita is, in turn, the object of the gaze of other characters. The gaze of other males who occupy higher social or professional positions, like his editor-in-chief, and the gaze of the narrator (interpreted by most contemporary readers as a self-reflexive and self-critical projection of “Tayama Katai,” the implicit author of the text) converge to weaken the otherwise dominant position of Sugita’s gaze. It is thus possible to reconstruct the economy of the gazes and acts of vision inscribed in this story, in which they serve as tools for the positioning and interaction among subjectivities within a highly specific social and narrative context.

Sara Danius detects two “regimes of sight” in her penetrating analysis of Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* (1924): vision “as *aisthesis*, that is, as a form of corporealized and individualized perception, often libidinally inflected . . . a means of leisurely activity, pleasure, and pain (optical toys, cinema, and above all eroticism),” and, on the other hand, vision “as a matter of *theoria*, that is, as a means of gathering systematic knowledge (definition, classification, typology).”⁶⁷ With some adjustments, these two regimes can also be found in “*Shōjobyō*.” The libidinal and reifying acts of vision performed by the protagonist upon the young women can be chiefly placed in Danius’s first regime, but what can be said of these acts of vision as a matter of *theoria*, as epistemic processes? How are they described or characterized when it comes to their ability to grasp what in the story constitutes the reality that lies outside the minds of the characters? To what epistemological “regime of vision”⁶⁸ do they respond? Are they described in pure, immediate, truthful terms? Or are they distorted, mediated, unreliable? I answer these questions by analyzing the interplay of the sense of sight with two modern technological devices: the glass pane window and the train.

67. Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 61.

68. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 3.

The Glass Window

The glass pane window is such a common feature in the modern experience of buildings and means of transportation that it has become almost completely naturalized. However, this technological artifact requires adequate historicization. As Timon Screech points out in his analysis of the introduction of the “view through glass” to early modern Japan, the technology required for the manufacture of glass pane windows remained unknown or ignored until the end of the eighteenth century, when it was described by Japanese individuals who had had contact with Europeans: “In Japan it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that windows were commonly glazed, and they remained as they always had been, entirely opaque, covered with wooden shutters or translucent *shōji*.⁶⁹

The glass window was a “symbol of modern civilization that was finally spreading at the time” of Katai’s story.⁷⁰ Indeed, it was only after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that Japanese authorities encouraged the use of glass pane windows in new Western-style buildings (*yōkan*). As Martha Chaiklin notes, in an age in which Japanese demand was largely dependent on imports from Europe, the establishment of a Japanese sheet-glass industry represented one of the most complex industrial and technological challenges the new regime had to face:

By the 1880s, glass doors and windows were common in public buildings and schools, because they were constructed along European models and required them. School students, used to studying in traditional structures, found the rooms “almost dazzlingly bright.” The use of windows in homes and shops came more slowly, not because of any cultural resistance but rather because only the rich could afford glass panes. Even as late as the 1890s, glass windows were still only seen in higher-end shops.⁷¹

Despite its relatively recent introduction, for Katai’s generation—he was born in 1872—the glass pane window must have already acquired a certain degree of familiarity by the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it was still frequently associated with the experience of Western-style or modern buildings, and it also carried a connotation of higher social class.⁷² In “Shōjobyō,” for instance, the offices of Seinensha have a “glass door [*garasudo*] facing the road,” and the play of light on the “upstairs windows” of

69. Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), p. 134.

70. Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 189.

71. Martha Chaiklin, “A Miracle of Industry: The Struggle to Produce Sheet Glass in Modernizing Japan,” in Morris Low, ed., *Building a Modern Japan: Science, Technology, and Medicine in the Meiji Era and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 177.

72. Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 189.

“Sendagaya’s new residential area” described in the initial part of the story can take place and be described by the narrator only because it involves glass windows (*garasumado*) installed in the villas of a recently built neighborhood (*shinkai no yashikimachi*).⁷³

The use of such windows as part of the means of transportation was relatively new as well: Freedman reports that the “large glass-plate windows” installed on the Sotobori line streetcars, which began operations at the end of 1904 (less than three years before “Shōjobyō” was published), were “luxuries many people had not seen before.”⁷⁴

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in “Shōjobyō,” the interaction of the sense of sight with such glass artifacts is always described as something that is pure, transparent, immediate, and truthful. In this story, looking through a glass window equals enjoying the clearest act of vision possible. Therefore, the verbal representations of these acts of vision through glass reflect a naïve, unproblematic realism, or even a form of unconscious technological fetishism. They escape the critical gesture of questioning the technological properties of industrially produced modern glass sheets, or the pellucidity, cleanliness, or material integrity of a specific window. The transparency of the glass sheets in the story is a given on which the enhancement of the liberty of one’s gaze is premised. While other modern elements in “Shōjobyō” alter or distort Sugita’s perceptions, glass windows stand as self-erasing mediators and tools for pure vision: a reassuring, domesticated product of modern technology.

Two passages in the final part of the story in which the word *garasu* (glass) is used are particularly telling in this respect.⁷⁵ On his way back home, Sugita boards the Kōbu line train and, since the train is crowded, he has to stand on the external platform of the carriage. Beyond the “glass window” (*garasumado*) that separates the external platform from the inside of the carriage, he sees the young lady from Shinanomachi for the first time in a long time:

Glancing inside the carriage, he gave a surprised start. For there, just beyond the glass window [*sono garasumado o hedatete sugu soko ni*], the beautiful demoiselle from Shinanomachi, the one he had wished so much to see again, was almost overwhelmed by felt hats and college hats and Inverness capes, in fact looking just like a dove surrounded by a flock of crows.⁷⁶

73. Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 168, 177; Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” pp. 164, 186.

74. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, pp. 37–38.

75. Similar if more succinct considerations on the role of glass windows in the story are presented in Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 189.

76. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 180; Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” pp. 190–91. I have slightly adapted Henshall’s translation.

Shortly after, as the train is moving, Sugita is described as he contemplates her, always from the same position:

Taking advantage of the crowd of passengers and the glass between he poured his heart, his very soul into her beautiful figure, with her white neck, her black hair, her olive ribbon, her dainty white fingers, her gold, jeweled ring [*shiroi erikubi, kuroi kami, uguisucha no ribon, shirauo no yō na kirei na yubi, hōseki-iri no kin no yubiwa*].⁷⁷

In both scenes, the glass window is treated as a perfectly transparent tool that does not affect in the least Sugita's sight. This is also confirmed by the fact that the narrator resorts to a nominal style to describe more vividly what Sugita sees beyond the window.⁷⁸ We might even interpret the adverb *sugu* (just) not only in its spatial meaning (just beyond the glass window) but also as a further marker of the immediacy of Sugita's act of vision.

In the second scene, the fact that Sugita is looking through the glass window, expressed by the idiom *garasugoshi ni naru* (literally, going beyond/overcoming the glass), is even presented as one of the factors (the other being the fact that the train is crowded with passengers) of which Sugita "takes advantage" to accomplish a double task. First, he attains a generous apprehension of the physical features of the young lady, which are presented as an asyndetic listing of noun phrases, with no verb at its end. This impressionistic and highly chromatic presentation tends to mimic a collection of unprocessed perceptual data received by Sugita's eyes. From a literary historical perspective, this passage can be considered an attempt at that variety of "impressionistic-naturalist" (*inshōteki shizenshugi*) writing discussed above. The second task is the unhindered deployment of Sugita's libidinal intentionality, as expressed by the sentence: "he poured his heart, his very soul [*kokoro yuku made . . . tamashii o uchikonde shimatta*] into her beautiful figure." If, as Walter Benjamin once said, "objects made of glass have no 'aura,'"⁷⁹ surely in this case they assist Sugita in his contemplation of the most "auratic" among the female presences that inhabit this story, the young woman from Shinanomachi.

77. Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 180–81; Ishihara et al., "'Shōjobyō' o yomu," p. 191.

78. In the *Taiyō* version of the story, the sentence introducing the Shinanomachi demoiselle ends without a verb, with the simile of the dove surrounded by crows (*chōdo karasu no mure ni torimakareta hato to itta yō na fū*). As can be seen in later reprints of the story (e.g., in the 1936–37 *Katai zenshū*), Katai later changed the sentence to "chōdo karasu no mure ni torimakareta hato to itta yō na fū ni natte nocte iru." The addition of the indicative verb *nootte iru* ("was riding") further strengthens the epistemic certainty of this sentence. The 1936–37 *Katai zenshū* published by Katai Zenshū Kankōkai was reprinted as *Teihon Katai zenshū* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1993–95), Vol. 1, p. 686.

79. Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 734.

Any interference from the glass window is not at the level of Sugita's perceptions but is more physical and spatial, by separating his body from the actual place where the Shinanomachi demoiselle is, thus hindering his capacity to act and move but perhaps also exalting her unreachability and desirability. In an important way, the trope of the glass window is functional in the deployment of a highly impressionistic representation of Sugita's sensory perceptions and desires.

The Train

As Alisa Freedman has reported, in the years around “Shōjobyō,” the “railway journey” (to quote the title of Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s seminal study on this subject) was becoming a relatively common trope in Japanese literature.⁸⁰ Some of the acts of vision described in “Shōjobyō” are indeed influenced by this new sociotechnological experience. Such influence especially affects two aspects of vision: speed and succession. The eyes of a subject traveling on a train can experience the objects outside at a speed significantly higher than usual, while they perceive them in the spatial and temporal succession dictated by the train’s movement.⁸¹ As Sara Danius points out, the new “technologies of speed” that made their appearance in the nineteenth century thus became “visual framing devices on wheels.”⁸² This aspect can be appreciated in a passage in “Shōjobyō,” which has also been analyzed by Freedman, a depiction of the landscape as seen through the train window that is not ascribable to any specific character in the story but only to a generic passenger or perhaps the narrator; it is explicitly said, in fact, that during his journeys Sugita prefers to watch the young women inside the train rather than the scenery outside it.

This description emphasizes the geometrical order of the landscape, an order that hinges on the traveler’s point of view. The oak trees “line up black” (*kuroku narande*) and the new houses in Sendagaya appear to “follow each other as uneven lines” (*shinshi toshite tsuranatte iru*). (An identical description of the houses appears at the beginning of the story, where it is made from the perspective of the ground.) The geometrical order of lines and rows “passed quickly as if images on a revolving lantern

80. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, pp. 29–31.

81. On this point, see also Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 24: “It was, in other words, that machine ensemble that interjected itself between the traveler and the landscape. The traveler perceived the landscape as it was filtered through the machine ensemble.” Schivelbusch’s classic study is also mentioned in the analysis of “Shōjobyō” conducted in Ishihara et al., “‘Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” especially pp. 180–83.

82. Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 5.

[*mawaridōrō*.]”⁸³ This analogy with a precinematic device is part of a long “history of comparing spatial perception in motion with the perception of mediated moving images.”⁸⁴ Katai shares with many authors from the first decades of the twentieth century⁸⁵ a discovery that today is largely naturalized; that is, as Nanna Verhoeff puts it, the fact that “the cinema and highway panoramas have in common . . . a particular mode of vision geared towards moving images seen from a fixed seated position, either behind the glass windshield or in the darkness of the movie theater.”⁸⁶

While these aspects have already been pointed out by Freedman and Levy, I would like to focus on another detail: the impact that the railway journey has not only on Sugita’s perceptions as he moves with the train but also on his subsequent processing of the perceptions gathered during the journey. First, it must be noted that in a number of passages in this story, Katai attempts to deploy a narrative technique that mimics the main character’s stream of thoughts. Such elements as the conventional syntax and the didascalic intrusions of the narrator prevent one from speaking of classic stream-of-consciousness techniques, but Katai’s attempt at reproducing the character’s thinking by way of his mental associations (*rensō*) is remarkable, especially in modern Japanese literature. An example of this technique is found in section 2. The narrator evokes a previous interaction between Sugita and a young female student:

She thanked him again politely, then turned on her heels. He was deliriously happy. It was simply marvelous. “From now on she’ll remember me! From now on, when we meet in the train, she’ll think of me as the man who picked up her pin for her!” His thoughts rambled. “If I were a little younger, and if she were just a little prettier, then there’d have been an interesting tale to tell about this episode. . . .” One thought gave rise to another [*rensō ni rensō o unde*]. He had idly wasted away his youth. His wife, whom he’d once loved, had passed her prime. He had children. His life was bleak. He was behind the times, with no hope for the future. Such thoughts were tangled and twisted, almost without end [*iroiro na koto ga midareta ito no yō ni, motsureatte, kongarakatte, hotondo saigen ga nai*]. Then suddenly, into the midst of this reverie [*kūsō no uchi ni*] floated the sullen face of the

83. Translated in Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, p. 51; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” pp. 179–80. The *mawaridōrō*, or *sōbatō* (the reading of this *kanji* compound varies through the *Taiyō* text), is one of the precinematic novelties that gained popularity beginning in the Tokugawa period. Two concentric paper frames enclose a source of light; the internal frame, decorated with pictures, rotates so that the moving images are projected on the internal wall of the external frame.

84. Nanna Verhoeff, *Mobile Screens: The Visual Regime of Navigation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 31.

85. See Danius’s discussion of this topic in the works of Marcel Proust, Fernand Léger, and others (*The Senses of Modernism*, chapter 3).

86. Verhoeff, *Mobile Screens*, p. 31.

editor-in-chief of the magazine house where he worked. At which, hastily abandoning his daydreams [*kūsō*], he hurried on along the lane.⁸⁷

A similar passage appears shortly before Sugita boards his train for the last time, on his way back home, which Levy also discusses.⁸⁸ Sugita's internal monologue on his miserable life is interrupted midway by this interesting narratorial comment:

This thought [*nen*] was already fading away, and his mind, in nervous terms, was now completely lost to the point that [such a thought] could not even provoke a reverberation in it [*hankyō o ataenu hodo sono kokoro wa shinkeiteki ni kanraku shite shimatta*].⁸⁹

This passage is notable for its terminology. *Kanraku* (陷落) echoes and thus establishes an ironic linkage between this scene and the diagnosis previously suggested by one of Sugita's friends on his condition ("is something missing somewhere?").⁹⁰ In this reprisal, Sugita's deficiency has become "nervous" (*shinkeiteki ni*). More important, this passage reiterates a neuro-physiological paradigm according to which the human mind is subjected, as a resonance chamber, to stimuli (including its own thoughts) that produce "reverberations" (*hankyō*) in it.⁹¹ As Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail observe in their study on the discursive connections between neurology and modernity, the subjective experience of modernity had come by the end of the nineteenth century to be connected to such neurological descriptions of the functioning of the mind, in which "thinking came to be modeled as dependent, like the body's functions, on constant stimuli."⁹²

The same resonating effect can be found in three sentences that precede this passage:

The yellow dust being blown about by the westerly wind was miserable, so miserable [*wabishii, wabishii*]. . . .

As he moved his bulky frame along, such thoughts made him feel life was no longer worth living, that he would be better off dead . . . better off

87. Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 171–72; Ishihara et al., "Shōjobyō' o yomu," pp. 173–74.

88. Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, p. 161.

89. My translation; Ishihara et al., "Shōjobyō' o yomu," p. 190.

90. In its two occurrences in the *Taiyō* version of the text, the *kanji* compound 陷落 is given two different readings (*rosuto* and *kanraku*), while in later editions, starting with *Katai-shū* (Tokyo: Ifūsha, 1908), p. 279, the reading *rosuto* is applied in both cases, thus reinforcing the parallelism between the two passages.

91. This term also appears in a previous passage. At the height of his feelings of regret for his wasted youth, Sugita asks himself: "Imajibun omotta tote, nan no hankyō ga aru" (literally, "What kind of reverberations are expected in having such thoughts now?"). Ishihara et al., "Shōjobyō' o yomu," p. 188.

92. Salisbury and Shail, "Introduction," p. 31.

dead . . . better off dead. . . . [*shinda hō ga ii, shinda hō ga ii, shinda hō ga ii*]. . . .

Loneliness . . . loneliness . . . loneliness [*sabishisa, sabishisa, sabishisa*]—was there no one who would save him from this loneliness?⁹³

Freedman argues that in these passages Katai's impressionistic style reaches a mimetic dimension: "The last chapter is peppered with descriptions of the man's self-pity that, when read aloud, mimic the noises of trains. The phrases 'better off dead' (*shinda hō ga ii*) and 'loneliness' (*sabishisa*) are repeated three times each in succession, echoing a locomotive."⁹⁴ This is an intriguing interpretation; however, I think that the text here, rather than mimicking the phonic substance of the "noises of trains" by a quasi-onomatopoeic word choice, is rhythmically (rather than acoustically) reproducing the obsessive tempo of the reverberation of Sugita's thoughts, suggesting that these thoughts are continually echoing, like shockwaves, in his mind.

What is the relationship between Sugita's mental associations (*rensō*), reverberations (*hankyō*), and daydreaming (*kūsō*) and the acts of perception that he experiences while traveling on the train? Levy has analyzed the following passage to highlight the escapist and consolatory effect that fantasies about Westernesque young women produce on Sugita. I believe this passage is also notable because of the way these fantasies are organized. Sugita takes a break from his dull work at Seinensha and smokes a cigarette; he evokes the images of the young women he has seen that very morning on his way to work:

As he stared at it [the smoke of his cigarette], the girl from Yoyogi, and then the girl student, the beautiful figure from Yotsuya, and all the others appeared in mixed-up fragments, and seemed to blend into one person [*gotcha ni natte, motsureatte, sore ga hitori no sugata no yō ni omo-wareru*]. He realized this was a bit silly, but he didn't seem to find it unpleasant either.⁹⁵

In this passage, before experiencing in a canonically "modernist" way the successive fragmentation, confusion, and final unifying synthesis of his own perceptions and thoughts, Sugita experiences something that is even more crucial for understanding the effect that the means of transportation had on his mental processes: while evoking the young women that appear in his mind "in mixed-up fragments," Sugita reproduces the *exact* order in

93. Tayama, *The Quilt*, pp. 179–80; Ishihara et al., "'Shōjobyō' o yomu," pp. 188–90. The original *Taiyō* text has only two *shinda hō ga ii*, while later versions of the story have three.

94. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, p. 53.

95. Tayama, *The Quilt*, p. 179; Ishihara et al., "'Shōjobyō' o yomu," p. 188.

which they have interacted with his eyes throughout that day. Since these interactions took place on the train or in its peritexts such as the stations, the order that Sugita reproduces is also the order in which the young women themselves interacted with the train: “the girl from Yoyogi [station]”—“the girl student [whom Sugita watched right after boarding the train at Yoyogi]”—“the beautiful figure from Yotsuya”—“and all the others [seen after Yotsuya].” In other words, the train route and the succession of its stops are the spatial and chronological points of reference in compliance with which Sugita retrospectively brings order to his own perceptions of the women. The railway journey dictates this sequence, this very order, to Sugita’s sensory organs and, later, this order is reproduced in his thoughts. In so doing, this modern means of transportation appears as an actor that, in a way however ephemeral and unstable, brings order to Sugita’s cognitive system.

Even more explicitly, this ordering power of the train journey combines in Sugita’s mind with pleasurable aesthetic sensations during his last trip back home:

But simply having gotten on the train calmed the spirit, and from here on, at least to the point of reaching home, was like his own paradise [*paradisu*], and [he] felt at ease. Stores and signs along the road passed before the eyes like images on a revolving lantern, calling to mind a host of beautiful memories, so that was a good feeling.⁹⁶

The scrolling of images seen from the train is again compared to the pre-cinematic device of the revolving lantern. Here we have an explicit causal chain originated by the peculiar sensory experience provided by the train, in which things pass before his eyes like the projections of a revolving lantern (*sōbatō*); “this [fact/experience]” (*sore ga*) calls to mind beautiful memories because of which (the causal conjunction *node*) Sugita experiences “a good feeling” (*yoi kokochi ga suru*). A psycho-physiological paradigm is implicit in this passage. Like in Krafft-Ebing’s definition of *paraesthesia*, the otherwise inane “stores and signs along the road,” once they are apprehended in a succession dictated by the train journey, become the “inadequate stimuli” that excite Sugita’s sense organs to pleasurable and almost paradisiac experiences. Or, in the terms of contemporary experimental aesthetics, in this scene a “maximum of stimulation” is achieved with a “minimum of fatigue or waste.”

In these two passages, the train journey also appears as the only syntax that connects otherwise disparate passing images (different women,

96. Translated in Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, p. 149; Ishihara et al., “Shōjobyō’ o yomu,” p. 190. I have slightly adapted Levy’s translation.

different sights of the city). It initiates an empirical visual succession of things that excites Sugita's sense organs and later reverberates through his mind as a mental succession (*rensō*). Like the "vanishing subject" overwhelmed by the "flux of sensations flooding in from without" described by Judith Ryan, Sugita lets the train act in these passages as an associative machine, doing the work of associating things that in other situations would be left to Sugita himself. One wonders if at some point in Sugita's life the train journey, with its associative work done on his behalf, has become the very agent that, on a daily basis, disciplines, models, and trains the protagonist's regime of perception.

The crux of "Shōjobyō" lies in the interplay between these technology-enhanced regimes of perception and the pathologically inflected inclination known as *shōjobyō*. They reinforce each other. The railway journey as a sensory experience appears to strengthen, if it does not in fact initiate, the most evident effects of this inclination: the most radical among these effects is undoubtedly the protagonist's death.

However, before his demise, Sugita's experience of the train both brings libidinal pleasure to his miserable life and helps him bring order to the knowledge he collects with his senses. The reiterated evocation of the revolving lantern, an optical toy intended for entertainment purposes and here associated with an experience that invests the senses of the protagonist in their totality, appears to recapitulate metaphorically the discourses on the senses implemented in this story, fusing the libidinal and the epistemic domains, *aisthesis* and *theoria*.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown the crucial role played by the layered discourses on the senses and sensory knowledge (which are implied in the etymological meaning of "aesthetics") in the construction of modern subjectivity and experience in "Shōjobyō." I demonstrated that these elements are incorporated in the story through an interplay of the discourses on sexuality and psychopathology and those on the effects of new technology on human sensory perception. By the end of my analysis, we have seen that "Shōjobyō" implements an "aesthetics" aligned with these meanings, in which the characterization of the sensory experiences and faculties of the protagonist is closely connected to his interactions with modern devices and constructs.

We might ultimately describe Sugita as a socially modern subjectivity—a writer of modern poetry and novels turned salaryman in "Western-style clothes"—affected by a sexual-aesthetic pathology (*byō*), whose desire for modern female subjectivities and experiences of modern means of transportation are premised on a modern neuro-physiological paradigm. The

death of this individual subjectivity is equally modern: crushed by the same modern means of urban transportation that brings pleasure and new ways of sensory knowledge to his life. This perhaps makes “Shōjobyō” an ironic reflection not only, as is often pointed out, on Katai’s life but also on the modern condition itself.

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