

No True Words Here:

An Essay on Fantasy Literature,
Comparing 'The Earthgod and the Fox' by Kenji Miyazawa
with *Futon* by Katai Tayama

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I

In most descriptions of the history of modern Japanese literature in general, *Shizen-shugi Sakka* or Naturalist writers – Tōson Shimazaki (1872-1943), Doppo Kunikida (1871-1908), Katai Tayama (1871-1920), to mention but a few – have been highly valued compared to the writers writing on other principles. It was particularly the case in the first decades of the twentieth century, while the genre of fantasy literature was unduly underestimated as 'naïve' or 'escapist' one. The theory of Naturalism was introduced from Europe to support the value judgment. It was in such a context that Kunio Yanagita (1875-1962), a folklorist, published an essay 'The Relationship between Lying and Literature' (*Uso to Bungaku tonō Kankei*) in 1932, later included in his book, *The Unhappy Art* (*Fukō naru Geijutsu*, 1953). It was an essay on the contemporary literature which, with a keyword of *uso* (lying), implicitly criticized the ideology of *Sizen-shugi* and insisted on the essential need of the fictional element for novels. According to Yanagita, the word *uso* had no negative implication in pre-modern Japan as it has now; on the contrary, it has been used as a positive word and it was only in the modern era that the word got a negative connotation. As a result, the

element of *uso* was denied as possible as it could be. A literary work was appreciated in this respect; it was essential how closely the world of the literary text resembled, or represented, the 'real' world. That was why the convention of *Shi-shōsetsu*,⁽¹⁾ supposing the writer/hero's identity and describing, or confessing, the 'real' experience of his life, has been highly estimated. In such a situation, Yanagita argued that denying *uso*, or capacity of making an imaginary world, should lead to degradation of Japanese literature, which had long been cultivated with the idea of *uso*.⁽²⁾

Though, as I have said, the school of *Shizen-shugi* has been considered as the main stream of modern Japanese literature, there were, of course, a number of writers creating their literary worlds with the base of fictionality, and it seems it is necessary to make reevaluation of those whom I would call 'fantasy writers' for the sake of convenience. To do so, it would be useful to compare a typically Naturalist I-novel, *Futon* (*The Quilt*, 1907) by Katai Tayama with a fantasy 'The Earthgod and the Fox' ('Tuchigami to Kitsune', written about 1923) by Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933), as there are certain similarities between their plots, though their styles and ideas make an obvious contrast.

II

The plot of *Futon* is quite simple.⁽³⁾ The hero Tokio, a middle-aged writer living in Tokyo with his wife and young children, receives a girl, named Yoshiko, a would-be writer, as his pupil and allows her to live in his house. Almost from the start, he becomes infatuated with the girl pupil, though he does not dare to make advances to her for fear of disgracing her and himself. While she is back in her country (Okayama Prefecture) for some recuperation, Yoshiko falls in love with a young man, named Tanaka, who is studying theology in a university in Kyoto. On her way to returning to Tokyo from Okayama, she secretly passes

one night with him in Kyoto. Yoshiko defends herself against suspecting Tokio that their relation is a 'divine love' (*shinsei naru ren'ai*) and swears that they 'have never committed a sin'; that is, they have never had an extramarital intercourse. For a while, Tokio, though reluctantly, tries to support their so-called 'divine love', but, finding out their relationship not 'divine' after all, calls her father from the country to settle the matter. The father takes her to home, and thus she is forced to part from her love. Of course it means Tokio himself has to give up infatuation with his beloved pupil. The ending paragraphs of *Futon* are well known. After Yoshiko has left him, he clutches the *futon* (the Japanese quilt) she has used, and weeps:

Tokio opened the drawer. Inside was left a ribbon stained with old oil [for hairdressing]. He took the ribbon and smelled it. In a minute, he stood up and opened the *fusuma* [the papered sliding door].... And there he found the *futon* Yoshiko had always used – a *shiki-buton* [mattress] with yellowish green arabesque pattern and a quilt of thick cotton with the same pattern, folded up. Tokio drew them out. The dear smell of her oil and the scent of her sweat made his heart pound strangely. Pushing his face against the velvet hem of the quilt where the stain was most distinct, he sniffed her dear scent to the full.

Sexual desire, sorrow and despair assailed Tokio's heart immediately. Spreading the *futon*-mattress, covering it up with the quilt, he buried his face in the velvet hem, cold and stained, and cried. The room was dusky, and outside the wind blew violently.⁽⁴⁾

The novel had a great impact on the contemporary literary scene, and indeed it has been estimated as an extremely significant work in terms of a literary history, giving the following naturalist writers the formulaic matter and style to be imitated. In an essay 'Bungeijō no

Shizen-shugi' ('Naturalism in Literature', 1908), Hōgetsu Shimamura (1871–1918), referring *Futon*, writes, 'it seems as if the work were printed in an essay on Naturalism as an illustration.'⁽⁵⁾ Another critic, Mitsuo Nakamura (1911–88) points out that Shi-shōsetsu, given a fixed form by *Futon*, provided, not only proper Naturalist novelists, but also modern Japanese novelists in general, with a definite framework.⁽⁶⁾

Unlike *Futon*, 'The Earthgod and the Fox' by Miyazawa Kenji had not such an impact on literary history. It was not published during Kenji's lifetime, as many of his stories and poems were. The plot too is simple. It can be summarized according to its five chapters:⁽⁷⁾

(1) A beautiful female birch tree (*kaba-no-ki*) standing in the middle of a hillock has two friends: a fox and an earthgod (*tsuchi-gami*). She prefers the fox, who is refined and intellectual, to the earthgod, who is too wild both in attitude and in appearance.

(2) In the early summer, the fox comes to pay the birch tree a visit, speaking about astronomy and lending her a book of poetry by Heinrich Heine. Next morning, the earthgod visits her. When she mentions the name of the fox, the earthgod, driven by jealousy, suddenly gets furious, which frightens her further.

(3) Returning to his dwelling place, a dank and chilly swamp, the earthgod, who cannot subdue his anger and jealousy, tries to disperse his frustration by bullying a bird and a man.

(4) In a night in August, the earthgod goes to see the birch tree, expecting she might be waiting for him, but when he reaches the hillock, the fox is already there, engaging in pleasant conversation with her about aesthetics. Suffering from an inferiority complex towards the fox, as well as from disappointed love, the earthgod flees away toward his dwelling place and, rolling about in the grass, cries in a loud voice.

(5) One autumn day, the earthgod finds himself in the very best of

tempers. Feeling he could forgive the birch tree and the fox, he visits her to tell so. The fox also comes a little later and, finding the earthgod present, driven by jealousy, sets off toward home saying goodbye only to her and without so much as a nod to the earthgod. Suddenly peaceful temper of the earthgod is taken place of furious one. He rushes after the fox and, just when the fox tries to jump into his dwelling hole, catches and kills him. The last paragraphs run thus:

The next moment he lay all twisted with his head drooping over the earthgod's hand and his lips puckered as though smiling slightly.

The earthgod flung the fox down on the ground and stamped on his soft, yielding body four or five times.

Then he plunged into the fox's hole. It was quite bare and dark, though the red clay of the floor had been trodden down hard and neat.

The earthgod went outside again, feeling rather strange, with his mouth all slack and crooked. Then he tried putting a hand inside the pocket of the fox's raincoat as he lay there limp and lifeless. The pocket contained two brown burrs, the kind foxes comb their fur with. From the earthgod's open mouth came the most extraordinary sound, and he burst into tears.

The tears fell like rain on the fox, and the fox lay there dead, with his head lolling limper and limper and the faintest of smiles on his face.⁽⁸⁾

III

Having presented the plots and the ending passages of *Futon* and 'The Earthgod and the Fox', we will proceed then to compare the two texts. As I have suggested, we can notice some similarities between their plots. In a nutshell, both of them could be summarized as stories

of 'triangular love' between a female and two males: Yoshiko, Tanaka and Tokio in the former case and the birch tree, the fox and the earthgod in the latter. As disappointed love and jealousy urge the hero of *Futon*, who has found his pupil's love for the young student not 'divine' but 'filthy' (that is, physical), to put an end to their relationship, so jealousy and anger for despised love of the earthgod, despite the short period of tranquillity, drive him to kill his rival at the end. Both describe agony of the heroes, being in love but not loved. Finding Yoshiko's alleged innocence untrue after all, Tokio is much tormented:

Tokio felt extraordinary agony on the night. He was much irritated at the thought of having been deceived. More disgusting was that, though the soul and body of Yoshiko had been all stolen by a poor student, Tokio had dared to protect their love seriously – disgusting indeed! Then, as she had given herself to that man, he should not have regarded her virginity highly. He might as well have wooed her and satisfied his sexual desire. Now beautiful Yoshiko whom he had put in a high heaven thus far seemed to him a prostitute. He felt like despising her gracious attitude, let alone her body. Thus he agonized on all the night in the state of sleeplessness.⁽⁹⁾

The earthgod of Kenji's story also agonizes for disappointed love. One day he goes to see the birch tree, thinking she might have missed him:

His heart danced as he strode on through the grass. But before long his stride faltered and he stopped dead; a great blue wave of sadness had suddenly washed over him. The fox was there before him.⁽¹⁰⁾

Overhearing their intelligent conversation on aesthetics, the

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earthgod cannot help feeling himself inferior to the fox:

By now the earthgod was quite beside himself. From what the fox said, it seemed the fox was actually more impressive than he was himself. He could no longer console himself with the thought that he was a god if nothing else. It was frightful. He felt like rushing over and tearing the fox in two. He told himself that one should never even think such things. But then, what was he to do? Hadn't he let the fox get the better of him? He clutched at his breast in distress.⁽¹¹⁾

Then, suddenly feeling frightened at the thought of what he might do if he stays there any longer, the earthgod flees away toward the north, and finds himself at the root of a mountain:

He rolled about in the grass, tearing at his hair. Then he began to cry in a loud voice. The sound rose up into the sky, where it echoed like thunder out of season and made itself heard all over the plain. He wept and wept until dawn, when, tired out, he finally wandered vacantly back to his shrine.⁽¹²⁾

Though the hero's agony for disappointed love can be seen in each of these texts, there are significant differences between them, of which we would see next in terms of stylistic characteristics and the narrated worlds respectively.

IV

First, stylistically speaking, one of the obvious differences between the two texts is the use of figurative words and phrases. In the passage I have quoted above where the earthgod is disappointed to see the birch

tree with the fox, we notice a striking phrase:

But before long his stride faltered and he stopped dead; a great blue wave of sadness had suddenly washed over him. The fox was there before him.

The original text of the words underlined here runs: 'Marude atama kara aoi iro no kanashimi wo abite tsuttata nakereba narimasen deshita.' Though the word *marude* in the adverbial clause indicates it being a simile, another phrase *yō ni* or *kano yō ni* to be added to complete a usual Japanese simile lacks, so that it borders on a metaphor. It is understandable, therefore, that the English translator rendered it metaphorically as well as separately. Anyway, it is not an exceptional case. A number of figurative expressions are used effectively in 'The Earthgod and the Fox'. A little later, for example, we find another simile describing the earthgod's jealousy for the fox: 'But now the earthgod felt as though red flames were licking his whole body'.⁽¹³⁾ The sentence describing his first appearance has also a striking simile: 'Slowly, slowly, from the northeast, bathed in morning sunlight as though he had poured molten copper all over himself, came the earthgod'.⁽¹⁴⁾ So do the paragraphs where the earthgod rushes after the fox who runs away 'like the wind', 'as in a dream': 'To the earthgod, the glass about him seemed to be burning like white fire. Even the bright blue sky had suddenly become a yawning black pit with crimson flames burning and roaring in its depths. /They ran snorting and panting like two railway trains'.⁽¹⁵⁾

On the contrary, it is hard to find such figurative phrases in *Futon*. It is true that it uses occasionally similes or metaphoric expressions, but in general they are too idiomatic for the reader to be conscious of their nature as figures: e.g., '[Yoshiko] seems to be quite modern' [literally 'to be quite of high collar']; 'In the course of time Tokio got dead drunk

[literally 'got drunk like mud']; 'His life returned to the condition of three years before' [literally 'His life returned to the old wheel truck of three years before'].⁽¹⁶⁾ The rareness of striking figures in *Futon* is one indication that the author deliberately invites the reader to focus his attention directly to the 'fact' he thinks he wrote without being conscious of its material—language.

Let us examine here briefly the nature of simile and metaphor as rhetorical devices. Sentence (1) contains a simile:

(1) John is busy as a bee.

Here, a busy man John is likened to a bee, the insect generally known to be a hard worker. As it is a stereotyped simile (favoured, probably, for alliteration of *busy* and *bee*), it would pass without the word 'busy'; 'John is like a bee.' You could even change it into a metaphor by taking 'as' or 'like' away:

(2) John is a bee.

The metaphor of (2), with no barrier of 'as' or 'like' between the subject 'John' and 'a bee' as in the simile of (1), stirs up more vividly likeness of John and the busy state of a bee. Using I. A. Richards' terminology, a metaphor has two elements: a 'vehicle' and a 'tenor'. The former is an object with reference to which some particular features of a subject are shown. The latter is the subject holding the features or characteristics of the object in common.⁽¹⁷⁾ Thus, in our example, the 'vehicle' is 'a bee' as an insect and the 'tenor' is 'busy' John. It should be stressed that, properly speaking, even in the stereotyped example I have chosen here, though 'John is (like) a bee' might be conveniently paraphrased as 'John is busy', the two sentences are by no means entirely equivalent in

value, as the introduction of the word 'bee' to express John's busy life renders a particular dimension otherwise impossible to give.

We notice here that the new dimension, or recognition, can be acquired only through 'make-believing' of the identity of a man and a bee, focusing the sole aspect of their similarities (diligence) and neglecting their other differences. It is fair to say that the less a 'vehicle' is stereotyped, the more it becomes effective as a rhetorical device and it could become one of the tools for what Jan Mukarovsky (1891–1975), a Prague school linguist, calls 'foregrounding' ('aktualisace'), that is, the way of making a common, ordinary expression salient by some special use of language. In other words, it is a device of looking at ordinary things with fresh eyes as if they were seen for the first time. He insists that literary works, especially poetical ones, would have no reason for being if it had not the unique function of 'foregrounding'.⁽¹⁸⁾ Kenji's use of strange, therefore impressive, similes and metaphors shows he was conscious of the function.

It is not too much to say that Kenji's narrative is in its essence made of metaphors. For what are the earthgod, the fox and the birch tree if they are not certain metaphors?⁽¹⁹⁾ To take up the metaphor of bee again, we could make the third sentence:

(3) The bee returned to its hive.

Here, if we take the 'bee' as a metaphor for John, it follows naturally that 'its hive' is also a metaphor for his home, so that we have now two metaphors in a sentence. I would call the sequence of more than one metaphor as an 'allegory'. Let me continue the allegorical sequence. Thus:

(4) The bee returned to its hive to deliver a bucket of honey he had collected diligently during the day to his beloved queen. But he

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was disappointed to find another bee already there, engaging in a pleasant conversation with her.

The seed of fantasy is sown. If we continue the allegorical sequence further without breaking its narrative continuity, we may be able to get a distinctive narrative of fantasy. Here, if we accept that the 'bee' means John, then the 'hive', the 'bucket of honey', the 'queen' and the other 'bee' are all metaphors having their own 'tenors' whose textual effects would become very much different if we render the passage as below:

(5) John returned to his house to deliver the money he had earned diligently during the day to his beloved one. But he was disappointed to find another man already there, engaging in a pleasant conversation with her.

Simply speaking, one of the differences between 'The Earthgod and the Fox' and *Futon* is the difference between (4) and (5), about which it needs further explanation.

V

In 'Plain Description' ('Rokotsu naru byōsha'), an essay published shortly after *Futon*, Katai insisted that in the new trend of literature, that is, in *Shizen-shugi* literature, 'everything should be plain, everything should be true, everything should be natural' in favour of 'describing the nature as it is' against 'idealization or gilding'.⁽²⁰⁾ The word *Shizen* (Nature), as one of 'the words for translations' (hon'yaku-go) used rather awkwardly by intellectuals of Meiji era to transplant Western ideas into modern Japan, has been a confusing term, for definition of which there was a famous debate between Ōgai Mori (1862–1922)

and Yoshiharu Iwamoto (1863–1942) in 1889.⁽²¹⁾ But it seems that *Shizen* means for Katai the ‘true nature of human being’ (*ningen no honshō*) hidden behind the ‘falsehood of society’ (*shakai no kyōgi*). In short, Katai intended in his novels to offer a ‘natural’, ‘true’ representation of human life. To do so, he rejected fictional elements or lying (*uso*) as possibly as he could, portraying the hero/author’s life and psychology as it was, whose methodology was to be followed soon by other I-novel writers. It is suggestive to find in *Futon* the hero’s exclamation: ‘It cannot be helped if it be inconsistent. The inconsistency, the inconstancy – it cannot be helped as it is the fact. The fact! The fact!’⁽²²⁾ We can notice here Katai’s simplest belief in ‘representation’, the problem of which ‘post modern’ critics have so eagerly exposed lately. He assumes naively, and tries to make the reader believe in, not only the correspondence of the hero and the author’s identity, but also the ability of language to represent perfectly and truthfully the action the author has experienced in real life. For him, language seems to be nothing but a neutral medium whose only function is to transmit the outer facts faithfully. He has not the slightest idea that any system of language is embedded with a network of ideology; transmitting any, the material of language cannot be neutral and never fails to transform it within its framework. It could be noticed, therefore, that Katai has been caught in a ‘representation-myth’ from which pre-modern Japanese writers had probably been free. He also believes *a priori* that there exists the ‘true nature of human being’ (*ningen no honshō*) or ‘the inside’ (*naimen*) on its own, independent of linguistic and cultural – that is, materialistic – conditions; so he could, he supposes, manage to represent these ideas ‘naturally’ in his novels.

It explains the limits of *Futon*. As we have seen, the principal method Katai (and his followers) advocated was to avoid artificial, fictional elements as possibly as he could so as to make a novel a ‘real’ and direct expression of the ‘truth’ of the human ‘nature’. So it was

essential for him to try to describe his own 'real' life faithfully: to try, at least, to make the reader believe that all that the hero does in the novel was drawn precisely from the 'real' experience of the author. Even in I-novels, of course, they cannot be made without some proper arrangement of facts, so that it is inevitable that certain elements of fiction intervene between them.⁽²³⁾ Katai believed, however, what the novelist should do was to keep the intrusion of 'lying' at a minimum and to put the fictional out of sight of the reader.

The result gained by this was a most oppressive kind of *écriture*. Thus described, it is reasonable that both the 'falsehood of society' and the 'true nature of human being' Katai assumed hidden behind should be imposed on the reader as the unchangeable reality. We notice in the text a number of moral concepts prevalent in those days approved of as a matter of fact: for example, the dichotomy of 'divine love' (*shinsei na koi*) and 'carnal love' (*niku no koi*); the supreme merit of virginity (that it is a 'sin' for her to have an extramarital relation); the proposed view in favour of motherhood: 'Women are destined by nature to perform their duties of becoming mothers.'⁽²⁴⁾ Despite the fact that these concepts were nothing but the ideas variable according to historical and cultural contexts, the style of *Futon* still forces us to see them as if they were the eternal, unchangeable truth. They are set firmly as parts of background for the story. The style of *Shizen-shugi*, denying its own artificiality and feigning the novel/reality identity, prevents us, as well as it did the writer himself, from 'foregrounding' these conventional, conservative ideas or, in other words, from looking at them in fresh, critical eyes. The most essential point to be made is that, paradoxically, using the style which was meant to describe his own experience naturally and realistically without artificiality, he fell short of searching thoroughly, not only for the meaning of his experience, but for some of the fundamental passions or sentiments human beings are thought to have in common – in the case of *Futon*, love and jealousy. Wherever he treats

them, one finds them mixed and distorted by other impure elements, most notable of which are the hero's desire for power over someone, his undoubted belief in the supreme vocation of the writer or the novelist ('That I, a literary man', he complains, 'should be forced to do the job of editing geographical books!'), his superficial generalization that life is nothing but painful; the hero says 'This is painful. But painful is life after all.'⁽²⁵⁾ The hero's love for the girl and jealousy for his rival, it is true, are told now and then, but it is only superficially and suppressively without his prejudices and fixed ideas ever really objectified.

VI

Though Kenji did not publish an essay criticizing *Shizen-shugi* novels, we find in his letters and memos what he thought about them. The following quotation from his letter written in 1921 indicates that novel writing (in the *Shizen-shugi* style, of course) was, to him, synonymous with lust for wealth and fame, which made the form itself suspect:

Go to a library on any given day and you'll see about a hundred people borrowing books with titles like *How to Write a Novel* or *The Path to Writing Novels*. Well, of course, if it's simply a matter of writing, there's nothing so easy as a novel. If all goes well, you'll have seventy thousand yen of instant wealth like Seijiro Shimada, You'll be proclaimed a genius...

Henceforth Religion is Art. Henceforth Art is Religion. No matter how many letters you set down, if they don't come from the heart they're meaningless.⁽²⁶⁾

In a lecture, recorded by Seiich Itō, one of his pupils, Kenji also said, 'To replace an original is not true Art. It is imitation. One might as well bring on the real thing.'⁽²⁷⁾ His scorn for realism here may be viewed as

a reaction against the prevailing literary ideology, *Shizen-shugi*. As we have already seen, the 'truth' of the school usually amounted to little more than a confession of living a shocking life. By rejecting imagination—or the mind's capacity of making alternative reality as a vision—the *Shizen-shugi* novelist deals death to spontaneity and is left with only a carefully contrived vision of a severely narrow horizon, which is most typically seen in his idea and use of language.

Returning to the topic of metaphor, I fear that I have shown it as if it were merely *one* of the rhetorical devices. In fact, metaphor plays a more vital function, not only for making literary works, but also for making language as we have now. Let us take an example of a Japanese word, *kuchi* (mouth).⁽²⁸⁾ Suppose, first, that the word was originally coined to denote the human organ for eating, drinking, respiration and utterance. It is easy to imagine the next process in which the original *kuchi* was transferred to a horse's mouth. Ancient people must have found the similarity between the human organ and that of a horse, and adapted the word for the latter. And it will be seen that this discovery partly includes 'make-believing' of similarity, as the two organs cannot be wholly identical in every respect (think whether you would be pleased if you were told, 'Your mouth is like a horse's'), so that we find here the fictional element again. We can recognize here the function of metaphor working. In this way we have now common phrases such as *tsubo no kuchi* (a mouth of a jar), *to-guchi* (a doorway), *iri-guchi* (an entrance), *de-guchi* (way-out), *yoi-no-kuchi* (early evening), *jo-no-kuchi* (the first stage), *shūshoku-guchi* (employment), *yome-no-kuchi* (the position of wife), *kuchi-arasoi* (quarrel), *waru-guchi* (backbiting), *kuchi-beta* (a poor speaker), etc. Those phrases are all made of the supposedly original *kuchi* by means of metaphor, though for the Japanese they have become too idiomatic phrases to be conscious of it. Metaphors can be seen, then, as wings propelling words to transfer and increase their meanings. It is for this reason that we could see the metaphoric func-

tion essential for language. The function by way of which we could discover, or 'make believe', a similarity between two objects, moreover, seems to correspond to that which stimulated the creation of the word *kuchi* itself. Given that the word was originally made to denote a human mouth, it was probably born as a result of discovering the similarity between that organ of his and that of hers and that of mine, etc., as well as uniting the auditory image and the articulated *kuchi*. Thus, the moment of making the original word seems to correspond to the moment of spurring the word to expand its meanings. By means of metaphor, we can comprehend more fully the ambiguity and abundance of the objective world or, more precisely, point to the direction of similarities among differences, over which the objective world may exist. In short, the world is comprehended as existing beyond the visible ambiguity. Language with metaphors makes us deepen our recognition of the world as infinitely as possible. At the same time, we, as the subjects confronting it, will deepen understanding of ourselves infinitely. As Sugiyama suggests, it is nothing but a process of liberation.

According to Roman Jakobson, though there is a boundary between a word's original meaning and its transferred ones, it is a particular phenomenon for the poetical language to transgress the boundary; in other words, to bring itself in a dynamic state of ambiguity as a word is just about to be created. The surprise we feel then is the effect of what Mukarovsky called 'foregrounding' to which we have already referred.

The ideology of *Shizen-shugi* is made on the assumption that such a metaphoric function plays no essential part in literary language; 'nature' can be imitated truthfully by means of perfectly 'objective' language. We cannot help thinking Katai Tayama and his followers misunderstood the nature of language and the essential need of the fictional for literary works. It is regrettable that modern Japanese literature has been bound by the ideology from which it is yet to be liberated. It is in this respect that the importance of fantasy literature,

the nature of which we have examined through the text of 'The Earth-god and the Fox', should be stressed.

VII

In 'An Introduction to *The Restaurant of Many Orders*' (1923), Kenji wrote:

Though we do not have all the sugar balls we would like, we can eat the clear, transparent wind, and drink the beautiful pink rays of the morning sun.

And I have seen on occasion in fields and forests the most awfully tattered cloths change into the finest velvet, woollen, or jewel-studded garments.

I am fond of such lovely food and clothing.

All of these my tales I received from rainbows and moonlight in woods, fields, and by rail lines.

To be honest, I cannot but feel this way when I pass alone through a bluish evening in an oak forest, or stand shivering in the mountain wind of November. And in truth, I have written about these things just as they are.

So, some of them might be good for you, others good for nothing, I cannot say which is which.

Some parts may be difficult for you to make out, and indeed they are for me.

I heartily wish, however, that some pieces of these humble stories would ultimately become your transparent, real foods.⁽²⁹⁾

It will be noted that a metaphorical use of food (*tabemono*) which appears in the first sentence is repeated in the last one—this time to describe Kenji's stories. The phrase 'piece' (*ikukire*) itself is a metaphor, as

it is suitable for some kind of food (e.g. 'ikukire kano takuan' [pickled radish]); normally we would say, 'Korerano chisana monogatari no nannkasho ka ga'). Kenji chose, however, to use *ikukire* and expressed his wish that his stories would become for juvenile readers some spiritual nutriment.

In the phrase 'transparent, real foods' (*sukitōtta hontō no tabemono*), again, though it is a normal usage in itself, there are two adjectives Kenji liked among others and frequently used in his works: namely, *sukitōtta* (transparent) and *hontō no* (real or true). In particular, we should remember that the word *hontō*, though in itself a common word, has, for Kenji, a religious connotation. Kenji perceived fantasy literature as inspired by the cosmic spirit and expressed as the universal 'truth' contained within phenomena set against the backdrop of the physical world. He did not misapprehend, however, like *Shizen-shugi* novelists, that the 'truth' can be attained by means of words that make one-to-one correspondence in value, hence his derision of the art of the *Shizen-shugi* realists as 'imitation', saying, 'One might as well bring on the real thing.' It is true that as a man of religion Kenji believed in the transcendental, eternal Truth, and he aspired after 'the True words' (*makoto no kotoba*) to express it. He knew with resignation, however, that in this world as it is, this side of the grave, nowhere can we find such words, as he wrote poignantly in his poem 'Haru to Shura' (Spring and Asura):

We can find no True words here,

And tears of Asura fell down on the earth.⁽³⁰⁾

The method Kenji followed was, so to say, to try to gain 'an approximate value' of the 'True words' by endless presentation of hypothetical similarities through similes or metaphors. The process, it should be added, is always attended with admiration for the world, the same

admiration that the earthgod expresses to his beloved tree:

'D'you know, Birch Tree, there are lots of things I don't understand when I come to think about them. We don't really know very much, do we?'

'What kind of things?'

'Well, there's grass, for instance. Why should it be green, when it comes out of dark brown soil? And then there are the yellow and white flowers. It's all beyond me.'

'Mightn't it be that the seeds of the grass have green or white inside them already?' said the birch tree.

'Yes Yes, I suppose that's possible,' he said. 'But even so, it's beyond me. Take the toadstools in autumn, now. They come straight out of the earth without any seeds or anything. And they come up in red and yellow and all kinds of colors, I just don't understand it!'⁽³¹⁾

After that the birch tree makes the earthgod angry by saying 'How would it be if you asked Mr. Fox?'⁽³²⁾ The fox, it is true, is intelligent and surely has scientific knowledge to explain the phenomena, but the admiration which the earthgod has towards nature is, though expressed rather naively, more profound and philosophical; the fact that birch tree fails to see it is one reason for the earthgod's dreary sense of solitude.

VIII

Now we have to examine love and jealousy shown in Kenji's story. The earthgod loves the birch tree seriously and ardently. He is tormented by the feeling and says to himself, 'Why don't I forget all about the birch tree, then? Because I can't. How splendid it was this morning when she went pale and trembled!'⁽³³⁾ His lovesickness is severe: 'He

couldn't say why, but whenever he thought of her, his heart seemed to turn over and he felt intolerably sad'.⁽³⁴⁾

From the Buddhist point of view, Kenji denied one's particular love or attachment for other persons as incompatible with religious love or *caritas* for all creatures, as seen in the following passage from his poem 'Koiwai Nōjō' (*Koiwai Farm*) included in the first selection of *Haru to Shura*:

In this strange, large mental universe,
Where we could not divide ourselves into parts,
If we define religious sentiment
As a wish to attain supreme welfare with others,
With all creatures, burning with true hope,
We could define, on the other hand, love
As a strange wish that one soul desires
— As the religious hope crushed and worn out —
To go with another soul alone,
Perfectly and forever.
And the tendency to seek the impossible direction,
Evading the fact that one could not attain
Real welfare in such a way [i.e., by love],
— The tendency we could call sexual desire.⁽³⁵⁾

Such kind of particular, exclusive love is denied even when it is love for one's blood relations:

(As all creatures have been brothers from the olden days,
You must not pray only for one person.)
Oh, I've never done so,
In the days and nights after she [Toshiko] passed away,
I have never prayed that she alone

No True Words Here

Would go to the good place.

I think I have never done so.⁽³⁶⁾

(‘Aomori Banka’ [*Aomori Elegy*])

In another poem, ‘A Curse of Spring Light’ (*Shunkō Juso*), also included in *Haru to Shura*, Kenji accuses himself of having fallen in love with a charming woman:

For Shame!

Do you know what it is?

Her hair is dark and long,

And she keeps silence graciously

—No more than this.

You are dazzled by grass ears of spring.

And beauty will pass away.

(Here is dark blue and vacant.)

Her cheeks are light red and her eyes brown

—No more than this.

(Oh, this bitterness, lividness and coldness!)⁽³⁷⁾

The last line reminds us of the famous lines of the eponymous poem, ‘Haru to Shura’:

Full of bitterness and lividness of rage,

To the depth of April’s atmospheric strata,

I spit, going to and back,

Teeth gnashing,

I am an Asura!⁽³⁸⁾

which suggests that not only anger, envy or jealousy, but also the passion of love itself is attributed to the sphere of *Shura*.

Indeed, at least in the earthgod's case, love and jealousy are co-existing passions:

He had done his best not to think about either the fox or the birch tree. But, try as he might, they kept coming into his head. Every day he would tell himself over and over again, 'You're a god, after all. What can a mere birch tree mean to you?' But still he felt awfully sad. The memory of the fox, in particular, hurt till it seemed his whole body was on fire.⁽³⁹⁾

After a few months of suffering agony, however, the earthgod attains a kind of spiritual enlightenment (*satori*), and it seems then as if he has overcome the worldly passions altogether:

One transparent, golden autumn day found the earthgod in the very best of tempers. All the unpleasant things he had been feeling since the summer seemed somehow to have dissolved into a kind of mist that hovered in only the vaguest of rings over his head. The odd, cross-grained streak in him had quite disappeared, too. He felt that if the birch tree wanted to talk to the fox, well, she could, and that if the two of them enjoyed chatting together, it was a very good thing for them both.

He would let the birch tree know how he felt today. With a light heart and his head full of such thoughts, the earthgod set off to visit her.⁽⁴⁰⁾

His agony is, so it seems, overcome and transformed into rings that hover around his head. The simile ('wa ni natte kakatta yōni') suggests he has reformed himself into a saint, having gone through hardships. In fact, meeting the birch tree, the earthgod even says, 'The way I feel now, I'd willingly die for anybody. I'd even take the place of a worm if it had

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to die and didn't want to'.⁽⁴¹⁾ In other words, he is almost in the state of *bodhisattva* in this very moment. It is not surprising that his eyes have become 'dark and splendid'⁽⁴²⁾ as he has declared his willingness to devote himself to the 'Act of Bodhisattva'. Unfortunately, however, it does not last long. We have already seen the last paragraphs where the tragedy occurs. It should be noted that the sudden change of the earthgod's temper is caused directly by a gesture of jealousy on the side of the fox. This time, the face of the fox becomes pale with jealousy: "I must apologize for coming when you have a visitor," said the fox to the birch tree, his face pale with jealousy.⁽⁴³⁾ In short, the fox's jealousy stirs up the earthgod's again, which shows difficulty of attaining real spiritual enlightenment. We can take one of the similes used in the ending sentence, '*The tears fell like rain* on the fox, and the fox lay there dead', as closely connected with lines in 'Haru to Shura' already quoted:

We can find no True words here,
And tears of Asura fell down on the earth.

In conclusion, it seems it is hard to find a story, at least in modern Japanese literature, that has explored the nature of love and jealousy so profoundly as 'The Earthgod and the Fox'. The story is, as we have seen, a fantasy essentially made of the fictional. It sounds paradoxical, and indeed it is, but it is only through the fictional that we can find the direction where the 'True words' and the truth might possibly, so it is hoped, lie.

*An earlier version of this paper was read as one of my lectures as visiting professor of Istituto Orientale, Naples, Italy, on 20 March 1996.

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Notes

- (1) Though *Shishōsetsu* (or *Watakushi-shōsetsu*) can literally rendered as 'I-novels', they are not necessary written in the first person; those narrated in the third person are quite common. In both cases, narrative purports to 'represent (with varying degrees of distance or "purity," i.e. faithfulness) the experiences of the author.' Karatani, p. 214.
- (2) Incidentally, the argument of Yanagita reminds us of Oscar Wilde's essay, 'Decay of Lying' (1888), included in *Intentions* (1891), criticizing contemporary Western novels written on the principle of Realism or Naturalism, in favour of romances full of 'lying'. It is probable that Yanagita had closely read it. See Yura (1987).
- (3) All quotations from *Futon* are taken from Tayama (1972). Henceforth cited in the notes with the chapter and the page numbers, with the original text.
- (4) 「時雄は机の抽斗を明けて見た。古い油の染みたりボンがその中に捨て、あつた。時雄はそれを取つて匂ひを嗅いだ。暫くして立上つて襖を明けて見た。……芳子が常に用ひて居た蒲團——萌黄唐草の敷布團と、綿の厚く入つた同じ模様の夜着とが重ねられてあつた。時雄はそれを引出した。女のなつかしい油の匂と汗のほいとが言ひも知らず時雄の胸をときめかした。夜着の襟の天鷲絨の際立つて汚れて居るのに顔を押附けて、心のゆくばかりなつかしい女の匂ひを嗅いだ。
- 性慾と悲哀と絶望とが忽ち時雄の胸を襲つた。時雄は其の蒲團を敷き、夜着をかけ、冷たい汚れた天鷲絨の襟に顔を埋めて泣いた。
- 薄暗い一室、戸外には風が吹き暴れて居た。」(*Futon*, ch. 11, p.194.)
- (5) 「自然主義論の中へ、此の作が挿畫として刷り込まれたやうな形である。」 Shimamura (1923-24), vol. 2, p. 48. See also Keene, pp. 538 ff.
- (6) Nakamura, p. 202.
- (7) All quotations from 'The Earthgod and the Fox' are taken from Miyazawa (1993), translated by John Bester. Henceforth cited in the notes as EF with the chapter and the page numbers, with the original text quoted from *Shin Kōhon*, vol. 9, 'Honbun Hen', pp. 246-259.
- (8) EF, ch. 5, p. 14. 「狐はもう土神にからだをねぢられて口を尖らして少し笑つたやうになつたまゝ、ぐんにやりと土神の手の上に首を垂れてゐたのです。
- 土神はいきなり狐を地べたに投げつけてぐちゃぐちゃ四五へん踏みつけました。
- それからいきなり狐の穴の中にとび込んで行きました。中はがらんとして暗くたゞ赤土が奇麗に堅められてゐるばかりでした。土神は大きく口をまげてあけながら少し変な気がして外へ出て来ました。
- それからぐったり横になってゐる狐の屍骸のレーンコートのかくしの中に入手を入れて見ました。そのかくしの中には茶いろなかまがやの穂が二本はいつて居ました。土神はさっきからあいてゐた口をそのまま、まるで途方もない声で泣

き出しました。

その泪は雨のやうに狐に降り狐はいよいよ首をぐんにやりとしてうすら笑ったやうになって死んで居たのです。」(pp. 258-9.)

- (9) 「時雄の其夜の煩悶は非常であつた。欺かれたかと思ふと、業が煮えて仕方が無い。否、芳子の霊と肉——其全部を一書生に奪はれながら、兎に角其恋に就いて真面目に尽したかと思ふと腹が立つ。其位なら、——あの男に身を任せて居た位なら、何も其の処女の節操を尊ぶには当らなかつた。自分も大胆に手を出して、性慾の満足を買へば好かつた。かう思ふと、今迄上天の境に置いた美しい芳子は、売女か何ぞのやうに思はれて、其身体は愚か、美しい態度も表情も卑しむ氣になつた。で、その夜は悶え悶えて殆ど眠られなかつた。」
(*Futon*, ch. 9, p. 184.)
- (10) EF, ch. 4, p. 10. 「土神は草をどしどし踏み胸を躍らせながら大腿にあるいて行きました。ところがその強い足なみもいつかよよろしてしまひ土神はまるで頭から青い色のかなしみを浴びてつゝ立たなければなりませんでした。それは狐がきてゐたのです。」(p. 254.)
- (11) EF, ch. 4, p. 11. 「土神はもう居ても立っても居られませんでした。……あ、つらいつらい、もう飛び出して行って狐を一裂きに裂いてやらうか、けれどもそんなことは夢にもおれの考へるべきことぢやない、けれどもそのおれというものは何だ結局狐にも劣つたもんぢやないか、一体おれはどうすればいいのだ、土神は胸をかきむしるやうにしてもだえました。」(p. 255.)
- (12) EF, ch. 4, p. 12. 「土神は頭の毛をかきむしりながら草をころげまはりました。それから大声で泣きました。その声は時でもない雷のやうに空へ行って野原中へ聞えたのです。土神は泣いて泣いて疲れてあげ方ほんやり自分の祠に戻りました。」(p. 256.)
- (13) EF, ch. 4, p. 11. 「土神は今度はまるでべらべらした桃いろの火でからだ中燃されているやうにおもひました。」(pp. 254-5.)
- (14) EF, ch. 2, p. 6. 「その東北の方から溶けた銅の汁をからだ中に被つたやうに朝日をいっぱい浴びて土神がゆっくりゆっくりやって来ました。」(p. 249.)
- (15) EF, ch. 5, p. 14. 「土神はまるでそこ〔ら〕中の草がまっ白な火になって燃えてゐるやうに思ひました。青く光つてゐたそらさへ俄かにガランとまっ黒な穴になってその底では赤い焰がどうどう音を立て、燃えると思つたのです。／＼二人はごうごう鳴って汽車のやうに走りました。」(p. 258.)
- (16) 「余程ハイカラの女らしい」(*Futon*, ch. 2, p. 128.) 「時雄は時の間に泥の如く酔つた。」(ibid., ch. 3, p. 138.) 「生活は三年前の旧の轍にかへつたのである。」(ibid., ch. 11, p. 193.)
- (17) Richards, pp. 96ff.
- (18) 'The function of poetic language consists in the maximum foregrounding of the utterance.' Mukarovskiy, p. 977. Cf. Lodge, pp. 2-5.
- (19) It is interesting to find on a front paper cover of the original manuscript a note Kenji wrote besides the title, 'The earthgod—a retired professor. The Fox—a poor poet. The birch tree—a village girl.' See *Shin Kōhon*, vol.

9, 'Kōi-hen,' p. 119.

- (20) 「自然を自然のまゝに書くこと……理想化即ち^{めつさ}鍍……何事も露骨でなければならん、何事も真相でなければならん、何事も自然でなければならん……」
Tayama (1962), p. 433.
- (21) Shuichi Kato points out that the term *Shizen-shugi* (Naturalism) has 'created a good deal of confusion in accounts of modern Japanese literature'. The 'Naturalist' novelist in Japan, he adds, was 'almost completely unlike the nineteenth-century European novels of naturalism, such as those of Zola', in that the former lacked such features as found in Zola's novels—reference to the methods of biological science, interest in heredity and environment, a broad view of society (Kato, p. 163).
- (22) 「矛盾でもなんでも仕方がない、其矛盾、其無節操、これが事実だから仕方がない、事実！ 事実！」 (*Futon*, ch. 4, p. 147.)
- (23) See Ken Hirano's 'Shi-shōsetsu no Niritsu Haihan' (Antinomy of I-novels) in Hirano (1958).
- (24) 「女は生理的母たるの義務を尽さなければならぬ……」 (*Futon*, ch. 2, pp. 128-9.)
- (25) 「文学者に地理書の編輯！」 (*ibid.*, ch. 1, p. 125.) 「これはつらい、けれどつらいのが人生だ。」 (*ibid.*, ch. 4, p. 139.)
- (26) Letter to Kanai Hosaka, July 13, 1921. 「図書館へ行っ〔て〕見ると毎日百人位の人が『小説の作り方』或は『創作への道』といふやうな本を借りやうとしてゐます。なるほど書く丈けなら小説ぐらゐ雑作ないものはありませんからな。うまく行けば島田清次郎氏のやうに七万円位忽ちもうかる、天才の名はあがる。……／これからの宗教は芸術です。これからの芸術は宗教です。いくら字を並べても心にもないものはてんで音の工合からちがふ。頭が痛くなる。同じ痛くなるにしても無用に痛くなる。」 (*Shin Kōhon*, vol. 15, 'Honbun-hen,' p. 217.)
- (27) 「本物に似たのが真の芸術とは言ひ〔ママ〕ぬ、此んなのは模倣である、其んなら本物を持ってきたい、」 (*Shin Kōhon*, vol. 16, part 1, p. 200.) The lecture, which was entitled 'Peasant Art' (*Nōmin Geijutsu*) was delivered to the students of Hanamaki Agricultural School, in January 30, 1926. For the importance of his ideas of 'Peasant Art', which were influenced by a number of Western thinkers including John Ruskin and William Morris, see Fromm (1980).
- (28) I owe the argument and examples in this paragraph to Sugiyama (1976).
- (29) Translated by Fromm, quoted in his Ph. D. dissertation (1980). 「わたしたちは、氷砂糖をほしくらゐもたないでも、きれいにすきとほつた風をたべ、桃いろのうつくしい朝の日光をのむことができます。／またわたくしは、はたけや森の中で、ひどいぼろぼろのきものが、いちばんすばらしいびらうどや羅紗や、宝石いりのきものに、かはつてゐのをたびたび見ました。／わたく

しは、さういふきれいなたべものやきものをすきです。／これらのわたくしのおはなしは、みんな林や野はらや鉄道線路やらで、虹や月あかりからもらつてきたのです。／ほんたうに、かしはばやしの青い夕方を、ひとりで通りかかつたり、十一月の山の風のなかに、ふるえながら立ったりしますと、もうどうしてもこんな気がしてしかたないのです。ほんたうにもう、どうしてもこんなことがあるやうでしかたないといふことを、わたくしはそのとほり書いてまです。〔。〕／ですから、これらのなかには、あなたのためになるところもあるでせうし、ただそれつきりのところもあるでせうが、わたくしには、そのみわけがよくつきません。なんのことだか、わけがわからないところもあるでせうが、そんなところは、わたくしにもまた、わけがわからないのです。／けれども、わたくしは、これらのちいさなものがたりの幾きれかが、おしまひ、あなたのすきとほつたほんとうのたべものになることを、どんなにねがふかわかりません。」(Shin Kōhon, vol. 12, 'Honbun-hen', p. 7.)

- (30) 「まことのことばはここになく／修羅のなみだはつちにふる」(Shin Kōhon, vol. 2, 'Honbun-hen', p. 24.)
- (31) EF, ch. 2, p. 6. 「わしはね、どうも考えて見るとわからんことが沢山ある、なかなかわからんことが多いもんだね。」／「まあ、どんなことでございますの。」／「たとへばだね、草といふものは黒い土から出るのがなぜかう青いもんだろう。黄や白の花さへ咲くんだ。どうもわからんねえ。」／「それは草の種子が青や白をもってゐるためではないでございませうか。」／「さうだ。まあさう云へばさうだがそれでもやっぱりわからんな。たとへば秋のきのこのやうなものは種子もなし全く土の中らばかり出て行くもんだ。それにもやっぱり赤や黄いろやいろいろある、わからんねえ。」(pp. 249-250.)
- (32) EF, ch. 2, p. 6. 「狐さんにでも聞いて見ましたらいかがでございませう。」(p. 250.)
- (33) EF, ch. 3, p. 9. 「樺の木のことなどは忘れてしまへ。ところがどうしても忘れられない。今朝は青ざめてふるえたぞ。あの立派だったこと、どうしても忘れられない。」(p. 253.)
- (34) EF, ch. 4, p. 10. 「本当に土神は樺の木のことを考へるとなぜか胸がどきとするのでした。そして大へんに切なかつたのです。」(p. 254.)
- (35) 「ちいさな自分を劃ることのできない／この不可思議な大きな心象宇宙のなかで／もしも正しいねがひに燃えて／じふんとひとと万象といつしよに／至上福しにいたらうとする／それをある宗教情操とするならば／そのねがひから碎けまたは疲れ／じふんとそれからたつたもひとつのたましひと／完全そして永久にどこまでもいつしよに行かうとする／この変態を恋愛といふ／そしてどこまでもその方向では／決して求め得られないその恋愛の本質的な部分を／むりにもごまかし求め得やうとする／この傾向を性欲といふ」(Shin Kōhon, vol. 2, 'Honbun-hen', pp. 87-88.)
- (36) 「(みんなむかしからのきやうだいなのだ [か] ら／けつしてひとりをいいつてはいけない)／ああ わたくしはけつしてさうしませんでした／あいつがなくなつてからあとのよるひる／わたくしはただの一どたりと／あいつだけがい

いとこに行けばいいと／さういのりはしなかつたとおもひます」(ibid., p. 168.) Kenji's younger sister Toshiko died of an illness in November 22, 1922. Her death was a devastating event for Kenji, which spurred him to write some of his most moving poems, including 'Voiceless Lament' (*Musei Dōkoku*). As to the possibility of her death generating 'Night of the Milky Way Railway' (*Ginga Tetsudō no Yoru*), his unfinished, but great fantasy of the afterlife, see Sarah M. Strong's note in Miyazawa (1991), pp. 126ff.

- (37) 「いったいそいつはなんのざまだ／どういふことかわかつてゐるか／髪がくろくてながく／しんとくちをつぐむ／ただそれつきりのことだ／春は草穂に呆け／美しさは消えるぞ／(こは蒼ぐろくてがらんとしたもんだ)／頬がうすあかく瞳の茶色／ただそれつきりのことだ／(おおこのにがさ青さつめたさ)」(ibid., p. 25.)
- (38) Translated by Fromm, quoted in his Ph. D. dissertation (1980). 「いかりのにがさまた青さ／四月の気層のひかりの底を／唾し はぎしりゆききする／おれはひとりの修羅なのだ」(ibid., p. 22.)
- (39) EF, ch. 4, p. 10. 「[土神は] なるべく狐のことなど樺の木のことなど考へたくないと思ったのですがどうしてもそれがおもへて仕方ありませんでした。おれはいやしくも神ちゃんいか、一本の樺の木がおれに何のあたひがあると毎日毎日土神は〔繰〕り返して自分で自分に教へました。それでもどうしてもかなしくて仕方がなかったのです。殊にちょっとでもあの狐のことを思ひ出したらまるでからだか灼けるくらゐ辛かったです。」(p. 254.)
- (40) EF, ch. 5, p. 12. 「あるすきとほるやうに黄金いろの秋の日土神は大へん上機嫌でした。今年の夏からのいろいろなつらい思ひが何だかぼうっとみんな立派なもやのやうなものに変わって頭の上に環になってかかったやうに思ひました。そしてもうあの不思議に意地の悪い性質もどこかへ行ってしまつて樺の木なども狐と話したいなら話すがいい、両方ともうれしくはなすのならほんたうにい、ことなんだ、今日はそのことを樺の木に云つてやらうと思ひながら土神は心も軽く樺の木の方へ歩いて行きました。」(p. 256.)
- (41) EF, ch. 5, p. 13. 「わしはいまなら誰のためにも命をやる。みみずが死ななげゃならんならそれにもわしはかはってやっつい、のだ。」(p. 255.)
- (42) ibid. 「その眼も黒く立派でした。」(p. 255.)
- (43) EF, ch. 5, p. 13. 「狐は嫉ましさに顔を青くしながら樺の木に言ひました。／『お客さまのお出での所にあがって失礼いたしました。』」(p. 257.)

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