A Further Discourse on the Japanese I-novel, and A Study of the short Story of *At Kinosaki*

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This paper is divided into three parts. Part one is an analytical study of the short story *At Kinosaki* by the renowned Japanese I-novelist, Shiga Naoya. The aim of this study is to discuss and define this piece of early twentieth century Japanese literature, within the context of the parameters of an I-novel. In addition, I aim to contrast this literary style of the East with an equivalent from the West. Lastly, I hope to shed light on some of the difficulties of rendering this Japanese literary art form into English. The aim of part two of this paper is to effectively translate *At Kinosaki* for an English speaking audience, and to improve upon existing translations, or at least, to produce my own version of this exemplary model of the I-novel in its shorter form. The appendix contains the original Japanese version of *At Kinosaki*.

Part 1:
An Analysis of the I-Novel, and the short Story *At Kinosaki* by Shiga Naoya

The genealogy of the Japanese I-novel which can be traced through literary criticisms since the 1920's, went on to form the nucleus of dominant literary interpretation and cultural paradigms of the age. This was largely the result of a powerful aura surrounding the notions of the self and the novel.[1] The notion of

an independent, individual self emerged first and foremost in the political arena. A wave of relatively unrestricted political, and artistic freedom at the time, produced a rich fertile ground for the rise of the Naturalism movement (1906-1910). Japanese writers, publishers, and readers grew to create a rich literary milieu, an open creative "space," comparatively free and independent of religious and political institutions, filled with new paradigms of reality, alive with stylistic experimentation, and often concerned with social change and moral action in the world.

Large swaths of literary criticism since then have largely stifled that new found artistic freedom, with the constraints that were placed on the parameters used to define the I-novel. The exertion of cultural nationalism on the discourse seemed to be a constant. A putative genre, the I-novel, was defined as unique to a nation state, Japan and then innumerable pages were written, devoted to how the existence of this genre was evidence that the Japanese were not really modern, that the Japanese had a protean sense of self, that Westernization would never take hold in Japan, and that Japan's traditional identity was still intact. Not surprisingly, when this discourse was at its peak, the standard post-war definition of the I-novel, according to most literary histories, was analyzed as sharing three structural characteristics. The I-novel was defined in opposition to the Western novel, which was seen as a creation of the imagination, while the I-novel was a factual, direct expression of the author's lived experience. The I-novel as a value-laden term, was usually compared to the "Western novel" in a derogatory sense but on occasion with approbation, and finally, the critique of the I-novel which was seldom limited to

literary matters, was extended to Japanese society as a whole.[2]

Yet, could the I-novel be redefined? The so-called I-novel, Suzuki says, is not a genre that can be defined by certain referential, thematic, or formal characteristics, but rather a mode of reading by which any text can become an I-novel if the reader expects and believes in the single identity of the protagonist, the narrator, and the author of the given text."[3]

Most standard literary histories trace the origin of the I-novel to the confessional novels of the Naturalist writers and to the writings of the Shirakaba group. Shimazaki Toson's *Hakai* (*Broken Commandment; 1906*), Tayama Katai's *Futon* (*The Quilt*; 1907), and Mushakōji Saneatsu's *Omedetaki hito* (*A Blessed Person*; 1911). Yet, could the I-novel genre be redefined, one might extend the definition to include Tanizaki Jun'ichiro for instance, who was influenced by autobiographical writing, and who incorporated expanses of his autobiography in many episodes of *Chijin no ai*, which appears to be largely based on Tanizaki's personal experiences.[4]

Yet the paradox is that Shiga Naoya's fiction, held to be the ultimate aesthetic expressions of Japan's often termed *unique genre*, who was the consummate and most successful practitioner, the writer who brought this tradition to its apex, was no other than a partial product of Japan's most universally humanistic literary school. This was the Shirakaba group, which tended to accept Western discourse as universal. For them, there were no Japanese, there was only Humanity (*ningen*), or Mankind (*jinrui*), which stood side by side with such "universal" notions as Love, Art, Nature, Justice, Beauty and Life. For them, and for us, there was

only one Shiga Naoya. Yet elements of this much debated art, which has its roots in the Zen aesthetics of nature, passed down by Zen masters of the ages, is arguably and undeniably, to some extent, culturally unique to a nation state, and to a region of the world, that shares, at its heart, a similar philosophy and culture.

At Kinosaki was written in 1917, and has often been regarded as a prime example of the famous Shiga style in its full maturity, and as an exemplary model of the I-novel in its shorter form. *Kinosaki*, the name of a famous hot spring resort, was based on the author's experience when he stayed there to recuperate after being injured by a street car accident in 1913.

Many of Shiga's other stories, such as『清兵衛と瓢箪』(*Seibei and the Gourds*) which deal with Shiga's attempt to come to terms with the problems of life and living, are set in the *山陽* or, mountain light side of the mountains in the very cradle of Japanese civilization. This story, however, deals with with Shiga's attempt to come to terms with the problem of death and is set in the *山陰* or, mountain shadow side of Japan which in Japanese mythology has been associated with death since the defeat of the Izumo people, in the time of the *Kojiki*.

In the story *At Kinosaki*, the narrator has recently been involved in a near-fatal accident which has made him sensitive to the omnipresence of death. The traumatic impact causes him to make observations concerning his realization of his own mortality, a kind of enlightenment. His observations of death are manifested in the natural world, and with an abnormal clarity and intensity, that he would otherwise overlook, he makes new discoveries. The relationship between the incidents described are not causal, as in a

conventional narrative, but associative as in poetry[5].

The first sentence wastes no words, and is a fine example of what Tanizaki[6] calls（実用）, or the 'practicality' of Shiga's style. Japanese prose tends to be circumlocutory, but this opening takes us very quickly to the heart of the matter.『山の手線の電車に跳ね飛ばされて怪我をした、其後養生に、一人で但馬の城崎温泉へ出掛けた。』（'I was knocked down and sent flying by a Yamanote street car. Later, I went by myself to one of the inn's with a hot spring at Kinosaki, in Tajima to recuperate.'）

The first paragraph sets the scene by informing the reader that the narrator has not yet completely escaped the shadow of death. According to the doctor, there is still a chance that he could develop tuberculosis of the spine. In that event, it could prove fatal. This close brush with mortality inspires the narrator to take an interest in even the smallest manifestations of death in the world around him.

This is followed by the narrator's first encounter with a dead bee. The death-orientated consciousness of the narrator, steers him to makes two graphic descriptions. The first, being the humility of death; the bee is seen as a pathetic, and helpless figure. Then, in complete contrast, a description of the business of life, in and around the hive, that continues undisturbed, as if death has no consequence. Graphic descriptions of the natural world are a common thread in the Shiga style. An analysis of the narrator's complex psychological and emotional responses, follow, which is another reoccurring theme, whereby the narrator's inner and outer worlds collide in a reciprocating pattern of cause and effect.

This is illustrated by the narrator's response to his first

encounter, which is a rather positive one. He is attracted to the peaceful quietude of death. 『自分はその静かさに親しみを感じた。』(‘I felt myself become more intimate with that quiet.’) Yet the psychological and emotional responses here are not just within the story, but extend further to the author’s life and his other writing. This is clear when the narrator admits his desire to write『范の犯罪』’*The Murdered Wife of Han*’, from the wife’s point of view. Furthermore, he confirms he has begun to think in a very different way to the hero of『暗夜行路』‘*A Dark Night’s Passing*’, which he has been writing for a number of years. The protagonist starts out positive and life affirming, but his final experience on Mount Daisen, in the penultimate chapter, is to undergo a ‘self-dissolution’ to be in union with nature. .

The narrator’s second encounter is far more violent and unpleasant, when he comes across some bystanders making sport of an unfortunate rat.

「自分が希っている静かさの前に、ああいう苦しみのある事は恐ろしい事だ。死後の静寂に親しみを持つにしろ、死に到達するまでのああいう動騒は恐ろしいと思った。」

‘That painful struggle before finding peace that I wished for, was a horrifying thing. Though I now felt a closer affinity for the peace which followed death, the struggle that may precede it would be dreadful.’

Whereas the author’s first experience gave him an inviting sense of the ultimate peace of death, the realization of a possible dreadful struggle preceding death, fills the author with dread. However, this realization affirms his instinct to survive which is ever more powerful.

The narrator's final encounter is even more disturbing because he is the agent who is the catalyst for the third and final death. There is no trace left now of the narrator's previous attraction to death. He reacts by stating he is filled with the loneliness of all living things. His loneliness intensifies when he thinks of what might have become of the other two dead creatures.

In an almost nihilistic mood, he stumbles back to his inn in the semi-darkness. The narrator is left devastated after his final encounter, his feelings towards death metamorphosed, as if he had been changed forever by a kind of enlightenment. The story ends with a footnote that is more positive. The narrator reminisces, it has been three years since, and is partly assuaged by the fact that he was at least spared from getting spinal tuberculosis. A typical autobiographical ending, Shiga Naoya gives the reader the impression that he, or she, has been looking through a window in the author's consciousness, frame by photographic frame.

Shiga Naoya, when commenting on the story stated that "I intended to write directly and sincerely about the feelings that arose in me at the time". Shiga Naoya's closeness to the events that he writes about gives his style sincerity, and a directness. Francis Mathy[7] claims that 'sincerity' has 'but a low place in Western critical vocabulary'. However, Tolstoy maintained that art is 'infectious in consequence of the sincerity of the artist, that is, of the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself experiences the sensation which he is conveying....'[8]

Starrs[9] in his book, '*An Artless Art*, uses an intriguing comparison to contrast the literary styles of East and West, by quoting a story written by Tolstoy, built largely around the same

idea as *At Kinosaki*. Tolstoy's *Three Deaths*, is written in the European style, and is a story structured around three separate deaths: the death of a wealthy lady, of an old peasant, and of a young tree.

There are four parts to the story. In the first part, we are introduced to the wealthy lady, traveling from Russia to Italy by stagecoach with her husband, her doctor, and her maidservant. The party has stopped at a post-station, where the wealthy lady's doctor advises her husband not to continue with the journey, as the doctor thinks his wife will surely not survive. The husband tries to persuade his wife to turn back, but she is insistent on reaching the warm climate of the south, where she is convinced her tuberculosis will vanish.

The second part is set inside the driver's room at the post-station, where we are introduced to Uncle Theodore, an old stagecoach driver, who is also, like the lady, dying of tuberculosis. In sharp contrast to the lady, he accepts the inevitability of death with calm stoicism, even apologizing to the woman of the post-station house for the inconvenience his illness has caused her. When a young driver asks for his boots, since he will no longer be needing them, the old stage coach driver, accedes without complaint, asking only that the young driver buy him a gravestone for when he dies.

In the third part, about a year and a half later, the scene is set at the wealthy lady's house in Russia. We find out that she didn't travel to Italy after all, and now we witness a solemn scene, where her grieving family is gathered around her deathbed. Up until her final moment, she continues to reject the inevitability of death,

insisting that if only her husband had allowed her to travel to Italy, she would have completely recovered by now. Finally, only in death does she achieve a dignified calm.

In the fourth and final part, we are taken back to the post-station. Uncle Theodore has been dead now many months, but still he has no gravestone. The woman of the post-station house prods the young driver, who promised the old man a gravestone in return for his boots, until he finally agrees to cut down a tree, so that the old man might have at least a wooden cross over him. In the final scene, Tolstoy describes the tree's death from the point of view of nature, rather than through the young man's eyes. When the young ash has fallen, the other trees around it are described as having 'flaunted the beauty of their motionless branches still more joyously in the newly cleared space.'[10]

The literary device of contrast can clearly be seen in both stories. Life is contrasted with the inevitability of death, but it is the focus of life, which is insuppressible and continues with indifference for the departed. The three deaths, however, are contrasted rather differently in the two stories. Tolstoy, with the moral purpose of satirizing the aristocracy, as the English translator remarks, contrasts 'the querulous invalid lady with the stoical dying peasant, and the useful tree that makes no demands on anyone.'[11]

Conversely, Shiga Naoya contrasts the three deaths in *At Kinosaki* with his different emotional responses, in a much less ideological and cerebral way than Tolstoy does. This is because Tolstoy portrays numerous larger than life human characters in great detail. Yet, Tolstoy also focuses on the purity of the natural

world, exemplified by his idealistic portrayal of stoical Russian peasants, which are seen as a part of nature, just as the trees in the forest are. Tolstoy achieves a syllogistic God-like point of view, whereas Shiga Naoya is a narrator, who makes no moral judgment, and is observing and experiencing the world through fate and circumstance. Shiga Naoya's approach could be likened to the impersonality and self-detachment of viewing life through the eye of lens, frame by frame.

Both styles, although very different, can be termed autobiographical, if as Suzuki says, the reader interprets them that way. The reader will never be privy to the inner thoughts of the author, and as a consequence, will never really know how sincere or artificial the essence of the art really is.

Stylistically, the similarities end rather abruptly. Yoshida Seiichi says[12] that from the viewpoint of the 'art of rhetoric', Shiga Naoya's writing does not really qualify as 名文 or, 'fine prose'. He notes the many repetitions of words and phrases. The following example typifies the difficulty of reproducing the same stylistic effect in English.

今自分にあの鼠のようなことが起こったら自分はどうするだろう。自分はやはり鼠と同じような努力をしはしまいか。自分は自分の怪我の場合、それに近い自分になったことを思わないではいられなかった。自分はできるだけのことをしようとした。自分は自身で病院を決めた。

(What would I do if something like what happened to the rat happened to me? Wouldn't I struggle exactly as the rat had done? I couldn't help but think back to my own accident when I came close to sharing the same fate as the rat. I resolved to doing all I possibly could. I decided for myself which hospital I would go to.)

It is clear that the repetition of the Japanese 'I' creates a stronger impression than the English equivalent. However, Yoshida goes on to say, 'if we were to isolate this passage, and examine it as an example of bad style, it would probably be possible to delete many of the repetitions. But if we consider the emphasis of 自分 embedded within the context of the original text, then the self assumes a necessary role as part of the honest self-absorption of the passage.'

Another example of the device of repetition is the way in which Shiga uses *sabishii*. The word sabi, a derivative of sabishii, is a key term of Zen aesthetics, and has particular resonance in the poetics of Bashō. The English equivalent of *sabishii*, often translated as lonely, has none of the rich cultural associations of the Japanese word. As William Sibley points out, *sabishii* in the context of *At Kinosaki*, describes a 'quite positive, if largely passive, aesthetic-emotional experience..'[13]

However, Bashō conceived of the word loneliness 'as an impersonal atmosphere, in contrast with grief or sorrow, which is a personal emotion. The contrast cannot be over-emphasized, because loneliness thus conceived lay at the bottom of Bashō view of life, pointing toward a way in which his plea "return to nature" can be fulfilled.[14]

Sorrow then belongs to the human world, whereas loneliness belongs to the world of nature. Therefore, if it were possible for men to escape from sorrow, it would be only through a denial of humanity, by men dehumanizing themselves. They can escape from sorrow only when they transform it into an impersonal atmosphere, loneliness.

If we analyze the way in which Shiga uses the word sabishii throughout *At Kinosaki*, we find that more and more, it comes to take on a sense of Bashō's 'impersonal loneliness' pervading nature. The effect the absorption of this atmosphere has on the narrator's consciousness is to produce a greater and greater sense of detachment. The feeling of loneliness, the narrator has upon his first encounter with death, is liberating and impersonal, directly derived from nature. According to Francis Mathy[15], the development of an impersonal state of consciousness, as a way of returning to nature, is the sense of closeness to nature that Shiga is expressing. After his new encounter with death, he found himself entering a new world of union and harmony with nature. Yet ultimately, he continues to stand apart from nature, and does not achieve the psychic breakthrough, the satori, or spiritual transformation he is looking for.

It would seem then, that the autobiographical art of the I-novel in its various guises cannot be interpreted without at least some consideration for the indigenous culture from which its practitioners have evolved. In 1968, Kawabata Yasunari became the first Japanese to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. In his Nobel lecture, "Japan, the Beautiful and Myself", in which, addressing a western audience, he described the influence of the classical poets and Zen on his work. "The Zen disciple sits for long hours silent and motionless, with his eyes closed. Presently he enters a state of impassivity, free from all ideas and all thoughts. He departs from the self and enters the realm of nothingness. This is not the nothingness or the emptiness of the West. It is rather the reverse, a universe of the spirit in which everything communicates freely

with everything, transcending bounds, limitless."[16] It is clear that in *At Kinosaki* there are undertones of an age-old culture, philosophy and religion that pervade the surface, and which in essence, provides an essential context illuminating the deepness of what Shiga Naoya was trying to convey.

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Part 2:

At Kinosaki

Translated by David Flenner

I was knocked down and sent flying by a Yamanote[1] street car. Later, I went by myself to one of the inn's with a hot spring at Kinosaki[2] in Tajima to recuperate. If the injury to my back developed into spinal tuberculosis it could prove fatal, although the doctor said this was unlikely. If the tuberculosis didn't appear after two or three years there would be nothing to worry about. At any rate, the doctor said it was crucial to take good care of myself which is why I came here to Kinosaki. I came with the intention of staying for three weeks or more, five if I could stand it.

I felt somehow as if my head wasn't clear. My forgetfulness had became intense. On the contrary, my disposition was calm — unlike it had been in recent years, and I had a pleasant feeling of peace and tranquility. The rice harvest had just begun, and the weather too was pleasant.

I was all alone without anyone I could talk to. I either spent the day reading and writing, or sitting in a chair outside my room staring absent-mindedly at the mountains or the traffic moving to and fro, or otherwise, I would go for walks. A nice place for walks was a small road winding its way steadily uphill that followed a small stream which led out of the town. Where the small stream skirted around the foot of the mountain it formed a small pool, and there brook trout congregated.

Sometimes if you looked closely, you might see a large river crab with hairs covering its legs and claws sitting as motionless as a stone. I often walked along this road in the early evening before dinner. As I made my way along the small clear stream through the lonely autumnal gorge on those chilly evenings, my mood predictably would often sink. My thoughts would be melancholy. Nevertheless, I felt a pleasant repose arise from those thoughts. I often dwelt on my injuries from my accident. I contemplated the surreal thought that if I had been a little more in the way of the streetcar, I might now be lying face up under the earth, asleep forever in the Aoyama Cemetery. My face would be cold, blue and hard, and the cuts to my face and back would be just as they were on the day of the accident. The corpses of my grandfather and grandmother would be by my side. And yet we would exchange no words. Such were the thoughts that filled my mind. Although they were gloomy thoughts, the images that filled my mind didn't terrify me as much now. The end was inevitable. The question was when? Until now when I had contemplated mortality, the "when" was beyond knowing and seemed far off in the distance. Now, however, I felt one truly could not know when the end might be. I had been spared from a likely death, something had failed to kill me, I had work yet to accomplish...in a book about the life of Lord Clive, which I remembered reading in middle school. It said that Clive was stirred to new efforts by thinking similar thoughts. In fact, I realized that I too wanted to react in a similar way about my own close brush with death. I even did. But in the end my heart was curiously quiescent. Something like an intimacy with death had been awakened within my heart.

My room, being on the second floor and without any neighbors was comparatively quiet. When I became tired of reading and writing I would sit on a chair on the veranda. The roof of the entrance hall was beneath me, which was joined to the house by a boarded wall. Underneath the boarded wall there seemed to be a beehive. On days when the weather was fine, big fat tiger-striped bees appeared to be busily working from dawn till dusk. When the bees slipped out through the gaps in the boarded wall they would rest on the roof of the entrance for a while. There they would carefully adjust their wings and antennae with their front and back legs, and then some might walk around for a moment, before stretching both slender wings taut and swiftly flying off with a resonant buzz. Then after becoming airborne, they would in an instant, shoot off at great speed. The bees would cluster about the potted Yatsude flowers which were in full bloom at the time. When I grew bored, I would lean over the railing and watch the bees come and go.

One morning, I discovered one of the bees lying dead on the roof of the entrance hall. It's legs tucked tightly under its underbelly, its antennae drooping haphazardly over its face, while the other bees passed with unequivocal indifference. The bees showed no attachment whatsoever as they busily crawled around it on their way in and out of their hive. These industrious bees gave me a sense of the living creature. And yet every time I looked at that one bee, it was rolled over, lying face down, always in the same place and perfectly still, morning, afternoon or evening, just like had been before. But now it left me with a sense of something deceased. For three days it lay there like that.

Looking at this scene left me with a sense of an utter stillness. It was melancholic. After all of the other bees had entered their hive at dusk, it was lonely to see the solitary corpse lying on the cold tile. But at the same time, what a feeling of calm tranquility that was.

During the night there was a deluge of heavy rainfall. In the morning it was clear again, the roof, the ground, the leaves and trees too, were all washed immaculately clean, and the dead bee was no longer there. It had probably been washed away down the gutter. Already the other bees were energetically at work. It was no doubt lying somewhere still as a stone, covered with mud, its legs tucked tightly under its underbelly, its antennae drooping haphazardly over its face. Its corpse would probably lie there, fixed to the spot, awaiting the forces of nature to move it again which would bring about another transformation. Or would it be dragged away by ants? Whatever the outcome, it would be a very quiet transformation from the working life of a bee, nothing but hustle and bustle, to the complete suspension of all working activity, and how quiet that would be. I felt myself become more intimate with that quiet.

Not so long before, I had written a short story called "Han's Crime". Han who was Chinese had murdered his wife out of the jealousy he felt over a premarital relationship, something that happened in the past between his wife and a man who was his friend, and also because of his own psychological pressures which impelled him. I had written the story mainly from Han's point of view, but I now thought about writing the story "Han's Murdered Wife". I wanted to describe the stillness of how she ended up,

lying quietly in her grave. I hadn't written the story after all, despite the urge that has arisen in me. This disturbed me, because it meant that I had begun to think and feel very differently to the hero of a long story that I had been writing for some time.

It was shortly after the corpse of the dead bee had been washed away, and removed from my visual world. One morning, I left the inn with the intention of going to Higashiyama park where one can see the deluge coming from the Maruyama river meet the Japan sea. From in front of the Ichi-no-yu hot spring, a small stream flowed gently through the center of the street and entered the Maruyama river. I came upon a noisy crowd who were standing on the bridge and the bank, looking down at something in the water. They were looking at a large rat that had been thrown into the river. The rat was desperately trying to swim away. The rat's neck had been run through with a fish skewer some eight inches long. It stuck out about three inches above its head and about three inches below its neck. The rat was trying to climb up a stone wall. Two or three children and a rickshaw driver of about forty were throwing stones at it, although they kept missing their target. The stones made a sharp clack as they struck the stone wall, before bouncing off. Some onlookers laughed in loud voices. The rat finally managed to get a foothold in between the stones in the wall with its front paws. However, when it tried to climb further the fish skewer soon impeded its path, and so it would fall back into the water, but the rat was still intent on somehow saving itself. Its facial expression incomprehensible to the human eye, it was clear from its actions how desperate it was. It was as if it thought that if only it could get away to

somewhere safe it might survive. With mounting excitement, the children and the rickshaw driver threw more stones. Startled by the flying stones, two or three ducks that had been scavenging for food near a laundry stone, craned their necks and beadily eyed around. Entering the water the stones made a plunk and a splash. Their necks outstretched with absurd expressions, and squawking in alarm, they swam upstream carried by their brisk feet. I felt reluctant to watch the rat's final moments. The spectacle of the rat, burdened with its fate, and doomed to die, trying with all its might to escape, curiously stuck in my mind. It left me feeling distressed and lonely. That was honestly how I felt. That painful struggle before finding peace that I wished for, was a horrifying thing. Though I now felt a closer affinity for the peace which followed death, the struggle that may precede it would be dreadful. Oblivious to suicide, animals would have to endure that grim struggle until death finally cut them free. What would I do if something like what happened to the rat happened to me? Wouldn't I struggle exactly as the rat had done? I couldn't help but think back to my own accident when I came close to sharing the same fate as the rat. I resolved to doing all I possibly could. I decided for myself which hospital I would go to. I specified how I would get there. Afraid that the doctor might not be there, and the preparation for surgery to be performed soon after my arrival might not be done, I requested that someone phone ahead to warn of my arrival, for if not it would be an inconvenience. Afterwards, I thought how strange it was, even to me, how my mind had worked well on only doing the things that were vitally necessary, even though I was in a half conscious state. Indeed, whether my

injury would prove fatal or not, was very much in my own hands. However, facing the issue of life or death, I also thought how strange it was that I had become almost completely unperturbed by the fear of death. Would it be fatal? "What did the doctor say?" I asked my friend standing by my side. "It's not going to be fatal" came the reply. On hearing this, immediately my spirits rose. My feelings of elation turned to extraordinary cheerfulness. How would I have reacted if I was told it was fatal? In my present state it would be unimaginable. Perhaps I would have gone weak. Yet I had the feeling that I wouldn't have been so overcome by the fear of death that one normally might be. I also had the feeling that even had I been told I was going to die, I would have done everything in my power to save myself. There would be little doubt that I wouldn't have done much that was different to what the rat had done. And yet, trying to imagine what would have been if I had had my accident now, I thought that my old-self would have probably reacted in much the same way by struggling to survive rather than giving in to the feeling of longing for peace. Yet in truth, in that state of mind I doubt my hopes for survival would have been influenced so quickly. However, I really think that had I been influenced by what had happened since my accident, or not at all, I would have accepted it either way. What was inevitable was inevitable, and there would have been nothing I could have done anyway.

One late afternoon, some time since the incident with the rat, I walked alone along the road that followed the small stream, winding its way steadily uphill, and out of the town. Once I crossed the train tracks in front of the tunnel of the Sanin line, the

road grew steep and narrow, as did the flow of the small stream, and here the last houses disappeared from sight. Contemplating on turning back, I continued to walk on, further and further, around each bend, one after another to see what was there. Everything seemed drained of color in the early evening light, the air was cold on my skin, and the stillness somehow rather oddly, made me feel nervous. There was a large mulberry tree by the roadside. On the far side of the tree, on one of the branches overhanging the road, a single solitary leaf was fluttering, over and over, in a rhythmical movement.

I noticed there was no wind, and except for the movement of the stream in the midst of a hushed silence, everything was still, and yet that single solitary leaf continued to flutter busily by itself. How strange I thought. It gave me an eerie sensation, but I was also curious. I went beneath the tree and gazed up at it for quite a while. At once, the wind began to blow, and with it the solitary fluttering leaf ceased to move. The cause was evident. Then I realized that I'd known about this phenomenon all along. Gradually, the light began to fade. No matter how far I went, there always seemed to be another corner. Just as I thought hereabouts was far enough, and a good enough place to turn back, without thinking, I glanced over at the stream off to my side. On the far side of the sloping bank, a large rock measuring half the size of a tatami mat was sticking out of the water, and on it was a small black creature. It was a small water lizard. Still wet, it was a beautiful color. Fixed to the spot, its head downward, it faced the stream from the sloping bank. Water dripped from its body trickling an inch or so on to the dark dry stone. Without a

thought, I happened to squat down to take a closer look at it. I no longer felt an aversion to water lizards as I once did. Land lizards I had some liking for. Of all creepy crawlies I detested geckos the most. As for water lizards, I neither liked nor disliked them. About ten years earlier at lake Ashi, I used to like to watch the water lizards congregate around the waste water that drained from the inn. It often occurred to me that if I became a water lizard I wouldn't be able to bear it. If I was reincarnated as a water lizard what would I do, I often thought. Whenever I saw water lizards back then, those thoughts filled my mind which made me hate them. I stopped thinking like that now. I thought scaring the lizard would make it enter the water. I imagined the lizard's clumsy gait, swinging from side to side as it walked. Still squatting, I picked up a stone the size of a small ball from my side, and threw it. I wasn't particularly aiming at the lizard. My aim was so bad, it never occurred to me that I would hit it, since I was so bad at throwing things, aiming would be pointless. The stone ricocheted into the stream with a sharp sound. At the same time, the lizard seemed to leap sideways five inches or so. The lizard then arched its tail and lifted it up high. I looked on wondering what had happened. I didn't think the stone had hit the lizard at first. Then with a natural peacefulness the lizard's curled up tail unraveled and fell downward under its own weight. Simultaneously, the lizard braced itself against the rock by spreading its elbows to halt its slide, curling its front claws inward, it fell helplessly forward. Its tail lay entirely flat against the rock. It was motionless. The water lizard was dead. What have I done, I thought. Although I often squatted insects without much thought, this time unintentionally

killing the lizard left me with a strange revulsion for what I had done. Of course, what I had done inadvertently had been entirely coincidental. Yet for the lizard, its death had been entirely unforeseen. I continued squatting there for some time. I felt as if it was just the lizard and I, as if I had become the lizard and understood how it felt. I felt empathy for the loneliness of living things, and at the same time, I was filled with pity for the lizard. It was by chance that I had not died, and yet it was by chance that the lizard had died. I became lonely again, and finally I returned back down the road, barely visible underfoot, towards the inn and hot spring. The distant lights on the outskirts of the town of Kinosaki came into view. What had become of the dead bee? The bee had probably been carried underground after the rain had swept it away. What had happened to the rat? The rat had probably been washed out to sea, its body bloated from the water, would now be washing up with the rubbish on the sea shore. And I, who had not died, was walking along like this. Such were my thoughts. I felt I wouldn't be satisfied if I wasn't grateful, but in truth feelings of happiness did not well up inside me. Life and death were not two extremes. I felt as if there wasn't much difference between them. It had become quite dark. My vision could only discern the distant lights. It was as though my vision had become separate from the sensation I felt from the steps I trod, and both seemed uncertain. Only my mind labored on of its own accord. This sensation became all the more inviting.

I left Kinosaki after three weeks. It has been more than three years since that time. I never did get spinal tuberculosis, and from that at least I was spared.

1. Central Tokyo loop train line.
2. The hot spring town of Kinosaki Onsen in northern Hyogo Prefecture has a history that reaches back many centuries. According to local legend a hot spring sprang forth in 717 A.D. after the priest Dochi-Shonin prayed here for one thousand consecutive days. The Buddhist temple Onsen-ji was built to honor the priest and on April 23rd and 24th a festival is still held to commemorate his miraculous feat. Beautifully located along the Otani River, it is lined with a large number of community bathhouses. Especially famous are Satono-yu, Ichino-yu, Jizo-yu and Kono-yu. Kono-yu's name originates from another famous local legend about a stork that used a spring in this location to heal its wounds. Its name actually means stork's hot spring.

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Appendix

『城の崎にて』

山の手線の電車に跳ね飛ばされて怪我をした、その後養生に、一人で但馬の城崎温泉へ出掛けた。背中の傷が脊椎カリエスになれば致命傷になりかねないが、そんなことはあるまいと医者に云われた。二三年で出なければ後は心配はいらない、とにかく要心は肝心だからといわれて、それで来た。三週間以上———我慢できたら五週間ぐらい居たいものだと考えて来た。

頭はまだなんだかはっきりしない。物忘れが烈しくなった。しかし気分は近年になく静まって、落ちついたいい気持がしていた。稲の穫入れの始まるころで、気候もよかったのだ。

一人きりで誰も話し相手はない。読むか書くか、ぼんやりと部屋の前の椅子に腰かけて山だの往来だのを見ているか、それでなければ散歩で暮らしていた。散歩する所は町から小さい流れについて少しずつ登りになった路にいい所があった。山の裾を廻っているあたりの小さな潭になった所に山女が沢山集まっている。そしてなおよく見ると、足に毛の生えた大きな川蟹が石のようにじっとしているのを見つけることがある。夕方の食事前にはよくこの路を歩いてきた。冷え冷えとした夕方、淋しい秋の山峡を小さい清い流れについていく時考えることはやはり沈んだことが多かった。淋しい考えだった。しかしそれには静かないい気持がある。自分はよく怪我のことを考えた。一つ間違えば、今ごろは青山の土の下に仰向けになって寝ているところだったなど思う。青い冷たい堅い顔をして、顔の傷も背中の傷もそのままで。祖父や母の死骸が傍にある。それももうお互いになんの交渉もなく、———こんなことが想い浮かぶ。それは淋しいが、それほどに自分を恐怖させない考えだった。いつかはそうなる。それがいつか？———今まではそんなことを思って、その「いつか」を知らず知らず遠い先のことにしていた。しかし今は、それが本統にいつか知れないような気がしてきた。自分は死ぬはずだったのを助かった、何かが自分を殺さな

かった、自分にはしなければならぬ仕事があるのだ、———中学で習ったロード・クライヴという本に、クライヴがそう思うことによって激励されることが書いてあった。実は自分もそういう風に危うかった出来事を感じたかった。そんな気もした。しかし妙に自分の心は静まってしまった。自分の心には、何かしら死に対する親しみが起こっていた。

自分の部屋は二階で、隣のない、わりに静かな座敷だった。読み書きに疲れるとよく縁の椅子に出た。脇が玄関の屋根で、それが家へ接続する所が羽目になっている。その羽目の中に蜂の巣があるらしい。虎斑の大きな肥った蜂が天気さえよければ、朝から暮近くまで毎日忙しそうに働いていた。蜂は羽目のあわいから摩り抜けて出ると、一ト先ず玄関の屋根に下りた。そこで羽根や触角を前足や後ろ足で叮嚀に調えると、少し歩きまわる奴もあるが、すぐ細長い羽根を両方へしっかりと張ってぶーんと飛び立つ。飛び立つと急に早くなって飛んで行く。植込みの八つ手の花がちょうど咲きかけで蜂はそれに群がっていた。自分は退屈すると、よく欄干から蜂の出はいりを眺めていた。

ある朝のこと、自分は一疋の蜂が玄関の屋根で死んでいるのを見つけた。足を腹の下にぴったりとつけ、触角はだらしなく顔へたれ下がっていた。ほかの蜂は一向に冷淡だった。巣の出はいりに忙しくその傍を這いまわるがまったく拘泥する様子はなかった。忙しく立働いている蜂はいかにも生きている物という感じを与えた。その傍に一疋、朝も昼も夕も、見るたびに一つ所にまったく動かずに俯向きに転がっているのを見ると、それがまたいかにも死んだものという感じを与えるのだ。それは三日ほどそのままになっていた。それは見ていて、いかにも静かな感じを与えた。淋しかった。ほかの蜂が皆巣へ入ってしまった日暮、冷たい瓦の上に一つ残った死骸を見ることは淋しかった。しかし、それはいかにも静かだった。

夜の間にひどい雨が降った。朝は晴れ、木の葉も地面も屋根も綺麗に洗われていた。蜂の死骸はもうそこになかった。今も巣の蜂どもは元気に働いているが、死んだ蜂は雨樋を伝って地面へ流し出されたことであろう。

足は縮めたまま、触角は顔へこびりついたまま、たぶん泥にまみれてどこかでじっとしていることだろう。外界にそれを動かす次の変化が起こるまでは死骸はじっとそこにしているだろう。それとも蟻に曳かれていくか。それにしろ、それはいかにも静かであった。忙しく忙しく働いてばかりいた蜂がまったく動くことがなくなったのだから静かである。自分はその静かさに親しみを感じた。自分は「范の犯罪」という短篇小説をその少し前に書いた。范という支那人が過去の出来事だった結婚前の妻と自分の友達だった男との関係に対する嫉妬から、そして自身の生理的圧迫もそれを助長し、その妻を殺すことを書いた。それは范の気持を主にして書いたが、しかし今は范の妻の気持を主にし、仕舞に殺されて墓の下にいる、その静かさを自分は書きたいと思った。「殺されたる范の妻」を書こうと思った。それはとうとう書かなかったが、自分にはそんな要求が起こっていた。その前からかかっている長篇の主人公の考えとは、それは大変異ってしまった気持だったので弱った。

蜂の死骸が流され、自分の眼界から消えて間もない時だった。ある午前、自分は円山川、それからそれの流れ出る日本海などの見える東山公園へ行くつもりで宿を出た。「一の湯」の前から小川は往来の真中をゆるやかに流れ、円山川へ入る。ある所まで来ると橋だの岸だのに人が立って何か川の中の物を見ながら騒いでいた。それは大きな鼠を川へなげ込んだのを見ているのだ。鼠は一生懸命に泳いで逃げようとする。鼠には首のところに七寸ばかりの魚串が刺し貫してあった。頭の上に三寸ほど、咽喉の下に三寸ほどそれが出ている。鼠は石垣へ這い上がろうとする。子供が二三人、四十ぐらいの車夫が一人、それへ石を投げる。なかなか当たらない。カチッカチッと石垣に当たって跳ね返った。見物人は大声で笑った。鼠は石垣の間にようやく前足をかけた。しかし這入ろうとすると魚串がすぐにつかえた。そしてまた水へ落ちる。鼠はどうかして助かろうとしている。顔の表情は人間にわからなかったが動作の表情に、それが一生懸命であることがよくわかった。鼠はどこかへ逃げ込むことができれば助かると思っている

ように、長い串を刺されたまま、また川の真中の方へ泳ぎ出た。子供や車夫はますます面白がって石を投げた。傍の洗い場の前で餌をあさっていた二三羽の家鴨が石が飛んでくるのでびっくりし、首を延ばしてきょろきょろとした。スポッ、スポッと石が水へ投げ込まれた。家鴨は頓狂な顔をして首を延ばしたまま、鳴きながら、忙しく足を動かして上流の方へ泳いで行った。自分は鼠の最期を見る気がしなかった。鼠が殺されまいと、死ぬに極まった運命を担いながら、全力を尽くして逃げ廻っている様子が妙に頭についた。自分は淋しい嫌な気持になった。あれが本統なのだと思った。自分が希っている静かさの前に、ああいう苦しみのあることは恐ろしいことだ。死後の静寂に親しみを持つにしろ、死に到達するまでのああいう動騒は恐ろしいと思った。自殺を知らない動物はいよいよ死にきるまではあの努力を続けなければならない。今自分にあの鼠のようなことが起こったら自分はどうするだろう。自分はやはり鼠と同じような努力をしはしまいか。自分は自分の怪我の場合、それに近い自分になったことを思わないではいられなかった。自分はできるだけのことをしようとした。自分は自身で病院をきめた。それへ行く方法を指定した。もし医者が留守で、行ってすぐに手術の用意ができないと困ると思って電話を先にかけてもらうことなどを頼んだ。半分意識を失った状態で、一番大切なことだけによく頭の働いたことは自分でも後から不思議に思ったくらいである。しかもこの傷が致命的なものかどうかは自分の問題だった。しかし、致命的のものかどうかを問題としながら、ほとんど死の恐怖に襲われなかったのも自分では不思議であった。「フェータルなものか、どうか？　医者はなんといっていた？」こう側にいた友に訊いた。「フェータルな傷じゃないそうだ」こう云われた。こう云われると自分はしかし急に元気づいた。亢奮から自分は非常に快活になった。フェータルなものだともし聞いたら自分はどうだったろう。その自分はちょっと想像できない。自分は弱ったろう。しかしふだん考えているほど、死の恐怖に自分は襲われなかったろうという気がする。そしてそういわれてもなお、自分は助かろうと思い、何かしら努

力をしたろうという気がする。それは鼠の場合と、そう変わらないものだったに相違ない。で、またそれが今来たらどうかと思ってみて、なおかつ、あまり変わらない自分であろうと思うと「あるがまま」で、気分で希うところが、そう実際にすぐは影響はしないものに相違ない、しかも両方が本統で、影響した場合は、それでよく、しない場合でも、それでいいのだと思った。それは仕方のないことだ。

そんなことがあって、またしばらくして、ある夕方、町から小川に沿うて一人だんだん上へ歩いていった。山陰線の隧道の前で線路を越すと道幅が狭くなって路も急になる、流れも同様に急になって、人家もまったく見えなくなった。もう帰ろうと思いながら、あの見える所までという風に角を一つ一つ先へ先へと歩いて行った。物がすべて青白く、空気の肌ざわりも冷え冷えとして、物静かさがかえってなんとなく自分をそわそわとさせた。大きな桑の木が路傍にある。むこうの、路へ差し出した桑の枝で、ある一つの葉だけがヒラヒラヒラヒラ、同じリズムで動いている。風もなく流れのほかはすべて静寂の中にその葉だけがいつまでもヒラヒラヒラヒラと忙しく動くのが見えた。自分は不思議に思った。多少怖い気もした。しかし好奇心もあった。自分は下へいってそれをしばらく見上げていた。すると風が吹いてきた。そうしたらその動く葉は動かなくなった。原因は知れた。何かでこういう場合を自分はもっと知っていたと思った。

だんだんと薄暗くなってきた。いつまで往っても、先の角はあった。もうここらで引きかえそうと思った。自分は何気なく傍の流れを見た。向う側の斜めに水から出ている半畳敷きほどの石に黒い小さいものがいた。蠑螈だ。まだ濡れていて、それはいい色をしていた。頭を下に傾斜から流れへ臨んで、じっとしていた。体から滴れた水が黒く乾いた石へ一寸ほど流れている。自分はそれを何気なく、踞んで見ていた。自分は先ほど蠑螈は嫌いでなくなった。蜥蜴は多少好きだ。屋守は虫の中でも最も嫌いだ。蠑螈は好きでも嫌いでもない。十年ほど前によく蘆の湖で蠑螈が宿屋の流し水の出る所に集まっているのを見て、自分が蠑螈だったら堪らないという

気をよく起こした。蠑螈にもし生まれ変わったら自分はどうするだろう、そんなことを考えた。そのころ蠑螈を見るとそれが想い浮かぶので、蠑螈を見ることを嫌った。しかしもうそんなことを考えなくなっていた。自分は蠑螈を驚かして水へ入れようと思った。不器用にからだを振りながら歩く形が想われた。自分は踞んだまま、傍の小鞠ほどの石を取上げ、それを投げてやった。自分は別に蠑螈を狙わなかった。狙ってもとても当たらないほど、狙って投げることの下手な自分はそれが当たることなどはまったく考えなかった。石はこッといってから流れに落ちた。石の音と同時に蠑螈は四寸ほど横へ跳んだように見えた。蠑螈は尻尾を反らし、高く上げた。自分はどうしたのかしら、と思って見ていた。最初石が当たったとは思わなかった。蠑螈の反らした尾が自然に静かに下りてきた。すると肘を張ったようにして傾斜に堪えて、前へついていた両の前足の指が内へまくれ込むと、蠑螈は力なく前へのめってしまった。尾はまったく石についた。もう動かない。蠑螈は死んでしまった。自分は飛んだことをしたと思った。虫を殺すことをよくする自分であるが、その気がまったくないのに殺してしまったのは自分に妙な嫌な気をさした。もとより自分のしたことではあったがいかにも偶然だった。蠑螈にとってはまったく不意な死であった。自分はしばらくそこに踞んでいた。蠑螈と自分だけになったような心持がして蠑螈の身に自分がなってその心持を感じた。可哀想に想うと同時に、生き物の淋しさを一緒に感じた。自分は偶然に死ななかった。蠑螈は偶然に死んだ。自分は淋しい気持になって、ようやく足元の見える路を温泉宿の方に帰って来た。遠く町端れの灯が見え出した。死んだ蜂はどうなったか。その後の雨でもう土の下に入ってしまったろう。あの鼠はどうしたろう。海へ流されて、今ごろはその水ぶくれのした体を塵芥と一緒に海岸へでも打ちあげられていることだろう。そして死ななかった自分は今こうして歩いている。そう思った。自分はそれに対し、感謝しなければ済まぬような気もした。しかし実際喜びの感じは湧き上がってはこなかった。生きていることと死んでしまっていることと、それは両極ではなかった。それ

ほどに差はないような気がした。もうかなり暗かった。視覚は遠い灯を感ずるだけだった。足の踏む感覚も視覚を離れて、いかにも不確かだった。ただ頭だけが勝手に働く。それが一層そういう気分に自分を誘っていった。三週間いて、自分はここを去った。それから、もう三年以上になる。自分は脊椎カリエスになるだけは助かった。