

THE DEEP MUSIC OF TRADITION
IN THE WORKS OF KODA ROHAN

by

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B.A., Dartmouth College, 1968

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1982

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ABSTRACT

Rising to prominence on a wave of nationalistic reaction to two decades of intense Western influence, Kōda Rohan (1867-1947) re-discovered the Japanese past in the form of the Genroku period (1688-1703) poets Saikaku and Bashō, and led the way to a literary flowering in the 1890's. As this bloom faded and the tides of modernization continued to rise capturing literary circles in its currents, Rohan placed himself against the flow, dedicated to the vital task of preserving the values of the East Asian tradition. It is for this reason his work is valuable today: in his writing the voice of tradition speaks with great depth, breadth and beauty. This thesis explores the character of Rohan's writing by examining three of his novels. In the first work considered the focus is on the individual. The second treats the individual within the framework of society. The last is concerned with the shared cultural experience known as history.

The introduction attempts to place the writer and his work in historical perspective. In recognition that the life was admired as much as the creations of his pen, the first chapter is a biographical sketch. Chapter Two suggests an approach to the writing itself, noting salient points of style, influences, and development. Attention is focused on Rohan's use of traditional

poetic devices, the commanding rhythm of his prose, and the underlying qualities of his narrative voice.

Analyzing thematic and stylistic features, the third, fourth, and fifth chapters treat three representative works of fiction. Chapter Three deals with Taidokuro ("Encounter With A Skull"), an early work. The analysis shows how classical forms and materials were employed in an innovative, powerful, and, at times, humorous fashion in a piece of writing dealing with the problem of attachment and suffering due to human passion. In Chapter Four the discussion of Gojū no Tō ("The Five-Storied Pagoda"), the work which won Rohan an enduring reputation, centers around its portrayal of the energies of the individual and society in opposition. In bold, vigorous language the novel dramatizes the conflicting ideals of individual aspiration and social harmony, while suggesting a resolution represented by the balance and majesty of the pagoda. Chapter Five examines Rohan's view of history as expressed in his novel Renkanki ("Record of Linked Rings"). A late work, it is constructed with a series of biographical portraits of historical figures in tenth-century Heian Japan. Rohan's regeneration of the past reveals his vision of the fabric of history as woven by the threads of karma and recorded in the songs of poets.

The conclusion is devoted to observations on difficulties in reappraising Rohan's work and reflections on his place in the history of Japanese literature.

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Introduction

To most contemporary readers Kōda Rohan's literary world is a distant realm all but lost in an irretrievable past (幸田成行 Kōda Shigeyuki, 1867-1947; pen name: 露伴 Rohan). Reminded that Rohan lived into the postwar era, many will recall the very moving reminiscences of his daughter, Kōda Aya (幸田文 b. 1904). Her writing, initially, was of her father.¹ The remarkable response to her early work led to a distinguished career as a novelist. It may well be more readers know the father through the daughter than by direct contact with his own writing. In spite of this distance there remains a sense of respect, a residue of esteem for a man who by the time of his death in 1947 was something of a living legacy of Meiji Japan.

The years when modern Japanese literature came of age in the 1890's during a period of reflection and consolidation after the tumultuous decades following the Meiji Restoration (1868) are commonly referred to as the Kōro jidai (紅露時代), the era of Ozaki Kōyō (尾崎紅葉 1867-1903) and Kōda Rohan. Kōyō's literary universe revolved around erotic sensibilities, wealth, and the intricate network of social obligations constituting Japanese society; Rohan's world centered on love, fortune, and traditional Eastern ideals of self-cultivation. Together, their art represents nearly the whole spectrum of mid-Meiji cultural life.

The Meiji twenties (1890's) were years of intense literary and intellectual activity in Japan. For Rohan, also in his mid-twenties, it was a time for study, reflection, travel, and prodigious literary output. Some fifteen years later, after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, he abandoned his ambitious long novel, Sora Utsu Nami (天うっ浪 "Waves Striking the Heavens") and withdrew from his prominent position in the literary establishment. His withdrawal from the small, rather well-knit community of writers, editors, and critics known as the bundan (文壇) was a calculated retreat, for during this middle period he continued to write. Works on self-cultivation, historical biographies, and critical studies, rather than prose fiction, are most representative of those years. During the last decades of his long career he returned to writing novels, exhibiting a distinct personal style in sharp contrast with the self-consciously "modern" works of other Shōwa period novelists.

Rohan's long estrangement from the bundan, occasioned in part by his stance against naturalism and the genbun itchi ("unity of spoken and written language") movement, tends to obscure the fact that for a decade during the critical formative period of modern Japanese literature he was not an isolated figure, but a writer very much in the mainstream of the times, indeed, an influential leader of the flow.

A good example of this is Rohan's influence on Higuchi Ichiyō (樋口 一葉 1872-1896). After her break with the

gesaku ("playful composition") novelist, Nakarai Tōsui (半井桃水 1860-1926), she turned to Rohan's work for inspiration, modeling some of her early stories on his "artisan novels" such as Fūryūbutsu (風流仏 "An Alluring Buddha" 1889), Ikkōken (一口剣 "One Sword" 1890), and Gojū no Tō (五重塔 "The Five-Storied Pagoda" 1891). The porcelain painter in "Umorigi" (うもれ木 "In Obscurity"), a story she published in the prestigious literary magazine, Miyako no Hana ("Capital Blossoms") in Meiji 25 (1892), is clearly drawn along the lines of Rohan's artist heroes.² It was Rohan and Kōyō who, with their vigorous neoclassical idiom much affected by the Genroku literary flowering, directed Ichiyō's attention toward the prose style of Ihara Saikaku (井原西鶴 1642-1693). She then, perhaps more than anyone, made the rhythms and sympathies of the Genroku period novelist her own.

Less commonly recognized is the pervasive influence Rohan had on the members of the Bungakukai, a magazine at the heart of Japanese romanticism. Hirata Tokuboku (平田杢木 1862-1943), the scholar of English literature and translator of Defoe, Thackeray, Hardy, Conrad, and Yeats, admired the depth of Rohan's roots in tradition and praised him for "giving birth to a new literary world swaddled in genuine Japanese spirit."³ Hoshino Tenchi (星野天知 1862-1950), Kitamura Tōkoku (北村透谷 1868-1894), and Shimazaki Tōson (島崎藤村 1872-1943) were attracted by the romantic character of Rohan's idealism.

They saw in his writing, with its emphasis on love, poetic refinement, and liberation (風流思想 fūryū shisō), a possible means for harmonizing European romanticism and traditional Japanese sensibilities. Of course, as their understanding of Western attitudes and principles increased, the contradictions became more painfully apparent and Rohan's paradigm lost some of its appeal. We should remember, however, that much of their thematic program, many of the problems these writers dealt with, originated with Rohan.⁴

Kōda Rohan's impact on Meiji letters seems to be beyond dispute. Then too, when we consider the great appreciation Japan's finest modern waka poet, Saitō Mokichi had for Rohan, or the unstinting admiration of Tanizaki Junichirō, one wonders why the work of one of Japan's greatest early modern writers has received so little attention in his own country and is relatively unknown abroad.

While a seemingly endless number of monographs on Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石 1867-1916) and Mori Ōgai (森鷗外 1862-1922) continue to appear, there are relatively few book-length studies of Rohan in Japanese. Other than Chieko Mulhern's literary biography, Koda Rohan (1977), a study which concentrates on the early works and devotes less than ten pages to the final thirty years of active writing, in English we have only three translations, all by Japanese translators, the last, published almost sixty years ago.⁵

A few Japanese scholars and critics have, it is true, endeavored to keep alive and reappraise Rohan's literary corpus. Iwanami Shoten reissued the forty-one volume collected works, originally published from 1949 to 1958, in 1978. Yamamoto Kenkichi, son of the Meiji critic and Rohan associate, Ishibashi Ningetsu (石橋忍月 1865-1926), Shinoda Hajime, the scholar of English literature, and Noborio Yutaka, whose provocative essays have appeared recently in the journal, Bungaku, have all made notable contributions.

The question remains: Why the readerly and scholarly neglect? This is not a question this essay can hope to answer; it does point, however, to a situation it may serve in some small way to redress. I believe there is ample reason to attempt to do so. In the concluding section of the informative and well-known symposium, Zadankai: Meiji Bungaku-shi ("The History of Meiji Literature: A Symposium" 1961), a text edited by the foremost scholars in the field, in response to the question, "Who represents the highest peak in early modern Japanese literature?" the discussion revolves around Ōgai, Sōseki, Tōson and Rohan. The interesting point is that although the decision comes down in favor of Sōseki there is general agreement that "when it comes to representing Japanese literature to the world, it is Rohan who has the most distinctive flavor." "Were [Sōseki's novels] all translated into English and French and so on, and read by Westerners they just would not be very surprised. For an exemplar of Japanese or Asian culture, it would have to be Rohan. In

other words, if one sought to elicit admiration from Westerners and impress them with something truly different, Rohan's works are the best example of what is characteristically Japanese or Eastern." ⁶

Needless to say, I find myself very much in agreement with the opinion expressed. Much of early Japanese fiction reads like a pale imitation of the more highly refined Western form. It would be unreasonable to expect otherwise. Of course the language in early works of fiction has a novelty that sustains interest. As a record of social and psychological developments they merit attention. But as art? Futabatei Shimei's Ukigumo (浮雲 "Floating Clouds" 1887-89) for example, hailed as Japan's first modern novel, did break new ground in establishing a literary realism modeled on European, specifically Russian techniques.⁷ As a work of art, however, especially for a reader familiar with the psychological subtlety of a Henry James or the realism of a Flaubert, it fails to meet the alien, albeit self-chosen standards.

For a Westerner approaching modern Japanese literature, Rohan's writing opens new vistas and provides a reading experience rich with the elements of a thousand years of verbal artistry. Across the whole spectrum of arts and letters it is only in the area of prose fiction that parallel forms did not develop when East met West in late nineteenth-century Japan. Usually the

traditional form of a particular art was preserved while its Western equivalent was added. In poetry, tanka and haiku are alive and flourishing alongside other verse forms created initially in response to Western poetry. Kabuki and Noh exist beside an active modern theatre. The same phenomenon is found in music and painting. Only in prose fiction were traditional canons overthrown almost entirely in favor of Western models. Frequently have we heard the idea that it was the novel that cultivated the modern sense of self-identity (kindai jiga) in Japan. Undoubtedly it played a large role, but too often, I believe, at the expense of narrative and lyrical qualities in the tradition that writers today are struggling to recover -- unique qualities artists like Kōyō, Ichiyō, Kyōka, and Rohan sought to preserve.

The development of modern prose styles is a fascinating, involved subject which I will merely touch upon below in my discussion of Rohan's buntai ("style") and his opposition to the genbun itchi ("unity of spoken and written language") movement. Here, I would like to relate an anecdote which clearly indicates the kind of conflict most, if not all, men of letters found themselves in around the middle of the Meiji period. To a great extent, buntai 'style' in Meiji writing was determined by how a writer resolved this conflict.

In the preface to his Meiji 39 (1906) Bungaku Ron (文学論 "Essay on Literature") Natsume Sōseki had this to say:

In my younger days I studied Chinese literature and enjoyed it quite a bit. Although the time spent on those studies was not great, it formed my definition of just what literature should be. Behind this view, vague and obscure, lay the great classics of Chinese historical writing. I thought to myself that English literature must be like this. If it was and I were to devote my life to its study, I would certainly never have any cause for regret. Why I alone entered the unfashionable field of English literature was due solely to this simple, infantile belief. ... After graduating, in the bottom of my heart I had the sinking, unsettling thought I had been deceived by English literature.

After claiming essentially equivalent competence in, and ability to appreciate, both Chinese and English, he declared, "What is called literature in Chinese studies and what is called literature in English cannot even be subsumed under the same definition.-- they are entities of a wholly different nature."⁸ He arrived at this conclusion while living alone in London: about the same time, he began to write the kind of English style novel he had come to harbor intense doubts about. Discussing the "rivalry between the old and new views of literature that arose in Sōseki's consciousness," Yamamoto Kenkichi comments that it was precisely this tension that "produced dislocations and fissures everywhere." He goes on to add that while Sōseki was writing Meian (明暗 "Light and Darkness" 1916) he would devote his mornings to the novel, but "clear his head" by composing Chinese poetry in the afternoon.⁹

Rohan preferred not to straddle the fissure. This does not imply a lack of knowledge or awareness of Western literature. Indeed, his first published novel, Ro Dandan (露団々

"Dewdrops" 1889) has a number of Americans, a Chinese, and a single Japanese poet in its cast of characters, is set in New York, and has individuals mouthing the tenets of Unitarianism. Nevertheless, "modernity" for Rohan was negatively informing, it was seen as a symptom of deterioration and abrogation of crucial cultural values. He chose instead to align himself with the immortal poets of Japanese tradition, Saigyō and Bashō, and with the master storytellers of the pre-modern era, Saikaku and Bakin. This stance permitted a more selective absorption of Western elements. He experimented with new verse forms (shintaiishi) for example, and in his fiction there are attempts to assimilate thematically Christian love with the Buddhist sense of compassion (jihi) and the Confucian ideal of humanity (jin). His involvement with Izaak Walton's (1593-1683) The Complete Angler (1653), a classic of Western contemplative life, is an indication of the type of literature he sought and admired in the West.

What then can a reader expect to find in the writings of Kōda Rohan? First of all, a beautiful tapestry of language moving with a rare power and rhythm. In the early works in particular there is a haibun-like flow turning the novels closer to poetry than prose. Later works are infused with a dignity and strength based on elements in the style derived from kambun.¹⁰ Then it will be discovered his works are brimming with the

traditional culture of East Asia: the author takes full advantage of the icons of Buddhism and the riches of classical allusion based on a vast reading knowledge of the literatures of Japan and China. Finally, the reader encounters a writer who endeavored in his life and art to embody and preserve the ideals at the core of Japanese aesthetic and philosophic sensibilities. Among these ideals, kū (空 "emptiness"), michi (道 "way"), makoto (真 "purity of spirit"), and en (縁 "relatedness") are particularly important in the works to be examined in this essay.

Taidokuro (対骷髏 "Encounter with a Skull" 1890) can be read as a meditation on emptiness and the related notions of attachment and release. Gojū no Tō (五重塔 "The Five-Storied Pagoda" 1891) is a kabukiesque novel concerned with an individual, an artist, finding his way to self-realization in conflict with the conventions of society. Renkanki (連環記 "Record of Linked Rings" 1940), an historical novel set in the tenth century, presents a series of biographical sketches which unroll before us in a manner similar to the medieval emaki 'picture scrolls' recapturing the spirit of the age and giving the reader a remarkable sense of the subtle karma at work linking the characters in an unbroken chain.

¹ Koda Aya, Chichi. Konna Koto ("My Father", "Like This") (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1955); and Chigiregumo ("Scattered Clouds") (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1956).

² Robert Lyons Danly, In the Shade of Spring Leaves (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981). For a brief treatment of Rohan's influence on Ichiyō see Chapter Five, "The Bundan," pp. 133-164. Danly notes that "Like the protagonist of The Five-Storeyed Pagoda, the hero of "In Obscurity" is a man dedicated to the solitary perfection of his craft, ready to sacrifice himself for his calling and to forsake all corrupting influences in his single-minded revolt against the rampant, crass materialism of his age. In Rohan's novel, the art is carpentry and the obsession is the building of a perfect pagoda; in Ichiyō's story, the art is the painting of porcelain and the hero [is] ... metamorphosed into a man of integrity and artistic passion (p.76).

³ Sasabuchi Yūichi, "Kōda Rohan to 'Bungakukai'," Bungaku, 46, No. 11 (1978), p. 1370.

⁴ Sasabuchi notes, for example, Kitamura Tōkoku's "Waga Rōgoku" ("My Prison"), first published in Hakuhyō Jogaku Zasshi (June, 1893), was written as a direct response to Rohan's "Fūryūgo" ("Love's Enlightenment") which appeared the previous year in the newspaper, Kokumin no Tomo (August, 1892).

The term fūryū (風流) from the Chinese feng liu (lit. "wind-flow") has a long and complex history in the aesthetics of East Asia. Apparently an epicurean ideal of Taoist origin, in T'ang poetry it is always found representing an ideal combination of wine, women, music, and poetry. In Japan during the late

medieval and Edo periods the expression lost some of its sense of gaiety and color and came to suggest a mood of greater sophistication and restraint with emphasis on tranquility and simplicity bordering on the astringent. A key aspect of the fūryū sensibility is the way in which the past assumes a central role in the formation of aesthetic values. A man of refined taste eschews the present popular norms in favor of the forms of a preceding period. See Konishi Junichi, "Fūryū: An Ideal of Japanese Aesthetic Life" in The Japanese Image, ed. by Maurice Schneps and Alvin P. Cook (Orient/West, 1965).

⁵ Shioya Sakae, trans., The Pagoda (Gojū no Tō), by Kōda Rohan (Tokyo: Okura and Co., 1909); Miyamori Asatarō, trans., "Lodging for the Night" (Taidokuro), by Kōda Rohan in Representative Tales of Japan (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1914); Nagura Jirō, trans., Leaving The Hermitage (Shutsuro) by Kōda Rohan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925). While this was being written Chieko Mulhern published translations of three of Rohan's early works in Pagoda, Skull and Samurai: Three Stories by Kōda Rohan, Cornell Univ. East Asia Papers, No. 26 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982).

⁶ Yanagida Izumi, Katsumoto Seiichirō and Ino Kenji, ed., Zadankai: Meiji Bungaku-shi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976), p. 473.

⁷ Marleigh Ryan, Japan's First Modern Novel: Ukigumo of Futabatei Shimei (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1971).

⁸ Natsume Sōseki, Bungaku Ron ("Essay on Literature") in Sōseki Zenshū (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1949), p. 9-10

Sōseki says his definition of literature (teigi) was based on his reading of the Chinese historical works indicated by the phrase, "Sakokushikan" (左国史漢). This refers to the

Lü-shi Chun-giu ("Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü"), Guo-yu ("Narratives of the States"), Shi-ji ("Records of the Historian Si-ma Qian"); and Han-shu ("History of the Former Han Dynasty").

⁹ Yamamoto Kenkichi, Sōseki Takuboku Rohan (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū-sha, 1972), p. 196.

¹⁰ "Haibun" Donald Keene describes as, "Prose writing characterized by the ellipses and other stylistic features of haikai poetry. Bashō's travel diaries are examples of haibun." World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-modern Era 1600-1867 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 573.

"Kambun" is a Sino-Japanese hybrid prose written with Chinese syntax and glossed with Japanese readings of the characters.

Chapter One

A Biographical Sketch

Kōda Shigeyuki was born on the eve of the Meiji Restoration, in Edo, on the twenty-third day of the seventh month in the third year of the Keiō era (1867). It was a propitious year for writers. Born that same year were Ozaki Kōyō (d. 1903), Natsume Sōseki (d. 1916), and Masaoka Shiki (d. 1902).

He was the fourth son of Kōda Shigenobu (成延 1839?-1914) and wife Yū (鰐 1842-1919).¹ Both parents came from hereditary lines of direct retainers to the Shogun: his mother, from the Kōda family who were omote bōzu; his father, from the Imanishi family, ura bōzu. Rohan's father married into the Kōda family. The Edojō bōzu (江戸城坊主 or chabōzu 茶坊主 as they are sometimes called), the monk-like officials of the Edo Castle which was the seat of government during the Tokugawa period, were responsible for protocol, appointments, and the general day to day functioning of the bureaus and residences. The role required discipline, correct deportment, and a stock of ready knowledge in subjects ranging from armour to incense. In short, the Castle bōzu became a group whose professional duties involved cultivating and preserving the finer points of Tokugawa culture. Throughout his career, Rohan's writing reveals his debt to the cultured, edifying milieu of his upbringing.

Rohan's parents had a total of eight children, six boys and two girls. The third son died in infancy and the last, early in life. His father is said to have been fairly skilled at writing and to have had an interest in music. His mother evidently had considerable talent for music, for she played a number of instruments, including the shamisen, quite well. She is also said to have been an excellent calligrapher.

They raised a talented and extremely successful family. Rohan's elder brother, Shigetada (成忠), married into another bōzu family and, known to history as Gunji Taii ("Naval Lieutenant Gunji") became famous as a leader of expeditions to the Kuriles, the islands north of Hokkaido. He organized the undertaking which led to the establishment of the first settlement and fishing bases in 1893. Due to his exploits claiming land for Japan in the north, he became a Russian prisoner of war when he was captured in Kamchatka soon after the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries in 1904. Adventurous men of action were part of Rohan's family as well as his fiction.

The two sisters, Nobu (延) and Kō (幸) were pioneers in the study and introduction of Western music. Having studied at the Tokyo Music School, Nobu went on a government scholarship to Boston (1890-91) and Vienna (1891-96), then returned to a distinguished career as a pianist and professor of music at the forerunner to what is now Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku. The younger

sister, (Andō) Kō, studied in Germany from 1896 to 1903, became an accomplished violinist, and a professor of music at the university with her sister. Both were music tutors to the Imperial family and were elected to the Imperial Academy of Arts.

Rohan's younger brother, Shigetomo (成友), a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University, became an authority in the fields of Japanese economic history, the history of foreign trade, and Christianity in Japan. He was a professor for many years at Tōkyō Shōdai (Hitotsubashi University) and Keiō University. Mori Ōgai was inspired to write his Ōshio Heihachirō (大塩平八郎 1914) by Kōda Shigetomo's detailed treatment of the rebellion leader in his monumental study of the history of the city of Osaka.

These outstanding achievements in the artistic and scholarly arenas, not to mention the world of practical affairs, were due in no small way to the family's background in the bōzu tradition with its insistence on cultural excellence. The financial well being of the family, however, was closely tied to the fortunes of the Shōgunate. The Restoration of 1868 saw a decline in the circumstances of many of the old Edo elites -- the Kōda family was no exception.

Rohan's father fared better than some. The early years of Meiji are rife with stories of once proud samurai pulling rickshaw through the streets of the capital. After the fall of

the Bakufu government, his father's annual stipend was discontinued but he was able to obtain a position in the newly established Finance Ministry as a minor official. The income from this job was on the paltry side, and limited resources became a factor affecting the course of Rohan's formal schooling. By Meiji 18 (1885) even this employment was terminated and his father was relieved of all official government duties (hishoku to haikan). During this period the Kōda family moved frequently -- always to smaller quarters, sharing the fate of "déclassé bushi."

On the eve of the Restoration the Kōda family had occupied a large, impressive house with an imposing gate. The bōzu were better off than their smallish yearly stipends would indicate. Because of their function as intermediaries, their control of access to power (like Kira Kōzukenosuke Yoshitaka of Chūshingura -- a bōzu), they were often the beneficiaries of valuable gifts and privileges. During Rohan's childhood he watched the family's fortune steadily decline.

To see a photograph of Kōda Rohan in the prime of life, from the look of the large, sturdy, robust man, it is hard to believe he was a weak and sickly child.² The doctor attending the birth thought the infant would be too frail to live a normal life, were it able to survive. Dedicated parental care saw the baby through the early crisis, but illness plagued Rohan's youth.

There were no maids in the Kōda household and the family members were rather rigorous about daily chores. Rohan's grandmother played a dominant role in his early training, teaching him a wealth of practical lore, from identifying constellations to the use of Chinese medicines. It seems to have been from her that he acquired his strong sense of devotion and self discipline. Together they made the daily offerings to the numerous household divinities -- a practice Rohan continued after the rest of the family abandoned their ancestral observances in favor of Christianity -- and regularly visited the family graves.

Rohan's formal education was limited to primary and middle school. He enrolled at the Tokyo English School (Tōkyō Eigakkō) at age fifteen but dropped out after a year to study at a private academy, the Keigijuku, run by a scholar of Chinese studies, Kikuichi Shōken (菊池松軒 1808-1886). It was during this period he began to frequent the Ocha no mizu Tokyo Toshokan, the only public library at the time. It was around this time too that he became acquainted with Awajima Kangetsu (淡島寒月 1858-1926), who introduced him to the writings of Ihara Saikaku, the Genroku period artist.

The question arises, why a capable young man, whose future clearly would be best served by training in a Western language and higher education, would instead turn toward traditional Chinese studies and pre-modern Japanese literature. In a general

way, Rohan's whole life and literary output may be offered as a response to this question. A more direct response is suggested by Kimura Ki in his article on Kōyō, Rohan and Ichiyō.³ He notes that until the Taishō period (1912-26), when such writers as Arishima Takeo (有島武郎 1878-1923) and Satomi Ton (里見淳 b. 1888) appear, there are no prominent literary artists from the provinces (han) which led the anti-Bakufu movement (Chōshū, Satsuma, Tosa, and Hizen). He maintains the Edokko 'native Edoites' who became leading figures in Meiji letters took a stance diametrically opposed to the Meiji government, and claims that even if "many were not actively aware of this, sub-consciously they all were." Being opposed to the government implied less than enthusiastic support for the wholesale modernization cum Westernization then being fostered.

In the same article, Kimura goes on to point out that the writers who promoted Japanese naturalism were all provincials (inakamono), people who moved to Tokyo from the countryside. Tayama Katai (田山花袋 1871-1930) was from Joshū, Shimazaki Tōson (島崎藤村 1872-1943) was from Shinshū, Kunikida Doppo's (国木田独步 1871-1908) ancestors were from Harima although he was born in Chiba near Tokyo, and Masamune Hakuchō (正宗白鳥 1879-1962) was born in Bizen, now called Okayama Prefecture. It was the urbanites, the real "Edokko" who fought to preserve something of the old

style. From this perspective, Rohan, Kōyō and Ichiyō may be seen as representative of "the last of the old guard" opposing the usurpation of literary sovereignty by the uncultivated "country folk."

This argument does suggest one very plausible explanation for the young Rohan's decision to switch from English school to a traditional academy (juku). It was the beginning of a life-long role which, with the exception of a decade in the 1890's, increasingly took on the mantle of polarity, a gracious opposition to the winds of modernization.

In August of Meiji 16 (1883) Rohan decided to attend a government-run technical school, the Denshin Shugikō, in order to become a telegraph operator. The better students were given an opportunity to continue their training at government expense with the provision of a three year assignment upon completion of the two-year program. The impetus for this move seems to have been largely financial; behind it was the desire to make his own way in the world and not be dependent on his family. The fact that it was a telegraph school -- the telegraph being the most advanced means of communication at the time -- is an indication of the range of Rohan's inquisitiveness. He was always very good at mathematics and showed an interest in and aptitude for applied science throughout his life.⁴

In 1885, at the age of eighteen, Rohan was sent to the

Yoichi branch telegraph office in remote Hokkaido. Yoichi was a small town of fishermen, miners, and Ainu, northwest of Sapporo, near the port of Otaru. Even today it is rather remote: in those days it was little more than a frontier settlement. In a poem written on the boat taking him from Yokohama to Hakodate, Rohan playfully pokes fun at his fate with the phrase "takusen o narau" (謫仙をならう), an allusion to Li Po, which captures the sense of his fall from grace. The expression may be rendered, "learn how to live as an outcast from heaven."⁵

For the more than two years he spent in Hokkaido reliable information is in short supply. From later personal accounts and assorted anecdotes we can piece together a picture of a young man with enormous energy and little in the way of satisfactory outlets. Like Ninomiya Sontoku (二宮 尊徳, 1787-1856) -- a man Rohan greatly admired and on whom he later published a book aimed at young people⁶ -- he helped the local people build ice storage houses, encouraged sericulture, and sent to Tokyo for a Western book on scientific hog raising. He had archery contests with the Ainu, raided the local Buddhist temple for reading material, and developed a taste for tobacco, sake, and zazen. His work at the telegraph office must not have been too demanding.

In the late summer of 1887, with one year still remaining on his work assignment, he sold some of his kimono, pawned his

books, said goodbye to a few friends, and quietly left for Tokyo. His trip back to the capital which took about a month and was accomplished by ferry, horseback, train, cart and on foot, is recorded in Tokkan Kikō (突貫紀行 "Record of a Desperate Journey" 1890). It begins:

Stricken by a malady, my heart was aching. Adverse karma was impossible to dispel; I saw no happy destination in the future but only bitter obstacles before me. I had desires but no money, ambition but no opportunity. At last I decided to break out of this predicament. Selling several kimono and pawning a trunkful of books, I bade farewell to a few friends and departed at once.

Rohan's precipitous act has often been ascribed to the influence of events shaking the literary world in the distant capital. Certainly the promising stirrings in the bundan were not without effect. Tsubouchi Shōyō's celebrated treatise, Shōsetsu Shinzui (小説神髓 "The Essence of the Novel"), which had been published the previous year, presented a new argument for psychological realism in fiction. Rohan appears to have been most impressed by Shōyō's high appraisal of fiction and his insistence on the autonomy of artistic writing. Years later however, he said in an interview that the essay was not what had prompted his journey.⁸

Another influence not to be overlooked was the writer, Tōkai Sanshi (東海散士 1852-1922). After a number of years studying economics at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, he returned to Japan to warn of impending danger in his widely read political novel, Kajin no Kigū (佳人之奇遇

"Beauty's Fortuitous Encounters") It was written in kambun style prose and published in 1887. In it he examines the unhappy fate of small nations at the hands of the major powers in the nineteenth-century by tracing the stories of women the hero meets who are refugees from their homelands. Rohan's patriotic "Nihonka" ("A Song for Japan"), a poem in Chinese written in Hokkaido, seems to have been inspired by this novel.⁹

Ozaki Kōyō with Yamada Bimyō (山田美妙 1868-1910) and others had formed the Kenyūsha Society (硯友社 "Friends of the Inkwell") in 1885 and began publishing the first dōjinzashi (a journal edited and published by a group of writers with similar proclivities) in Japan, the Garakuta Bunko (我楽多文庫 "Knick-Knack Library"). The writers contributing to the magazine were, for the most part, Rohan's age. His ambition was provoked and dreams of a different future must have troubled his sleep,

Still, at the time of his flight from Hokkaido, Rohan had not committed himself to a life as a writer. The professional writer was not a person of very high standing in those days despite the approbation of leaders like Shōyō. Unlike today, talented youth aspired to a vocation in politics. As his travel diary, Tokkan Kikō clearly indicates, it was a combination of depression, ambition, and a reservoir of talent with insufficient outlet that stimulated Rohan's departure.

Faced with limited funds and less than robust health, for the Hokkaido winters had taken their toll, it was a difficult journey. Arriving late in the day in Fukushima he discovered he had just enough money for the train fare from the next large town, Kōriyama, to Tokyo. If he spent some for a night's lodging in Fukushima he would not have enough for ticket, and even if he walked the next day he would have to spend a bit, thus always finding himself in a Zeno-like quandary. He decided to walk to Kōriyama that evening and spend the night on the road in the open air.

Sato tōshi
Iza tsuyu to nemu
Kusamakura.

Far from home
I share with the dew
A pillow of grass.¹⁰

This haiku, although not included in Tokkan Kikō, was evidently based on his experience that particular evening. Rohan's biographer, Shiotani San, speculates the poem was actually written upon reflection subsequent to his return to Tokyo. It first appears in print gracing the opening lines of Taidokuro ("Encounter with a Skull"). I have gone to some length to provide biographical detail surrounding this poem not only because it is the first modest jewel hinting at the literary luminary to be, but also because it is the source of the gō 'pen name' "Rohan" which means "companion of the dew."

Back in Tokyo by September, 1887, the twenty year old Rohan, still burdened with an "aching heart" and out of favor with his parents for renouncing his "career" midstream, sought solace in reading and writing. He immersed himself in Buddhist texts and borrowed and copied the works of Saikaku. It is this combination of Buddhist diction and haibun style that comes to the fore in Rohan's early writing, especially Fūryūbutsu ("An Alluring Buddha").

Due to political reorganization his father had lost his position in the Finance Ministry. He opened a shop dealing in stationery and other paper goods called the "Ai Ai Dō" (愛力堂). Rohan tended his father's shop, wrote letters for untutored patrons, and spent great stretches of time at the library. A good deal of the research for his first few novels was undertaken during this period. It has been shown, for example, that much of the information on whaling used in Isanatori ("The Whaler" 1891), including transcriptions of whaling songs and technical details on the industry, was garnered from materials then available at the library.¹¹ He read voraciously, encyclopedically. Rohan recalled to Yanagida Izumi having been very impressed at the time by Ninomiya Sontoku's Hōtokki (報徳記 "Rewards of Virtue and Economy") and claimed the Kamakura monk, Shōken (證賢 d. 1345), author of the Sanbu no Kanashō (三部假名抄), as his "writing master" ("bunshō no shi").¹²

Rohan's father thought for a while it was quite possible his son would become a monk.

The whole Kōda family had been converted to Christianity while he was away in Hokkaido. His father heard the preaching of Uemura Masahisa (植村正久 1858-1925), gave up a long standing belief in the Hokkeshū (Nichiren Sect), and was baptized along with the other members of the family. Rohan had an interest, read extensively and, acquiescing to his father's wishes, attended study meetings conducted by Uemura. He, however, refused to be baptized. (After the death of his first wife, Kumiko, Rohan's unfortunate second marriage was to an "active Christian." The ceremony was conducted by Uemura.)¹³

While minding his father's store, sometime in 1888, Rohan wrote his first novel, "Zen Tenma" (禪天魔 "Demon Zen").¹⁴ The work, not extant, was evidently modelled on Edo period sharebon. Donald Keene gives Hijiri no Yūkaku (The Holy Men's Brothel 1757) as the prototype sharebon, the playful compositions largely devoted to descriptions of life in the pleasure districts:

The theme is startling: Shakamuni Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-tzu arrive in Japan and at once go to the Osaka brothel run by Li Po, where Po Chu-i serves as a jester. Each holy man is matched with a prostitute whose name suits his philosophy: "Fleeting World" goes with Buddha, "Great Way" with Confucius, and "Great Void" with Lao-tzu. ... The story concludes as Buddha and Fleeting World leave the licensed quarters bent on lover's suicide. They go off to the accompaniment of a recitation in the traditional Jōruri style.¹⁵

Many years later Rohan recalled that his work was in three parts. In the first, two or three young sports frolic in the pleasure quarters. The second was a single man's recollection of experiences in a Hokkaido licensed district. The concluding section, entitled "Toroba En" (Smoke from a Rare Incense), related the story of an Edo period Zen addict who meditates in a courtesan's chamber.

Before the work was destroyed (It is said to have been used to repair fusuma 'sliding doors!'), it was read by Awajima Kangetsu who showed it to Ozaki Kōyō. Impressed, Kōyō asked Rohan to write a piece for the magazine he was editing. The novel, Issetsuna (一刹那 "One Instant") was published the following year, 1889, in three installments, beginning with the July issue of Bunko. By the time this appeared, however, Rohan was already well on his way to recognition and acclaim in the literary world.

His first published work was not fiction but a critical article, "Oto to Kotoba" (音と詞 "Sound and Words"), which appeared in a minor journal, Kunshi to Shukujo ("Gentlemen and Ladies"), in January and February of 1887. The essay urged greater cooperation between composers and lyricists in order to further the creation of a new Meiji music. It is interesting to note his last completed work, sixty years later, was Ongenron (音幻論 1947), a comprehensive study of sounds in the

Japanese language. This concern with the relationship between music and words remained with Rohan throughout his life. His extensive research on wasan (和讃), Buddhist devotional hymns, is but one example.

Some might find this interest in the musicality of language surprising. Because of the preponderance of ideographs in Rohan's prose -- to a degree unusual even for a Meiji period writer -- readers tend to respond to the visual and semantic aspects of his writing, overlooking the musical side of his style. There are rhythmic and alliterative elements all too uncommon in modern Japanese prose. Rohan had a good ear; this was a gift that seems to have run in the family. Many of his works have to be heard to be fully appreciated.

In 1888, toward the end of the year, Rohan went with Kangetsu to the home of the scholar and theatre critic, Yoda Gakukai (依田学海 1833-1909), with a recently completed novel to ask him to write a foreword. Yoda responded that he received numerous requests for such things and thought it was a lot of trouble, adding, "Besides, just my writing a foreword won't make your work brilliant. If it is a masterpiece, without my introduction or anything at all, it will shine." Rohan is said to have responded, "I am not seeking to add luster to my work with Master's foreword. My piece is entertaining. Since you enjoy novels, please read it. If you find it interesting, please write

a foreword. If tedious, then please throw it into the fireplace and burn it." At the end of this outrageous speech he threw down the manuscript and hurried out. Yoda, impressed by the young man's cavalier confidence, but equally sure the gesture was futile, began reading the work. He found it so unusual and amusing he could not put it down. The next day he hurried by rickshaw to Kangetsu's residence, thence to Rohan's. He is said to have apologized for not seeing his genius right away and agreed to assist in having the novel published.¹⁶

The novel, Ro Dandan (露団々 "Dewdrops")¹⁷ was brought to the attention of Yamada Bimyō who was then chief editor and writer for what was perhaps the most prestigious literary magazine of the day, Miyako no Hana ("Capital Blossoms"). After reading it he exclaimed, "Well, now here is a really fantastic piece! Completely original. Right out of the blue! You never know where or when this thing called genius is going to appear -- just like a comet!"¹⁸ Ro Dandan's publication in the magazine from February to August of 1889 marks the departure point of Rohan's career as a writer. The fifty yen he received for the work, a sizable amount at the time, facilitated a literal departure as well. With it, he travelled for a month through the mountains of Shinshū in central Japan and to areas in western Japan including Kyoto and Osaka.

While Ro Dandan may be considered Rohan's maiden work, it was Fūryūbutsu (風流仏 "An Alluring Buddha") published in September of 1889 that established him in literary circles as a writer of distinction. It is here we first find his jaunty, consciously ornate, haibun style -- a prose verging on poetry. Here too are sounded the themes which continue to concern the writer throughout his life: the transformation of reality with art, the potential of human love, antimodernism, and the salvation of the individual through absorption in a way of self discipline.

The success of Fūryūbutsu, which had an artisan, a sculptor of Buddhist images, as hero, prompted subsequent novels along similar lines, all with traditional craftsmen playing the central role. In these artisan novels the hero is able to overcome a crisis, a problem in his immediate existence, by discipline and concentrated devotion to his chosen vocation. Such works as Gojū no Tō (五重塔 "The Five-Storied Pagoda" 1891), Ikkōken (一口剣 "One Sword" 1890), Tsuji Jōruri (辻浄瑠璃 "Minstrel at the Crossroads" 1891), and its sequel, Nemimi Teppō (寝耳鉄砲 "Surprise Gunshot" 1891) are representative of Rohan's meijin shōsetsu, his "master craftsman novels."

Although Rohan is probably best remembered for these artisan novels -- selections from Gojū no Tō were for many years included

in school text books -- they represent only a small fraction of his total body of writing. His works span the spectrum of literary genres, extending beyond the usual scope of belles-lettres. In addition to his fiction, verse, and commentary on classical texts, Rohan wrote treatises on self-development, natural science, and the social issues of the day. Some readers may be familiar with his vignettes on fishing, others with his essays on shōgi, the Japanese version of chess. He was an accomplished practitioner of both.

In his movement away from the novel as primary means of expression Rohan is not unlike other Meiji writers such as Mori Ōgai or Shimazaki Tōson who turned to history in their later years. After abandoning his last effort at the long novel, Sora Utsu Nami ("Waves Striking the Heavens"), serialized in the newspaper the Yomiuri Shimbun from 1903 to 1905, his production of imaginative fiction decreased sharply. The ostensible reason for discontinuing publication of the work was the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Rohan wrote that he could not in good conscience continue because:

To reveal the plot as I planned it, this novel is about to enter a chapter involving a woman and consequently [is] infused with the scent of rouge and powder. ... I cannot find it in my heart to write amorous scenes for a public newspaper at this time, when a soldier is going off to war the day after his wedding, or another is leaving an old mother and young children in the care of relatives. ... In short,

I believe that my freedom of creative choice cannot be compromised in the least by conditions in the world, but I am also convinced that inasmuch as my work is meant for public consumption, it is only proper for me to take social situations into consideration.... 19

The fact that his elder brother, Gunji Shigetada, had become a Russian prisoner of war undoubtedly contributed to his decision to discontinue the ambitious novel which at the time was already in excess of five-hundred pages. Nevertheless, conflicts between Rohan's writing style and the prevailing winds of literary fashion may well have been an even more decisive factor. The advent of naturalism and the widespread success of the genbun itchi movement (the drive to abandon the traditional literary style in favor of a form more closely approximating everyday speech) in conjunction with the wholesale adoption of Western literary values occasioned Rohan's antipathy and freed him to go his own way.

The last years of Meiji and the early years of the Taishō period brought a self-imposed withdrawal from the bundan. The extent to which contemporary trends were inimical to Rohan's literary standards can be seen in his historical novel, Unmei (運命 "Destiny" 1919), a work some hold to be his masterpiece. This tour de force was a judgement on, and challenge to, the literary scene in the mid-Taishō period.

Away from serious fiction for over a decade, at the age of fifty-three, Rohan was asked to contribute a piece to the first issue of Kaizō (改造 "Restructuring") to be published in April, 1919. The journal was founded by Yamamoto Sanehiko (山本実彦 1885-1952) as a vehicle for views on liberalism and social reform. Asked to submit a novel, Rohan offered Unmei, a powerful account of the struggle for imperial succession in the early Ming dynasty based entirely on the historical record. Thematically it deals with questions concerning historical inevitability, justice, and the difficulty of accounting for the vicissitudes in personal fate. It is the style of writing, however, that reflects the magnitude of the divergence between Rohan's mature prose and mainstream modern Japanese stylistic developments. The work opens with:

Yo onozukara sū to iu mono ariya. Ari to ieba aru ga gotoku, nashi to naseba naki ni mo nitari. Kozui ten ni habikorumu, U no ko kore o osame, taikan chi o kogasedomo, To no toku kore o sukueba, sū arugagotoki ni shite shikamo sū naki ga gotoshi.

Is inevitability intrinsic to the world? If you say destiny exists then it is as though it existed; if you deny it, it is as though it did not. When vast waters threatened to flood all under heaven, the deeds of the Sage King Yu brought them under control; when the earth was parched by a great draught, the virtue of the Sage King Tang brought salvation. Destiny seems to exist and yet again it appears not to.²⁰

Upon reading Unmei, Tanizaki Junichirō experienced unforgettable excitement:

Despite its relative brevity, "Destiny" is a grand work ... containing a cosmos in itself. Its style is the traditional wakan konkō bun [a mixture of Chinese and Japanese dictions] but strangely leaves no impression of being outmoded, thanks to its enormous vitality and dignity. It is beyond a mere historian's ability to depict such world-shaking events with their extreme vicissitudes, bringing innumerable great and minor heroes to life as he does.... In this day and age when things resembling pages from a mundane diary pass for fiction, this historical treatise is a novel in its genuine sense.²¹

Rohan refused to relinquish the riches of the classical idiom, the rhythms available to the literary style, and the dignity associated with traditional poetic forms. It is interesting to note that his revival as a novelist was predicated on his dispensing with contemporary notions of what the novel should be. In Western literature not until the mid twentieth-century did we encounter the "non-fiction novel," whereas pre-eminent Meiji writers such as Ōgai, Tōson, and Rohan were exploring the form much earlier.

As he moved away from fiction, Rohan turned toward academic writing: essays, commentaries, translations and biography. In 1908, at the request of Ueda Kazutoshi (上田 萬年 1867-1937), he was invited to lecture on Japanese literature at Kyoto Imperial University. He declined the invitation at first, then, at the urging of Ueda and Okada Ryōhei (岡田 良平 1864-1934), president of the university, he accepted. The appointment caused a stir in both academic and literary circles because

Rohan's formal education had ended with middle school.

At the university he lectured on Soga Monogatari (曾我物語 a fourteenth-century revenge tale -- one of his favorite works), wasan (Buddhist hymns), Chikamatsu's (近松門左衛門 1653-1724) sewamono jōruri (puppet plays), and other Edo period literature. Why he left the university position after just one year is not clear. He once claimed the primary reason he returned to Tokyo was because in Kyoto he was unable to do the kind of fishing he enjoyed.²²

In 1911 the academic world recognized Rohan's achievements in scholarship by awarding him a doctor of letters degree. That same year Natsume Sōseki refused to accept the honor. The scholar who wished to live as an artist and the artist who wanted to be respected for his scholarship found their ways crossing as the establishment moved to acknowledge their respective contributions to Japanese cultural life.

It is commonly thought that Rohan did not write novels during the later period of his life. Part of this misconception may stem from a confusion regarding genre. A work such as Unmei ("Destiny") can be read as a novel or as an essay in history. Since it has excluded the merely fanciful, the patently fictitious, and is based on the historical record, relying heavily on authoritative texts, it is a fascinating exercise in historiography. Yet we know that an author of an historical narrative is

constrained to provide a theme and, in his particular emplotment of events, give expression to his view of human nature. Historical writing, in any form beyond mere chronology, has the added requirement that it be expressed in an aesthetically pleasing manner. This is especially true of literatures developed within the sphere of Chinese cultural influence.²³

During the last thirty years of his life as a writer Rohan moved easily between history and fiction because of an increasingly strong belief in their essential similarity as verbal repositories of human emotion. In this he provides a striking contrast to Mori Ōgai who, toward the end of his life, worked at separating the lyrical and fanciful from putative hard fact in his textual studies of historical documents.²⁴

The power of imagination is said to fade with age leaving recollection and contemplation in its place. While this may be a factor behind the preponderance of novels based on historical materials in Rohan's later work, such imaginative efforts as Kangadan (観画談 "Picture Viewing Tale" 1925), Gendan (幻談 "Illusory Tales" 1939), and Yukitadaki (雪たき "A Knock in the Snow" 1940) attest to a tremendous reserve of vitality and creativity. His final novel, Renkanki (連環記 "Record of Linked Rings"), which was published in 1940 when he was seventy-three, is thought by many to be his finest.²⁵

He produced these works while writing his monumental study of the Bashō Shichibushū ("The Seven Collections of the Bashō School"), an anthology of verse by members of Bashō's school of haiku.²⁶ It was a labor which extended over a period of twenty-five years. The final chapters had to be dictated from his sickbed to an amanuensis because severe cataracts impaired his vision. Although some would claim this work, Rohan Hyōshaku: Bashō Shichibushū (露伴評釈芭蕉七部集 "Rohan's Commentary on the Seven Collections of the Bashō School"), is more a testament to his own vast learning and poetic insight than a cornerstone of modern haiku criticism, others recognize it as a genuine classic which must be reckoned with in any serious analysis of the Shichibushū.²⁷

During the concluding years of his life, Rohan received a series of awards and honors culminating in his nomination (along with his sister, Nobu) to the Japanese Imperial Academy of Arts in 1937.

He lived through the Pacific War which brought great hardship and loss. His house and library were destroyed during a Tokyo air raid on May 25, 1945. As his diabetes worsened he was finally confined to bed unable to walk, his sight and hearing fading. His dignity, strength of will, and exemplary ability to tell a good story stayed with him until the end.²⁸ His daughter,

Kōda Aya has written very movingly of the years she spent caring for her aged father, the last of the great Meiji men of letters. Kōda Rohan died at the age of eighty, on July 30, 1947, one of the few men and certainly the only major literary figure to have lived from the Edo period into the postwar era.

¹ For the biographical information in this chapter I have relied on: Yanagida Izumi, Kōda Rohan (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1942); Shiotani San, Kōda Rohan 4 vols., Chūō Bunko ed. (Chūōkōronsha, 1977); and Chieko Mulhern, Kōda Rohan (Boston: Twayne, 1977). Some sources give his date of birth as the twenty-sixth of July, 1867, rather than the twenty-third. Rohan himself was never sure which was correct.

² Zenshū, Vol. 15, Front. Photo.

³ Kimura Ki, "Kōyō, Rohan, Ichiyō no Kyōtsūsei to Idōsei," Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kanshō, 43 (May, 1978), p. 8.

⁴ One example from the Pacific War years recounted by Shimomura Ryōichi, then an editor at Nihon Hyōron and instrumental in "inducing" the author's final novels, concerns Rohan's knowledge of lacquer. Shimomura relates a conversation which moved from a discussion of incense to how it was discovered lacquer-ware is the best means of preserving the fragrance of rare incense. Rohan then mentioned how he had been talking with someone from the military who told him about problems they were having maintaining the atmosphere in aircraft flying at high altitudes. He suggested lacquer as a solution and heard that it worked quite well. Shimomura notes the story appears to have involved Ōkōchī Masatoshi (大河内 正敏 1878-1952) who was head of the Tōkyō Rikagaku Kenkyūjo ("Physico-Chemical Research Institute") at the time. Shimomura Ryōichi, Bannen no Rohan ("Rohan's Later Years") (Tokyo: Keizai Ōraisha, 1979), p. 20.

⁵ Shiotani, Vol. 1, p. 46.

⁶ Kōda Rohan, Ninomiya Sontoku (1891), Zenshū, Vol. 11, pp. 1-44.

⁷ Zenshū, Vol. 14, p. 1. The translation is Mulhern's, Koda Rohan, p. 26. The travel diary was originally published in the Osaka Asahi Shimbun between May 18 and June 5 of 1890.

⁸ Shiotani, Vol. 1, p. 48-49.

⁹ Zenshū, Vol. 40, p. 37-38.

¹⁰ Zenshū, Vol. 1, p. 137.

¹¹ Noborio Yutaka, "Isanatori Ron," Bungaku, 46, No. 11 (1978), pp. 1405-1417.

¹² Shiotani, Vol. 1, p. 59. Ninomiya Sontoku's book was published in a printed edition in 1886. Rohan had previously copied it by hand. Son of a poor farmer, Ninomiya is known for his successful development of rural economies through rational farming techniques. Based on his own interpretation of Confucian, Buddhist, and Shintō texts he devised a pragmatic moral philosophy which exerted a tremendous influence on post-Restoration Japan.

The Tendai monk Shōken, also known as Kōa Shōnin (向阿上人) wrote the Sanbu no Kanashō to relate his experiences at the Shinyōdo and Seiryūji temples in Kyoto awakening him to the truth of Pure Land teachings. His prose is embellished with poetry, including quotations from the imperial anthologies and verse from the Sūtras. His style was highly regarded in both Buddhist and literary circles. For the text see Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho, Vol. 44 (Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1971), pp. 1-153.

¹³ After the death of his first wife, Rohan was left with two children to care for. The household experienced a series of illnesses and he married again with the thought that a woman at home would help to set things on even keel. The marriage was "unfortunate" because his second wife seems to have been unable or unwilling to provide the stable home life and care for the children Rohan desired. She was active in Church affairs, often not at home to prepare dinner for the family, and frequently complained about Rohan's drinking. See Shiotani, Vol. 2, p. 313.

¹⁴ The title, "Zen Tenma" (禪天魔) may have come from Nichiren (日蓮 1222-1282), the founder of the Lotus Sect in Japan. The phrase is part of an expression known as the shika kakugen (四箇格言) Nichiren used to criticize other sects: "nembutsu mugen, zen tenma, shingon bokoku, ritsu kokuzoku" (念仏無間 禪天魔 真言亡國 律國賊). "Pure Land meditation leads into an infinite hell, Zen is the practice of demons, Mantric Esotericism will destroy the country, and the followers of the Rules (vinaya) are the plunderers of the nation." See Nakamura Hajime, Bukkyōgo Daijiten, (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 1975), p. 509.

¹⁵ Donald Keene, World Within Walls, (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 402.

¹⁶ Kawamori Yoshizō, in the introduction to Kōda Rohan Shū, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Taikei, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kadogawa, 1974), pp. 12-13.

¹⁷ Zenshū, Vol. 7, pp. 1-144. The novel evidently went by the title, "Tsuyu Dandan" in its early editions. The first editor had a pronunciation gloss (furigana), "tsuyu," for the first character which may also be read "ro" in the Sino-Japanese (onyomi). Rohan is said to have remarked later that "ro" was the preferred reading. See Shiotani, Vol. 1, p. 67.

Despite the assertion in Yoda Gakukai's diary that "this person [Rohan] has read a great number of western books and managed to grasp their essence -- a genius hard to come by!" (Kawamori, p. 16), the inspiration for Ro Dandan seems to have come from a Ming collection of vernacular tales known in Japan as the Kinko Kikan (今古奇觀 c. 1633). It is my guess the title comes from a line of Li Po's in the Gu Feng Shi (古風詩) which runs: "Countless droplets of autumn dew// Like beads of white jade covering the garden greenery."
(秋露白如玉 // 团团下庭綠)

¹⁸ Kawamori, p. 14

¹⁹ Zenshū, Vol. 10, pp. 221-222. The translation is from Mulhern, Kōda Rohan, p. 131.

²⁰ Kōda Rohan, Unmei ("Destiny"), Iwanami Bunko ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 5. The novel is included in Zenshū, Vol. 6.

²¹ Tanizaki Junichirō, "Jozetsuroku," in Tanizaki Zenshū, Vol. 20 (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1968), p. 165. Mulhern's translation in Koda Rohan, p. 147. Tanizaki was a life-long Rohan reader. He kept two sets of the new Rohan Zenshū, one in Tokyo and another in his Kyoto residence. The old twelve-volume edition of Rohan's collected works published between 1929 and 1934 he had rebound in fine bindings. See Fukumoto, p. 3-4.

²² Shiotani, Vol. 2, p. 186.

²³ Hayden White in his study of the nineteenth-century European historical imagination, Metahistory (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), develops a view of historical writing not unlike the traditional Chinese attitude. He defines an historical work as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them" (p. 2). In his analysis, he maintains histories and philosophies of history contain a deep structural element which is fundamentally poetic and which "serves as the precritically accepted paradigm of what a distinctively 'historical' explanation should be" (p. 1). He argues that the various modes of historiography "are in reality formalizations of poetic insights that analytically precede them and that sanction the particular theories used to give historical accounts the aspect of an 'explanation' (p. xii). And in a

conclusion with which a traditional Chinese or Japanese historian might readily concur, he writes, "The best grounds for choosing one perspective on history rather than another are ultimately aesthetic or moral rather than epistemological" (p. xii).

²⁴ Richard J. Bowring in his very informative study, Mori Ōgai and the Modernization of Japan (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), shows how Ōgai's western, scientific training, what he calls his "Apollonian" stance, led him to finally reject the self-contained truth of fictional representations and embrace "fact" as an end in itself. Ōgai, he tells us, refused "to foist upon reality a pattern he cannot apprehend" (p. 221). In his later work, Ōgai wanted to exclude all fictional or imaginative elements from his attempt to come to grips with the past which had given birth to his present-day Japan, "his aim was to write unadulterated history" (p. 237). The contrast with Rohan's view could not be greater. Recognizing the metaphoric nature of all discourse, including the description of "fact," Rohan valued the aesthetic and moral dimension in history that is brought to bare on the "facts" by the writer himself. Ōgai chose "to study in detail a series of failures" (p. 222). Rohan concentrated on men who led successful lives. One of Ōgai's studies, "Suzuki Tōkichirō" (1917), part of a series of four short biographical notes, was a work requested by the descendants of the subject of the study. It seems Suzuki was mentioned in a popular tale (kōdan) told by the teller of battle stories, Matsubayashi Hakuen (1812-1855). The reference implied Suzuki was an eta, a member of the outcaste group in Japanese society. Ōgai's work showed that there was no definite proof either way, but reveals very clearly that Ōgai was more interested

in questions of methodology and practical research problems than in the man being studied. This "depersonalized" writing has caused some to "argue that Ōgai's study of history ended in a sterile world of unemotional reportage" (p. 239). Rohan too, "fought within himself a constant battle to justify to himself the significance of fiction in the modern world" (p.240), but it is clear, in his case, the muse never abandoned him.

²⁵ Saitō Mokichi, Yamamoto Kenkichi, Mushanokōji Saneatsu, and Shishi Banroku are among those holding this opinion of the work.

²⁶ Kōda Rohan, Rohan Hyōshaku Bashō Shichibushū (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1956): Zenshū, Vols. 20-23.

²⁷ Personal communication from Prof. Maeda Ai (Feb. 9, 1981).

²⁸ See the personal reminiscences of Kobayashi Isamu, Kagyūan Hōmonki ("Record of Visits to the Snail's Hermitage") (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1956); and Shimomura Ryōichi, Bannen no Rohan ("Rohan's Later Years") (Tokyo: Keizai Ōraisha, 1979).

Chapter Two

Listening with the Eye: A Prologue to Reading Rohan

It is possible to hear the deep music of tradition in the works of Kōda Rohan if we know how to listen. In his essay, Bunshō Yō Ron (文章要論 "Essentials of Writing" 1914), we come across the following:

Flowing water rends the earth and envelops massive rocks to take on the form of a river and reveal its character. Ultimately a river reaches the ocean. In a similar way, the mind, overflowing and released, strings together characters into words, piles up words into phrases, and combines them in a sentence into a particular body. This then transmits energy, eventually communicating with others. Having reached the ocean, a river's being is exhausted. So too, writing, when it connects with the other, attains completion.¹

The point, that writing be a natural outpouring which ends in communication, is straightforward enough. The striking thing about the passage is just how apropos the water analogy is. Sometimes the effect of Rohan's prose is one of a mountain torrent as in Taidokuro, or a waterfall as in Kangadan (観画談 "Picture Viewing Tale" 1925). In Renkanki the impression is more one of a series of streams joining a wide river stretching to the sea. In Renkanki and Gendan (幻談 "Illusory Tales" 1938), another late work, like the metaphorical river the final sentences seem to disappear into the same vast space the novels themselves end in.

It has become fashionable to question the validity of claims concerning "communication" between text and reader. In Rohan's

view, however, the idea that a piece of writing was complete and meritorious when it communicated what Mathew Arnold called "both sweetness and light" held a central place. He did not believe a work of literature could be confined to a simple moral, practical, or philosophical category. Nor could it be seen solely in aesthetic terms. "Bungaku" 'literature' was not only poetry and fiction; it included a much wider range of written discourse. Rohan's view was close to the traditional Chinese and Japanese broad conception of the canons of literature.

Actually, the "broad conception" appears to have prevailed in Europe as well before the late nineteenth-century. "Under that older conception literature comprises everything worthy to be read, preferably the best thoughts expressed in the best manner, but above all the best thoughts." Renaissance writers spoke of bonnes lettres but gradually the "grand, broad, and noble conception of literature as les bonnes lettres disappeared and was replaced by the narrower, more decadent conception expressed by les belles lettres."² Literature in Meiji Japan underwent a similar, but much more rapid, transformation.

Rohan developed a style of writing that for a period around the turn of the century was admired and influential. But by the beginning of the Taishō era (1912) it was already considered antiquated. Masamune Hakuchō (正宗白鳥 1879-1962) wrote that Rohan's prose reminded him of a stolid samurai "in full battle array dragging along behind a hefty iron club heavily

weighted with a fool's wisdom."³ The fairness of this sardonic characterization aside, it is true that "premature aging" was a fate encountered by many Meiji writers.

For decades modes of written expression varied greatly; there was no concensus as to a standard prose style. The time-honoured distinction between bungo 'literary language' and kōgo 'spoken language' began to break down. A sense of the diversity in prose styles can only be suggested by the following list of different forms the language took in print in early Meiji:

kambun chokuyakutai (漢文直訳体) -- in the manner of translation from Chinese, following fairly closely the syntax and diction of the foreign language;

haishi yomihon no zokubuntai (稗史よみ本の俗文体) -- the vulgar style of romantic potboilers;

yōbuntai (洋文体) -- a style in the manner of Western languages;

wabuntai (和文体) -- classical Japanese literary style;

gazoku setchū buntai (雅俗折衷文体) -- elegant (i.e. literary) and colloquial styles mixed.

The difference between any two would be somewhat greater than, say, the difference between the "Telemachus" and the "Molly" chapters of James Joyce's Ulysses.⁴

A particular style might also be referred to by an author's name: Kōson-chō after Aeba Kōson (饗庭篁村 1855-1922), Shiken-chō after Morita Shiken (森田思軒 1861-1897),

Shōyō-chō after Tsubouchi Shōyō (坪内逍遙 1859-1935), and so on. By the mid 1890's the range had narrowed somewhat and to distinguish that juncture in the history of style, the period has been called the "Kōroshō'ō period." This was when the styles of Kōyō, Rohan, Shōyō, and Ōgai were in ascendancy.

Rohan's early style is said to have been greatly influenced by his reading of Ihara Saikaku and Genroku period haibun. This is a notion he himself later downplayed, but the similarities are unmistakable. Saitō Mokichi wrote that "no one other than Rohan could write so powerfully in the sublime vein of the language of the Buddhist classics."⁵ Some found his mature style too Sinofied, others, quintessentially Japanese. Let us examine a bit more closely the general contours of Rohan's stylistic development.

Noborio Yutaka, in a recent article on Rohan's imaginative faculties and writing style, draws a distinction between buntai 'style' and bunshō 'composition'. It is a distinction I think useful in analyzing Rohan's work. He maintains that buntai is the expressive form of a writer's cognition ("ninshiki no hyōshutsu keishiki"). It must be deduced from bunshō but is itself the process through which cognition takes literary form -- a type of channel through which writing takes place. (We may be reminded here of the river analogy Rohan himself uses.) Buntai exists at a level prior to expression, bunshō. Thus matters such as sentence length, quality of diction, and so on are secondary

indications of a more fundamental process. Bunshō may change from work to work, but the buntai of an author is not so readily changed because it is the underlying form of the writer's cognition.⁶

While there seems to be a remarkable continuity of buntai in Rohan's fiction, evident to some extent in the unchanging quality of the narrative voice, the outward expression undergoes a number of changes. Over the course of his career, Rohan's mode of expression moved from the powerful, taut, jaunty sentences of works such as Fūryūbutsu and Gojū no Tō toward the easy flowing relaxed prose of Kangadan and Renkanki. This is readily apparent when we compare the opening passages of the early Taidokuro and the relatively late Kangadan. Taidokuro begins:

Ware ganrai share to iu koto o shirazu, mata suki to
tonaeru mono ni mo arade, tada furafura to goshaku no
kara o ou dedemushi no ukare kokoro yamigataku tozai-
nanboku ni haimawarite, obotsukanaki kakuto no me ni
chikara no oyobudake no yo o mitaku, izasareba tōsei
Eguchi no Kimi no yado karisazu, Uji no kazokusama
kosenyu ippai o oshimitamao tomo kamawaji yo, sato
tōshi iza tsuyu to nemu kusamakura ...

I, from the outset, ignorant of what is called refined
humor, nor being one to sing the praises of elegant
pursuits, merely trip along, whimsical mind hard to
suppress, like a snail burdened by a six-foot carapace,
crawling around all points of the compass, intent on
seeing as much of the world as the eyes on my doubtful
feelers can take in. Be that as it may, being turned
away from a night's stay by a present-day Eguchi no
Kimi, or missing a cup of wonderfully aromatic spice-
tea proffered by aristocrats from Uji, bothers me not
in the least.

Far from home
I bed down with the dew
On a pillow of grass.⁷

The tension, pace and rhythm of the opening lines of Kangadan are quite different:

Zutto mae no koto de aru ga, aru hito kara kimiai
no myō na hanashi o kiita koto ga aru. Soshite
sono hanashi o imadani wasurete inai ga, jimmei ya
chimei wa ima wa sudeni rinkan no tabi no kemuri no
yō ni, dokoka shiranu tokoro ni isshisatte iru.

It was a long time ago I first heard this astonishing
yarn from someone. I still have not forgotten the
story, but the personal names and place names have
by now drifted away like smoke from a campfire
through the trees of a forest to who knows where.⁸

Rohan's early work has an unmistakable gesaku or haibun
flavor. His middle period fiction employs a less ornate
bungobun which slowly moved toward the colloquial (genbun itchi).
This movement toward the developing mainstream was suspended
after his failure to complete the ambitious long novel,
Fūryū Mijinzō (風流微塵蔵 "The Minute Storehouse
of Life" 1893-95). Yanagida Izumi maintains that while writing
Fūryū Mijinzō Rohan became very ill with what may have been
typhus. He almost died. His view of life underwent a change
and he felt his previous works were "too many empty words down
from on high." Subsequently, the challenging, explosive, shocking
tone of the stories with demons and lepers and nude bodhisattvas
gave way to a more down to earth description of ordinary life.
That is, the "crisis" is supposed to have turned Rohan in the
direction of a greater realism.

Although Yanagida attributes this change to some sense of
mission Rohan felt, "the ideal of improving and purifying humanity

through the beauty of literature,"⁹ we should recall that at the same time the artist was producing more and more realistic type fiction in a prose approaching the contemporary colloquial style, he was also writing such works as Shin Urashima (新浦島 "The New Urashima Taro" 1895) and Futsuka Monogatari (二日ものかたり "Tale of Two Days" 1898). Both of these novels are full of the earlier demonic visions and their baroque classical style makes no concessions to demands for realism or the use of common spoken forms in artistic fiction.

The conflict behind these very different prose styles does not seem to be the ethical or pedagogical one suggested by Yanagida. It seems rather to be a problem of how to adapt his potent narrative voice -- his buntai -- to the rapidly changing literary scene. Rohan eventually abandoned all attempts in the direction of naturalistic or realistic fiction after the incomplete Sora Utsu Nami ("Waves Striking the Heavens" 1903-05), where the jinobun (地の文) or narrative passages are in the literary style (bungo) and the dialog is written in the colloquial.

For Rohan, writing in the genbun itchi style was, as Noborio puts it, "like the oppressiveness of borrowed clothes."¹⁰ In an essay published in 1914 entitled "Bunshō oyobi Gengo no Kōjō" (文章及言語の向上 "The Improvement of Writing and Language") he was still fighting a battle most would have already conceded. Rohan wrote:

The forms of writing and the spoken language in our country are not the same. The characters used are both signs for pronunciation and symbols of mental images [shinzō no shōchō]. Sentences [bunshō] are two dimensional, not uni-dimensional. The history of style in Japan confirms this. ... To write sentences directly in the spoken idiom, to try to make the form of the written conform exactly to the spoken, is nothing more than striving for an "ideal." The actual results of this pursuit are still very far from what is envisaged. Consequently, provisional rules are established and the desire to make the spoken and written conform results in imprisoning sentences with the stocks of the spoken language. Art is something that requires freedom. Since any obstruction to artistic freedom, be it ever so trivial, is undesirable, why is it that the great pillory of spoken language is inflicted on writing and the freedom of literary art plundered? Those who would do so are going to great pains to be their own best enemy. They are binding their arms and falling into a mold. In the end, they will be unable to attain freedom of thought and action.¹¹

In this connection it is interesting to note that both Tanizaki Junichirō and Kawabata Yasunari, in their essays on style (文章読本 "bunshō tokuhon"), urge a greater emphasis be placed on the use of the classical idiom in modern writing for essentially the same reasons stressed by Rohan in the passage quoted.

Any novel, in addition to dialog, usually has some description and some explanation provided by the author or one of his personae. The explanatory material may be referred to in Japanese as katari -- the "telling" or "relating." The katari element looms large in a pre-modern novelist such as Bakin or Dickens. In modern fiction the descriptive aspect is usually dominant and the explanatory material suppressed. In Rohan's work the situation is reversed. The dominance of katari is what Noborio points out

as the central pillar of Rohan's buntai.¹² Thus we find in the midst of description or "neutral facts" within a story, or even entwined with the subjectivity of a character, the author's presence as narrator. Put negatively, one might say Rohan never escaped his own voice or allowed his characters the freedom to surprise the storyteller. (A "freedom" which is none the less an illusion of authorial technique.) On the other hand, this can also be seen as a natural limitation of traditional narrative forms with compensating features such as the direct channel to the reader and freedom for the narrator to display his medium with rhetorical bravura.

Rohan's katari suspends the objective calculation of distance between object and self; the object is pulled into the subjectivity of self and expressed in subjective terms. In his novels, the differentiation of straight narrative, dialogue, interior monologue, and authorial comment, evaluation and aside is rather difficult. The same situation obtains in classical Japanese monogatari. A subjectively strong narrator, in the midst of the narration, tends to obscure the self-other distinction. Often this resembles the phenomenon of the narrator at times being himself, and at times being a character in the narration.

Rohan's narrative voice was based on traditional monogatari prose. With this type of katari it is not possible to write what we have come to know as a modern realistic novel. It seems he maintained the traditional style primarily out of consideration

for its musicality and unity of narrative voice. His technique, his bunshō, did of course change over the sixty years he spent writing; the underlying deep structure of his literary imagination did not. Of the works discussed in this essay, Taidokuro and Gojū no Tō are representative of Rohan's early bungotai shōsetsu -- his "literary style novels." Renkanki is written in more or less kōgotai, the "spoken style." Yamamoto Kenkichi has characterized this later "spoken style" as "kōentai" (口演体), "oral narrative style." In this mode, Rohan's writing "gives you the sense of sitting around the fireside and listening to a lively, informal tale from the mouth of one who has fully realized his humanity [人生の達人 "jinsei no tatsujin"]."¹³ Reflecting briefly on the oral/musical basis of so many of the Japanese literary arts, from court poetry and Noh to Jōruri, we can begin to understand why Rohan was unwilling to adapt a more modern style -- it would mean the forfeiture of so much.

To emphasize Rohan's stress on the importance of sounds, I would like to quote from his commentary on a poem in Bashō's Fuyu no Hi: Shigure no Maki (冬の日しぐれの巻 "The Winter Sun: Early Showers Chapter") which reads:

Mikazuki no
Higashi wa kuraku
Kane no koe.

Through the gloom
East of the crescent moon
The toll of a temple bell.

Nightfall with a three-day moon and to the east it
is already dark. A tableau of dusk stretches beyond

the horizon as Heaven and Earth are about to be linked by night. The sound of the temple bell passes slowly, echoing in the shadowy forest and fading at the rim of the clouds, evoking a solitary tranquility. ... The poem has no need for theory and the like. Previous commentaries say the crescent moon is seen in the west and the bell heard in the east. Some have it that both moon and bell are in the west and the east is just dark. Neither view is correct. Wherever the sound of the bell comes from, it is fine: arriving from the west or coming from the south, falling from above or arising from beneath the feet, it admits no difference. There is no bell tower in view here, thus no need for this kind of discussion. Here we have only, from the midst of the darkness at dusk, the ringing of a temple's evening bell proclaiming the transitoriness of all endeavor. In the tolling, like vile thoughts being washed away with water, karmic delusion is immediately dissolved, body and mind fall away, and suddenly the truth is grasped. The wonder of the poem's construction is how all this is disclosed, yet unspoken. Read it three times! Enough to make anyone shed tears of gratitude. There is no room for tangled arguments of east and west. As explained in the Sūrangama-sūtra, the virtues of the eye are eight hundred, of the ear, twelve hundred. ... 14

One of the elements of a prose style, which Yeats called "the playful demonstration of the medium itself," is rhythm.¹⁵ It tends to receive little attention in most discussions of prose, but in Rohan's writing, especially the early work, rhythm is a major feature.

Simply put, rhythm refers to the pleasing flow of sounds. A stricter definition can be applied involving an examination of duration, stress, pitch, and tempo (including pauses) in a series of phrases or clauses which have been given a regular pattern. It is primarily tempo and metrical rhythm we find in

Rohan's prose. Here I will limit my remarks to a few general aspects. Specific examples are provided in the discussion of individual works.

All languages have a kind of latent meter or a tendency toward a certain set pattern of syllables. In Japanese it is the five-seven pattern. This is the syllabic pattern of traditional Japanese verse, the tanka, haiku, and their linked forms. Its conscious use in prose gives a natural flow to the sentences and (especially in the modern period) evokes a classical ambiance. Rohan's early works make extensive use of the five-seven syllabic rhythm and the poetic devices that have been developed over centuries for use with that particular line: kireji (切れ字 "cutting words"), kakekotoba (掛詞 "pivot words"), and engo (縁語 "associated terms").

Another notable feature of Rohan's writing is the technique known as meishidome (名詞止 "the noun stop"). A sentence in Japanese normally ends with a verb, often the copula. Occasionally, a sentence will end with an adjective. The syntax ordinarily runs: subject or topic, object, and then verb. However, modifications of nominals occurs before the noun so it is possible to have a long series of loosely related descriptive phrases all modifying the same noun. The noun becomes a focal point or center of gravity with the weight of the previous half-dozen clauses balanced on it. The energy of the whole, often

extremely lengthy sentence, comes to rest with an abruptness because sentences do not normally end with nouns. It breaks the tempo and throws a spotlight on the noun in a rather dramatic fashion. The technique was evidently derived from Saikaku, the master of rhythmic Japanese prose.

The purpose of rhythm, Yeats tells us, is to "prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotone while it holds us waking by its variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind, liberated from the pressure of the will, is enfolded in symbols."¹⁶

The meishidome 'noun-stop' device serves to prolong this "moment of contemplation." It does so by causing a break in the rhythm and a crystallization around a particular image. This abrupt stop on a noun is something like the "point of charm" Yamazaki Masakazu refers to in his discussion of Zeami's (世阿弥 1363-1443) aesthetics. The "point of charm" is the instant of emotional impact between the ha and kyū movements in Noh, "the marvelous point of the opening of ears and eyes."¹⁷ The Noh technique is a more sophisticated, yet fundamentally similar, application of the principle of ma (間). "Ma" refers to the art of using an interval or space to heighten an artistic effect. The mie or "climatic freeze pose" in kabuki is another

example of the application of the principle of ma.

This description of Saikaku's prose, a description which could easily be applied to some of Rohan's own best writing, centers on the use of ma, the opening or space in the flow of language:

It has a pleasant lightness and marvelous spirituality. One has the impression of being in a boat made from the petal of a flower, shooting the rapids, flying through mountains, and dashing over boulders. After going beyond a stretch where there was no time to pause and examine in detail the flowers, grasses and trees, you come out into a vast ocean -- only then do you have the opportunity to look around and reflect. By then the trail behind you is already being buried in white clouds and the way before you is wrapped in an amorphous vapor.¹⁸

Before leaving this brief sketch of the salient features of Rohan's prose, one other important influence should be mentioned. With respect to individual works, it is of course possible to point to immediate influences such as Noh texts and Bashō's travel diaries on Taidokuro, Jōruri and Kabuki on Gojū no Tō, the principles of renku 'linked verse' on Kagyūan Renwa (蝸牛庵聊話 "Linked Tales from the Snail's Hermitage" 1943), and so forth. But on a deeper level, the level referred to above as "buntai," I think it is important to note the following. Despite forays into colloquial language writing in mid-career and a number of successful novels not written in bungobun 'literary style' toward the end of his life,

Rohan was most comfortable with his variant of the kambun kundokutai bungobun style, that is, literary Japanese tempered with strings of Chinese character phrases.

There have been, and presumably still are, various schools or styles of reading kambun (Chinese) in Japan. One of them, the monzen yomi (文選読 "the Wen Xuan reading" named after the classical Chinese anthology), has been described as follows: "Whenever possible it repeats the Chinese word to be glossed in kan'on [Japanese version of Chinese pronunciation] and then explains it with Japanese kun [native Japanese for the term in question] often introduced by the Japanese quotative particle to. Here as in other respects it clearly shows its origins in the oral traditions of the classroom."¹⁹

Rohan, we remember, withdrew from middle school, the Tokyo First Middle School in Kanda, and the Tokyo English School in favor of a traditional Confucian school. He is known to have voraciously read a wide range of Chinese texts as a youth. It seems clear it was this kambun training that had a tremendous affect on his style. The important point is to keep in mind that although kambun looks like a series of signs meant mainly for the eye, kundoku, the Japanese reading, was originally developed for aural understanding.

Terada Toru, discussing Rohan's essay on Lieh Tzu, "Resshi o Yomu" (列子を読む "Reading Lieh Tzu" 1927), a text rather dense with Chinese characters, writes, "As you begin

reading, as the eye follows the characters, deep in the ear a powerful voice begins to be heard. That is, one has the feeling of hearing an explanation." Terada claims the flow of thought is much closer to language as it is actually spoken, storytelling style, than what is now called "spoken style" (kōgobun).²⁰ This agrees with Yamamoto's observations mentioned above and with what has been said about katari: the voice of the narrator permeates the text as a unifying force. The strength of this voice in Rohan's writing, both fiction and nonfiction, whether or not we attribute the effect to a kambun kundoku buntai, gives the reader a strange sense of having heard an intimate story from the text. After finishing Kangadan ("Picture Viewing Tale") or Gendan ("Mystifying Tales") the sound of the narrator's voice lingers in the ear while the details of his conjured space begin to fade from view.

Having indicated why Rohan's prose style did not lend itself to the creation of a modern European-type novel, I hope I need not add this was not the kind of literature he sought to write. Yet he has been widely criticized for just this supposed "failure." Above and beyond considerations of style, it was over the issue of realism that Rohan and the bundan parted company. In a recent essay Denis Donoghue had this to say about realism:

A work of literature is realistic when the reader finds it easy to forget that it is literature, the fiction is so continuous with what he already knows

of life. Realism tries hard to give the impression that the work of art is really a work of nature and that the artist has merely taken dictation from the truth-telling force in life itself. ... it proceeds as though its particular form and style arose so spontaneously from the experience it presents that the gap between the experience and the style seems to be closed.²¹

Faced with the manifestly superior technology and material civilization of the West which was based on scientific observation, the Meiji Japanese sought to emulate those achievements. Their literature moved closer to the realism fostered by a naïve science. Naturalism and its outgrowth, the watakushi-shōsetsu ("I-novel") won the day to the detriment of older literary sensibilities. A realistic sentence says "believe me" but a sentence indifferent to realism says "enjoy me!" Realism makes claims upon truth the way science does. A literature with little inclination toward realism is more concerned with beauty and pleasure: it is able to, as Donoghue puts it, "take pleasure in the extravagance of the signifier."

The literary taxonomist often tries to include Rohan under the rubric "Romantic Idealist." As far as the early works are concerned it would be difficult to deny this characterization. The tenor of his later work might be better described as "anti-realist." An anti-realist would hold that realism "impedes the freedom of imagination, fantasy, [and] the metaphorical possibilities to be discovered within the artistic medium; and therefore

conspires with a complacent society to maintain its common-places, especially those of character, identity and history."²²

The greatest danger of realism from this point of view is that it attempts to employ signs that conceal their character as signs and pretend to be the truth itself.

During a critical juncture early in his career, while he was at Jigokudani, a hot springs retreat, Rohan wrote "A Commentary on the Secondary Significance of the Heart Sūtra" (般若心經第二義注 "Hanya Shingyō Dainigichū" 1890). He explains his commentary can only deal with secondary meanings because the essential truths of the sūtra can not be grasped with language. (This, by the way, is the reason why the titles of so many of his works begin with "fūryū" -- the term emphasizes the secular, equivocal nature of the writing.) Rohan's artistry lay not in making the trivial and transitory appear to be true and enduring, but in his ability to express in the play of language, in the sounds of a story, deep human emotion and a taste of the sublime.

¹ Kōda Rohan, "Bunshō Yō Ron" ("The Essentials of Writing"), in Rohan Zenshū ("The Complete Works of Kōda Rohan"), 41 vols., (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1949-58), Vol. 25, pp. 50-51.

Subsequent references to the Rohan Zenshū will be cited as Zenshū with the appropriate volume and page numbers.

² E. D. Hirsch, Jr., The Aims of Interpretation, (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 140-141.

³ Masamune Hakuchō, as cited in, Kōda Rohan Shū, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Taikei Series, No. 6 (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1974), p. 595. The Japanese is: "omoi yoroi o kita ue ni, rochijin no motte ita yō na nanjūkan mo suru tetsunobō o hikizutte iru yō na bunshō."

⁴ For a number of informative articles on modes of written expression in the Meiji period see the special issue "Meiji no Buntai" ("Meiji Prose Styles") of Kokubungaku, 25 (August, 1980).

⁵ Saito Mokichi, "Kadan Mankaku Chō" ("Notes on Myriad Awakenings in the Poetry Circle"), as cited by Fujioka Takeo, Saito Mokichi to no Shūhen (Tokyo: Komyōsha, 1973), p. 301.

⁶ Noborio Yutaka, "Koda Rohan no Sōzōryoku to Buntai" ("Rohan's Imagination and Style"), Kokubungaku, 25 (August, 1980), pp. 98-103.

⁷ Zenshū, Vol. 1, p. 137

⁸ Zenshū, Vol. 4, p. 383

⁹ Yanagida Izumi, Meiji Bungaku Zenshū, Vol. 25 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1968), as cited by Noborio, p. 100.

¹⁰ Noborio, p. 101.

¹¹ Zenshū, Vol. 25, p. 55.

¹² Noborio, p. 103.

¹³ Yamamoto Kenkichi, Sōseki Takuboku Rohan (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū-sha, 1972), p. 176.

¹⁴ Kōda Rohan, Rohan Hyōshaku Bashō Shichibushū ("Rohan's Commentary on The Seven Collections of the Bashō School") (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1975), p. 91

¹⁵ William B. Yeats, "The Tragic Theatre," in The Cutting of an Agate (London: MacMillan, 1922), p. 35.

¹⁶ Yeats, p. 86.

¹⁷ Yamazaki Masakazu, "The Aesthetics of Transformation: Zeami's Dramatic Theories," trans. with intro. by Susan Matisoff, The Journal of Japanese Studies, 7 (Summer, 1981), p. 249.

¹⁸ Fukumoto Kazuo, Nihon Runessansu-shiron kara mita Kōda Rohan ("Koda Rohan Viewed from the Perspective of Japanese Renaissance Theory") (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppan Kyoku, 1972), p. 25.

¹⁹ Roy Andrew Miller, The Japanese Language (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 118.

²⁰ Terada Tōru, "Rohan no Kōshō," ("Rohan's Textual Studies") Bungaku, 46, No. 11 (1978), p. 1354.

²¹ Denis Donoghue, "The Real McCoy," rev. of Essays on Realism, by Georg Lukács, and The Realistic Imagination, by George Levine, New York Review, 19 November, 1981, p. 44. Donoghue writes in the same review, "Realism encourages the reader to believe that what he thinks he knows is indeed the case, and that what he doesn't know is continuous with what he thinks he knows. Unrealism diverts him from knowledge to his heart's desire, in keeping with the fact that fiction is fiction because, without it, he would die of fact" (p.44).

²² Donoghue, p. 44.

Chapter Three

Encounter With A Skull

Deep in the Snowy Mountains
 Would I vanish
 In search of the brew that is death
 For those who love.¹

On the back page of the magazine Shinchō Hakushū for September, 1889, an issue which included Rohan's first piece of really masterful writing, Fūryūbutsu ("An Alluring Buddha"), there is an advertisement for Taidokuro (対 骨 髑) "Encounter with a Skull".² It reads in part:

A novel beyond the law! Never before such a controversial work!
 Never before such eroticism [iroppoki]
 Never before such an unusual, perplexing work as this!³

We may forgive the hyperbole, such is the nature of advertising, but the repetition of "never before" challenges the prospective reader to find elements in the novel that have been encountered in previous literature.

Even a cursory reading of Taidokuro reveals its great debt to classical sources going back as far as the Tale of Genji from which the poem quoted above has been taken. The work mines traditional literary forms, especially the Noh theatre, for both thematic material and stylistic devices. Like the best of pre-modern Japanese literature, it too develops a poetic tension

between "this world" and a "beyond;" it evokes a sense of the pleasures of the body at odds with the freedom of spirit. This it does while managing to maintain a reverence for the complexity and mystery of real existence. The "mystery of real existence" as encountered in many Japanese poems and some prose narratives might be expressed in the following paradox:

Mundane existence is nothing but the life of the Buddha himself. Should one loathe and try to abandon it, that is precisely to lose the life of the Buddha. Should one stay with it and cling to mundane existence that also would mean to lose the life of the Buddha.⁴

At the same time we note Taidokuro's debt to the past we should also point out the originality and skill with which classical elements are reworked into a fresh, modern expression. It is an excellent example of how tradition always involves a pattern of persistence and change. The hero of the novel goes by the author's own name and the temporal and spatial details have close autobiographical parallels.⁵ It reminds us of the Edo period travel diaries while anticipating the watakushi-shōsetsu ("I-novel") development. Although the eroticism in the novel stays within the bounds of the light titillation of Edo pillow books, the work concludes with a very graphic passage describing a woman in an advanced stage of leprosy which must have profoundly shocked the Meiji audience. Taidokuro honors its predecessors while developing different pathways of expression

and eliciting new levels of response.

The novel tells the story of a young man, "Rohan" (露伴), who, while attempting to traverse some rugged mountain country in early spring, lost and exhausted, chances upon the lonely dwelling of a beautiful young woman, "Otae" (お妙). Invited to spend the night, the protagonist wrestles with his desires and fears with respect to the woman who seems at once provocative, threatening, and motherly.

That there is only one set of bedding occasions some amusing comic-erotic banter, but temptation is finally overcome and the situation resolved by both staying up through the night. Time passes quickly as Otae relates her life story, explaining how she came to abandon the world and achieve freedom and enlightenment in her solitary mountain abode. Dawn breaks and the young man finds no house or companion, only a white skull at his feet:

... just then, with the morning sun sending forth its first streaks of red, the house and woman vanished into the rising mist. Alone, crouching in last year's withered brush to tie my bootlace,⁶ I encountered at my feet, a bleached, white skull.

He buries the skull believing it to be that of the woman in his vision and follows a stream down to a hot springs village. An innkeeper responds to his query about a woman wandering in the vicinity with a grotesque description of a leprous woman he witnessed entering the mountains the previous year. She was

in a raging frenzy, stumbling along chanting, "Cast off by the world, I throw it all away!" ("yo ni suterarete yo o sutete").⁷

Each of the three sections of Taidokuro begins with a brief three-line heading playfully teasing the reader with an ironic comment on the narrative to follow. The first heading reads:

Tabi ni michizure no aji wa shiranedo
yo wa nasakearu onna no kotogoto
tadashi dokoyara ni kowai tokoro arigatai tokoro.

Don't yet know the taste of companionship on the road,
though the world itself be a compassionate woman,
somewhere for sure is that witch to fear, that which
to hold dear.⁸

This introduces the michiyuki (道行) stretch of the story. A michiyuki is a description of a journey, usually in highly poetic language, derived from the conventions of Noh. In the later Jōruri and Kabuki theatres the michiyuki was expanded and took on a dramatic function while retaining its lyric emphasis. Such passages usually contain allusions to, or quotations from, classical literature.

The michiyuki in Taidokuro presents the protagonist, a young, light-spirited traveller, as he moves through a series of transformations to reach the space in which the central action occurs. In the three lines of the heading we have the main elements of the first part of the story: A lone traveller, the

thought of a compassionate female, and the caveat that the combination may induce either fear or gratitude.

The heading of the second section, alluding to Ise Monogatari (伊勢物語 "The Tales of Ise"), the tenth-century song narrative (uta monogatari), and Chikamatsu's Jōruri, Keisei Shutendōji (傾城酒呑童子 "The Amorous Brigand of Mt. Ōe"), reads:

Irojikake inochi ayauki onihitokuchi to
nigete mawarishi okubyō mono
shisai uketamawareba shisai nakikoto.

An artful seduction threatens to dispatch his life
in one fell swoop
as the coward runs this way and that to escape,
yet once the facts are known, there is nothing
to it at all.⁹

The lines ridicule the interplay of lone traveller and alleged temptress, while suggesting the ultimate innocence or vanity of the affair.

The third part of the story is introduced with the lines:

Kikeba kikuhodo suji no wakaranu
koi-ji no hajime to satori no owari
yokuyoku tadashite mireba seken ni ōi koto.

The more you listen, the less you understand
this narrative from its beginning on the path of love
to a final awakening,
if you look very very carefully, nothing could be
more common.¹⁰

This final section, which includes a lengthy tale within the tale,

is given over to Otae's life story. The heading winks at the young man's confusion and advises us not to take the story at face value, but to look instead at the larger significance of the narrative. The satori 'awakening' referred to occurs more than once.

Numerous references to specific characters, the rhythm of certain passages, and the similarity of overall structure remind the reader of this novel's debt to classical Noh drama.¹¹ The Noh is usually divided into three sections or dan (段). The jo section (序) introduces the waki (ワキ) or deuter-agonist, often a travelling monk. In Taidokuro the portion of the narration relating the young traveller's experience from the inn at the hot springs to his first encounter with the woman corresponds to the jo movement in Noh. In this movement, rhythmic music and intensified poetic language work to set a mood and draw the waki and audience into a realm somewhat removed from waking consciousness. The structure of Rohan's story follows what is known as fukushiki mugen nō (複式夢幻能), literally, "multiple dream Noh," often called simply, "vision Noh." In such a play, a traveller meets the spirit of a deceased person in the form of a dream or hallucination. He hears their story, views their dance, and generally commiserates with their tale of woe. After a pause or interval, the spirit returns in its true form and discloses its original identity to the traveller.

The middle development or ha (破) movement is itself often composed of three parts. First is the entrance of the maejite (前 シテ), the protagonist of the first part. This is followed by a conversation between this maejite and the waki, conducted in song and dance. Finally, the high point is reached when the protagonist completes the communication of his or her story with an emotional chant and dance known as the kuse (クセ) part. In a similar way, in Taidokuro we have the appearance of Otae to the young traveller, Rohan, followed by a section of sustained serio-comic banter between the two which establishes the pretext for Otae's long life story. Her account is a complete drama within this drama, which ends abruptly with the coming of dawn and the dissolution of the vision.

In the third part or kyū (急) movement of a Noh play there is a quickening of the pace as the drama moves toward its finale. In "vision Noh" the nochi jite (後 シテ), the protagonist of the second part, appears and discloses his or her true identity, then dances a very powerful dance expressive of their particular affliction or attachment. The macabre "dance" of the leprous woman described in extremely graphic terms by the villager in Ogawa corresponds closely to the final dance of the nochi jite in Noh.¹² More specifically, the mad woman's frenzy can be thought of as a variation on the kakeri (カケリ),

the "rush dance" of a crazed woman or warrior often accompanied by rapid flute. The villager's account concludes:

From time to time she would pause, catching her breath, heaving as if to vomit forth the poisons flooding her viscera. It wasn't only the dogs and birds that fled her path, a single glance filled a person with a terrible nausea. Just the thought of that terrible smell recollected during a meal would dispell the pleasure of eating miso soup. Remember the oozing pus and you'd have to pass up such delicacies as salted, fermented fish entrails. Nobody had the heart to provide her with even a handful of boiled rice. She was left to manage as best she could. You could hear, despite wretched articulation, what sounded like a song chanted with great sorrow, "Cast off by the world, I throw it all away!" She tottered uncertainly, wavering back and forth, her voice a wheezing rage. "Aargh!" Glaring at the empty sky, and brandishing her bamboo staff, winding crazily, striking out at the roadside rocks and trees, she leaped and lunged, her heart burning in flames of wrath, in madness, pure madness, she went off without a trace.¹³

While the overall structure of the work reflects the basic pattern of "vision Noh," the encapsulated tale -- Otae's life history -- serves to develop in straight narrative the same thematic material presented indirectly in the frame. Otae's tale is reminiscent of the narrative line in Kayoi Komachi (通小町), a Noh play by Kan'ami (観阿弥 1332?-1406?). Donald Keene has summarized the play this way:

An unknown woman ... appears each day to offer fruits and firewood to a priest. He asks her name, but after hinting that she is Ono no Komachi, the poet, she

disappears. Later, the priest offers prayers for the woman's salvation and she returns asking that he administer to her Buddhist ordination. But a voice calls out forbidding this. Komachi pleads to be given the chance of salvation, but the ghost of her rejected lover Fukakusa ... seeks to prevent Komachi from deserting him in hell. In the end his wrath is appeased and both attain the way of the Buddha.¹⁴

The young lord who pines away for Otae puts us in mind of Fukakusa who, legend has it, visited Komachi and was refused for ninety-nine nights before he finally died. Although Otae had largely resigned herself to her lonely fate sealed by her mother's letter informing her of her terrible communicable disease, her resolve is shaken by the young lord's love. Like Fukakusa's love for Komachi, that love becomes both an obstacle to her salvation and the impetus propelling her toward her enlightenment.

The title of this work, Encounter with a Skull, indicates that, contrary to the situation in Noh where the shite has the main role, here, the waki, "Young Rohan" is the focus of the story. It is his encounter to which the title refers. The novel begins with this young man who has stopped for a cure at a hot spring deep in the mountains of Chuzenji in central Japan. As mentioned above, the "hero" of the tale is identified with the writer, Rohan.¹⁵ The hero recognizes that he is associated with the light, transient, "floating world" of appearances. He has "a buoyant spirit with no fixed abode." He is resigned "to

wander through the universe, always restless," the "ebb and flow of his fate determined by the winds of karma." He is not altogether lacking in aspiration for spiritual cultivation as his mocking reference to himself as "a three day monk with part-time discipline" shows.¹⁶

He disregards the innkeeper's advice and, rather than return the way he has come, insists on traversing an infrequently taken, rather difficult pass through the mountains. The high point on this route separates Kōzuke and Shimotsuke provinces, "the upper and lower fields." In spite of a warning that this journey should not be undertaken lightly, he allows a streak of stubbornness and the opportunity for a show of bravado to influence his decision. Acting against common sense and honest advice he sets out with a sturdy giant of a guide, only to realize very quickly what an uncommon, formidable journey he has begun.

The attentive reader realizes from the outset just how uncommon a space awaits the young hero. The opening passage contains allusions to the story of Eguchi no Kimi (江口の君) and Bashō's travel journal, Nozarashi Kikō (野ざらし紀行 "The Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton"). Eguchi no Kimi is mentioned by name and refers to famous courtesan, Tae (妙), who appears in a story told of Saigyō (西行 1118-1190), the great poet-priest of medieval Japan. She refuses the travelling priest lodging for the night in an exchange of poems filled with

double entendre. In some versions she is later revealed to be an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The legend was adapted by Kan'ami in his Noh play entitled "Eguchi".¹⁷ The conjunction of prostitute and saviour is not quite so startling as we might imagine. During the Edo period, for example, ukiyo-e prints of popular courtesans in the guise of bodhisattvas were very popular. The prostitute as bodhisattva, a model of compassion without attachment, is particularly poignant since it is probably the women of the night who know better than anyone the vanity of the passions. The allusion to Eguchi no Kimi in the text serves to alert the reader to the age-old pattern being introduced and set the mood of the narrative to follow.

The Saigyō theme is continued in the same passage with the phrase, "... negoto ni bakari wa shizuku tokutoku kokoromi ni ukiyo sosogabaya to hakanaki senjo ..." (" 'tis only lonely gibberish that, 'Would that the watery droplets undertake to wash away the floating world,' mere futile defiance ..."). Rohan has taken part of this phrase from Nozarashi Kikō.¹⁸ Reference to Bashō's journal, which opens with the image of a skeleton (possibly Bashō's vision of his own) by the wayside, prefigures the appearance of the skull toward the end of this tale. The phrase from Bashō comes from the end of a passage describing the poet's visit to Saigyō's hermitage near Oku no In on Mount Kōya. Bashō notes that the clear water running from a spring

near the site of the hermitage seems unchanged from the time of Saigyō -- it is still percolating purity. The passage then concludes with the verse quoted above except, we should note, Rohan has changes the first word, tsuyu ("dew") to shizuku ("droplets"), a word Bashō uses in the prose preceeding his haiku. Bashō's verb, susugu becomes sosogu, both meaning "to wash." The original poem goes:

Tsuyu tokutoku
Kokoromi ni ukiyo
Susugabaya.

Would that these droplets of dew
Undertake to rinse away
This doleful floating world.¹⁹

The hero's movement into an unexpected, supramundane realm takes the form of a guided ascent and free descent. Deep in the mountains, as a cold wind blows down his back and his breathing becomes labored, he reaches the final stage of the climb:

The tracks of rabbit and deer marking the snow finally disappeared and the sound of bird calls gradually faded away. My body perspired heavily from the strain of the ascent. It was as though the defiled garments of the five desires covering and concealing the mind were being peeled off layer by layer and the demon king, until a moment ago revelling in the glory of its unlimited miraculous power at the ego center in the sixth level of consciousness, suddenly became bereft of camp followers and allies, and was reduced to a vacuous, tenuous sadness.

Somehow, I had become a defeated warrior fleeing the world in fear. Perhaps the state was something like the semi-death of the senses at the dawn of old age when the body draws towards its end. How heartless! Such a loss of strength and so little to rely on. As a profound sadness welled up uncontrollably, from

out of the darkness of the treetops came the scream of a bird shrill enough to pierce stone. At that point, a shock went up my spine and before my eyes reeled a wild fountain of arabesques. "Here's where we part,"20

The guide gives him perfunctory directions and departs, leaving him alone, half frozen, and soon to lose his way on the descent.

The changes in the hero and his environment during the climb prepare him and the reader for the space beyond normal ken they are about to enter. First, the signs of animal existence disappear. Then the five senses are purified. Purified in that their attachment to their corresponding objects is weakened or broken due to the strain and concentration of the ascent. The hero's ego (here Rohan employs the vocabulary of Buddhist epistemology -- "dairokushiki maō;" Skt., mano-vijñāna-māra) is stripped of its defenses, its ties to the mundane world are loosened, and penetration to a deeper region made possible. The story adheres closely to the timeless pattern of heroic adventure derived from mythology. Although the climb was a severe hardship, the hero must experience further suffering on the descent: he is bruised, scratched, and half buried by a snowslide; his clothes are torn by the brush and the soles of his shoes cut through. As night falls he is lost, his ties to the quotidian severed.

It is worth noting that it is invariably substantial effort called forth by a particular situation that sustains and carries Rohan's characters to the insight or satisfaction they achieve. In the artisan novels of his early period, characters such as Shōzō of Ikkōken ("One Sword") or Jūbei of Gojū no Tō ("The Five-Storeyed Pagoda") are required to exert tremendous effort, to draw on resources and energies they were only dimly aware of possessing, in order to become masters of their own fate. In both novels, and to some degree in Taidokuro as well, a sense of pride is what triggers the individual's conflict with his workaday world and provides the initial impetus for the drive to some form of transcendence.²¹

The realm the hero is transported to is clearly demarcated. As he sits despondently in the forest about to retie a broken shoelace, he sees a light flickering in the distance. Approaching, he discovers a "simple cabin with thatched roof set beneath a large, mountain cherry tree just beginning to bud."²² The spot is watered by a stream. The water signals life, like the streams running through Shintō shrines identifying the place as sacred; it also marks the way back to civilization and company, for a mile and a half downstream is the village, Ogawamura.

A more striking marker is the yamazakura 'mountain cherry.' In the deepening darkness it casts an aura of beauty and desolation. The yamazakura is a season word (kigo) associated with spring. In our narrative it is April. Rohan has just

descended from a cold, snowfilled pass -- a deathly place -- to light, water, and the promise of flowers. The tree, harbinger of the woman within the dwelling, is not yet in bloom. The buds, analogous to a woman's nipples, are tight ("tsubomi no kataki") either in anticipation or from the lingering night chill.

The yamazakura is a very evocative image used by countless poets. Two examples are instructive. First, a waka by Daisōjō Gyōson (大僧正行尊 1057-1135):

Moro tomoni
Aware to omoe
Yamazakura
Hana yori hoka ni
Shiru hito mo nashi.

Together we sense a deep yearning
The mountain cherry and I,
Other than your blossoms
Who else is there that knows? ²³

The eleventh-century poet, grandson of the Emperor Sanjō, is famous for his mountain asceticism (yamabushi shugendō). This poem, one of Fujiwara Teika's (藤原定家 1162-1241) Hyakunin Isshu (百人一首) selections, was composed deep in the mountains at Omine in early spring.

Yosa Buson (与謝蕪村 1716-1783) captures the loneliness, fear, fondness and beauty associated with the yamazakura in this series of three haiku (rensaku sanku):

Sabishisa ni
Hana sakinu meri
Yamazakura.

It seems to blossom
Out of its loneliness,
The mountain cherry.

Ishikiri no
Yubi yaburitaru
Tsutsuji kana.

A stonecutter's
Smashed finger and
Scattered azaleas!

Hirachi yukite
Kotoni tōi yama
Sakura kana

Ah, now as I approach lower ground
There on a distant mountain
A flowering cherry.²⁴

It is thus with a sense of anticipation and trepidation that our hero makes his plight known to the occupant of the house who, to his alarm, is found to be a young woman. She is an extraordinary woman, one of the best portrayals of female character in Rohan's fiction. The young man is invited into the world of Otae. Her name is written with a character (妙) signifying that which is marvelous, mysterious, charming or strange. She becomes in turn, mother, temptress, saint and witch, roles which are interpretations or reflections of Young Rohan's consciousness. Otae herself, we are led to believe, actually inhabits a realm "informed by sublime truth" ("myōtai o uru ni itaru").²⁵

The contrast between the light, floating, almost childlike existence of the man and Otae's weighty, deeper presence is sharply drawn and developed. Doubts the young man has about this unaccountable female carry the reader along involving him in the same questions. The mood fluctuates from titillation to fear, from fear to domesticity, as the hero is bathed, fed, and bedded down for the night. The banter between the two is filled with humor and suggestion mixed with a hint of real terror.

There is some marvelously humorous writing with a lively rhythm resembling the dialog in Jōruri and Kabuki:

How shall I respond [to Otae's invitation to share her bed]? Just what should I do? Ah yes, I recall hearing an old story about Bashō who when a woman grasped his sleeve remained perfectly silent and immobile. When the woman finally let go and was about to move away, Bashō caught hold of her robe from behind and with the poem, "Turn this way, I too am lonely, In this autumn twilight" tried to guide her to deliverance. I firmly resolved to follow Bashō's example and remain completely silent. With my mind fixed on contemplating the nine aspects of decomposition of the body, I sat down with an energy firm and stalwart enough to split yin from yang.

The woman, growing impatient, increased the force in her hand clasp my mine. "Well, just what have you been thinking? Come this way, come on!" She began to pull me to my feet. As she pulled harder and harder I mustered the strength of my whole body to resist her. "Oh please come this way! For all your talk of light-hearted traipsing through mountains and frolicking over water, when all is said and done, you are really a pretty rigid, straitlaced person, aren't you," she said continuing to tug.

This is it, I thought, if this enchantress ever moves me a single step. Like a stone buddha guarding a crossroads, I braced myself against the woman's deliberate pull.

Feeling myself slipping, involuntarily, I let out a scream, shook free my hand, and started to flee. She pursued and grabbed my sleeve, giggling. "Oh no! You must really think I'm the apparition of some monster to despise me so much. Though I believed you courageous and spirited, my kind intentions have served only to alarm you. A grave mistake to have upset you so. Sincerely now, I am neither the emanation of a demoness nor one who has abandoned the floating world only to be caught up in the delusions of desire. In any case, I would never insist on anything you found abhorrent. But were I to allow you to leave now to find your way in the night, it would be an utter failure

in hospitality. There would be no end to my regret. So please, please sit down and stay."

Once restrained, and afraid to bluntly refuse her entreaty, I sat down at the far side of the hearth. She picked up a hatchet and stood up! Noticing a startled, anxious look come over me again, she laughed, slipped on her straw sandals, and went out. "Crack! Crack!" came the sharp ring of wood being split.²⁶

After a meal is served in elegant but incongruous utensils, the hero tries to analyze this remarkable woman whom he observes, "sits under the lamp sewing up the torn seams of my kimono looking for all the world like she has been my wife for ten years, yet strangely, managing this without the least trace of sexuality." Otae has already frightened him and mothered him and is about to tempt him with an offer to share her bed, but the young man is still at a loss, "Just what is she? A woman who has abandoned the world? Maybe, but her fragrant black hair says she is no nun. But if she has not chosen to forsake the world, what is she doing alone deep in the mountains with absolutely nobody to notice her beauty? It does nothing to allay suspicion...." ²⁷

The questions thrown back and forth in the man's mind are treated lightly here, but do point to the problem of attachment and suffering, a problem at the heart of this work. In Taidokuro the object of desire, the cause of attachment, has been differentiated into three images: beautiful, red-blooded Otae, transcendent white skull, and mad leprous woman.

The promise and the dangers involved in a male-female

relationship are highlighted in the entertaining serio-comic situation revolving around the issue of who sleeps in the only set of bedding in the house. When Otae first suggests Rohan share the bed with her, he begins to recite to himself lines of Chinese verse, "On the Suppression of Desire." The poem raises the specter of suffering in a series of transmigratory hells because of lust and enjoins a man to view all women as his sisters.

Still weighing his options when this fails to cool his excitement, the hero compares himself to others, legendary and otherwise, who had to cope with similar circumstances. A few examples will suffice to indicate the kind of company Rohan imagines himself in.

He admits he cannot possibly measure up to the wise and virtuous Liu-Xia Hui (柳下惠) of the Spring and Autumn Annals period who, when begged by a beautiful woman to provide her lodging for the night, graciously offered to share his own bed with her and then slept soundly through until morning.

He then imagines his situation in light of the "Old Lady's Burnt Hermitage," a Zen koan. This refers to a story from the Go Tō Egen (五燈会元) collection which tells of an old woman who builds a hut and offers it to a monk who lives in it practicing meditation and austerities with her encouragement. Years pass. One day the woman sends her pretty, young daughter

to him. The monk sits resolutely in his meditation posture, declares, "My body is like a withered tree on cold rock," and sends her away (枯木寒岩の如し "koboku kangan no gotoshi"). When the old lady hears what happened, in great anger, she chases the monk away and burns the hermitage to the ground. Rohan doubts whether he would be able to bring warmth to the winter air with a similar frigidity ("kono utsukushiki onna to ... nemuraba koboku kangan ni yorite santō ni danki naru beki ya inaya").²⁸

On another occasion he compares himself with the wizard (仙人 sennin), Kume (久米), a holy man who appears in tales as far back as the tenth-century. In the fourteenth-century work, Tsurezuregusa (徒然草 "Essays in Idleness") by the Buddhist priest Yoshida Kenkō (吉田兼好 1283?-1350?) a brief section is devoted to the fate of Kume:

Nothing leads a man astray so easily as sexual desire. What a foolish thing a man's heart is! Though we realize, for example, that fragrances are short-lived and the scent burnt into clothes lingers but briefly, how our hearts always leap when we catch a whiff of an exquisite perfume! The holy man of Kume lost his magic powers after noticing the whiteness of the legs of a girl who was washing clothes; this is quite understandable considering that the glowing plumpness of her arms, legs and flesh owed nothing to artifice.²⁹

The power he lost was the freedom to fly through the air. Rohan simply notes that he fell from the clouds after noticing the woman's white calves. Stories of holy men, monks and ascetics

who have labored for years to achieve supramundane powers, losing those powers in a single encounter with an attractive woman, are legion throughout Asia. (Couples such as Merlin and Vivian, or even Samson and Delilah, remind us, however, the motif is universal.) The young man is Taidokuro reflects, "Were Master Kume to sleep in the same bed as this woman, he would, without fail, plunge into the depths of a bottomless hell." ³⁰

While these comparisons are largely facetious, there is a serious undertone in the hero's interior monologue suggested perhaps by the reference to Ikkyū Sōjun (一休宗純 1394-1481), a Zen monk well known for his indulgence of the carnal appetites. The overall effect of the young man's reflections is to make Otae seem ever more desirable. The object of desire, if distanced by restrictions, avoided by capricious self-restraint, or, in the manner of Japanese poetry, if endowed with a pervasive aura of ephemerality, becomes that much more attractive.

Immediately after searching his memory for models of self-restraint, in a scene reminiscent of sharebon, the comic-erotic novels of the Edo period, Rohan imagines himself sharing the bed with Otae:

For me to keep calm would be difficult indeed under such circumstances. It would be nearly impossible with her downy locks brushing against my cheeks and her radiant face right in front of my nose. Where would she put her soft arms? Where could her breasts

hide? This surely is a serious situation. How could I possibly fall asleep as calmly as if holding a female cat in my arms? Oh, no! Suppose our clothes became undone through casual movements of our bodies, unseen under the cover? And what if her shapely legs or feet touched my own hairy shins? Good Heavens! That would be a moment of life and death for me! ³¹

A solution to the bedding problem is reached by both agreeing to stay up all night. This provides the opportunity for Otae to tell her life story -- what in Noh would be the shite's tale. It is the story of an impossible love.

When approached by a young man of noble birth and experience abroad with protestations of love, Otae had to refuse to see him. We learn three reasons for this. As a young woman, her father's death taught her the transitory nature of existence (無常 mujō). Her avid reading of fiction showed her the vanity of the world, the despicable nature of men, and the unreliability of people in general (浮世 ukiyo). Finally, her mother's death and dreadful letter seals her fate by revealing her leprosy (at the time thought to be genetically transmitted) (悪因縁 aku innen).. Otae waxes eloquently on the first two but, of course, does not disclose the contents of her mother's letter to Rohan. As to just what message the small black lacquer box with mother-of-pearl inlay of petals floating in water contained, he and the reader remain mystified until the shocking truth of her wretched fate becomes clear at the end of the work.

Otae abandons the world not out of choice or by religious conviction but because fate has chosen to brand her. Actually, she is abandoned by the world; love and marriage become impossible for her. The original and, for some time, alternate title of this novel, Engai no En (縁外縁 "A Tie Beyond All Ties"), refers to the fact that her inheritance, her disease (innen), has placed Otae outside all normal relationships. She refuses the young noble out of fear of perpetuating her pernicious karma but has not yet resolved to relinquish all connection with the world. Heartbroken, the man languishes away in dejection, and she witnesses his death. At this point, two Otaes enter the text. One, for not having heeded her mother's warning and finally fallen in love with the now departed suitor, is overcome with grief and the onset of the symptoms of leprosy. She is the one described wandering off into the mountains in an advanced state of decay and madness.

The other Otae is the young woman in the dream telling her tale. Distraught at the death of her would-be suitor, she roams into the mountains, meets a virtuous monk, and achieves insight and release from her suffering. She has left the world and attained an enlightened state of being where everything is seen to be the "transformation of mind" ("isshin no henka") and "worthy of compassion" ("aisubeshi").

It should be remembered that the Otae in Rohan's vision is

an illusion and the attributes of enlightenment properly belong not to the red-blooded form but to her skull. Noborio Yutaka puts it this way: "What said it had transcended all, that everything was lovable, was in fact, not Otae, but her skull." He reminds us that in mugen nō or "vision Noh" the shite appears in a borrowed form and while narrating "often forgets it is a borrowed or temporary form and reverts to the language of its original state."³² Interpreted this way, the skull itself can be considered the nochi-jite, the protagonist of the second part.

The transcendence of the skull is expressed directly in a section appended to the novel, "Engai no En no Nochi ni Shosu" ("Epilogue to A Tie Beyond All Ties"). Here, the writer Rohan explicitly associates his novel with traditional accounts of encounters with skulls beginning with the famous episode in Chuang-tzu (莊子). In that episode, Chuang-tzu while on a journey sees a bleached skull by the roadside. Hitting it repeatedly with his whip, he interrogates it as to the cause of its present condition. He asks if it was due to military service, punishment by the government, decadent living, cold and hunger, or simply because of old age. Then, using the skull for a pillow he goes to sleep for the night. As in Taidokuro, the ghost of the skull appears in a dream and claims to exist in a state of enjoyment and tranquility, very much like the

existence Otae describes. Chuang-tzu does not believe the skull and enquires, "Were I able to get the ruler of your destiny to bring your form to life again with bones and flesh and skin, and return you to your mother and father, wife and children, and all your friends in the village, would you desire that I do so?" The skull asks with "knitted brows" how it could possibly give up its tranquil pleasures to return to the suffering of human life.³³

The problem posed by this anecdote is amplified and developed poetically in Taidokuro. The hero, Rohan, has a glimpse into emptiness. His dream deep in the mountains reveals the ephemeral, illusory nature of the world. Otae's transcendence is real, but it is the reality of the skull. In the flesh her reality was the suffering of the leprous dying woman. The leper and the skull representing the suffering and death of beautiful Otae serve in an unexpected way to enhance the attractiveness of that marvelous beauty while reminding us of her ephemerality and ultimate emptiness. Like the finest works of Japanese literature, this novel elicits a complex response, evoking both a forbearance and a yearning for this world of ours, a "tremulous causeway linking dream to dream."³⁴

¹ Edward Seidensticker, trans., The Tale of Genji, by Mursaki Shikibu (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 869. The poem is sung by Kaoru after the death of Oigimi:

Koi wabite
Shinuru kusuri no
Yukashiki ni
Yukinoyama ya
Ato o kenamashi.

Genji Monogatari, No. 17 of the Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei Series, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), Vol. 4, p. 466.

² Taidokuro was originally published under the title "Engai no En" ("A Tie Beyond All Ties") in the bi-weekly, Nihon no Bunka ("Japanese Culture") in three installments beginning January, 1890. At the same time "Dokushushin" ("Venomous Coral Lips") was published in the magazine, Miyako no Hana ("Capital Blossoms"). In June of the same year when Shinyōdo published the work in an edition of collected novels, the title was changed to "Taidokuro" ("Encounter with a Skull"). The original title was not dropped entirely because in subsequent collections published by Hakubunkan (1902 and 1909) the title "Engai no En" was retained. In 1897 it was published together with "Dokushushin" under the title, "Daishijin" ("The Great Poet") in a special edition of the magazine, Taiyō ("The Sun") to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Hakubunkan publishing house. There are slight differences in the texts of the two publishers and there appears to have been some minor revision undertaken for the various editions. I have used the text in the Rohan Zenshū, Vol. 1, pp. 135-167. Subsequent references are to this text and cited as TDR.

For a detailed publication history see Noborio Yutaka, "Taidokuro Ron," Bungaku, 44, No. 8 (1976), p. 1047.

³ Yanagida Izumi, Kōda Rohan, (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1942) p., 97.

⁴ Dōgen (1200-1253) in the "Shōji" chapter of Shōbōgenzo ("Essentials of the True Law") trans. by Nakamura Hajime, Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971), p. 371.

⁵ Some months before the publication of Taidokuro, in April of 1889, Rohan travelled to Nikkō and crossed the mountainous region north-west of Lake Chūzenji via Konsei Pass to reach the Jōshū district.

⁶ TDR, p. 164.

⁷ TDR, p. 166.

⁸ TDR, p. 137.

⁹ TDR, p. 148. The phrase onihitokuchi 'one gulp of the demon' is a common expression for danger striking suddenly. Here, the words may be playfully alluding to the appearances of oni 'demons' in works such as those mentioned. In the sixth section of Ise Monogatari, "Akutagawa" (芥河), for example, a man steals away with a woman who has refused him for years. They come to Akutagawa on a dark night, the woman asks a question about the glimmering light on the grass, but the man puts her off by responding that they are in a dangerous area frequented by demons: "Encountering a woman, a demon devoured her in one gulp" ("oni haya onna oba ... hito kuchi ni kuite keru"). It begins to rain, they stop at an open kura 'storehouse,' he pushes her in and guards the door through the night. In the kura a demon quickly devours the woman, her cry for help drowned by thunder. The empty kura in the morning sets the scene for a poem about the evanescent dew, the "glimmering light" his lover had asked about. Nihon Bungaku Zenshū, Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1969), p. 138.

¹⁰ TDR, p. 154.

¹¹ Noh plays specifically mentioned include: Eguchi (江口), by Kan'ami, and Giō (祇王), Hotokenohara (仏原), and Kogō (小督) by Zeami. The first three are "woman plays" (kazuramono), the last is a "maskless play" (hitamenmono). The "maskless play" usually has a real man, as opposed to a god or ghost, as the protagonist. The "woman plays" contain some of the most beautiful poetry in Noh and usually deal with memories of love and the problems arising from attachment to this world.

¹² Noborio argues that the skull rather than the leprous woman might be considered the nochi jite since it is the skull that is the present form of the spirit of Otae (p. 1055).

¹³ TDR, p. 166.

¹⁴ Donald Keene, Nō The Classical Theatre of Japan (Tokyo and Palo Alto: Kodansha, 1966), p. 251.

¹⁵ The opening lines include the phrase, "goshaku no kara o ou dedemushi" ("a snail burdened with a five-foot carapace"). "Dedemushi" (蝸牛) may also be read "Kagyū" ("snail") which suggests the gō or pen name Kagyū-an ("The Snail's Hermitage") Rohan used especially in connection with haiku. The words "tsuyu no tomo" (露の友 "friend of the dew") are also used, suggesting, of course, the pen name "Rohan" which means "companion of the dew."

¹⁶ TDR, p. 137.

¹⁷ The play, Eguchi, was based on an incident recorded in the Senjūshō, a medieval collection of edifying tales. Saigyō was on his way to Tennōji when, caught in a sudden shower near Eguchi no Sato (present day Ōsaka, Yodogawa-ku, Eguchi-chō) he attempted to secure lodging for the night at the house of a woman of pleasure. The woman was named "Tae." Her refusal

led to the following exchange of poems:

Yo no naka o
Itou made koso
Katakaramae
Kari no yadori o
Oshimu kimi kana.

- Saigyō Hōshi -

It is hard, perhaps,
To hate and part with the world;
But you are stingy
Even with the night I ask of you,
A place in your soon-left inn.

Ie o izuru
Hito to shi kikeba
Kari no yado ni
Kokoro tomuna to
Omou bakari zo

- Yūjo Tae -

It's because I heard
You're no longer bound to life
As a householder
That I'm loath to let you get attached
To this inn of brief, bought, stays.

In Kan'ami's Noh play it is not Saigyō who meets a woman at Eguchi no Sato but a monk in later time. The monk (waki) also on his way to Tennōji hears from a villager that he is near the place along the river where Saigyō met Eguchi no Kimi. As he recites phrases from Saigyō's poem a woman appears (maejite) and reminds him there was a response to the poem. She says the exchange involved nothing so petty as begrudging a night's lodging: She wanted to save Saigyō from forming even a brief

attachment to the floating world. She then confesses to be Eguchi no Kimi's ghost and vanishes. The monk wants to perform a memorial service but the villager reappears and tells him that Eguchi no Kimi was actually an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

In a boat on the river, the spirit of Eguchi no Kimi appears (nochiijite) as a woman of pleasure accompanied by two others of the same profession (funegasobi). She sings about the sadness of the floating world and responds to the monk's questions in beautiful language explaining the cyclical transmigration of human existence and the path to enlightenment. Toward the end of the play she has this exchange with the chorus:

Shite:

In the great ocean of truth with no outflows,
although the winds of the five defilements and
six desires blow not

Chorus:

The waves of suchness rise and fall
day in and day out according to
the laws of karma.

Shite:

Why is it that these waves are produced?
The mind has taken up lodging in a temporary dwelling;

Together:

Because the mind has found a resting place.

Chorus:

With no mind fixed upon it
the floating world of sadness is no more.

The play concludes with Eguchi no Kimi transformed into Samantabhadra and the boat into a white elephant, this bodhisattva's vehicle. Bathed in light they mount a marvelous cloud and float off into the western sky.

Maruoka Akira, ed., Kanze Ryū Koe no Hakubanshū, No. 59 "Eguchi" (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969), p. 4. The poems exchanged by Saigyō and Eguchi no Kimi are numbers 978 and 979 in the Shinkokin Wakashū, ed. by Hisamatsu Senichi, Vol. 28 of the Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958), p. 215. I have used the translations in William LeFleur, Mirror for the Moon (New York: New Directions, 1978), p. 37.

¹⁸ Matsuo Bashō, "Nozarashi Kikō" ("Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton"), in Bashō Shū, ed. by Imoto Shinichi and Hori Nobuo, Vol. 5, Koten Haibun Bungaku Taikei (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1970), p. 441.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 441.

²⁰ TDR, pp. 139-140.

²¹ My reading of Gojū no Tō developed in the next chapter suggests that it is more "typically Japanese" than Rohan's other artisan novels in that the victory represented by the pagoda is shown to be the consequence of a group effort propelled by the dedication and sacrifice of both Genta and Jūbei.

²² TDR, p. 140.

²³ Hakunin Isshu Hitoyogatari, compiled by Ozaki Masayoshi (1755-1827), ed. by Furukawa Hisashi, 2 Vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 413.

²⁴ Yosa Buson, as cited in Haiku no Kaishaku to Kanshō Jiten, ed. by Ogata Tsutomu (Tokyo: Obunsha, 1979), p. 238.

²⁵ TDR, p. 163. Rohan's female characters are not usually painted as attractively as Otae. In Ikkōken ("One Sword" 1890) O-Ran is a selfish, unsympathetic wife who runs off with the money her husband Shōzō received on commission to make a sword he has little prospect of ever completing. The women in Isanatori ("The Whaler" 1891) are repeatedly unfaithful to their husbands, while in Fūryūbutsu ("An Alluring Buddha" 1889) Otatsu abandons Shu'un, the Buddhist sculptor, on the eve of their marriage to return only in idealized form through the sublimation of his

passion for her into a beautiful work of art.

²⁶ TDR, p. 150-151.

²⁷ TDR, p. 143-144.

²⁸ TDR, p. 148. For one version of the anecdote and sources see Mochizuki Shinkō: Bukkyō Daijiten 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1954), p. 1267.

²⁹ Yoshida Kenkō, Essays in Idleness, trans. by Donald Keene (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 8-9.

³⁰ TDR, p. 149.

³¹ TDR, p. 149-150. The translation is from Mulhern, Kōda Rohan, p. 48.

³² Noborio, p. 1055.

³³ Ichikawa Anshi and Endō Tetsuo, ed., Sōshi, Vol. 2 in the Shinyaku Kanbun Taikei series (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1979), pp. 494-496.

³⁴ Arthur Waley, trans., The Tale of Genji, by Murasaki Shikibu (Tokyo and Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1970), p. 370. One of the most succinct, albeit not terribly lyrical, expressions of the problem of attachment and release is found in this poem from the Shikashū (詞花集 1151) traditionally attributed to Saigyō:

Mi o sutsuru
Hito wa makoto ni
Sutsuru ka wa
Sutenu hito koso
Sutsuru nari keru.

Has the one resigned from the world
Found true abandonment?
Or in not throwing it all away
Is there the greater renunciation?

A tension between the demands of Buddhist detachment and a poetic absorption in the beautiful carnality of the world represented by

a mountain full of blossoms on a spring evening is at the heart of Saigyō's poetry. Taidokuro is perhaps the best expression of this tension in Rohan's own life. For a discussion of the poem quoted above see Hirohata Yuzuru, Chūsei Inja Bunsei no Keifu (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1978), pp. 178-184.

Chapter Four

The Five-Storied Pagoda

When Gojū no Tō (五重塔 "The Five-Storied Pagoda") appeared in the Kokkai Shimbun, a popular newspaper, in Meiji 24 (1891) it was received with wide acclaim and propelled the twenty-four year old Rohan to the top of the literary world of the day.¹ Earlier works had attracted attention and critical approval. Fūryūbutsu ("An Alluring Buddha") so impressed Masaoka Shiki (正岡子規 1867-1902), a university student at the time, he wrote a novel in a very similar style and moved to within a few minutes walk of Rohan's residence.² Rohan was living beside the Yanaka Tennōji, with the temple's five-storied pagoda visible from his house. The last section of Gojū no Tō describing the force of a storm descending upon Edo and the newly erected pagoda startled readers with the boldness of its vision and the power of its imagery.

The previous year had seen the first general election in Japan, the abolition of the Genroin (元老院 "Council of Elders"), and the issuance of the Imperial Rescript on Education. The turbulence of the decade before, with its people's rights movement, rice riots in the provinces, and pervasive aura of rising expectations, had subsided somewhat and the 1890's began

a period of reflection and reaction. The Western Powers were then scrambling for colonies in Africa, China having already been carved into spheres of interest. The external threat to Japan's sovereignty had diminished, but the doctrines of social-Darwinism had found wide acceptance among the intellectual elite.

Amidst the demands for modernization from all quarters, the following four points may serve to characterize the climate of the period beginning in the third decade of the Meiji era:

1. Continued efforts by various elements in the society to use the newly gained political freedom to extend and insure human rights.
2. The growth of self awareness and individualism. Fostered by greater social and economic mobility and stimulated by Western-Christian notions, such concepts as "modern selfhood" (kindai jiga) and "individualism" (kojin shugi) enter the marketplace of ideas. (And, on occasion, practice: 1891 was the year of Uchimura Kanzō's (内村 鑑三 1861-1930) refusal to bow before the Imperial Rescript on Education for reasons of principle, an incident known as the fukei jiken (不敬事件)).
3. Materialism, capitalism, utilitarian and technological values were displacing the value structures nurtured throughout the pre-Restoration period. Village life was beginning to break down due to the demands of industrialization and traditional cooperative group units were losing their cohesion.

4. Largely in response to the above, the 1890's ushered in a period of reaction, a time of vigorous nationalism grappling with an awakening sense of the national identity crisis. Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) and Okakura Tenshin's (岡倉天心 1862-1913) work to revitalize appreciation for traditional aesthetic ideals (Kokka [国華], a periodical devoted to Japanese art, was first published in 1889), and the founding of the conservative Seikyō Sha (政教社 "Politics and Learning Society") along with the publication of Nihonjin (日本人 "The Japanese") by Miyake Setsurei (三宅雪嶺 1860-1945) and others, are indicative of the mood of the times.³

Even in this brief characterization we can see the kinds of problems that began to be consciously debated once the initial euphoria and novelty of "modernization" had faded. The second chapter of Gojū no Tō ends with the sounds of children playing tops (koma ate no asobi) in the street. The innocent children are involved in a game in which the victor of one match is immediately confronted by another challenger in an ongoing struggle. The children mimic the struggle for existence, their play accompanied by shouts of "I've got ya" and "You're dead!" It is within this world of cyclic struggle (川原々競争の世 "junjun gataki no yo") that the pagoda must be built.⁴

The novel begins with a detailed description of Okichi, wife of the master carpenter, Kawagoe Gentarō, known as Genta. The

old-fashioned diction and reference to mid-Edo furnishings draw the reader back in time. The description flows easily into her interior monologue which sets forth in outline the conflict at the core of the novel. In ways similar to classical Japanese prose, the narrative moves from third-person description to dialog and interior monolog, with the shifts often occurring in mid-sentence. Throughout the work, the author, although careful to let the characters speak for themselves, never hesitates to interject his opinion on the flow of events in a manner similar in some respects to the Victorian novelists in English. This narrative technique, along with the occasional use of a seven-five cadence (七五調 shichi-go chō) and parallel clauses (対句仕立 tsuiku shitate) to establish a pleasing rhythm, achieves what was regarded to be a life-like, natural effect. The language is a modified bungobun 'literary style' incorporating Meiji colloquialisms. Traditional poetic devices such as kakekotoba (掛詞 "pivot words") and engo (縁語 "fixed associated words") are also used.

The work is divided into thirty-five chapters. With the exception of the storm scene which ranges over the entire city, each chapter is constructed within a rather limited setting. One can easily imagine most of the scenes on stage as part of a Kabuki sewamono ("domestic tragedy"). Thus it is not surprising

to learn that the novel was adapted for the theatre and successfully performed.⁵

We do not meet the protagonist, the slow-witted but highly skilled Jūbei, until the fifth chapter. By this time, the reader has formed an impression of the obtuse, rather grating fellow through a series of unflattering references and rumors. His outstanding expertise at his craft is never in doubt, but his characteristic slowness and lack of worldly finesse have earned him the nickname "Nossori," a perjorative implying "dull" or "sluggish." The novel's 1909 translator, Sakae Shioya, rendered him "the slouch."⁶ It is, however, Jūbei's impulse to escape his lot in life that triggers the conflict in the work. His being cast as an outsider from the start makes his subsequent actions more plausible.

Due to the presence of the virtuous and revered Abbot of Kannōji, Rōen Shōnin, donations from people in all walks of life were collected to make additions to the temple. With surplus funds, the Abbot suggests a pagoda be built. When Jūbei hears of the plan he seizes on this "once in a lifetime opportunity" and submits his own proposal for the erection of the monument. He does this knowing that Genta, a well established master carpenter who has already built some of the existing

temple structures and under whom he has been employed, has already presented his plans and estimate for the construction. The question as to what sparks this impulse, whether it is essentially egotistical ambition, some form of religious aspiration, or the spontaneous creative urge of an artist, becomes a central problem in the work.

Impressed by Jūbei's intensity and his painstakingly built model, the Abbot calls the two craftsmen together, tells a Buddhist parable along the lines of the "Burning House" parable in The Lotus Sūtra, and asks them to determine between themselves who is to build the pagoda. The point of the Abbot's homily is the simple truth that competitive, aggressive self aggrandizement brings only misfortune or mundane reward, whereas self-abnegation and cooperation yield happiness and spiritual recompense.

Genta, a man in the traditional mold, is acutely conscious of social position yet generous by nature. He takes both his work and pleasure quarter amusement very seriously. After a good deal of reflection, he takes the Abbot's teaching to heart and resolves to build the pagoda jointly with Jūbei. Genta confides in his wife:

There's nothing to be concerned about. I always thought our fine, gentle Abbot would find a way of turning me into a good man. Ha ha ha! Okichi, the true elder brother is the one who really cherishes his little brother, right? There are times when even if it's a little rough you have to share your food with someone who is really hungry. Not that I'm the slightest bit afraid of anyone, but being a man isn't always just a question of strength. You know, sometimes a man has to resign himself to being weak. Ah, it's a splendid fellow indeed who is able to do that! But a five-storied

pagoda is such prestigious work! How I would like to leave a superb monument, one built by me alone, to endure for a thousand years before the eyes of multitudes. Oh, just to be able to bequeath a work -- Genta's masterpiece -- known not to involve the hands and thoughts of anyone but myself! Ah, yes, it takes a man to control his fiery passions. Yes, a man, a real man. The Abbot is absolutely correct. It's utterly abhorrent to concede half of a job I had set all my hopes on to another ... Ah, It's hard! A good buddy, right! Ha ha ha. Well you tell me Okichi, isn't my giving half to the slouch -- we'll build the pagoda between us -- isn't that a splendid openness to see in a man? Praise me Okichi! Without your praise, it just becomes too discouraging, hardly worth the words.

It is a painful decision, for he too realizes that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve enduring fame. Were it not for Jūbei's sudden inspiration and the Abbot's intercession, he would have had sole claim and the right to be principal architect. Instead, he feels morally compelled to make a bitter but sincere compromise, a compromise Jūbei refuses to even consider.

For Jūbei it is all or nothing, a position he makes clear with neither tact nor eloquence:

That's really heartless of you Sir. To say let's do it together is really heartless. For you to so kindly offer to allow me half the work, though seemingly generous, is terrible unfeeling. I am afraid I must refuse. Although I desire nothing more than to build the pagoda, I have already given up all thought of doing so. On my way home after hearing the Abbot's instruction I thoroughly abandoned the thought. I was wrong to have had ideas so beyond my station. Ah, what I fool I've been! I will forever be the slouch, lucky

even to be considered a fool. I shall spend the rest of my life pounding rain gutters and so be it! Please forgive me, Sir. It was wrong of me. I won't say anything more about building the pagoda. It is not as though you were a stranger. You are the boss to whom I am very much indebted. I will be happy to stand aside and watch you construct a magnificent monument.⁸

The crux of the novel is this deeply revealing struggle between self affirmation and negation that is enacted in the Jūbei-Genta relationship. Rohan's biographer, Shiotani San, has suggested that the five levels of the pagoda reflect the alternating stages of conflict and accord in the novel. "The construction of the pagoda proceeds with successive levels of struggle and reconciliation forming its central pillar."⁹ Certainly in terms of plot development this rising oscillation between antagonism and cooperation does parallel the pagoda's construction. Taking it a step further, I think this image of the pagoda as conflict rising to higher and higher levels is an excellent representation of the struggle at the center of Meiji intellectual life. The structure of the novel, if not the pagoda itself, mirrors the antithetical momentums of the age: the spirit of aggressive self advancement (立身出世主義, risshin shusseishugi) and individualism (個人主義, kojin shugi) versus the urge to establish a unified, harmonious nation-state while preserving the social order and public morality of traditional values.

The structure of both novel and pagoda may also be interpreted in light of the Tendai Pure Land doctrine of kechien gojū (結緣五重). The five levels of the pagoda correspond to the five stages of religious practice: Ki (機), Hō (法), Ge (解), Shō (証) and Shin (信). Both Genta and Jūbei proceed through these stages. "Ki" refers to basis, readiness, and individual endowment, as well as opportunity (機緣 kien) for contact with the Buddhist dharma or teaching. The decision to build the pagoda at Kannōji and Jūbei and Genta's desire to do the work are the first stage, "Ki." This leads to their encounter with the teachings in the person of Rōen Shōnin. Rōen Shōnin's instruction and manipulation of the situation is "Hō," the dharma. Reflection on the Abbot's parable brings intellectual understanding and the decision on the part of both men to relinquish their personal ambitions. This is "Ge" -- understanding and release. Genta's compassion and patience and Jūbei's absorption in the work lead to the next stage, "Shō," which refers to experiencing the fruits of insight. "Shin," or "true faith" is reached at the very end when their practice withstands the attack by demons and the fruit of their effort, the realized stūpa is authenticated by Rōen Shōnin.

We can see how in the rising dialectical movement of the narrative, Genta's original position of power -- he is after all

"Oya kata," the boss -- becomes the basis of his weakness. By the same token, Jūbei's lack of worldly power -- he is the despised "Nossori" -- is the source of his strength in the conflict over who is to build the pagoda. Jūbei has everything to gain and precious little to lose by his audacious, willful actions. Were Genta to use his position of authority to secure sole rights to the pagoda he would lose his integrity in both the Abbot's eyes and his own. He must learn the true meaning of strength. As he says to the Abbot, "Okage de otoko ni naremashita ka" ("Thanks to you, I've learned how to be a man, haven't I").¹⁰

It is said Rohan is a very masculine writer, often contrasting him with Ozaki Kōyō who was able to portray women very effectively. Whether or not this is the case with all of Rohan's fiction, in this work the female characters play decidedly minor roles. This is not to say they are not full-bodied characters; Okichi and even Seikichi's old mother, who makes only a brief appearance, are memorable and lifelike. Nevertheless, they have no important function in the central conflict. Although aware of their husbands' problems, neither Okichi nor Onami, Jūbei's wife, seems to understand or sympathize to any significant degree. Both are still firmly rooted in a feudal, role-bound view of the world. Both hold fast to giri ninjō attitudes, that is,

have a strong sense of social obligations in opposition to human passions with the emphasis placed on fulfilling the expectations of a particular role. Okichi feels the demands of obligation and the perogatives of superior social position very strongly. She unintentionally incites one of her husband's workers to take revenge against Jūbei for "his shameless grab for fame" and lack of due respect for the debt of gratitude he owes her husband. Onami pleads with her husband to remember his place and acknowledge his obligations.

Genta first offers to let Jūbei act as his assistant, while he retains the position of principle architect. When this is refused he swallows his own ambition and makes a deeper concession:

Jūbei, you still don't understand? That's not enough for you? Of course it's regrettable to have to do something together you set your heart on doing alone. Maybe it's being assistant with me as boss that is so troubling. All right, you win! Let's do it like this. I'll be the assistant and you stand at the center. How's that? Come on, give me your okay. Let's agree to build it together!

Despite his wife's pleading for him to accept the generous offer, Jūbei steadfastly refuses:

Whether as head or assistant, for two to do one piece of work is just unacceptable. No matter what, I cannot do it! Please go ahead and build it yourself. I'll be a fool till the end.¹¹

Thoroughly angered by this rebuff, Genta calls him ungrateful and insensitive to human feelings. He storms out, determined

to build the pagoda by himself, daring Jūbei to find fault with it.

Genta however, being a compassionate man and mindful of the Abbot's teachings, is forced to reconsider. Finally, both he and Jūbei inform the Abbot they can reach no agreement and request that he decide how the pagoda be built. Under his influence they both seem to have suppressed their competitive drive and stand ready to do his bidding. In Genta's words to Rōen Shonin:

However it is to be, Jūbei or myself or the two of us together, please just say the word and it shall be done. Jūbei and I have given up the spirit of selfish competition and are willing to do whatever you decide.¹²

Throughout the novel it is the Abbot's wisdom and compassion that serves as a catalyst for the spiritual growth of both men. Needless to say, it is also Rohan's way of criticizing the opportunism and misguided egotism of his own times. The Abbot however, despite his crucial role as mediator, and even taking into account the larger than life, kabukiesque characterization we find in this novel, is too much the typical "wise old monk." For a Western reader not overly familiar with the stereotype, the Abbot character functions tolerably well. The language used to describe him is rich with the cultural accoutrements of Buddhism which helps to create an ambiance and presence sufficient

to spark the imagination. It is easy to see, however, why a Japanese reader might find Rōen Shōnin the "unimaginative model of an eminent monk" ("katadori no kōsō").¹³ This is, I suppose, a common fault with any character designed to be the standard bearer of an ideal.

The privilege of building the pagoda is granted to Jūbei. His grateful, tearful acceptance is wholly within character, but one questions what there is about him that allows him to accept the kindness of the Abbot with such gratitude, yet, with such firm resolve, refuse so ingraciouslly any overture on Genta's part.

After the matter has been decided, Genta vows to be as helpful as possible. He invites Jūbei to a teahouse and offers to provide all kinds of assistance, from supplying workers and access to materials, to offering his own detailed plans and even trade secrets handed down over generations. All this Jūbei awkwardly refuses, once again enraging his would-be benefactor.

Jūbei's attitude and actions have to be understood from two different perspectives, each yielding a quite different evaluation. From one point of view he is undeniably selfish, ambitious, and concerned only with improving his stature and achieving a lasting fame. He thinks to himself:

If I give up this opportunity there will never be another chance to erect a five-storied pagoda. Will my whole life be spent like I am now, a man who never amounted to anything? Ah, it's just too cruel, too bitter.¹⁴

He appears to represent what Itō Sei called "the egoism of the modern artist." To attain his goal, to produce a work of lasting value, to achieve prominence and fame, are all that is important for such a man. Compassion and moral obligation in human relationships become superfluous in the consuming drive for success. In his discussion of Gojū no Tō, Itō writes that "the reason this work achieved such a deep sympathetic response from the literary world of the day was its portrayal of Jūbei asserting the independent world of his own work by thrusting aside his master. It captured the modern artistic ego which was in the process of budding forth in the minds of writers at that time." He goes on to suggest that what excited and pleased the general reading public was the depiction of Jūbei's masterful artistry and self-confidence which satisfied the rising mood of self-assertion and upward mobility sweeping through Japanese society during the 1890's.¹⁵

This view, however, misses the ambivalence in the characterization and fails to appreciate the distinction which can be drawn between "modern ambition" and traditional "artistic aspiration." The extremely skillful carpenter in Gojū no Tō

is but one of a series of craftsmen heroes (swordsmith, Buddhist sculptor, etc.) appearing in Rohan's early fiction. Rohan maintained he wrote so much about craftsmen because they were solid people, producing something, and contributing directly to society. His characters stand in sharp contrast with, for instance, Sōseki's "aesthete" or the innumerable, unproductive "sensei" 'teachers' so prominent in Meiji fiction. In his critique of modernism Rohan presented the dedicated craftsman, the man for whom artistic skill and spiritual endeavor formed a unified way of life. In response to the shallow, self-serving entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and engineers, he offered a vision of the individual finding fulfillment and salvation in self-mastery through commitment to an art. The vision is based on a long-standing, one might almost say, medieval, cultural ideals somewhat akin to the European notion of craftsmanship. These ideals embodied spiritual values rapidly declining under the impact of industrialization. Like the medieval craftsman whose life frequently depended on the successful completion of a piece of work, Jūbei wagers his own life on total involvement with the pagoda. The energy, strength, and selfless devotion with which he goes about constructing this religious monument inspires his fellow workers and gives the reader a powerful sense of Rohan's belief in human potential.¹⁶

Construction of the pagoda proceeds with Jūbei the guiding

force. Both aspects of the hero, his total commitment to the task and his lack of sympathy toward his fellow beings are clearly expressed:

A hawk in flight sees nothing but its prey. If a crane, then concentrating solely on the crane it will pierce the clouds and defy the wind until it grips its quarry firmly by the throat. Jūbei, once the construction of the pagoda was finally awarded to him, awake or asleep, had his mind constantly focused on the task. At mealtime all he could taste was the rising tower; in his dreams his spirit circled the nine rings of the upper spire. So involved was he in his work, his wife was completely ignored, his child too, forgotten. Yesterday's self never emerged in recollection, nor did he imagine himself tomorrow. But when he swung his adz to dress a log he put his whole body into the stroke; when he drew a plan he instilled in it the sincerity of his whole heart.¹⁷

Jūbei's dream is almost brought to an abrupt end when Seikichi, spurred on by Okichi's anger at Jūbei's insensitivity, attacks him with a hatchet. The carpenter survives the sudden assault, sustaining only a minor shoulder wound and the loss of an ear. Although not directly responsible, Genta assumes the blame and apologizes to Jūbei and the Abbot for the incident. Okichi secretly pawns her kimono to provide money for Seikichi to travel to another city until things quiet down. The prose describing Okichi removing one beautiful kimono after another from her wardrobe is a wonderful attempt at kimonozukushi (an exhaustive cataloguing of splendid gowns) in the manner of Chikamatsu's Jōruri.

In spite of his wounds and protest from his wife, Jūbei appears at work the very next morning right on time. His hitherto lackadaisical workers are startled to find him there as they straggle in late. His example inspires their work and the pagoda is soon completed.

Apparently the novel was originally intended to end here. About half way through the serialization, Tokyo was hit with a severe storm. Rohan, concerned about the condition of Tennōji's pagoda (The temple was in fact called Kannōji until 1833; it belongs to the Tendai Sect of Buddhism), went out a number of times to walk around the structure and examine the effects of the storm.¹⁸

The final chapters of the novel, published as "Gojū no Tō Yoi" (五重塔余意, "Afterthoughts on The Five-Storied Pagoda") appeared several weeks after the original installments ended. This segment depicts the violent assault of a tempest upon the city of Edo. The natural forces of destruction are personified as yasha (夜叉). The yasha (a transliteration of the Sanscrit yakṣa) are demons which have been assimilated into the Buddhist pantheon (hachibushū 八部衆). Thus they are said to be protectors of the dharma, feeding on the wicked elements of humanity and safeguarding the good. In spite of this they are generally considered malevolent.

The wrath of the demons is first directed at the moral failings of the inhabitants of the city. Pride, lust, avarice,

dishonesty, and insensitivity to nature (the silk industry is taken to task) are the charges that stir the fury of the yasha. However, as the storm grows in violence, the Demon King urges his myriad followers to:

Fly on wildly, abide only in the lawless! Shamelessly indulge yourselves! Away with principles and lay all to waste. On! On! With rage and frenzy fight even the Gods and tumble the Buddhas to the ground! Crush all principles! Once destroyed, all under heaven will be ours!

The first part of the powerfully written diatribe is aimed at a corrupt humanity; the second, at the principles of morality and order. Throughout the storm the completed pagoda sways back and forth, "the precious jewel at its pinnacle describing an unreadable character in the sky."¹⁹

Jūbei, confident of his work and secure in the Abbot's trust, remains at home (a house half demolished by the storm) unconcerned about the effect of the driving rain and raging wind on the pagoda. A messenger from worried, faithless temple officials fails to budge him until he is deceived into believing the Abbot has sent for him. His own faith temporarily shaken, he climbs to the highest level of the pagoda determined to confront the challenge of the storm and resolved to sacrifice his life if the work sustains even the slightest damage. He is unaware of the fact that Genta also maintains a vigil, circling around the base of the structure through the night.

The five-storied pagoda survives the tempest unscathed. Other buildings in the city do not fare so well. A greedy promoter's theatre is damaged, an unscrupulous ikebana 'flower arrangement' teacher's second story addition is blown away, and another large temple, because of profiteering and slovenly workmanship, is partially destroyed. Someone jokes that the large pillars of the temple's main hall might just as well have been empty barrels stacked one on another. This suggests, of course, that in contrast to Kannōji, only the outward form of religion is practiced and the artisans and craftsmen no longer do "solid work" being unable to fully invest themselves in their undertakings.

Turning to the craftsmanship of the novel itself, we recall that it is written in bungobun 'literary style.' Certain passages in seven-five rhythm are in conscious imitation of Saikaku. Masaoka Shiki, Japan's greatest modern haiku poet, praised Rohan's early prose for its "marvelous haiku flavor."²⁰ In the text, various traditional poetic devices are employed. Kakekotoba 'pivot words' for example:

meshita ni mo josainaku aikyō o kunde yaru
sakurayu ippai ...

considerate of inferiors, she put her charm into the
cup of cherry blossom tea she poured for him ...

Kunde is a kakekotoba. It pivots between "aikyō o kunde" ("with charm" or "full of affability") and "sakurayu ippai [o] kunde yaru" ("make a cup of cherry petal tea to drink together"). The sentence continues:

kokoro ni hana no aru ashirai wa kuchi ni kotoba
no adashigeki yori natsukashiki ...

hospitality from a deeply sincere heart is more
pleasant than being treated to a mouthful of
compliments.

Here, hana 'flower' is the engo (associated word) for the sakurayu 'cherry petal tea' in the preceding clause.²¹

The seven-five cadence adds musicality and a strong forward momentum to the flow of the prose. Consider this instance where Jūbei sits anxiously anticipating the Abbot's decision:

... moshi mata ware ni wa meijitamawazu Genta ni
makasu to kimetamaishi o ware ni kotowaru tame
yobareshika, sō ni mo araba nantosen, ukamu yoshi-
naki umoregi no waga mi no sue ni hana sakamu tanomi
mo nagaku nakunarubeshi ...

Then again, if I am not rewarded with the order but
it has been decided in favor of Genta and I have been
summoned only to be rejected, if that is the case,
what then? With no hope of ever rising in the world,
will I forever remain buried timber, potential blossoms
lost to oblivion?²²

The seven syllable phrase "ukamu yoshinaki" ("no hope of rising") is followed by the five syllable "umoregi no" ("buried wood" by

extension, "living in obscurity"). The clause employs the alliterative device of head rhyme (tōin) to create euphony. After the next seven syllable phrase, "waga mi no sue ni" ("at the tips of my limbs") we find the engo "hana sakamu" ("flowers blooming") associated with the word "umoregi" ("deadwood"). The associated terms together form the old idiom, umoregi ni hana ga saku, which means to rise out of obscurity by dint of noteworthy achievement. This type of complex figurative language is used frequently in Gojū no Tō and fascinating examples can be found in most of Rohan's early fiction.

Other features of Rohan's prose technique which might be pointed out include his use of parallel construction (tsuiku shitate), noun-stop clauses (meishidome), and the use of Chinese characters for both visual and aural effect. To illustrate, here is how the twenty-fifth chapter of the novel begins:

Hand axes chopping away, planes shaving planks, chisels knocking holes, nails being driven, crack crack click click the sounds reverberated in busy disarray as wood chips flew like leaves swirling in a sudden gust and sawdust danced like snow falling out of the blue in the precincts of the temple where carpenters in stylish dark blue aprons drawn tightly around their waists over rather natty white britches stepped sharply in their stapped sandals agilely about their tasks, while from an old man in a shabby jacket with a filthy towel slung over his shoulder squatting in a sunny spot comes the sound zzz zzz ting of a chisel being sharpened; here, a little urchin bungling about in search of a misplaced tool, there, a day-laborer intently sawing wood, and amidst these people of all

kinds engaged in their work, perspiring and out of breath, the principle architect, the slouch Jūbei, moved from worker to worker, supervising with ink pot, bamboo stylus, and T-square, directing the transformation of model into reality.

"Cut it here. Bevel it there a bit. What are you doing? Set it at this angle!" With plumb line and voice did he instruct, indicating the dimensions of tongue and groove, even troubling to score lumber, eyes like a falcon's, ever vigilant, desperately driven, when, as he stopped to draw some figures for a young assistant to carve in relief, there, out of a cloud of dust, faster than a charging wild boar, flying at him with hatchet raised high, was Seikichi.²³

The phrase "wood chips flew like leaves swirling in a sudden gust and sawdust danced like snow falling out of the blue" ("koppa wa tonde shippū ni konoha no hirugaeru ga gotoku, ogakuzu matte seiten ni yuki furu ...") is an example of parallel construction, a device used quite often in Rohan's early works. The effect of the technique is purely decorative. Parallelism is surely one of the basic aesthetic principles of poetic utterance in any language.

This opening passage of chapter twenty-five makes use of a syntactical manipulation which I have called the "noun-stop." It is used for both dramatic and aesthetic effect. The passage, one paragraph in Japanese, contains two sentences. Each sentence ends with a noun; the first, with the term "iitsuke" ("instructions") the second, with the proper name, Seikichi. I have tried to indicate in the translation how a whole string of clauses

describing the immediate circumstances is brought to focus on the action (supervising/directing) in the first instance, and on Seikichi, Jūbei's assailant, in the second. The pause or break in the rhythmic prose creates a dramatic tension, a grammatical as well as narrative suspense. It also opens an interval or space (ma) in the text by "freezing" a particular tableau, compelling the reader to contemplate the force and beauty of the language.

In Gojū no Tō Rohan presents the reader with a very dense canvas. Sounds and images move through this space in a rhythmic, almost musical way. The manner in which concrete visual image and the sounds of language are woven together reflects the author's views on the nature of writing. In his essay "The Improvement of Writing and Language" (文章及言語の向上 "Bunshō oyobi Gengo no Kōjō" 1914), mentioned above, Rohan argues that writing in Japanese should take advantage of the two-dimensionality of the writing system. He notes that the characters used are, at the same time, signs for pronunciation and symbols of mental images (心像の像徴 "shinzō no shōchō").²⁴ This is a position later echoed by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (芥川龍之介 1892-1927) and put into practice so beautifully by Tanizaki Junichirō (谷崎潤一郎 1886-1965). Rohan maintained that the direction taken by modern stylistics in Japan obstructed

artistic freedom and was based on an unrealizable ideal, since the written and spoken forms of any language will always have irreconcilable differences.

In Gojū no Tō the language works well in both dimensions. Consider the passage quoted above. One can "see" how the sounds and images work in tandem:

釘 打つやら丁々 かち かち

... kugi utsu yara chōchō
kachi kachi ...

driving nails, bam bam
clack clack

We not only hear, but see the
nails going in 丁丁丁々
one after another.

悠々 然と鑿を研ぐ... 爺もあり

... yū yū zen to nomi o
togu ... jiji mo ari

calmly, deliberately, zz zz ting,
an old man sharpening a chisel

We have picture, sound, and
mood of the old man sharpen-
ing a chisel.

The language in Gojū no Tō calls attention to itself, it is theatrical, full of bold exaggeration and elegant straining of limits. This is the reason we find a critic such as Terada Tōru saying, "The language used is just too strong and only serves to make the novel seem emptier." The novel, he thinks, takes on the qualities of the pagoda itself: it has a firmness and durability but not much else. The overall impression is,

he feels, "one of something hollow with rigid contours."²⁵ The rigidity Terada writes of comes more from the underlying structure of the work than the style. The hollowness he perceives is, I believe, a result of the characterization. Looking for realistic treatment, he finds instead idealization of types.

Modern fiction usually takes the external world as its object and seeks to represent this world "as is." This insistence on mimesis coupled with the writer's personal response to experience came to be the dominant fictional mode. Poetry and drama, however, tend to take language as their object and rather than limit their scope to works primarily expressions of self -- although this type of work is not lacking -- have sought the reason for literature in the expression of a universal order that goes beyond the individual. A novel in form, Rohan's Gojū no Tō is closer to the nature of epic poetry and drama than what we have come to know as modern fiction, where the self-consciousness of the hero is sovereign.

Most commentators on Gojū no Tō take Jūbei to be the unequivocal hero of the work. As we have seen, Itō Sei sees Jūbei as a kind of prototype of the modern individual ready to go it alone in his pursuit of fame and glory. He also notes that his appearance may be taken as signalling the end of the optimistic

early years of Meiji with the arrival of the problem of ego-centric individualism in modern society.

Seri Hiroaki, in his study of Rohan as critic of modern civilization, takes Jūbei to be the embodiment of the ideal of shinjin (真人), the "true man." He maintains that Rohan is trying to show how the development of the pre-modern spirit of craftsmanship ("shokuno seishin") might be an avenue of liberation for modern man.²⁶ Seen this way, Jūbei becomes an exemplar of makoto (真), that characteristic which Ivan Morris has called the "cardinal quality of the Japanese hero." Makoto, which may be translated "sincerity," has as its basis "a purity of motive which derives from man's longing for an absolute meaning out of time and from a realization that the social, political world is essentially a place of corruption whose materiality is incompatible with the demands of pure spirit and truth." Morris goes on to say that "the man of makoto proceeds not by logical argument, pragmatic compromise, or a common-sense effort to attune himself to the 'movement of the times,' but by the force of his own true feelings. Instead of depending on careful, rational plans and adjustments he is propelled by an unquestioning spontaneity."²⁷ There is little doubt many of the heroes of Rohan's master craftsman novels are infused with this "cardinal quality" of sincerity of heart.

Chieko Mulhern, who has written the only study of Rohan in English, feels that "Jūbei is undoubtedly his ideal hero." She writes, "Jūbei must transcend the customary heroics such as the typical Edoite generosity displayed by Genta or the human sentiments by which his wife lives." And that, "Jūbei is the divinely inspired artist-priest protecting the pagoda."²⁸

What all of the above characterizations fail to emphasize is the criticism levelled at Jūbei throughout the novel. He is consistently described as insensitive. At the ground-breaking ceremony his very worldly ambition wells to the surface. He is said to be "half in a dream, half in reality" when facing Seikichi's attack. Upon returning from a consultation with the Abbot he "seems to be half dead" ("hanbun shinda yō ni natte"). His son, Ino, has a prophetic dream in which Jūbei's head is "smashed in half by a sledgehammer" ("atama o butte ikudomo butte, atama ga hanbun kowareta").²⁹ There are numerous other references to Jūbei's onesidedness. To see him only as the "ideal hero" is to overlook his faults, his incomplete humanity. We are meant to recognize that his lack of compassion is a real weakness; that love is love is not something that can be jettisoned in the pursuit of individual goals regardless of the motive.

It is compassion that provides Jūbei with his opportunity.

Even the temple's name implies this: Kannōji is the temple (寺) where the Gods and Buddhas respond (應、) to human feelings (感、). Rōen Shōnin discerns in the carpenter a potential, a dedication to his art, which can be the vehicle of his liberation. He speaks to him while fingering his beads made from the fruit of the bodhi tree ("bodaiju no mi no zuzu") and resolves to awaken the man's bodaishin, his aspiration for enlightenment.³⁰

As the Abbot indicates in the final chapter, the pagoda is "Built by Jūbei of Edo and Completed by Kawagoe Gentarō" ("koto no jūnin Jūbei kore o tsukuri, Kawagoe Gentarō kore o nasu"). Among the other things we learn about constructing a pagoda is that the levelling and solidifying of the ground at its base is the most important factor. ("tō wa nani yori jigyo ga daiji").³¹ It is Genta who maintains a vigil at the base during the storm. He is probably the most fully drawn character in the work. We see him in intimate conversation with his wife, carousing in the pleasure district, losing his temper, eavesdropping, and altogether too rigidly constrained by social proprieties. Yet, his self-abnegation with respect to the creation of the pagoda may represent a higher order of attainment than Jūbei's affirmative triumph. It may well be Genta's uncreated pagoda should be seen as the essential component in the successful realization of the project. It should not be necessary to add that the principle architect is Rōen Shōnin. He combines compassion, skillful means, and wisdom, the main elements of a pagoda which, after all, stands for spiritual victory.

¹ Kōda Rohan, Gojū no Tō ("The Five-Storied Pagoda") in Kōda Rohan Shū, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Taikei Series, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1974). The novel is included in Rohan Zenshū, Vol. 5. References are to the Kadokawa edition which has the advantage of copious notes and commentary; hereafter cited as GJT

² Itō Sei, Nihon Bundan Shi, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1969), Vol. 3, p. 15. Shiki believed Rohan had succeeded in fusing Western ideas of love and human aspiration with the Buddhist world view. He considered Fūryūbutsu the best contemporary novel he had read and became an avid reader of Rohan's subsequent work. Shiki actually went so far as to retrace the steps of Shu'un, the sculptor in Fūryūbutsu, taking the same route through the mountains of Kiso Rohan had travelled two years earlier.

³ See Irokawa Daikichi, Meiji no Bunka (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977). Chapters One and Two outline the social history of the period.

⁴ GJT, p. 290.

⁵ The novel was first adapted for the stage by Takeshiba Shinkichi and performed at the Tōkyō-za in November, 1904. More recently, a play with a script based on Gojū no Tō written by Tsugami Tadashi was produced by the Nihon Engeki Kyokashō in 1966.

⁶ Sakae Shioya, trans., The Pagoda, by Kōda Rohan (Tokyo: Okura and Co., 1909).

⁷ GJT, pp. 308-309.

⁸ GJT, pp. 315-316.

⁹ Shiotani San, Kōda Rohan (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1977), Vol. 1, p. 165.

- 10 GJT, p. 325.
- 11 GJT, p. 317.
- 12 GJT, p. 224.
- 13 This is a fairly common criticism of the characterization. Here, the appraisal is by Terada Tōru, "Rohan no Kōshō," Bungaku, 46, No. 11 (1978), p. 9.
- 14 GJT, p. 306.
- 15 Itō, pp. 25-26.
- 16 On Rohan's heroes as representatives of traditional ideals of craftsmanship and spiritual endeavor see Seri Hiroaki, Bunmei Hihyōka toshite no Rohan (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1971). In particular the chapter, "Rohan no Meijinmono to Zen" ("Rohan's Master Craftsman Novels and Zen").
- 17 GJT, p. 334.
- 18 Shiotani, p. 164.
- 19 GJT, p. 351-352.
- 20 Itō, p. 29. Ito devotes a section of the third volume of his long history of modern Japanese literary circles to "Rohan's Gojū no Tō and Reactions to the Work" ("Rohan no Gojū no Tō to sono Hanbiki").
- 21 GJT, p. 288.
- 22 GJT, p. 301.
- 23 GJT, p. 337-338.
- 24 Zenshū, Vol. 25, pp. 53-57.
- 25 Terada, p. 9.
- 26 Seri, p. 203.
- 27 Ivan Morris, The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in The History of Japan (New York: Meridian, 1976), p. 22-23.
- 28 Chieko Mulhern, Koda Rohan (Boston: Twayne, 1977), pp. 87, 98, 99.
- 29 GJT, pp. 298, 326
- 30 GJT, p. 299.
- 31 GJT, pp. 358, 330.

Chapter Five

Record of Linked Rings

In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" T. S. Eliot, enumerating his criteria for greatness, wrote:

[The] historical sense ... we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year ... The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.¹

Kōda Rohan's novel, Renkanki (連環記 "Record of Linked Rings") succeeds in capturing this sense of traditional order.² It is not of course back to the ancient Greek poet but to the great literary flowering in Heian Japan that his work reaches. Renkanki reveals the tremendous scope of the author's historical erudition and the seemingly effortless skill with which he weaves together a series of biographical portraits, astute observations on human nature, and commentary on the literature of an epoch into a work of literature of the highest order. Much of Japan's literary heritage was crystallized in Rohan, the man; in his work, the reader is given a vision of the multifaceted mystery of time past. The author read history with his heart and brings to his writing a profound understanding of the empty center and delicate web of interrelated circumstance in human life.

In an often noted criticism, Tanabe Hajime (田辺元 1885-1962), the Kyoto University Hegelian, once characterized

Rohan's work as "zatsugaku" 'miscellaneous studies', a term with the negative connotation of "intellectual hodgepodge." The thrust of his criticism was that there is no unifying system of thought supporting his writing.³ This is the type of remark also directed at a writer such as Tanizaki Junichirō, who, although never having ventured far from the realm of fiction, is attacked for his lack of intellectual superstructure ("shisō ga nai"). While on a superficial level there is some element of truth in Tanabe's characterization -- Rohan's collected works do, after all, include studies on topics ranging from philology to city planning⁴ -- and however valid the observation might be from the standpoint of modern scientific disciplines with their need to specialize and fragment knowledge, it rings false when seen in the light of Rohan's effort to maintain a humanistic, comprehensive approach to the world. His writing seeks connections, discovers significant coincidence; it involves the "poetic thinking" Northrop Frye describes:

Poetic thinking, being mythical, does not distinguish or create antitheses: it goes on and on linking analogy to analogy, identity to identity. ... This means, not that it is merely facile or liquid thinking without form, but that it is a dialectic of love: it treats whatever it encounters as another form of itself.⁵

If a conceptual tag must be applied, rather than the usual "romantic idealism," I prefer Yamamoto Kenkichi's suggestion, "philosophy of interrelatedness" (en no shisō). Yamamoto contrasts

the warm, personal world view based on en (縁), which was derived from the Buddhist notion of karmic causality, to the impersonal, theoretical systematizing (rironteki na taikei) of the modern temper.⁶ During much of the Meiji period the residual effects of centuries of Neo-Confucian doctrine kept man, contemporary man, at the center of scholarship and modern scientific methodologies at a distance. In historiography in particular, the rapidity of change during the period generated a strong sense of living within, being part of, the subject matter itself.⁷

To describe her father's methodology Kōda Aya relates an analogy he used to explain his approach to knowledge:

[Rohan] You don't concentrate on just one area, but spread out in all eight directions, firmly forcing your way to the furthest extent like an advancing army. ... Similar to the way when ice forms it first sends out needles which begin to pull each other together creating links. Then a thin membrane stretches over the whole right to the center. What we call knowledge works like this. [Taking things] one by one does not work well. Instead you should reach out widely in every which direction. At some point, *bing!* all will be drawn together and connected, the space in the gaps will be filled in. That is what is called knowledge.⁸

This ice analogy suggests that Rohan would be in agreement with some of the recent anti-epistemological stances in criticism and philosophy. Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of Bildung for instance, which refers to a process of self-formation and education that is to replace a search for "knowledge" in the sense of some putative objective truth. This gestalt approach

is very much in keeping with the tenor of the works on self-cultivation Rohan published in mid career.⁹

History, viewed from this perspective, has value not because of something gained by ascertaining what actually happened -- an unattainable goal in any event -- rather, its worth lies in how it can be used to effect changes in our consciousness of ourselves. As the contemporary American philosopher Richard Rorty puts it, "getting the facts right (about atoms and the void, or about the history of Europe) is merely propaedeutic to finding a new and more interesting way of expressing ourselves." He maintains that "from the educational, as opposed to epistemological or technical point of view, the way things are said is more important than the possessions of truths."¹⁰ I will return to this point in my discussion of the view of history expressed in Renkanki.

Throughout Rohan's writing there is the implicit assumption that sentences and poems are connected to other sentences and poems in a verbal matrix that is able to mirror complex human emotions much more clearly than it can represent the objective world. Decades of studying haikai literature, which is built upon the skillful linking of lines of verse by a group of poets to create a lyrical narrative whole, certainly affected Rohan's view and use of language. His mastery of highly developed renku 'linked verse' techniques such as monozuke 'word link', kokorozuke

'heart link', and nioizuke'fragrance link' contributed to the seamless flow of his mature essays and stories.

The work of art was, however, never an end in itself. For Rohan the art work could not be disengaged from its moral or religious implications. In accordance with both Confucian and Buddhist views, the ultimate justification of literature is to be found in its function as hōben'expedient means' for the edification and enlightenment of society. Individuals in communities are connected by the flow of symbols through channels of communication. Until recently, literature was the most public and influential channel. Quite clearly, it is this system of symbols which helps the group form its self-image and images of realities external to the individual. The aggregate of this symbol system is what might be called human society. Thus it became a moral duty for the writer to further the good of society by eschewing the frivolous and vulgar while espousing the lofty teachings of the sages. The problem for the artist was to create a set of structural and stylistic devices to mediate between the realities of the commonplace world and the injunctions of the ideal one. Language was not always up to the task. In his "Commentary on the Secondary Meaning of the Heart Sūtra" (the Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra -- a distillation of Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings) Rohan explains that the explication is perforce a secondary meaning because the primary meaning is beyond the compass of language.¹¹

In September, 1938, when Rohan was seventy-two years old, Gendan (幻談 "Mystifying Tales") was published in the periodical, Nihon Hyōron.¹² The piece, written in the easy, raconteur style of his late fiction, joins two stories of the supernatural, one Western and of the mountains, the other Eastern and of the sea. The first deals with the original conquest of the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps in 1865. On the descent half the climbing party plunges four thousand feet and is lost. The survivors then witness the appearance of two large crosses in the sky enclosed by an arch. The second, somewhat longer story relates the experience of a fisherman and his boatman companion during the late Edo period. Out fishing one day around dusk they encounter a fishing rod bobbing in the water with the hand of a drowned man still tightly grasping it. Noticing the excellent quality of the bamboo rod, they, with some trouble, remove it from the possession of the dead fisherman and return home. Out fishing about the same time a day later, the same apparition appears to them. Awe-struck, they cast the rod back into the sea invoking the name of Amida Buddha.

Favorable reaction to this work may have prompted Rohan's final burst of creative effort which resulted in his last three novels: Yukitadaki (雪たゞき "A Knock in the Snow" 1939, May-June), Gachō (鵜鳥 "A Pair of Geese" 1939, December), and Renkanki (連環記 "Record of Linked Rings" 1940, June-July). They were originally published in Nihon Hyōron and in

1941 all four were issued together in a single volume under the title Gendan.¹³

Shiōtani San, Rohan's biographer, believes Renkanki was actually conceived much earlier, perhaps as far back as the beginning of the Taishō era (1912), and the author saved his best work to bow out with.¹⁴ In an agreement with a publisher of historical fiction at the time Rohan offered a work entitled "Nara no Ichiyō" (櫨の 一葉 "An Oak Leaf") which was to have dealt with Kamo no Yasutane (慶滋保胤 ? - 1002?) and others of his period in a manner similar to the treatment we find in Renkanki. We know that the beginning of the novel was written (or rewritten) much later because in a letter to his sister Nobuko, dated August 2, 1929, Rohan gives the reading for Yasutane's family name in katakana (phonetic script) as "Yoshishige!" It must have been after that he discovered "Yoshishige" should actually be read "Kamo!" Biographical dictionaries today still read the name as Yoshishige but Rohan shows how Yasutane simply changed characters, using kanji with equivalent meanings (ijidōgi: 賀 became 慶, while 茂 became 滋). This was done in order to show respect for his elder brother, Kamo no Yasunori (賀茂保憲 917 - 977). In Renkanki Rohan cites a similar change by Yasutane's nephew Tanemasa, one of the authors of the Shoku Honchō Monzui (続本朝文粹).

Renkanki is a narrative treating a number of historical figures in mid-Heian Japan and Sung China. The period coincides

with the great flowering of Heian court culture and literary achievement. The characters are contemporaries of Fujiwara no Michinaga (藤原道長 966-1027) the model for Murasaki's hero in The Tale of Genji. Whether the narrative be best described as historical novel (rekishi shōsetsu), biography (shiden), or some form of historical essay is a question that goes beyond the already complicated arguments concerning genre into problems concerning the relationship between fictional and historical modes of discourse. Since the text has a number of comments to make on this matter, it will be discussed below in the context of related issues raised by the work itself.

The narrative involves six major figures and numerous incidental characters, all of whom are attested to in the historical record. The main actors in this account which is structured as a series of biographical sketches or vignettes, often speak through their own texts (journals, poems, hagiographic writings) which have been preserved. Central characters and their relationships are indicated in the following chart:

Zōga
増賀

(917-1003)
Enryakuji Betsu-in
延暦寺別院

Sugawara no Fumitoki

菅原文時

(899-981)

Kamo no Yasutane

慶滋保胤

(? - 1002)

Jakushin

寂心

Genshin
源信

(942-1017)

Eshin Sōzu

恵心僧都

Ōe no Masahira

大江匡衡

(952-1012)

Ōe no Sadamoto

大江定基

(964- 1036)

Jakushō

寂昭

Akasaka no Osa no
Riki ju

赤坂の長の
力寿

(? - ?)

Akazome Emon

赤染衛門

(fl. 10th C.)

Ding Wei

丁謂

(fl. 10th C.)

Taira no Kanemori

平兼盛

(? - 990)

The narrative opens with Kamo no Yasutane, a devout Buddhist, one of the court literati, and author of the first Japanese ōjōden 'accounts of rebirth in the Pure Land', the Nihon Ōjōgokurakuki (日本往生極樂記 988). Yasutane is also referred to by his Buddhist name, Jakushin, and known to his contemporaries as "Naiki no Hijiri" (内記の聖), "the Sage of the Palace Secretariat." We learn about his teachers and his well-developed literary and critical skills. A number of incidents taken from Heian period sources reveal the depth of Yasutane's compassion. From his own diary, the Chiteiki (池亭記 "An Account of My Pond-side Villa"), passages are selectively quoted and commented on.¹⁵ He reflects on the corrupt state of the world and on the solace he finds at home, removed from the secular demands of court life.

It was at his modest retreat south of Rokujō that he wrote his "Record of Rebirths in the Pure Land Paradise" based on the Chinese model of the T'ang monk, Shi Jia-cai (釈迦才 fl.627), the Jing Tu Lun (浄土論 "Treatise on the Pure Land").¹⁶ Some years later, Ōenno Masafusa (大江匡房 1041-1111), grandson of an elder cousin of Ōe no Sadamoto, compiled another record of Pure Land rebirths, the Zoku Honchō Ōjōden (続本朝往生伝 1099-1104) which relates in detail Yasutane's own rebirth in the Pure Land. Rohan comments on this course of events: "the karmic nexus of the dharma is truly profound, like the linking together of jewelēdrings" (hōen mīmyō gyokukan no aitsuranaru ga gotoshi).¹⁷

These words sound the main theme and indicate the principle behind the structural organization of the work. In what follows we find a series of variations on this central motif as individual is linked to individual in a manner meant to suggest the mysterious operations of the web of interconditionality. The reciprocal causal connections (en) between individuals are here expressed in Buddhist terms. In Rohan's earlier historical novel, Unmei (運命 "Destiny"), the unfathomable force behind human fate and the process of history was referred to as "sū" (数 literally, 'number'), a concept derived from the cyclical transformations based on number in the I Ching ("Book of Changes") and related to Mencius' principle of "waiting for destiny" (待命 dai ming). "According to this doctrine man should exert his utmost in moral endeavor and leave whatever is beyond our control to fate."¹⁸

In another earlier novel, Fūryū Mijinzō (風流微塵蔵 "The Minute Storehouse of Life"),¹⁹ Rohan tried unsuccessfully to use a similar linking technique which Yanagida Izumi called "renkantai" (linked ring style).²⁰ The lengthy, unfinished work portrays the lives of ordinary people in the early years of the Meiji era. Its scope, use of melodrama, and great number of minutely detailed studies of the society of the day suggest comparison to Balzac. With the novel less than half completed more than one hundred and thirty characters had made an appearance, thirty-five of them fully developed. One story gave birth to another in an ever widening circle. While there is some over-

lapping of characters between chapters, the overall design called for the lives of a young man and woman introduced at the outset to serve as central warp threads with other characters becoming the interwoven weft. The experiment failed, in part, because of too many loose ends. As the novel expanded, with the number of characters and unresolved episodes multiplying, it began to lose its structural integrity.²¹

Rohan abandoned the novel but not the idea. In Renkanki, by limiting to six the number of main figures, he preserves a manageable structure without diminishing the historical sweep of the narrative. The figures chosen provide an historical ground with just the right contours for developing the "linked ring" structure. Jakushin, Jakushō, and Genshin were all members of a group called "The Society for Study and Endeavor" (勸学会 Kangaku-e). Consider the following account of the group's religious practice:

In 964 a group of young intellectuals and minor aristocrats, persons from the social stratum upon which the contradictions and insecurities of the time fell most heavily, formed a devotional society. It was called The Society for Study and Endeavor. ... It met for a whole day twice each year. In the morning the assembled members listened to a sermon on the Lotus Sūtra, in the evening they composed poetry on Buddhist themes, and throughout the night they cultivated nembutsu [a Pure Land meditation]. The meetings of the society ... were as much friendly reunions as religious gatherings (many of the members had been fellow students at the National College). ... The Society for Study and Endeavor dissolved in 984. Two years later, its former leader Yoshishige no Yasutane [Jakushin] ... together with the respected Tendai priest Genshin formed a far more thoroughgoing

nembutsu society called the Nembutsu-samādhi Society of Twenty-five. ... Composed of twenty-five dedicated Pure Land devotees, both clergy and laymen, this group met each month on the day of the full moon. They heard a lecture on the Lotus Sūtra and passed the night in nembutsu. The group was a religious fraternity as well as devotional society. The members took vows to act as spiritual brothers to one another especially at times of sickness or death, to assist one another at prayer and nembutsu, and to help one another in every way, in this life and all future lives, toward the goal of Pure Land salvation.²²

In the life of any narrative, especially in one that purports to be historical, interpretation is called for at every juncture. Interpretation may take the form of invention of new narrative or direct authorial commentary. Rohan uses both in Renkanki. "New narrative," which at one point he explicitly designates "detarame" (fabrication), is employed for instance in the section dealing with Sadamoto's quarrel with his wife over his affair with Rikiju. Direct commentary appears either in the form of character evaluation used to affirm trans-historical values, or as an aside to explain the reason for certain narrative leaps when the documentary record is silent. Very little in the way of interpretation is required, however, to establish the connections between Yasutane and the members of his religious society. The record is very explicit. Thus the remarkable cogency of the argument in Rohan's narrative -- the identification of subtle karmic threads linking individuals -- is due, I believe, in large measure to his choice of the group around Yasutane described above for his subject. They provide, in other words, ideal material, ripe for Rohan's historical imagination.

After relating, in some detail, various anecdotes involving Jakushin and Genshin, the focus shifts to the eccentric Zōga, a highly respected Tendai monk with a zen-like penchant for hyperbole and absurd pranks. He teaches Jakushin the inner significance of the Maka Shikan, the "Treatise on Concentration and Insight" (摩訶止觀), and provides a contrast to Jakushin's "render unto Caesar" attitudes with his outrageous behavior at court. Their encounter, seen as a meeting of wisdom with compassion, is expressed this way:

From this man whose knowledge was like a sheer precipice, Jakushin, like a jewel in the shallow waters of a tranquil pure stream, sought instruction on the Treatise on Concentration and Insight.²³

The next figure to be given full biographical treatment is Ōe no Sadamoto, poet, scholar, and court official of the third rank. The events of his life encompass the dramatic highpoints of the interlocking stories. The depiction of his involvement with beautiful Rikiju and subsequent domestic difficulties is the only portion of this work in any way resembling a "novel" as it is usually understood. His tragic love affair with Rikiju ends only after the stench of her decomposing corpse causes him to abandon her and the world. He becomes a disciple of Jakushin taking the name Jakushō and later, at the request of Genshin, travels to China.²⁴

Juxtaposed to the account of Sadamoto's passionate entanglement and troubled marriage are the stories of his older cousin Ōe no Masahira (a disciple of Sugawara no Fumitoki along with Kamo no Yasutane) and Masahira's wife, the famous poetess Akazome Emon. While their lives are related only in part, a surprising range of situations and emotions are represented in the poems and events recounted. Ambition, jealousy, and courtly prowess, along with touching scenes of maternal love and domestic harmony are presented in a manner somewhat similar to the classical uta monogatari 'poem-tale'. The presentation differs in that the ancient "poem-tales" such as Ise Monogatari used prose narration to set the scene for poems, whereas in Renkanki the poems provide touchstones for the narration.

The final portion of the narrative is devoted primarily to Jakushō and his encounter with Ding Wei in China. Genshin had a number of doctrinal questions which he wanted to present to the Hunan monk Zhi Li (矢礼). His questions have been preserved as the Tendaishū Gimon Nijūshichijō (天台宗疑問二十七条 "Twenty-seven Questions Concerning the Tendai Sect").²⁵ Jakushō, as Genshin's disciple, agreed to take the questions to China despite having to leave his aging mother.

Before his departure Jakushō holds a special service for his mother (法華八講 Hokke Hachikō) which attracts a great crowd:

As the time approached for his departure from the capital there was a tremendous turning of the wheel of the dharma. A great wind swept over the sentient throngs with countless beings ecstatically embracing the way. When the Master Preceptor, Jakushō, began to deliver his memorial and chant the sūtras, ox-drawn carriages piled up into pagodas and, unable to withhold their emotions, the crowd wept openly. A great many people abandoned the world that day: it is even said there were ladies of the court who, in their carriages, cut their hair and sent it to Jakushō.²⁶

A year after Jakushō's departure, Zōga died, his final days as colorful as ever. Among the equally odd incidents described is the "thin, withered, almost ninety-year old monk placing a gaudy horseblanket over his frail body and using it for wings to dance around like a butterfly." He explained that as a small boy he had once seen some other youngsters playing the game but had forgotten about it until then. Rohan's comment on this return to innocence: "On a clear day as the sun is about to set behind the western mountains, it is the texture of the eastern hills that can be seen so clearly."²⁷

Due largely to the lack of documentary evidence, Jakushō's life in China is treated rather briefly. We learn that in delivering Genshin's questions he impressed Zhi Li with the advanced state of Japanese Buddhism. He also gained the esteem of the third Sung emperor, Zhen Zong (真宗) with his exquisite brushwork and brilliant literary skills. He received various presents, lodging in a temple in the capital, and the honorary name Entsū Daishi (円通大師 "Great Master of the Perfect Crossing").

Finally Jakushō meets Ding Wei, a man Rohan believes has been given short shrift in the Sung histories. This, he notes, is common treatment in the dynastic histories for anyone associated with either Taoist or Buddhist teachings. "Although Ding Wei and Sun He [孫何] were highly acclaimed writers in early Sung they were later eclipsed by Ou-yang Xiu [歐陽修 1007-72], Wang An-shi [王安石 1021-86] and the Three Su [三蘇 fl. 11th C.] and are not so well known today."²⁸ Ding Wei was favored by the emperor Zhen Zong but despised by an imperial consort who had him banished after the emperor's death. There is some evidence for believing that before his misfortune Ding Wei had become Jakushō's benefactor, for he could not have remained long in China without a patron. The Sung histories remark on Ding Wei's espousal of the doctrine of karmic causality and Rohan suggests this was the result of Jakushō's influence.

Jakushō never returned to Japan:

Just as all rivers when they enter the ocean become indeed the ocean, so too people of any family entering the religious order of Śākyamuni thereby become Śākyas. Thus, there was no special reason to draw a distinction between east and west and return to Japan.²⁹

For over thirty years in China he led many through the gate of the Śākya family and ended his life amidst accolades to his virtue.

Rohan concludes this work with a sketch of Ding Wei. He is characterized with a few suggestive brush strokes, the empty

spaces set off by a handful of quotations. We read one of Ding Wei's poems from the period of his "barbarous island exile:"

Good cause have I to lament
My arrival on these shores.
Dreams constantly find me
Residing in the splendid capital,
A mere ten thousand miles away
From this place of three hundred dwellings.
Evenings I listen to the distant sound
Of a monkey howling in a lonely palm,
While dawn brings a noxious haze.
Rising with the morning tide.
Of court civilities local officials know nothing:
The governor's station is frequented by deer.

And a verse composed when his three year banishment ended:

Ninety thousand leagues again and again
The phoenix sets out over the ocean
One thousand leagues once again
The crane returns to its nest.³⁰

The island of Ding Wei's exile, Hainandao, was known for its incense production. Rohan emphasizes the fact that it was due to this particular karmic connection (innen) that he authored the first essay praising the art of incense, the Tian Xiang Zhuan (天香伝 "Commentary on Heavenly Incense").

Renkanki ends with a quotation from the Dong Xuan Bi Lu (東軒筆錄 "Records of Writings from the East") by the Sung historian Wei Tai (魏泰) describing Ding Wei's death:

For two weeks before his demise Ding Wei had given up eating. He just sat in a meditation posture burning incense. Silently he read the sūtras and from time to time would allow himself a sip of tea brewed with incense [jinkō]. With undisturbed lucidity, correctly attired, he peacefully passed on [enzen toshite kashi saru to].³¹

By curious coincidence Rohan's first published novel, Rodandan ("Dewdrops") begins in the west and his last ends in China. Critics have argued that the last section of the work, especially the Ding Wei link, is superfluous. Mushanokōji dislikes the second half of the novel because "jokes are used" and "sources show their original face in places." The first half he says is "like a jewel" but the later half has "unfinished chisel marks remaining." He betrays his bias, however, by remarking that the beginning "based on Japanese sources has names we are familiar with, deals with the best historical period, and the characters appearing are pleasant, agreeable Japanese" (detekuru jinbutsu wa kimochi no ii nihonjin de aru).³²

By extending the narrative to China, Rohan has given the work greater scope, made a number of none too subtle political comments (if we recall the 1940 publication date), and emphasized the universality of the karmic process in human destiny. In fact, it may well be the narrative was uncovered in reverse order, beginning with Ding Wei and tracing the linkages backward. Yamamoto Kenkichi speculates that Rohan's reading of the Dong Xuan Bi Lu prompted an early interest in Ding Wei. Finding insufficient material in the Sung histories he pursued the connection with Jakushō back to Japan. In his search through the Nihon Ōjō Gokurakuki, Genkō Shakusho (元亨釈書), Honchō Mōnzui (本朝文粹), Ujishūi Monogatari (宇治拾遺物語), Akazome Emon Shū (赤染衛門集) and other old texts the pattern for the narrative emerged.³³

Rohan's interest in Ding Wei was undoubtedly related to their affinity with incense. Ding Wei wrote the first serious treatment of the art of incense (香道 kōdō).³⁴ Rohan in his later years was extremely interested in incense and was acknowledged to be something of an expert, with opportunity to sample old and rare specimens.³⁵ It is my impression Renkanki is infused with olfactory stimuli which have an affect on the reader comparable to motifs of visual or auditory images. Smell is, of course, the sense most intimately associated with memory: the use of olfactory suggestion to evoke mood seems particularly appropriate in an historical novel.

But beyond the relatively simple evocation of isolated moods, in Renkanki aromas (usually, but not limited to the fragrance of incense) are used to signal the participation of characters in the efficacy of the dharma. In the Śūraṅgama-samādhi-sūtra (楞嚴經) the effect of incense is specifically likened to the function of meditation (念仏 nembutsu). In the same way that things infused with incense take on a perpetual fragrance, prolonged meditation leads to constant contemplation of the Buddha. A well known Pure Land gāthā (香偈 kōge) comparing incense to the merits and efficacy of the dharma runs:

In the vessel of a purified body
 With the flame of the mind's wisdom
 I vow to perpetually burn
 The incense of practice and meditation
 In offering to the Buddhas
 Of the ten directions and three worlds.³⁶

Each of the main figures in Renkanki is associated with a particular scent. The most striking is Sadamoto's experience with the corpse of Rikijū: "the terrible aroma issuing from her mouth" (āsamashiki ka [香] no kuchi yori idekitarikeru ni zo). The clouds of purple haze and garden full of aromatic celery connect Jakushin directly with the Pure Land. Other smells range between these extremes: from Zōga's excretions at the palace ceremony in the spirit of Bodhidharma's zen, to the tranquil fragrance of the aromatic tea of Ding Wei's final moments. While the work is not what one would call a rhapsody of aromas, smell does function as a kind of leitmotif indicating the subtle efficacy of the dharma. In Buddhist literature, the effect of perfume or incense has long been used as a simile for the way various dharmas influence each other. A well known example occurs in the Daijō Kishin Ron (大乘起信論 "The Awakening of Faith") where the term kunjū (薫習) 'perfuming' or 'permeating' refers to the process whereby the interaction of cause and effect produces "the defiled states and the pure state [which] emerge and continue uninterrupted."³⁷

As we have noted, Rohan used a great number of sources in creating this panorama of life in the tenth century. While subordinate to the characters portrayed, the old books themselves are part of the life-blood of the work. They are given an informal, yet scholarly treatment -- a balance Rohan strove for in all his historical narratives. At one point when Jakushin is

about to receive instruction on the Maka Shikan, we read:

Even if Jakushin had not yet been able to obtain the T'ang monk Kan Ran's commentary, the Zhi Guan Fu Xing Zhuan Hong Jue, he had already lived half his life in letters [hansei moji no naka ni kurashite] and was so thoroughly imbued with the fragrance of sūtras and śāstras [kyōron no kōke no mi ni shimi-jimi to ajiwatte iru], there is no reason to suppose he would not be able to follow the text.³⁸

The passage serves to illustrate how closely wedded character and text are in Rohan's writing. He liked to quote a phrase from a poem by Su Shih (蘇軾 1037-1101) with the three characters for "ink," "polish," and "person" (墨磨人) which refer not to a person rubbing an inkstick to produce ink, but to "Ink cultivating and refining the person."³⁹

Texts are compared and judged, the touchstone being their use of language, their poetry -- how well they accord with the emotional tenor of the historical space Rohan is creating. A good example is the treatment of Sadamoto's experience beside the corpse of his beloved which he has refused to part from for several days. The author quotes first from the Ujishūi Monogatari version:

So great was his grief he could only lie beside her talking, day and night. He was tasting her lips when a terrible odour came forth. Abhorrence heart and tearfully he buried her.

And comments:

Living, she was a person, dead, a mere object. Originally, the attachment Sadamoto felt was for a person, it was not attachment to an object. Nevertheless, the object still appeared to be a person so he was prepared to remain at her side indefinitely. Then, at some point, without thinking

he must have moved his mouth close to the mouth of the dead Rikiju. The simple old phrase "was tasting her lips" [kuchi o suru tari keru ni] is really fine! ⁴⁰

After some discussion of the nature of Sadamoto's reaction, the author compares the Ujishūi version with Kokan Shiren's (虎関師鍊 1278-1345) account in the Genkō Shakusho ("The Genkō Era History of Japanese Buddhism"). There, the kambun reads:

It happened that he lost his spouse and, shameless with love, delayed the mourning rites. Due to his contemplation of the nine aspects [of decomposition of the body] a deep aversion and the desire to abandon the world arose. ⁴¹

Rohan criticizes this manner of expression for "over reaching" ("todoki sugite") and straying from the facts. The great length of time involved in the actual practice of contemplating the nine aspects (九相観 kusōkan) makes it most unlikely this, in fact, occurred. He then reasserts his preference for Uji Dainagon's language: it has far superior emotional resonance and adheres more closely to reasonable assumptions.

It is not surprising Rohan would find the language of the Ujishūi Monogatari more to his liking. Accounts of Sadamoto's dramatic experience are numerous; the Konjaku Monogatari (Vol. 9 Chapter 2) for instance, has a more detailed description. The century later Ujishūi, however, is a much more lyrical work, in addition to being more concerned with internal motivation and development of character. Its mixture of elegant expression

and medieval colloquialism, use of both urban and countrified language, and attention to the details of story line find a parallel in Rohan's own style.

In passing it is worth noting that the Sadamoto-Riki ju scene in this work is said to have inspired a similar scene in Tanizaki Junichirō's Shōshō Shigemoto no Haha ("Adjutant General Shigemoto's Mother").⁴² Tanizaki's description of the decomposing body is much more graphic, truly gruesome in fact. There are other similarities: Tanizaki's work also uses poems to delineate character, quotes from the classics, and has an incense theme. (A marvelous incense compound in a lacquer box is proof that a would-be lover is no mere mortal.) Citing Kankyo no Tomo (閑居の友 "The Recluse's Companion" 1222)⁴³ a source Rohan refers to a number of times, Tanizaki dwells at some length on the Buddhist meditation practice, fujōkan (不浄観 "contemplation on defilement"). He relates a story about a monk who was so proficient at this meditation he could project his vision, transferring it to a third party. The monk demonstrates to his superior by having a bowl of rice gruel turn into a swarm of maggots before his eyes. His prodigious powers resemble those of the artist: Tanizaki himself has performed similar feats for the reader in works such as Shisei ("The Tattooer").⁴⁴

Renkanki has a lengthy anecdote dealing with this idea of transference of meditative visions. It is used to illustrate the relationship between Genshin and Jakushin. Rohan writes

that he thinks the story is from a fairly old text, possibly Kankyo no Tomo. If his recollection turns out to be mistaken the reader is asked to delete the reference ("kioku no machigai dattara massatsu shite morawaneba naranu ga"). This rather irreverent disclaimer is typical of the stance the author takes toward the historical status of the source material. The anecdote is in fact not included in Kankyo no Tomo but may be found in the Kamakura collection of edifying Buddhist tales, the Senjūshō (撰集抄) traditionally attributed to Saigyō.⁴⁵ Here, as throughout the work, the whole tenor and tone of the handling of historical materials suggests that the primary value of any set of signs from the past can be found in its poetic, emotional qualities, its particular constellation of human attitudes. Putative historical objectivity is always secondary.

The anecdote begins with Jakushin's visit to the Eshin-in at Yokawa. . . . The temple appears quiet and deserted as he wanders through looking around. He eventually arrives at the door to a room which he thinks must contain the sought-for Genshin. Upon opening the door, before his eyes was:

a vast expanse with nothing at all visible. Yet it was not actually empty. It was a limitless immensity like a great river, a great lake, or ocean rippling furrow after furrow, inundating, expansive, undulating and seething, the endless mist of waves fusing with the horizon, the sparkling surface of the water flush with heaven, nothing at all but water.⁴⁶

Jakushin retreated a step, picked up a wooden pillow, tossed it in and closed the door. He then left the temple and returned home. After coming out of his meditation, Genshin complained

of feeling some bodily pain. When Jakushin's prank was revealed on his next visit, Genshin again performed the water visualization meditation⁴⁷ and Jakushin retrieved the object he had thrown in. Consequently, Genshin returned to normal.

I should note that my translation of the above passage cannot begin to do justice to Rohan's description of the scene which met Jakushin's eyes when he peered into the room. In the one long sentence quoted, all the nouns and modifiers save two, "mist" and "heaven", are written with water radical characters. What meets the reader's eyes scanning down the line are signs for water in its various forms. This use of Chinese characters is in keeping with Rohan's stress on the two-dimensionality of the writing system. At the same time the eye registers the string of water graphs, the ear is filled with a whirl of dizzying sound: "manman yōyō toshite, daiga no gotoku taiko no gotoku daikai no gotoku, iitari renrentari, ō-ōtari tō-tōtari, kyōtari futtari...." Bold, vigorous use of sign and sound working in tandem is one of the distinguishing features of Rohan's prose. It is apparent here even in an historical work where he usually eschews the more colorful figurative language and rhetorical devices of his earlier fiction.

I would like to consider for a moment the question of selection: why has this particular anecdote been included in the narrative? While the number of accounts and other items of

documentary evidence dealing with the Genshin-Jakushin relationship is not great, some selection is possible. Why then this one, which seems calculated to leave all but the "true believer" incredulous? Anticipating the objection the author himself provides an answer. He begins by stating he would never venture to attempt an explanation for such an incident. "People of the present age must take this story as just some ridiculous little tale." ("tada kore mechakucha no dan to kikoeru"). He then proceeds to cite a number of other references to almost identical incidents in Indian, Chinese, and Japanese sources.⁴⁸ These references to similar accounts are not directed toward persuading the reader that an encounter such as the one described between Genshin and Jakushin was possible or plausible. Rohan in fact remarks, "Whether or not something like this story actually occurred between Eshin [Genshin] and Jakushin really makes no difference. What does is the fact that this tale was preserved."⁴⁹

Here again we can see that for Rohan historical "truth" is not to be found in any set of verifiable facts. It is rather the conceptual and emotional matrix within which the imagination of writers of the past functioned that provides the key. The other examples of the water visualization meditation came from "a sutra," "a biography," and "a tale;" from the recondite and religious to the common province of the popular imagination. The form of the anecdote and its perseverance through time tell us more than any possible argument concerning the "historical actuality" of the particular event. On the immediate level of

the narrative, the Eshin-in encounter allows the reader to conceive of Jakushin and Genshin as intimates ("bodai no tomo"), frequently debating on the sūtras, practice, and correct understanding of doctrine. We see them "as men both of whose natures have been similarly drawn toward the karma of the brush and inkstone."⁵⁰

It is a commonplace view by now that the writing of history involves the use of regulative fictions.⁵¹ When we impose a plot or narrative structure on a chronology or series of past events this always entails some kind of prefigurative strategy. Fragments of the past are fashioned into a whole through the medium of language. The manner in which the pieces are joined together, the construction of a continuous narrative flow, and the imposition of meaning on historical data are all part of what is essentially a poetic process. Thus the choices an historian makes (consciously or otherwise) as to narrative techniques for representing the past are, to a great degree, aesthetic ones. This is why history, until the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, was always thought of as a "literary art." East Asia has an even longer tradition of history as a literary art par excellence.

We have been told by Karl Popper that there is no history; we have only a wide array of histories. His insight was anticipated by novelists who wrote histories such as The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling or The Ordeal of Richard Ferval, A History of Father and Son. Novelists and poets have always known what historians have only recently admitted; the reason, perhaps, for Heinrich Heine's remark that the people of a nation like to get their

history not from historians but from their poets.

By the skillful manipulation of poems that have been preserved since the tenth century Rohan taps the vital pulse of the age as he develops psychological profiles of individual poets. As Shinoda Hajime has pointed out, Rohan sought to emphasize the "physiology of Japanese poetic language" ("nihon shiteki gengo no seiri").⁵² This is the aspect of language that, like an organism, builds up over time. At the heart of this physiology are the forms of classical poetry: waka, renga, and haikai.

The treatment accorded Akazome Emon is an excellent example of how poems -- unique, pregnant moments of the past -- may be induced to yield characterization and narrative flow. The problem of her paternity is dealt with first. "Before she was even able to discern the true color of things she found herself in the midst of a heartless conflict."⁵³ Although she was raised as the daughter of Akazome Ōsumi no Kami Tokimochi (赤染大隈守時用 ? - ?), the famous poet Taira no Kanemori (平兼盛 ? - 990) claimed her as his own offspring. The court (kebiishi-chō) decided in favor of its member, Tokimochi, and the mother's wishes. Considering Akazome Emon's ample poetic talent (she is the reputed author of Eiga Monogatari (栄華物語 "A Tale of Flowering Fortunes"))⁵⁴ it seems more likely than not Kanemori's claim was true.

To "explain" why the mother left him and took their daughter, Rohan examines a number of poems and headnotes from Kanemori's

collected poems, the Kanemori Shū, and various anthologies such as the Gosenshū, Shinchokusenshū, and Zokusenzaishū.

Among the headnotes we find:

To one I so long ago declared myself to.
(ii somete ito hisashii nari keru hito ni)

Because once again not even a reply.
(henji mo sara ni seneba)

There being no response from the lady.
(onna kaeshi mo sezarikereba)

On hearing what became of a person I was so fond of
not so long ago.
(omoi kakete hisashiku narinuru hito no kotosama ni
narinu to kikite)

With agonizing bitterness.
(ito itau uramite)

And of the poems cited, one from the Gosenshū:

The heart of an old lover
Harboring a sea of rancor,
Like so many reeds
On the water's edge at Naniwa.

Naniwa gata
Migiwa no ashi no
Oi no yo ni
Uramite zo furu
Hito no kokoro o.

Another from the Zokusenzaishū:

While you see only hardships
In this fickle world of ours,
On a lonely mountain ridge
A soft cloud awaits the breeze.

Tsuraku nomi
Miyuru kimi kana
Yama no ha ni
Kaze matsu kumo no⁵⁵
Sadamenaki yo ni.

of the poetic moment. The simultaneous use of modern colloquial language, kanbun (classical Chinese), and a good measure of the idiom of classical Japanese works toward bridging the flow of time.

The portrait of Akazome Emon is sketched in three panels, the first of which highlights the poetess as mother. Three poems are quoted which she is said to have composed on a visit to the Sumiyoshi Shrine (住吉大社 -- where Waka no Kami ' The God of Poetry' is worshipped) to pray for the recovery of her son, Takachika (掬周) who was on the verge of death. All are poignant; one, singled out by Fujiwara no Toshinari (Shunzei) (藤原俊成 1114-1204) for its mono no aware 'sensitivity to sorrowful beauty' in his Korai Fūteishō (古来風体抄), reads:

To exchange my life for his
Without misgivings do I pray,
Yet, oh how sad
Thoughts of final parting.

Kawaramu to
Inoruiinochi wa
Oshikarade
Wakaru to omowamu.⁵⁷
Hodo zo kanashiki.

It is a poem which expresses in a very direct, unadorned manner the love of a mother for her child. The details surrounding the composition of the poem may be found in a number of medieval collections of edifying tales including the Konjaku Monogatari, Jikkinshō, Kokonchomonjū, and Shasekishū. Appended to the poem in the Akazome Emon Shū is a note revealing the fact that Takachika

Kanemori's own sentiments reveal the defeatist, pathetic nature of his relationship with women. Rohan comments that his diction gives us a strong sense of his being quite a bit older than the object of his affections. Rather than analyze specifics the author lets the poems speak, then adds his observations. An authority on the waka of the period might well have objections, but the general reader encounters no reason to resist the interpretation Rohan offers. The emotional tenor of the poetry serves as the basis for his conjecture Akazome Emon was born out of a relationship her mother had with Kanemori. Moreover, it appears to have been a spring-autumn affair, with the disparity in age leading the mother to dissolve the bond and espouse Tokimochi.

The way Rohan weaves his story around a collocation of poems, besides being strikingly appropriate for the Heian period when uta-monogatari 'poem tales' were the primary narrative mode, permits "fact" and "fiction" to mingle and merge in a narrative stream untroubled by considerations of objectivity. The poems are like stepping stones through the garden of the past; the scenery -- the intervening space -- is rendered by the voice of the narrator. As Earl Miner has noted, "Japanese poetic units are quite simply more adhesive to fictional -- or even nonfictional-- strands of prose than our own discrete, autonomously conceived poems. ... a court poem is five lines in search of a context."⁵⁶ An historical narration punctuated by waka has the effect of bringing together elusive past event and the emotional immediacy

did indeed recover from his illness. The implication being that art -- the skillful employment of poetry in this case -- does have an effect on the ambient reality and should be both composed and criticized with this connection to daily life in mind.⁵⁸

The second series of poems reveals Akazome Emon as sophisticated lady of the world using her talent to maneuver her family members into favored positions at court. A number of poems, for instance, were composed to assist her son's advancement. In one exchange with Michinaga replete with innuendo and punning (revolving around the image of a spring 'izumi' in the snow -- which suggests aging and coldheartedness as well as the district by that name), "he received the poem, felt a deep sense of pity [aware], and consequently appointed Takachika Governor of Izumi just as she had wished."⁵⁹

Not only is the poetess the perfect mother, she is close to being the perfect wife as well. Her poetic genius and political acumen facilitate her husband's activities at court. She offers timely advice and helps with the writing of important documents. Then, in emphatic contrast to the way Sadamoto's wife handled her husband's affair with Rikiju, we are given a glimpse of how Akazome Emon deals with her husband, Masahira's dalliance with another woman. The poetic record suggests Masahira had established a liaison with a priestess at an Inari shrine near the capital.⁶⁰ During one of his rendezvous, Akazome sends her husband this poem:

No sign of you at all
 Near the pine of my abode,
 Were it up amongst
 The village cedars
 No doubt you would come to call.

Waga yado no
 Matsu ni shirushi mo
 Nakarikeri
 Sugimura naraba
 Tazunekinamashi.

Masahira, an accomplished poet in a culture with a proverb which declares, "Someone who receives a poem and sends no reply will be born in darkness for seven lifetimes," replies:

The way obscured
 While someone waited
 Along a mountain path,
 My thoughts in great confusion
 I must have trodden too far.

Hito o matsu
 Yamaji wakarezu
 Mieshikaba
 Omoimadou ni
 Fumisugi ni keru.

The first poem contains the hint of a confident woman's wrath as Akazome reminds a wayward husband of his place. The "sugimura" 'village of cedars' is a reference to the giant conifers around the shrine rendezvous and his companion there. The "mashi" ending of "tazunekinamashi" translated, "No doubt you would come to call," conveys a sense of hypothesis close to the English conditional mood. It suggests what is inferred is something natural or fitting -- implying here, that her husband's taste for the rustic and uncultivated might well be expected. We feel her disdain for the woman at the shrine: her husband's lover, associated with the unrestrained cedar, is an unworthy rival to her own graceful pine.

Masahira's response is sheepish and contrite. He plays on the word "fumisugi" which means "to tread too far," and also recalls the sugi 'cedar' trees around the shrine. Rohan comments that the poem is painful both emotionally and aesthetically: "For one of the thirty-six sages of verse of the medieval period [chūko sanjūrokkasen], the sound is very unsure, like someone breaking wind."⁶¹ He suggests the poem is so bad it forces one to think it may be a fabrication of a later storyteller. It is, however, included in the Akazome Emon Shū. The passage concludes with the observation that a firmly chastised Masahira henceforth became a dutiful husband and good father.

Akazome Emon is given such detailed treatment in Renkanki because her life represents probably the best of what can be said for the secular or mundane world. A polarity between the sacred and the secular (sei/zoku) is established from the very outset of the narrative in the person of Yasutane who "renders unto Caesar" in response to the demands of his official duties, but retreats to his Amida Hall for meditation and religious practice whenever possible. Sadamoto undergoes a dramatic shift from the mundane, one might even say profane, world into the realm of the sacred. Akazome, however, remains firmly in her bright world of "flowering fortunes." About her successful machinations at court Rohan says, "to put it in the best light you would say she is extremely adroit, negatively, you would have to say she was sophisticated in the ways of the world."⁶² One of the remarkable things about this work, and a factor in the breadth of scope it achieves, is the way fundamentally inharmonious human values are encompassed within a wider view.

I would like to conclude my remarks on Renkanki with a look at the section of the work dealing with the death of Jakushin. There are five death scenes in the narrative. With the exception of the untimely passing of Sadamoto's lover, Rikijū, all involve the deaths of eminent monks (and one devout layman) and each of these follows the pattern established by Kamo no Yasutane (Jakushin) in his "Record of Rebirths in the Pure Land Paradise." Death and rebirth in Pure Land Buddhism (written ōjō 往生, literally "go be born") is a formulation of the universal mythos of renewal, one of the primordial affirmations of mankind. Philip Wheelwright in his study of metaphor, The Burning Fountain, expresses it this way:

The end of the turning wheel is the still axis which is the archê of its turning. The end of the cosmic dance is the quietude of love beyond desire. The end of dying is the ever renewed threshold experience of potential rebirth.⁶³

After discussing a discrepancy in the dates recorded for Jakushin's death, Rohan writes:

Whether during the Chōtoku or Chōhō era -- it makes no real difference -- Jakushin died peacefully. Not being an entrepreneur of the secular world, naturally he left no imposing monuments. Even his literary productivity was rather limited. Counting the Imperial Edict proclaiming the change of era name at the beginning of the Eikan period and the Nōte of Advice respectfully submitted to the Throne in the second year of that era while he was still a court official, he left only twenty written compositions, including his "Record of Rebirths in the Pure Land Paradise."

Nevertheless, there is not the shadow of a doubt about the light cast by this man into the hearts and minds of the people of the day. This is abundantly clear, for instance, in the matter of Sadamoto's conversion. Then too, there is an interesting legend

that has been handed down concerning Jakushin's passing. The final moments of an ordinary Buddhist monk or layman of deep faith are said to be filled with the joy of a great rebirth as the holy assembly comes in greeting amidst lavender mist and heavenly music. This is the usual way. They then move off to Amida's Western Paradise or the Tushita Heaven or some such far away place. This is the set pattern. The records dealing with Jakushin, however, do not end there. After he passed away according to form at Nyoirinji in the eastern mountains of the capital, someone had a dream. In this dream, the Venerable Jakushin, in order to benefit living beings, had returned from the Pure Land and was once again present in this defiled world. This is unmistakably recorded in the Jakushin Shōnin Den.

For someone to have taken the trouble to record this anonymous dream -- even the time and place are unspecified -- relating a message from the after-life is extremely unusual. However, in that dream the Venerable Jakushin appeared and the dreamer heard him give an account of his return. Whether this means the person is supposed to have encountered the reincarnation of the saint or seen something like the specter of a mountain sage is hard to determine. The account is very obscure.

Just what do you suppose this all means? Why would anyone have such a dream? It is said that long ago the Taoist wizzard Lü Tong-bin, although having perfected the way of the sages, did not just ascend to Heaven and there remain, but continually manifested himself in this world, cavorting in the coarse realm of men and women of high birth and low, instructing and illuminating them. For centuries from T'ang through Sung, in many places, in every district, he left poems and songs as well as tangible traces of his activities. Among the populace of Sung China belief in him was widespread. Su Shih himself has a place for Lü Tong-bin in his writings. Even today it is thought that if summoned with the proper methods he will appear.

In our own country there is the folk belief that the Great Buddhist Master Kōbō of the ninth century is still present amongst us. From time to time he appears, not to only the dedicated ascetic undergoing austerities, but even to an average person making an ordinary pilgrimage to his mausoleum. He is said to bestow a teaching which causes suffering to be removed, pleasure to be attained, delusion to fall away, and the mind to be awakened to its essential nature.

Now all this really goes without saying if we just consider the stories of the eight-thousand comings and

goings of Śākyamuni himself elucidated in the Brahmajāla-sūtra or some such text. Properly speaking, relying on Amida or Maitreya or Śākyamuni, chanting "munya munya" or whatever, and then passing on by oneself to a paradisaical world while turning a cold shoulder to everything else, is an extreme case of feathering one's own nest. This is the inclination referred to in the proverb, "Like eating confections in the privy" -- foul and stingy.

Were one to enter the realm of "the marvelous fruit of wisdom attained," thereafter the most natural thing would be to want to render this good thing available to others, regardless of their relation to you. Hence the way those who have become Bodhisattvas and Buddhas strive to transform the karma of others is the natural course of the dharma. It is the very meaning of Bodhisattva; the meaning of Buddha. Amida's forty-eight vows, Kuan-yin's thirty-three forms, no matter what suffering entailed or bodily appearance assumed, the desire to benefit the entire world, to save and enlighten the beings in it -- this is the Buddha, the Bodhisattva. Sitting serenely on a lotus imbibing to surfeit a thousand delicacies has nothing whatsoever to do with the being of a Buddha, a Bodhisattva.

Jakushin, from his youth, was a person whose merciful, compassionate heart extended even to beasts of burden. Upon leaving the world and entering the order, his enlightenment deepened day by day, finally coming to the understanding that the Pure Land was much, much closer than the house visible next door. At last he arrived at the point where he had one foot in this, the other in that world. Here, just when the Pure Land he had yearned for so much in the past came into his grasp, he felt no inclination to make it his own forever. Beyond a doubt he felt well up in his heart a desire born of itself to return to this impure world and take on the karma of others. This intention must have overflowed the periphery of language and found its way into someone's dream and the rumors of the world.

From the time when he was still called Yasutane and empathized with the poor beasts of the road, Jakushin's self-awareness steadily expanded. How could he possibly have turned a blind eye to people agonizing in a world replete with suffering? Indeed, even during the secular period of his life his insight can already be discerned, its light illuminating his prose. He saw the society around him gradually become a world of anguish: on one hand was the lavish flowering of the blossoms of culture in the sultry winds of luxurious extravagance,

on the other, the people of the country found their lives at an impasse, having to face the likes of the violent storm of the Eiso era, the epidemic of Shōryaku, and the rise of brigands in many of the provinces. How pitiable the world must have seemed to gentle-minded Jakushin. He grieved for the world and the world felt a profound yearning for a person such as he. This too must be the reason behind the transmission of the story of Jakushin's return to the world. Needless to say, Jakushin was not a pratyekabuddha.⁶⁴

With this passage Rohan concludes his presentation of the narrative's central figure, Jakushin, yet leaves the reader with a sense of the ongoing reverberations of his religious energy. This effect is important for establishing the linking element in the novel, the "hōen" or "karmic nexus of the dharma." It also emphasizes a far from trivial truth about the nature of historical materials: certain configurations remain in the memory or conscience of a people because they satisfy the needs of a given archetypal emotional complex. This is where Jakushin joins the company of Kōbō Daishi, Lü Tong-bin, and various other Bodhisattvas and Immortals.⁶⁵ What all have in common is conformation to the core mythos of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The heart of this pattern of basic values is reflected in Rohan's interpretation of Jakushin's resolve "to return to this impure world and take on the karma of others."

When dealing with history, even in his essays classified as "studies" (考証 kōshō), it is clear in Rohan's case the writer as artist supercedes the writer as scholar. Over and above the satisfaction of a perfectly argued proof, Rohan chose the pleasures of style, of writing itself. Commenting on

this characteristic, Terada Tōru notes:

In what are called his textual studies ... vague theories or interpretations which enjoy general acceptance are used as strawmen, and although there is an effort to ascertain the truth [shinjitsu], when Rohan actually picks up the brush and begins to form characters, the joy of composing vital [kakki... no aru] prose takes precedence over arrival at the putative objective. 66

In an essay on the Taoist Immortal Lü Tong-bin, Rohan once again describes how the destination of the sage becomes his next origination:

It is said that Tong-bin had no desire to ascend to Heaven himself; rather, he exerted every effort to raise other sentient beings to Heaven. What extraordinary resolution! Truly was he a superior man! His great vow, his universal love, kept him in the world of men for a long time. From T'ang through the Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Ching periods he surfaced and disappeared, entered and exited [shūtsubotsu inken] countless times, transforming and leading people to salvation. 67

The "shūtsubotsu inken" does not of course refer to some phenomenal being ducking in and out of reality down through the ages. It signifies Lü Tong-bin's multiple appearances in the spoken and written language, the poems, songs and dreams of people over the centuries. This represents an "immortality" to be sure; the essential point, however, is what this tells us about the hearts of people who have kept the sage alive so long. Renkanki is one of Rohan's most successful efforts at keeping alive the deep music of this tradition.

Notes

¹ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Essays, New ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. 4.

² Kōda Rohan, Renkanki, in Kōda Rohan Shū, in Gendai Nihon Bungaku Zenshū, Vol. 7 (Chikuma Shobō, 1973). The work was originally published in Nihon Hyōron (June and July, 1940) and is included in Rohan Zenshū (Iwanami Shoten, 1949-58), Vol. 6. Subsequent references are to the Chikuma Shobō edition, hereafter cited as RKK.

³ Yamamoto Kenkichi, Sōseki Takuboku Rohan, (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū-sha, 1972), p. 168.

⁴ For the former see Rohan's last completed study, "Ongenenron" (音幻論 "The Metamorphosis of Sound"), Zenshū, Vol. 41. On city planning see his treatise, "Hitokuni no Shuto" (一國の首都 "The Capital of a Nation"), Zenshū, Vol. 27.

⁵ Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 122.

⁶ Yamamoto, Sōseki, pp. 159-218. In his chapter, "En no Shisō," Yamamoto notes Fukuzawa Yukichi's (1835-1901) insistence on en: "A so-called erudite character is someone who only knows about something, he does not know the connection [en] between one thing and another. His knowledge is limited to knowing the facts in one field; of the principle of mutual dependence he knows nothing. The essential point for scholarship [gakumon] is simply to learn the mutual interrelatedness of things [tagai ni kakawariau en o shiru ni aru nomi]. ... Someone who knew geography but not its interrelatedness, or history but not history's ramifications, would be, in effect, nothing other than a geographical or historical dictionary. If pressed for a difference, I would say a paper dictionary consumes no rice, whereas a human dictionary does."

It is worth noting here Yamamoto's discussion of Yamaji Aizan's (山路愛山 1864-1917) division of Japanese historians into two general types. The split between popular histories, with their emphasis on emotional response, and the aristocratic or specialist work concerned primarily with research methodology he saw as a dichotomy stemming from the time of Rai Sanyō (頼山陽 1780-1832) who wrote the former type, and Ban Nobutomo (伴信友 1773-1846), a kokugakusha 'scholar of national learning' who wrote the latter type of history. According to Yamaji, himself an upholder of the old view of "history as art," it was Arai Hakuseki (新井白石 1657-1725) who achieved the most satisfactory balance between artistry and textual accuracy.

Given this schema, Rohan's historical writing clearly falls into the tradition of popular artistic history initiated by Rai Sanyō.

⁷ Historical writing has always found a receptive audience in Japan. Meiji writers were especially fond of the historical mode; most wrote some form of historical biography, speculated in essays on the currents of Japanese history, or produced historical fiction. After the advent of naturalism, among the dominant elements of the bundan there was a drawing away from history due to a belief that the creation of realistic, life-like effects with historical figures was an insuperable problem. Yamamoto notes, however, that Mori Ōgai's Okitsu Yagoemon no Isho ("The Last Testament of Okitsu Yagoemon"), published in 1912, precipitated a great deal of historical fiction which the dominant naturalist group dismissed as "merely advanced history lectures," ignoring the fact that "readers responded with real [namanamashi] pain to the ritual suicides in [a work such as Ōgai's Abe Ichizoku] ("The Abe Family"). (p. 179). English translations of these stories may be found in The Incident at Sakai and Other Stories, ed. by David Dilworth and J. Thomas Rimer, (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977).

A legacy of naturalism in Japanese letters has been the degrading of historical fiction to the realm of "popular writing" -- an unfortunate turn, considering the strength Japanese literary arts have traditionally drawn from history.

⁸ Kōda Aya, Chigiregumo ("Scattered Clouds"), (Shinchōsha, 1956), pp. 140-141.

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). He writes, for instance, that tradition "is always part of us, a model, or exemplar, a recognition of ourselves" (p. 250) and "Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused" (p. 258).

The works on self-cultivation referred to include: Doryokuron (努力論 "On Endeavor", 1910), Zenshū, Vol. 27; and Shūseiron (修省論 "On Practice and Reflection", 1914), Zenshū, Vol. 28. Royalties from these works were a primary source of income for Rohan in mid-life. Doryokuron went into twenty-two or three printings.

¹⁰ Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 354.

¹¹ Koda Rohan, "Hannya Shingyō Dainigi Chū" (般若心經 第二義注 1890), Zenshū, Vol. 40, pp.

¹² Zenshū, Vol. 6.

¹³ Yukitadaki and Renkanki are included in Zenshū, Vol. 6. Gachō may be found in Vol. 4.

¹⁴ Shiotani San, Kōda Rohan, (Chūōkōronsha, 1977), Vol. 4, pp. 174-75. The Kamo family controlled the official Bureau of Yin-Yang. That is, they were onyōshi (陰陽師). The family produced a long line of outstanding men of letters. Yasutane was a student of the illustrious Sugawara no Fumitoki (菅原文時 899-981). In Renkanki Fumitoki is revealed as a person willing to speak truth to power. He is asked directly by the Emperor whether he thought his own poem composed on the subject of "bush warblers greeting the dawn with their song," or one by the Emperor on the same theme is better. Fumitoki hedges his answer twice but when pressed responds that his own poem is superior and flees the palace leaving the Emperor in amused agreement. A simple

incident, the point, perhaps, being that poetry escapes the vulgar demands of the powerful. If, however, we recall this work was published in 1940 amidst strict censorship, when even the slightest affront to the Imperial House or the questioning of government conduct was severely dealt with, the inclusion of this and similar anecdotes takes on greater significance. Some passages contain considerably more flagrant criticism: Zōga's eccentricities at the palace, Yasutane's plaintives concerning the arrogance of the rich and the plight of the poor, and the attitudes attributed to Jakushō when he resolves not to return to Japan from China are a few of the more striking examples. See the chapter "Rohan no Sensōkan" ("Rohan's View of War") in Shimamura Ryōichi, Bannen no Rohan, (Keizai Oraisha, 1979), pp. 97-105.

¹⁵ Kamo no Yasutane, "Chiteiki," Chap. 12 of Honchō Monzui in Kokushi Taikēi, Vol. 29, Part 2, ed. by Maruyama Jirō (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1965), pp. 298-300. The Honchō Monzui includes the first examples of social criticism in a Japanese official anthology. The criticism is directed toward providing justification for non-participation in society. Compiled by Fujiwara no Akihira (989-1066), it was modeled on the Chinese T'ang Wen Ts'ui (1011). For a brief discussion of the import of the work see Katō Shūichi, A History of Japanese Literature: The first Thousand Years, (London: The MacMillian Press, 1979), pp. 154-156. Yasutane's diary is a prototype for the "literature of the hermitage" (inton bungaku) genre which blossomed in later centuries. Kamo no Chōmei's (1153-1216) Hōjōki ("An Account of My Hut" 1212), considered one of the finest examples of the genre, borrows both form and metaphors from the Chiteiki. The image of the hermitage as cocoon for instance. Yasutane compares his Rokujō villa to the silky womb with the words: "Building a cottage for my twilight years! Ha, Just like an old silkworm making himself a cocoon" (RKK, p. 384).

¹⁶ Yoshishige no Yasutane, "Nihon Ōjō Gokurakuki" in Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho, Vol. 107 (Bussho Kankō-kai, 1912), pp. 185-191.

Shi Jia-cai, "Jing Tu Lun" in Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō, Vol. 47, ed. by Takakusu Junjirō and Ono Genmyō (Daizō Shuppan Kankō-kai, 1924-32), pp. 83-104. The sixth chapter records the biographies of twenty monks and laymen who achieved rebirth in the Pure Land.

¹⁷ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 384. The approach to history through biographical studies of related individuals used in Renkanki finds a counterpart in "prosopography," a methodology developed by Syme and Namier into a major school of English historiography. Prosopography is "a method of group biographies, not rounded biographies, but sketches of major figures or of ranges of modal, representative figures who do not receive full biographical treatment." The prosopographer understands his subject as an elaborate network of particular people who, "like cells in a honeycomb, are often in contact only on a single edge." (p. 123) David Hackett Fisher, "The Braided Narrative," in The Literature of Fact, ed. by Angus Fletcher (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 109-133. See also Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," in Daedalus, 100 (Winter 1971), pp. 46-79.

¹⁸ Wing-tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 79.

¹⁹ Kōda Rohan, Zenshū, Vol. 8. The novel was originally published in the newspaper Kokkai from 1893-95.

²⁰ Yanagida Izumi, Zadankai: Meiji Bungakushi (Iwanami Shoten, 1976), p. 106. Yanagida relates a conversation he had with Rohan in 1942 just after he finished writing his biography. Yanagida had coined the term "renkantai" (連環体 "linked ring style") to describe the structure of Fūryū Mijinzō. When asked how he had come upon the idea, he said that it had occurred to him while reading about cavalry tactics in the Sung Dynasty histories. Rohan laughed and replied that there is a T'ang poetic form

called "renkantai" in which a series of poems are linked in a sequence which always returns to the opening lines. Rohan was a great admirer of the renku (聯句 "linked verse") of the T'ang poet Han Yü (韓愈 768-824). For a long list of Chinese literary works utilizing what is also called the "linked jewel" form see Yokoyama Hiroshi, "Rekidai Renshushū," Tenri Daigaku Hō 24, No. 5 (1973).

In the preface to a series of his essays, "Kagyū-an Renwa ("Linked Tales from the Snail's Hermitage") (Chūōkōronsha, 1943), Rohan wrote:

Linked verse is fascinating. Each verse is reciprocally linked with other lines, yet each stanza stands complete in and of itself. The meaning changes and the language varies while the continuity of affective space is maintained. This gives rise to that, and from "a" one arrives at "b". Sometimes the poem moves straight along, at other points it branches off to the side; turning and evolving from one transition to another it goes on and on never exhausting its possibilities.

Seri Hiroaki notes that in the structural integration of renku, which Rohan adapts to his essay form, the kakari 'connection', if seen in Buddhist terms, may be likened to the karmic thread (innen no ito) which links one event to another and the whole chain of existence into a single ring. The relation between discrete images in a poem can be understood with reference to the concept of dependence and interdependence (sōe sōkan 相依 相関) as developed for example in the Avatamsaka-Sūtra. Seri Hiroaki, Bunmei Hihyōka toshite no Rohan, (Miraisha, 1971) pp. 99-100.

²¹ Yanagida Izumi, Kōda Rohan (Chūōkōronsha, 1942), pp. 181-208.

²² Allan A. Andrews, The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Genshin's Ōjōyōshū (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1973), p. 38. Andrews notes that Genshin's classic religious text was probably written between 984 and 985 as "manual of nembutsu devotion" for the members of the society.

²³ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 386.

²⁴ Jakushō appears to have been a devoted disciple of both Jakushin and Genshin. Rohan does not mention the fact he is known to have received instruction on the esoteric teachings (mikkyō) from Ninkai (仁海) at Daigo-ji after studying with Genshin.

²⁵ Genshin, "Tendaishū Gimon Nijūshichi-jō," in Eshin Sōzu Shū (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1967), Vol. 2, pp. 213-246.

²⁶ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 404. Hokke Hachikō refers to a Buddhist service where homilies are delivered on each of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sūtra. The practice originated in China but became very popular in Japan during the Heian period. See Nakamura Hajime, Bukkyōgo Daijiten (Tokyo Shōseki, 1975), p. 1252.

²⁷ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 405.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 406

²⁹ Ibid., p. 406.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 407

³¹ Ibid., p. 407

³² Shiotani, Vol. 4, p. 185.

³³ Yamamoto, Sōseki, p. 231.

³⁴ During the Heian and Kamakura periods the art of incense burning was known as kōawase (香合) or takimono awase (薰物合). The ceremony, similar in many respects to the tea ceremony, was formalized during the Muromachi period (1392-1568) and is known as "bunkō" (聞香) 'listening to incense.'

³⁵ Shimomura, pp. 64-71.

³⁶ Nakamura, p. 392.

³⁷ Yoshito S. Hakeda, The Awakening of Faith, translation of the work attributed to Aśvaghoṣa (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 56.

³⁸ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 386

³⁹ Shimomura, p. 68.

⁴⁰ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 398. For the Ujishūi version see Ujishūi Monogatari in Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū Vol. 28, ed. by Kobayashi Chishō (Shōgakkan, 1973), p. 185.

⁴¹ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 399.

⁴² Tanizaki Junichirō, Shōshō Shigemoto no Haha in Nihon no Bungaku Vol. 23 (Chūōkōronsha, 1972).

⁴³ Kankyo no Tomo is a collection of Buddhist tales attributed to either Jien (1155-1225) or Matsuo no Keisei Shōnin (1188-1268). For a discussion of the work see Kubota Jun, Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1972) pp. 119-143.

⁴⁴ Tanizaki, Shōshō, p. 450.

⁴⁵ Mochizuki Shinkō, Bukkyō Daijiten 2nd ed. (Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1954), p. 758.

⁴⁶ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 385.

⁴⁷ This particular water meditation, known as suikan (水觀) -- also called "mizu zammai" 'water samādhi' or "suirinkan" 水輪觀 'water cycle meditation'), involves visualizing the internal secretions of the body as one with the essence of water, and then negating any distinction between such secretions and what is called the "perfumed ocean." The perfumed ocean (香水海) refers to the seven inner seas surrounding Mt. Sumeru, the center of the world in Buddhist cosmology. These seas, said to be filled with eight meritorious, efficacious waters, figure prominently in the Avatamsaka-Sūtra. See Mochizuki, p. 2865.

⁴⁸ The first mentioned is Gakkō Dōji ("Acolyte of the Moon-beams", Skt., Candra-prabha) whose prototype water meditation story appears in the Śūraṅgama-samādhi-Sūtra, Vol. 5. This is apparently the sūtra referred to in the text ("kyō ni atte wa").

The second reference is to the T'ang monk Fa Jin (法進 ? - 770). A reader unfamiliar with the history of the Ritsu ("Rules," Skt., vinaya) Sect in Japan might be led to believe the anecdote wholly Chinese. However, Fa Jin was one of the fourteen monks who accompanied Ganjin (鑑真 688-763) to Japan in 754. Fa Jin, later abbot of the Tōdai-ji Tōzen-in, achieved high ecclesiastic rank and left a considerable number of works on monastic discipline in the tradition of the Nanzan (南山) School, as well as commentaries on the texts of

the Hossō (法相) Sect. He is considered the second patriarch of the Ritsu Sect in Japan. I have not been able to find Rohan's source for this one: the text has simply, "den ni atte," presumably one of the compendiums of biographies of eminent monks.

The third reference is to the Japanese monk Shōgyō Shōnin (勝行上人). Renkanki has his second character as 業, a possible homophone -- although the Buddhist reading is usually "gō." An account of Shōgyō Shōnin's water meditation may be found in the Kurodani Shōnin Gotōroku Daishichi Gyakushu Seppō (黒谷上人語燈録第七逆修説法). See Mochizuki, p.2866. This example Rohan refers to as simply, "a tale" ("hanashi").

⁴⁹ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 385.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 385.

⁵¹ Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973)

⁵² Shinoda Hajime, Sakuhin ni tsuite (Chikuma Shobō, 1971), p. 29.

⁵³ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 390.

⁵⁴ The work has been translated and thoroughly annotated by William H. and Helen Craig McCullough, A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period, 2 Vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980)

⁵⁵ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 391.

⁵⁶ Earl Miner, An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 28.

⁵⁷ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 392. In Akazome Emon's individual collection the poem is as quoted. A variant which appears in the twelfth-century Shika Wakashū (詞花和歌集 Vol. 10, Zatsu ge 361) and elsewhere has: "satemo wakaremu / koto zo kanashiki" for the last two lines. The meaning is essentially the same: the variant emphasizes the inevitable sadness of separation even if ("satemo") her prayer were answered.

⁵⁸ In an interesting essay, "Jōjōshi no Unmei" ("The Fate of Lyricism"), Yamamoto Kenkichi argues that the intensity and beauty of early Japanese art and poetry was largely due to its intimacy with daily life and the "deep sense of community" informing the energy of the artists. He is thinking primarily of the period of the Man'yōshū, the eighth-century "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves," but also refers to European art which flourished under the auspices of the Church. Speaking of the decline in contemporary art, he writes: "We can at least be certain that art divorced from a foundation built upon the spiritual ties and involvement in daily activities characteristic of communal bodies is a great misfortune for art and artist alike." The point with respect to Renkanki is simply that poetry was still the life-blood of Heian court society; the figures in the narrative are all involved in the "karma of brush and inkstone." Poetry thus provides the best access to the "deep sense of community" the narrative strives to unfold. Yamamoto Kenkichi, Koten to Gendai Bungaku ("The Classics and Modern Literature") (Shinchōsha, 1965), p. 54.

⁵⁹ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 392.

⁶⁰ Rohan supplies the place name, Miwa no Yama, for the rendezvous; it is not found in any of the related accounts. Yet, he notes, it is not a complete fabrication because the name does appear in the Akazome Emon Shū. The name, "Three Ring Mountain," fits the situation rather well, suggesting the "three links" in a love triangle and may even call to mind the Noh play "Miwa" in which a woman who wants to know the true form of a man who visits her every evening attaches a thread to the hem of his robe and traces his trail.

Since the author mentions seeing the name, Miwa no Yama in the Akazome Emon Shū, he must have known, but does not note, the poem quoted is a honkadori (allusive variation on a well-known earlier poem) on an anonymous poem in the tenth-century (905) Kokinshū (古今和歌集). The poem reads:

My cottage may be found
 At the foot of Three-Ring Mountain,
 When you feel a yearning
 Do come for a visit:
 Cedars stand hardby the gate.

Waga io wa
 Miwanoyamamoto
 Koishiku wa
 Toburai kimase
 Sugitateru kado.

The mildly ribald poem is just what Akazome may have had in mind if Rohan is correct about the circumstances of her own composition.

Another candidate for honkadori is a poem, also in the Kokinshū, by Lady Ise (伊勢 ? - 939), an early Heian period poetess often ranked with Ono no Komachi (小野小町 fl. ca. 850), with over one hundred and eighty poems anthologized in imperial collections. Here poem:

How long has it been waiting?
 Three-Ring Mountain?
 As the years go by
 Can it be there is no longer
 Anyone who will come to call?

Miwano yama
 Ikani machimimu
 Toshifutomo
 Tazunuru hito mo
 Arajī to omoeba.

Lady Ise's poem is said to be alluding to the anonymous poem previously quoted. See the Kokinwakashū ed. by Okumura Tsuneya, in the series: Shinchō Nihon Koten Shūsei (Shinchōsha, 1978), Poems 780 and 982.

⁶¹ Kōda Rohan, RKK, p. 393.

⁶² Ibid., p. 392

⁶³ Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain (Bloomington: 1954), p. 364.

⁶⁴ Kōda Rohan, RKK, pp. 403-404

⁶⁵ Lü Tong-bin (吕洞宾 Jp., Ryo Dōhin fl. ca. 800?), perhaps best known in Japan for his part in the Noh play "Kantan," has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly dispute. He is one of the Eight T'ang Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. Legend has it he received his teaching from the Master of Han-gu Pass where Lao-Tzu is said to have written the Tao-Te Ching. There is difficulty, for instance, in reconciling master-disciple dates. Both Liu Hai-chan (minister to the King of Yen 911-913) and Wang Che (1112-1170), founder of the Northern School or Golden Lotus Sect, claimed to have been disciples of Lü Tong-bin. He is the reputed author of the Tai Yi Jin Hua Zong Zhi known to western readers in Baynes' translation of Richard Wilhelm's translation, The Secret of the Golden Flower. As if to attest to the ubiquitous presence of Lü, we might add that he is said to have "written" the preface to the 1920 Peking edition Wilhelm used for his translation. The preface was composed employing the planchette. Wilhelm goes on to mention that P. Y. Saeki identifies Lü with the "Adam" who wrote the Nestorian texts discovered at Dun-huang. (The Nestorian Movement in China, London, 1928). See Richard Wilhelm, The Secret of the Golden Flower (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962). See also, Holmes Welch, Taoism: The Parting of the Way (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

⁶⁶ Terada Tōru, "Rohan no Kōshō," Bungaku, 46, No. 11 (1978), p. 1348

⁶⁷ Kōda Rohan, "Sennin Ryo Dōhin," Zenshū, Vol. 16, as cited by Terada, p. 1350. In his essay Rohan discusses the famous story "Kantan no Yume" which appears in the T'ang work known in Japan as the Chinchūki (枕中記 "Pillow Recollections"). The story concerns a humble traveller who happens to borrow a pillow from Lü Tong-bin while staying at an inn in Handan. After his stay there he meets with good fortune, making his way up in the world and finally achieving great wealth and position. As an old man he awakens to discover it had all been a dream. He had laid his head on the borrowed pillow just a few moments -- only

long enough for the innkeeper to boil some millet. Rohan wonders if the dream belonged only to the traveller or to Lü as well? Or perhaps Lü's teacher Zhong Li Quan was responsible? He asks about all the people in the dream and so forth, concluding with:

Why are there so many stories and poems [attributed to Lü?] Where did they all come from? His writings proliferate; who could possibly edit them? Fill your basket as you please! Listen to the pillow beneath your ear! Thus are a multitude of tales born, beheld, and dissolved, providing inexhaustible fascination.

As for Lü Tong-bin, we are left with the impression that we have enjoyable texts from the past, but know almost nothing with any degree of certainty about this elusive figure.

Conclusion

Tradition is a pattern of persistence and change. The modern Japanese literary world has accentuated change over persistence. But tradition has an unavoidable centrality in human life and letters: time-honoured elements have a way of always reasserting themselves. At the time of Rohan's death in 1947 Japan was entering its second major period of cultural transformation in the modern era. Defeat in the Pacific War opened the way for a tremendous influx of American influence with a corresponding loss of faith and confidence in the indigenous cultural heritage. It was, in many ways, a situation strikingly similar to the early years of the Meiji period (1868-1912) when there was an overwhelming enthusiasm for things Western. Rohan was born on the eve of the Meiji Restoration and thus lived through one complete cycle of modern Japanese cultural history. Almost one-hundred years ago he appeared on the scene to raise a voice of protest against the one-sided tide of cultural transformation. After his death, as the next cycle began, a second Rohan did not appear -- with him went the last breath of the Meiji spirit. ||

This fact helps to explain why his literary legacy has remained largely untouched by contemporary scholarship and criticism. Shinoda Hajime points out a related factor:

You would expect this group [of readers praising Rohan] to have a better than average degree of critical acumen yet, when it comes to writing on Rohan, they play up their own deficiencies and all we get are hymns of praise which never amount to real criticism. Rather than these awe-stricken, emotional tributes of admiration, it is the one-sided critiques verging on ridicule such as that of Masamune Hakuchō which actually have an element of critical insight. The well-intentioned but fruitless praise has the negative effect of intensifying the conditions which have discouraged real criticism, making it more difficult to bring Rohan into the animated, vibrant realm of contemporary literary discussion.¹

Shinoda's remark is directed toward a propensity in Japanese critical circles to weigh biography rather heavily, a tendency which results in the refusal to divorce a text from the life of its author. To some extent, at any rate, Rohan's stature in the eyes of younger writers dissuaded critical debate in the years following his death. Tanizaki Junichirō, in an essay for a memorial gathering, wrote:

They say that a man's value is determined when the lid is placed on his coffin. But in the case of a colossus possessing the depth and breadth of a man like Rohan it is difficult to immediately comprehend his greatness. Isn't it only now, after a quarter of a century, that we are finally beginning to understand the eminence of Mori Ogai who died in 1922? Thus, might it not require a few years, or decades, or perhaps even a hundred years before we fully understand the true worth of Kōda Rohan?²

Today, in an age when large, sometimes radiant bodies of literature are beginning to slip from our grasp, the question of Rohan's true worth is one we cannot afford to pretermite. In this essay we have examined three novels -- only a small fraction of of his total body of writing -- and have sought in them the voice of Japanese literary tradition. For this is what Rohan represents:

continuity with the past. His work forms a majestic bridge reaching from the post-war era to the aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of pre-modern Japan. He developed an inimitable narrative voice which projects the authority and resonance of a verbal artistry based on centuries of tradition. It is a voice that has the ring of authenticity; it is an exemplary voice invoking the ideals of Japanese culture. Rohan's work is infused with a dignity which refuses to accept or adopt the contrivances and pretensions of modern writing techniques. Antiquated perhaps, but even today, if we stop to consider, it is the author's voice rather than complexities of structure or intricacies of narrative technique that speaks most clearly and directly in the intimate act of communication between author and reader through the medium of the text. Rohan's writing becomes all voice and his voice lets the music of tradition resound. It is to be hoped that as tradition reasserts itself -- as it inevitable does -- Rohan will again be given the reading and recognition he justly deserves.

Notes

¹ Shinoda Hajime, "Koda Rohan no tame ni II," in Sakuhin ni tsuite (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1971), pp. 47-48.

² Tanizaki Junichirō, as cited by Shiotani San, Kōda Rohan (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1977), Vol. 3, p. 145.

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