

# Japanese Language and Literature

*Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese*

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 60 | Number 1 | April 2026 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2026.414

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

## Kyōka's Animistic Prose: When the Semantic Becomes Mantic

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*Katsushika Sunago* (葛飾砂子 “A Requiem to the River” aka The Sands of Katsushika, 1900) was made into a silent film by the same name directed by Thomas Kurihara (1885-1926) in 1920. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō had suggested Kyōka's story to Kurihara as a good candidate to make into a movie. He claimed in an essay, published in 1921, that, “in the case of Izumi Kyōka, so many of his works seem ideally suited to the cinema, so much so that the reader wonders at the outset whether they should be novels or films. ‘The Sands of Katsushika’ had all sorts of flaws, or so I’ve been told. Yet that alone made it a labor with significance.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, neither film nor screenplay survived the earthquake or the air raids of 1945. Only a few tantalizing stills from the movie remain.

What was it that made Kyōka's work so cinematic? In his PhD dissertation, Joseph Murphy suggests that Kyōka's story anticipates the invention of montage—the use of parallel actions and cutbacks—by Hollywood director D.W. Griffith. Rather than being influenced by new innovations in visual storytelling introduced by the moving pictures at the turn of the twentieth century, Murphy writes, both Kyōka and Griffith independently discovered, as it were, a technique for narrating the experience of modern time both spacially as well as temporally. “[B]oth were dealing with a qualitatively new situation,” Murphy writes, “the emergence of a new ‘time of the meanwhile’ shared by artist and audience alike.”<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of Murphy's insight, Thomas Lamarre adds that “Murphy identifies a problem of modernity, that is, of the production of what Walter Benjamin called “empty, homogeneous time.”<sup>3</sup>

*Katsushika Sunago* tells a story consisting of independent storylines that are told in tandem until they eventually intersect. It begins with the death of a young and charismatic kabuki actor, Onoe Kitsunosuke, then, quite abruptly, the action shifts to the disappearance of a sixteen-year-old



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girl, Kikue, the daughter of the owner of a shamisen store called Matchiya.

The scene changes yet again, to Shichibei, a boatman who is ferrying some customers to the brothel district of Susaki. On his return he discovers Kikue in the water and drags her barely lifeless body into his boat and brings her back to the shack that is his home. Much of the arc of the story thus zigzags from one setting and cast of characters to the next until Kikue recovers.

Shichibei nurses Kikue back to health. She leaves his place when the old man goes to work in the morning. Cut to two weeks later, where Onui and Kikue have come to one of the many bridges lovingly described in Kyōka's story, to release Kitsunosuke's *yukata* into the water as a kind of *kuyō*, or requiem to the actor. (Kyōka intimates that the *yukata* itself was "an angel of death" (*shinigami*) that had bewitched the girl, luring her into the river.) Jump to four years later: Kikue is twenty, a grown woman, who still carries a memento of the actor under her obi.

The temporal and spatial construction of this story is truly cinematic, indicative of a narrative technique that the author would continue to refine over his long career, with the use of cutbacks, flashbacks, and flash forwards to negotiate time and space. It is no wonder that Tanizaki saw the potential of a film treatment of this story. Kyōka was a modernist who anticipated new media and ways of storytelling.

But ever present in this writer's works are manifestations of older world views and expressive modes. *Katsushika Sunago* is not only a requiem to the actor; it is also a requiem to the river. Long passages of the story allude to the many who have drowned in the Sumida and its tributaries and how the borders between the living and the dead are permeable, especially at night, when most of this story is set. Shichibei, a Charon figure ferrying bodies from one side to the next, spends much of his time reciting verses from the Lotus Sutra as if to appease their spirits. Since this is a Kyōka story, an aura of the supernatural hovers over even the most naturalistic description.

For most readers, the most striking aspect of Kyōka's fiction, however, is not his narrative dexterity but his unique literary style. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Kyōka is a writer's writer, one whose inimitable style influenced (or at least impressed) a generation of younger novelists, from Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (谷崎潤一郎 1886–1965) to Kawabata Yasunari (川端康成 1899–1972) and Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫 1925–1970). In an essay called *Kyōka-shi no bunshō* (Master Kyōka's prose style), Nakajima Atsushi (中島敦 1909–1942) writes:

To have been born Japanese, or at least to understand the Japanese language and not have read Kyōka's work is to throw away one's privilege as a Japanese. [...]

Kyōka is a veritable magician of language. A conjuror of emotional delicacy. He is a weird sorcerer with a contraption that can take a mustard seed and make it look like an apple. It's a kind of telescope through which the viewer can catch a glimpse of paradise. One might even say that the master's art is a kind of narcotic like opium.<sup>4</sup>

To give you a sense of this narcotic style, consider another story set in Fukagawa, *Sanjaku-kaku* (三尺角 “Three Feet Square,” 1899), written just a year before *Katsushika Sunago*. Again, we have intersecting narratives. Here, the point of view shifts back and forth between two families: Yokichi, a young sawyer, little older than Kikue, the heroine of *Katsushika*, and Yokichi's father Yohei; the other family consists of Oshina, wife of the tofu-maker, and her little sister Oryū. (Children and youths are the protagonists of much of Kyōka's fiction.) Two stories about familial relations are related here, the only connection between the two families being that Yokichi buys tofu from Oshina's store. Oshina's sister Oryū lurks in the back room of the tofu shop and is evidently quite ill, though we do not know why until the end. Yokichi becomes the catalyst for our discovering why and in a manner that seems as miraculous as it is far-fetched.

Like *Katsushika Sunago*, the narrative viewpoint in *Sanjaku-kaku* shifts back and forth cinematically until eventually the separate storylines intersect. Yet something else is at work in this story, a narrative technique that is more obvious here than in the latter story, though both works share this feature. In short, Kyōka's narrative method is animistic. Language not only describes but evokes, conjures the very thing it points to. *Sanjaku-kaku* and its sequel *Kodama* trace, as it were in microcosm, the arc of Kyōka's literary career from romance to fantasy, from the world of the living to the world of the dead. This vector in Kyōka's work is inscribed in the language itself.

A brief message was found in Kyōka's desk drawer when he died: *iroha no toku wa muryō nari tsukau toki wa taisetsu ni* (The power [virtue] of letters is infinite. Be careful when you use them). Numerous stories tell of Kyōka's fears, fascination, and fetishes for the written word: for example, he would burn rough drafts of his work, then eat the ash as a kind of talisman against cholera, a disease he was mortally afraid of catching.

(Charcoal or carbon is, incidentally, an excellent cure for diarrhea.) *Sanjaku-kaku* is quite literally an illustration of how the semantic—the meaning of the words, the text, the story—becomes mantic, a magical demonstration of what it seeks to describe.<sup>5</sup> The words come alive.

When I first started reading Kyōka more than forty years ago, what made me captive to his prose was not only his portraits of women—sexy, spirited, and outspoken—but the beauty of his language, his inimitable evocation of a particular place and time that no longer exists. The past is not just a foreign country, it is a ghost, and to encounter it in Kyōka's stories is already a haunting.

In an essay entitled, *Shōsetsu ni mochiuru tennen* 小説に用うる天然 (On the use of landscape in my fiction, 1909), Kyōka writes that often the germ of a story came to him as a particular scene, and from that scene he imagined characters who inhabit that place and from those characters came a story.<sup>6</sup> This seems true in the case of *Katsushika Sunago* and *Sanjaku-kaku*, which are both set in Fukagawa, which in the late Meiji Era was a waterworld of wooden shacks, brick factories, bridges, and canals along the Sumida River. Kyōka's prose vividly brings this world to life, but the Japanese language has changed as much over the past century as the landscape Kyōka describes, and a contemporary reader even in Japanese needs a guide. Increasingly, editions of Kyōka stories are being published in modern Japanese translation. For my own English translation of *Sanjaku-kaku* I was especially indebted to the volume of Kyōka's stories annotated by Tōgo Katsumi and Yoshida Masashi in Volume 20 of *Shin-Nihon koten bungaku taikei: Meiji-hen* 新日本古典文学大系明治編 (The new compendium of classical Japanese literature: Meiji edition), published by Iwanami Shoten (2002) [hereafter abbreviated as SNKBT].

Like Kafū after him, Kyōka attests to his love of the scruffy old dregs of Edo, which are being swiftly swept away in Japan and in Tokyo's headlong dash into modernity. Kyōka's long sentences, with their cascades of associative imagery like *renga* 連歌 linked verse, unspool a picture scroll of a working class district of Tokyo that is slowly emerging from the Edo era into industrial modernity. The landscape itself is featured as a character in the story. After many pages lovingly evoking the seamy landscape of Fukagawa, Kyōka asks the reader: “Ah, that dear, that dreamy scene so like a cicada's shell—will something beautiful be born there? Someone beguiles him at the Willow House,” thus bringing Yokichi and the women of the Willow House together.<sup>7</sup> But it isn't the wife of the tofu-maker, Oshina (as sexy and as flirtatious as she is), but her sick sister,

Sarashina Oryū, whose fate is linked to Yokichi's.

Worried about his father's health, Yokichi asks if Oshina's husband could slip some fish into the tofu he makes. A little animal protein would do him good, he thinks, but his father turns up his nose at anything not a vegetable. In a remarkable scene, Oshina bites on a branch of the willow growing outside her shop, chews the leaves between her blackened teeth (married women still blackened their teeth until at least the Taishō Era), and spits them out into the palm of her hand, saying, "Why, I bet you'd tell me, Yokichi, that these leaves felt pain."<sup>8</sup>

Oshina is teasing the ingenuous Yokichi, but the willow also stands for her sister Oryū お柳, signalling her concern for the girl. At the same time, Oshina plants an idea in Yokichi's mind to do with the sentience of the organic world—the leaves, the trees, eventually the giant camphor log that Yokichi has been arduously sawing in half for days now—that will become a theme running throughout the story. As he works, Yokichi lapses into a reverie in which the log he is cutting is still the giant camphor (a sacred tree) growing deep in the mountains of Hida, before it had been cut down and shipped downriver by barge and along the coast to Tokyo. In his mind's eye, Yokichi sees the tree, girded with a sacred *shimenawa*, "its branches [...] a roof for a valley, its thick leaves a canopy for a peak, a whole mountain gripped in its roots," and then he senses that the stream falling from the cut of his saw isn't sawdust but blood.<sup>9</sup> He stumbles out of his shed like a man possessed.

The scene shifts back to Oshina and her sister Oryū back at the tofu shop. Oryū has just received a letter from her lover, vowing that if ever the wood in the lumberyards of Fukagawa would spring to life again, he would come to her. Oshina tells her sister that his—and her—wish has miraculously come true. Yokichi's cries, that "the timber's bewitched! It's sprouting branches and leaves," sounded like holy scripture to the sick girl's ears. "Were it not for Yokichi, surely no words could have saved her." Kyōka's story concludes.

A farfetched tale indeed! Mori Ōgai, ever the rationalist, wrote a disparaging review of this story in the April 10, 1899 issue of his magazine *Mezamashigusa* (Grasses of awakening):

The kernel of this tale lies in a boy's silly *illusion* (*sakkaku*, glossed by the English word). I wonder: is the author satisfied that the miracle he has sought has been achieved by this device? The sheer absurdity of the dialogue that ensues between Oshina and Yokichi is what one might expect from this author, and likewise too such mechanical turns of phrase as "he

ran around with his arms in the air,” or “the cords that tied back her sleeves hung down like a priest’s surplice,” or “he hitched up the sleeves of his jacket.” Incidentally, he calls the jacket a *happi*, but its proper name is *hanten*.<sup>10</sup>

As for Oryū’s lover’s vow to come to her should the logs of Fukagawa suddenly come to life again, well, men make promises to women like that all the time. W. H. Auden sends up such posturing brilliantly, in his poem, “As I Walked Out One Evening:”

‘I’ll love you, dear, I’ll love you  
Till China and Africa meet,  
And the river jumps over the mountain  
And the salmon sing in the street,  
‘I’ll love you till the ocean  
Is folded and hung up to dry  
And the seven stars go squawking  
Like geese about the sky.’<sup>11</sup>

No satirist, Kyōka takes the promise and, in spite of its dubious messenger, fulfills it. It is the power of words (like holy scripture—Kyōka even uses the word *fukuin* 福音, literally meaning gospel) that saves Oryū, no matter how fantastical, even mendacious, her lover’s vow may have been. And, inasmuch as it is a hallucination, Yokichi’s cry that the log has come back to life is an instinctive recognition (*chokkan*) that the material world is fearsomely alive, despite our efforts—especially in Kyōka’s industrial age—to tame it, even kill it. One can even say that one of the enduring themes of his literature is that neither humans nor the natural world can be instrumentalized, because if we ignore their agency they will come back and haunt us with a vengeance. True, there is a curious passivity to Kyōka’s characters that make them and their actions seem puppetlike, but one can attribute this passivity to their keen sensitivity to their environment, as if the landscape and everything in it flows through them.

*Sanjaku-kaku* is thus a demonstration of the power of words (*iro no toku*) to transmute language into life. This is key to Kyōka’s inimitable prose style, where a scene comes alive to a reader: language is a magical tool to unlock the living world. Rhetoric here is not only a stylistic flourish, but also a thematic core to the story. The medium is the message. The world and everything in it is alive and constantly in the process of transformation into things and beings that humans have no fundamental

control over. A story like this could be held up as a cardinal text for the environmental movement. But of course, Kyōka's story goes beyond a simple lesson in the evil of eating animals. The point is that it is not only fauna that feels, even flora are sentient, or so at least Yokichi believes, and arguably that is the author's own belief. Everything is alive and capable of suffering, and it is through language that it is brought to life again. Thus is the reader able to catch a glimpse into the vast suffering of the natural world. Everything that lives laments.

A little over two years later, Kyōka published his sequel to this story, which he called *Kodama* 木霊 (Echo). The Japanese word, *kodama*, literally means a "tree spirit." Yokichi felt sure that the camphor he was sawing was possessed with a kind of soul. Perhaps the author felt that there was something unfinished in the tale: what happens to Sarashina Oryū, sister of the tofu-maker's wife? The sequel launches directly into a dialogue between Oryū and her lover, Kin-san 金さん. True to his promise, Kin-san has come to her, but he has little to say for himself. The passivity of Kyōka's characters is even more accentuated in his men, and Oryū does most of the talking here. It is night and the lovers are sitting out in the lumberyard by the estuary, a stone's throw from the Willow House.

The names of Kyōka's characters underscore their natures. Oryū means "willow," just like the name of the tofu shop, and Kin-san, a nickname (Kintarō, Kinnosuke?), means "gold." Oryū is flora, the botanical world, whereas Kin-san stands for money, the material world, and ultimately inorganic matter.<sup>12</sup> Thus, somewhat schematically, Kyōka sets up a tension between two world orders, one male, one female, one representing the modern world, the other the past. And of course it is the feminized, naturalized old order that is victimized. Beauty is born from a cicada's shell (*utsusemi*).<sup>13</sup>

Oryū and Kin-san were evidently childhood sweethearts but, like the protagonists of Higuchi Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* ("Child's Play," in Robert Danly's inspired translation), they went their separate ways as they grew up: the well educated Kin-san becomes an engineer and moves to Koishikawa across the river, near to Tokyo University's Hongō campus. Oryū, on the other hand, was sold into prostitution to pay off her family's debts. Yet again, this is the master narrative of many of Kyōka's melodramas (or, for that matter, the films of Mizoguchi Kenji 溝口健二 (1898-1956), a number of which were adaptations of Kyōka novels).<sup>14</sup> That is to say, the project of Japan's modernization was quite literally built by men on the backs of women. Oryū tells Kin-san how she wasted away,

pinning for him, until a miracle happened. “My wish for something that could never be came true,” she tells him. “That’s what happens when you believe in something that hard, dear.”<sup>15</sup> Wishful thinking, as almost all Kyōka’s stories are.

The two share a cigarette. Then the story takes a sudden, strange turn and we leave the land of the living. There follows a procession of *obake* in the gloomy mist hanging over the water of the estuary, including a baby in a boat and, floating over the water’s surface, some kind of monster with a face the color of tarnished copper, which Kyōka calls an *ijin* (異人). An “*ijin*” in my dictionary is a foreigner, but the editors of the Kyōka volume in *Shin-Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (The new compendium of classical Japanese literature) gloss it as something otherworldly, not just outlandish. And so it is, so they are, all the weird creatures that Kin-san is momentarily distracted by. The smell of incense brings him back to his senses, and when he turns his attention back to Oryū, she has vanished like smoke in his arms. It would seem that Yokichi’s cry that the log has come back to life didn’t save her at all. The story ends with a challenge to the reader: “Ah, tell me if you can: are we ever to see the souls of women, or even plants and trees?” This, at least, is my attempt to translate the phrase, *aware, sōmoku mo onna mo tamashii ni sugata ga aru no ka?* True to her name, once again Oryū is relegated to the botanical world: women are as sentient as plants and trees, no more, no less. On the one hand this would revoke a woman’s agency, but by the same token it promotes the natural world to an existential status equivalent to humans (or women, anyway). But do their souls have a form we can see? For a moment the supernatural world is revealed to Oryū’s lover, then it closes, and her soul is lost to him.

*Sōmoku* is a keyword in certain Buddhist texts like the *Lotus Sutra*. In the *Nirvana Sutra* we have the phrase 草木国土悉皆成仏 (*sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu*), the grasses and trees, the earth and land, all become buddhas. The pairing of *sōmoku* with *sugata* in the narrator’s challenge to the reader at the end is also an echo of the following passage in the noh play *Takasago* 高砂, attributed to Zeami (1363–1443):

The grasses and trees, the soil and sand, (草木土砂 *sōmoku dosha*)  
 even the wind’s voice and the rushing water, (風声水音まで *fūsei suion made*)  
 all things, (万物の *banbutsu no*)  
 are filled with spirit. (籠る心あり *komoru kokoro ari.*)  
 The spring groves (春の林の *haru no hayashi no*)  
 that rustle in the eastern breeze, (東風に動き *tōfū ni ugoki*)  
 or the autumn insects (秋の虫 *aki no mushi*)

crying in the northern dew— (の北露に鳴くも *no hokuro ni naku mo*)  
 are not all of these too (皆和歌の *mina waka no*)  
 the very embodiment of our poetry? (姿ならずや *sugata narazu ya.*)

In this praise of the spiritual power of the natural world, a further link is made to the power of words. Japanese poetry (*waka*) is the very voice of nature itself; language is embodied spirit.

The closing lines to both *Sanjaku-kaku* and its sequel *Kodama* are most evocative:

*Sanjaku-kaku*: “Had it not been for Yokichi, surely there would have been no words to save her.”

(*kono Yokichi no yō na mono denakereba, jissai mata kakaru fukuin wa nakatta de arō.* SNKBT 20: 305–306)

*Kodama*: “Ah, tell me if you can: are we ever to see the souls of women, or even plants and trees?” (*aware, sōmoku mo onna mo tamashii ni sugata ga aru no ka?* SNKBT 20: 314)

Yet, the endings contradict each another. In the original story, it appears that Oryū is saved; in its sequel, *Kyōka* kills her off.

The doyen of *Kyōka* studies Muramatsu Sadataka 村松定孝 (1918–2007) called this sequel to *Sanjaku-kaku* a kind of *mugen nō* 夢幻能 (dream-fantasy *noh*) that has its own poetic flavor.<sup>16</sup> It is true that the aura of the supernatural hovers more heavily over *Kodama* than *Sanjaku-kaku*, which is after all about the living. But here I want to conclude with what, for lack of a better way to say it, might be the moral quandary of a translator, for I think *Kyōka*’s sequel is not just another story with different characters from the original, but one that is decidedly inferior. If Ōgai found *Kyōka*’s characters puppetlike in *Sanjaku-kaku*, they are much more inert in *Kodama*. A translator is a writer’s shadow; translation is the closest reading of a literary work that anyone can ever do and to do it well I feel is to show one’s ultimate respect for the author and their work. But just like the author, the translator begins to feel an affection for the characters that is almost proprietorial. I miss the sawyer and the tofu-maker’s wife in the sequel. Neither Kin-san nor even Oryū’s ghost have the innocence or wit that Yokichi and Oshina have. I can understand why the author wanted to find out what would happen to his lovers, but neither of them are terribly interesting characters, and their romance is the stuff of *shinpa* (新派, “new wave”) melodrama.<sup>17</sup> It is as if the author, however, was himself not satisfied with this development and instead pulls his characters into the

realm of fullblown fantasy. As I have noted earlier, *Kodama* in microcosm retraces the course of Kyōka's own literary career. It is not unusual to see a writer coming back again and again, almost obsessively, to what is ultimately the story of their lives. Did Kyōka get it right this time? Not perfectly, but what ever is?

What's a translator to do in situations like this? I suppose the simple answer is not to bother translating it at all. But I was so captivated by Kyōka's evocation of Fukagawa that I wanted to capture it myself, in English. Maybe not all readers feel the same way I do: I shared my translation of *Sanjaku-kaku* with an editor somewhere, who reported back that she found reading it "a slog." I suppose that, a century on, Kyōka is indeed a slog whether we read him in English or the original. At the same time, one could ignore the sequel and present *Sanjaku-kaku* on its own as a work complete in itself, but that would be a disservice to Kyōka's intention, which was to carry the story further and tie up what were to him loose ends. So I translate both and let the reader judge.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Miscellaneous Observations on Cinema" (1921), translated in Thomas Lamarre, *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō on Cinema and "Oriental" Aesthetics* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), 120. Here the story's title is translated more literally as *The Sands of Katsushika*.
- <sup>2</sup> Joseph Murphy, "Izumi Kyōka Today: Cinema, Antimodernity, and the Logic of Contestation in the Literary Field." (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1995), 146. Quoted in Lamarre, 242.
- <sup>3</sup> Lamarre, 242.
- <sup>4</sup> Nakajima Atsushi, "Kyōka-shi no bunshō," *Gakuen*, 1933. (*Nakajima Atsushi zenshū* 3 [Chikuma bunko, Chikuma shobō, 1993].)
- <sup>5</sup> I owe this play on words between semantic and mantic to describe Kyōka's prose to a friend, Alex Olivera de Bary.
- <sup>6</sup> "Shōsetsu ni mochiuru tennen," (小説に用うる天然) first published in *Kokumin no tomo*, November, 1909.) *Kyōka zenshū* 28. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1942, 702.
- <sup>7</sup> SNKBT 20: 289.

- <sup>8</sup> SNKBT 20: 295.
- <sup>9</sup> SNKBT 20: 301.
- <sup>10</sup> Mori Ōgai, “Setchū dokuwa” (雪中独話, Monologue in the snow), *Mezamashigusa* (めざまし草, Grasses of awakening, April 10, 1899. Quoted in Tōgō Katsumi, Yoshida Masashi, *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* [SNKBT]: *Meiji-hen* 20: *Izumi Kyōka* (Iwanami Shoten, 2002), 431.
- <sup>11</sup> W. H. Auden, “As I walked out One Evening” (1937). In W.H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems, 1927–1957* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 85–86.
- <sup>12</sup> Tōgō Katsumi makes this point in his essay, Kodama no chikara—*Sanjaku-kaku, Kodama, to Kōya-hijiri o tsunagu mono*” 木霊の力・「三尺角」、「木霊」と「高野聖」を繋ぐもの (The power of the tree spirit: what links *Three Feet Square, Echo, and The Kōya Priest*)” (SNKBT: *Meiji-hen* 20, 481–493).
- <sup>13</sup> *Utsusemi* is a classical trope easily recognizable to a Japanese reader as a metaphor for what is perishable and transitory.
- <sup>14</sup> Mizoguchi made film adaptations of at least three Kyōka’s stories: *Nihonbashi* (日本橋, 1929), based on Kyōka’s 1914 novel of the same title, *Taki no Shiraito* (滝の白糸, 1933), based on Kyōka’s *Giketsu kyōketsu* (義血狭血, 1891); and *Orizuru Osen* (折り鶴お千, 1935), based on *Baishoku kamo nanban* (売色鴨南蛮) 1920, translated by Charles Inouye as “Osen and Sōkichi” in *Japanese Gothic Tales* (University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 141–158. The sacrificial woman is a motif in many of Mizoguchi’s other films.
- <sup>15</sup> SNKBT 20: 309.
- <sup>16</sup> Muramatsu Sadataka, *Izumi Kyōka jiten* (『泉鏡花辞典』 Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1982), 61.
- <sup>17</sup> *Shinpa* was Japan’s first attempt to create a modern theatre, created by figures like Kawakami Otojirō (1864–1911) and his wife Sadayakko (1871–1946). It had its roots in the political theatre promoting *Jiyū minken* (自由民権, liberty and human rights) in the 1880s, but soon became the place to stage adaptations of popular fiction of the Meiji Era, including many of Kyōka’s novels. Kabuki was its stylistic inspiration, but it shared many features of nineteenth-century European melodrama, with its sentimentalism, sensationalism, and strong sense of justice, featuring clearcut heroes and villains.

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My translation of *Katsushika Sunago* is based on the text in Izumi Kyōka, *Kyōka zenshū*. Iwanami Shoten. Tokyo: 1941; my translations of *Sanjaku-kaku* and its sequel are based on the scrupulously annotated edition by Tōgō Katsumi and Yoshida Masashi in Volume 20 of *Shin-Nihon koten bungaku taikei: Meiji-hen* 新日本古典文学大系明治編 (The new compendium of classical Japanese literature: Meiji edition), published by Iwanami Shoten. Tokyo: 2002 (hereafter abbreviated as SNKBT).

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