



Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1938

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Remarkably little has been written on the subject of modernism in Japanese fiction. Until now there has been neither a comprehensive survey of Japanese modernist fiction nor an anthology of translations to provide a systematic introduction. Only recently have the terms "modernism" and "modernist" become part of the standard discourse in English on modern Japanese literature and doubts concerning their authenticity vis-a-vis Western European modernism remain. This anomaly is especially ironic in view of the decidedly modern prose crafted by such well-known Japanese writers as Kawabata Yasunari, Nagai Kafu, and Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. By contrast, scholars in the visual and fine arts, architecture, and poetry readily embraced modanizumu as a key concept for describing and analyzing Japanese culture in the 1920s and 1930s.

This volume addresses this discrepancy by presenting in translation for the first time a collection of twenty-five stories and novellas representative of Japanese authors who worked in the modernist idiom from 1913 to 1938. Its prefatory materials provide a systematic overview of the literary movement's salient features—anti-naturalism, cosmopolitanism, the concept of the double self, and actionism—and describe how modanizumu evolved from its early "jagged edges" into a sophisticated yet popular expression of Japanese urban life in the first half of the twentieth century. The modernist style, characterized by youthful exuberance, a tongue-in-cheek tone, and narrative techniques like superimposition, is amply illustrated.

Modanizumu introduces faces altogether new or relatively unknown: Abe Tomoji, Kajii Motojiro, Murayama Kaita, Osaki Midori, Tachibana Sotoo, Takeda Rintaro, Tani Joji, Yoshiyuki Eisuke, and Yumeno Kyusaku. It also revisits such luminaries as Kawabata, Tanizaki, and the detective novelist Edogawa Ranpo. Key works that it culls from the modernist repertoire include Funahashi Seiichi's *Diving*, Hagiwara Sakutarō's "Town of Cats," Ito Sei's *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts*, and Kawabata's film scenario *Page of Madness*. This volume moves beyond conventional views to place this important movement in Japanese fiction within a global context: an indigenous expression born of the fission of local creativity and the fusion of cross-cultural interaction.

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