

Natsume Sôseki and Andrew Lang: their interpretations of the supernatural¹

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Introduction

This paper aims to shed light on the reception of Andrew Lang (1844-1912) by Natsume Sôseki (1867-1916) in their interpretations of the supernatural through the examination of 'Koto no Sorane' (The Hallucinatory Sound of Koto, 1905), one of Sôseki's early short stories. This story is now interpreted as a 'tale of "modernization" when unscientific superstitions will disappear, and be replaced by the age of enlightenment and civilization'.² I argue that it is not that simple, as Sôseki's attention is rather on the vacillation of an enlightened man's rational-oriented common sense, and on his acquisition of greater depth in perception as a result of his acceptance of the supernatural. 'Koto no Sorane' has not attracted the serious attention of

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² Satô Izumi, *Sôseki Katazukanai <Kindai>*, Nippon Hôsô Shuppan Kyôkai, 2002, p.124.

critics, but it is worth examining in terms of the various issues it raises: the sense of awe toward Nature which is inherent in the belief in superstition and the supernatural; the ideology of science and technology which rejects superstition and supernatural; and the double structure of modern culture in the Meiji period (1868-1912) represented by the high culture of the young elite class such as the story's narrator and the sub-culture of his house-keeper. Although this paper focuses on Sôseki's interpretation of the supernatural in his reception of Lang, the above-mentioned issues are an integral part of the story of 'Koto no Sorane'.

According to his diary, Sôseki read Lang's *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (1897) in March 1901, four months after his arrival in London, and his scribbles on his copy of the book indicate that he was very much taken by it, as he read the 300 page book within two days. This is a collection of supernatural phenomena drawn from classical to contemporary cases with Lang's commentaries and interpretations. And inspired by the book, Sôseki wrote 'Koto no Sorane', two years after his return to Japan. Sôseki also refers to *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* in *Bungakuron* (A Theory of Literature, 1907) and in his collection of essays, *Omoidasu koto nado* (Remembrances, 1910-11). Sôseki's interest in and awareness of Lang as a versatile man of letters is evident in the fact that Sôseki's library (Sôseki Bunko) holds copies of Lang's other works such as *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (1887), *The Making of Religion* (1898),³ and his translation, *The Odyssey of Homer* (1900).⁴ Indeed Sôseki's copy of *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* contains a list of some of Lang's works up to 1899, which no doubt directed Sôseki's

³ This book is not contained in Sôseki Bunko's present catalogue, but we have evidence that a copy of the 1900 edition of *The Making of Religion* existed in Sôseki's library at the time of cataloguing for *Sôseki Zenshû* (Collected Works of Natsume Sôseki published by Iwanami Shoten, 1967).

⁴ *The Odyssey of Homer* was translated with S.H. Butcher, and *The Illiad of Homer* (1883) translated by Andrew Lang, W. Leaf and E. Myers is quotes in *Bungakuron*.

attention to Lang as a literary critic, historian, biographer, novelist, and an author of many works on anthropological subjects. For our interest, *The Making of Religion* is understood as a book ‘which exploded like a bomb in ethnography’⁵ for his arguments and methodology. Lang is now described as a ‘dictator of the end-of-the-century literary taste’,⁶ for his activities as an established reviewer. He is also described as ‘the quintessential Victorian man of letters’,⁷ or ‘the last of the generalists’⁸, and in his heyday Oscar Wilde called him a ‘divine amateur’.⁹

The Book of Dreams and Ghosts is regarded as the source of ‘Koto no Sorane’,¹⁰ because the first-person narrator’s friend, Tsuda, is modeled after Lang, as he is introduced as the author of *Yûrei-ron* (Theory of Ghosts), and also because Tsuda refers to ‘Lord Brougham’s Story’, an episode in *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, as ‘belonging to exactly the same case’¹¹ as his own ghost story. However Sôseki’s reception of Lang or affinity with Lang is shown to be deeper than that, when we examine Lang’s arguments about the supernatural and Sôseki’s interpretation. In understanding Sôseki and Lang’s interpretations of the supernatural, I would like to point to the fact that spiritualism and supernatural phenomena were looming in both England and Japan in their times. Although Sôseki caricatures the boom of hypnotism in *Wagahai wa Neko de aru* (I am a Cat, 1905-6) and ‘Koto no Sorane’, his interest in the subjects

⁵ Roger Bastide, Mary Baker (tr.), *Social Origins of Religion* (originally published as *Éléments de sociologie religieuse* in 1935), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2003, p.178.

⁶ Margaret Beetham, ‘The Agony Aunt, the Romancing Uncle and the Family of Empire: Defining the Sixpenny Reading Public in the 1890s’, Laurel Brake et al. (eds), *The Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2000, p.261.

⁷ William M. Clements, Steven R. Serafin & Valirie G. Myer (eds), *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Literature*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 2003, p.561.

⁸ Sally Mitchell (ed.), *Victorian Britain: An encyclopedia*, 1988, p.433.

⁹ Roger Lancelyn Green, *Andrew Lang*, Henry Z. Walck, New York, 1962, p.32.

¹⁰ Tsukamoto Toshiaki, *Sôseki to Eibungaku: ‘Yôkyo Shû’ no Hikaku Bungakuteki Kenkyû*, revised and enlarged edition, Keiryûsha, 2003, pp.287-315.

¹¹ *Sôseki Zenshû*, vol.2, Iwanami Shoten, 1966, p.199.

of telepathy and superstition, more precisely in the functions of superstition, continued, as manifested in his later novels such as *Higan sugi made (To the Spring Equinox and Beyond, 1912)* and *Kôjin (The Wayfarer, 1914)*. Lang, on the other hand, was interested in the supernatural throughout his life from an anthropological point of view: beginning with 'Mythology and Fairy Tales' (*The Fortnightly Review*, May 1873), the first article in which he challenged the academia, and by his affiliation with the Folk-Lore Society and the Society for Psychical Research. His works on totemism were often quoted by Freud in *Totem und Tabu* (1913), but according to the anthropologist, Andrew Duff-Cooper, Lang 'is most unjustifiably ignored by contemporary social anthropologists'.¹²

'Koto no Sorane' and 'Lord Brougham's Story'

'Koto no Sorane' is a 37 page story told by the first person narrator, a young lawyer. It begins with the narrator's visit to his friend, Tsuda, who was reading a book of ghosts. In the course of their chit-chat, the narrator complains about his superstitious house-keeper, and briefly mentions about his fiancée having caught influenza. Tsuda tells him to take the illness seriously, because his relative, a newly wedded wife recently died of influenza. What follows is Tsuda's ghost story about the woman's apparition at the moment of her death before her beloved husband, a lieutenant, in a battle ground of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). To the narrator's amazement and disbelief, Tsuda emphasizes its striking similarity to an apparition experienced by Lord Brougham (1778-1868). In Lang's book, Lord Brougham's ghost is his friend with whom he

¹² Andrew Duff-Cooper (ed.), *Andrew Lang on Totemism*, Centre for Social Anthropology and Computing, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1994, p.106.

exchanged a pledge to appear in spirit at the time of either man's death in order to prove the existence of life after death.

Behind Tsuda's ghost story lies, as Etô Jun points out, a reality of Japan at the time of the Russo-Japanese War when supernatural phenomena related to the numerous deaths of the war were commonly shared by the people.¹³ In this story, however, the ghost story itself does not weigh much, nor is it in 'Lord Brougham's Story' in Lang's book. The focus of 'Koto no Sorane' is firstly on the narrator's sense of self-respect as a rational-oriented lawyer and his disgust with his superstitious house-keeper. Upon hearing Tsuda's ghost story, he says to himself:

I am a lawyer. I cannot use my mind other than rationally to deal with incidents in front of me by seeing them as they happen, ...What I hate most is to think about such vague things as ghosts, curses, and fates. But I am a bit overwhelmed by Tsuda's brain. Since this surprisingly bright man is seriously telling a ghost story, I am obliged and inclined to change my attitude to this problem. To tell the truth, I was certain until now that ghosts and ruffians had gone out of their business since the Restoration. Nevertheless from the looks of Tsuda, this thing called ghost seems to have been revived.¹⁴

Then his common sense becomes disintegrated. This is what Lang emphasizes in his interpretation of Lord Brougham's Story, where he writes: 'His Lordship was not reckoned

¹³ *Sôseki to Sono Jidai Dai Sanbu*, Shinchôsha, 1993, p.84.

¹⁴ *Sôseki Zenshû*, Vol.2, p.97.

precisely a veracious man; on the other hand, this was not the kind of fable he was likely to tell. He was brought up under the *régime* of common-sense' (italics by Lang),¹⁵ and as to the reason why Lord Brougham vacillated between the common sense and his own perception or hallucination, Lang explains:

the cock-sure common sense of the years from 1660 to 1850, or so, regarded everyone who had experience of a hallucination as a dupe, a lunatic, or a liar. In this healthy state of opinion, eminent people like Lord Brougham kept their experience to themselves, or, at most, nervously protested that they "were sure it was only a dream".¹⁶

The ghost story in 'Koto no Sorane' provides the lawyer-narrator with another dimension of life, greater depth in his perception, and most of all concerns and love for his fiancée. On his way home from Tsuda's house at night, he encounters two men carrying a baby's coffin, a mysterious red light, and so on, and he becomes aware for the first time of the fragility of life. Owing to his newly acquired sense of fear and awe, he begins to understand and share his superstitious house-keeper's perceptions and care for the well-being of his fiancée, and as a result he gains her love. Hence, the title of the story, 'the hallucinatory sound of koto', is suggestive of the romance played by the hallucinatory koto. In this regard, superstitious approaches play an important role in the development of the two people's relationship. This is also the case in Lang's fairy tale, *Prince Prigio* (1889). In this humorous tale, Lang creates a

¹⁵ *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, Longmans, Green., London, 1899 (Sôseki's copy), pp.96-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.x.

prince with too much brain who laughs at the very idea of fairies. Having fallen in love, however, he begins to believe in fairies and gains the heart of his beloved.

Sôseki-William James-Lang

The volume of the entire story is about the process of the narrator's unsettling psychology and physical sensation, which may reflect Lang's appreciation of William James (1842-1910). Lang often refers to James to support his own arguments. For example in the first page of the Preface to *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* Lang writes: 'It has not been thought necessary to discuss the psychological and physiological processes involved in perception, real or false',¹⁷ and quotes from *Principles of Psychology* (1890): 'Every "hallucination" is a perception, "as good and true a sensation as if there were a real object there. The object happens *not* to be there, that is all"' (italics by Lang).¹⁸

Tsuda in 'Koto no Sorane' is sometimes described as a literary man and at other times as a psychologist by the narrator: 'I thought, I shouldn't ignore ghosts, as the psychologists have revived ghosts while the lawyers were unaware of them. We can't argue about things we don't know. Ignorance makes us incompetent. With regard to ghosts, I think lawyers must unquestioningly obey literary men'.¹⁹ Sôseki's reception of William James is well researched, but Lang's role in it has escaped the attention of Sôseki specialists who regard Sôseki's first encounter with *Principles of Psychology* as taking place in 1902.²⁰ As we have seen, Sôseki

¹⁷ *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, p.v.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Sôseki Zenshû*, vol. 2, p.100.

²⁰ Ogura Yûzô, *Natsume Sôseki: William James Juyô to no Shûhen*, Yûseidô, 1989, p.4.

evidently read quotations from *Principles of Psychology* in Lang's book in 1901.

Lang and James shared the same view about the importance of serious study of psychic phenomena. The two men were connected by the Society for Psychical Research, and they quoted each other to support their views. For instance, in his President's Address before the Society for Psychical Research published in the *Proceedings* for June 1896, James writes, pointing out the discrepancy of the Society's methodology in evaluating the credibility of physical mediumship: '[it] appears to force upon us what Mr. Andrew Lang calls the choice between a moral and a physical miracle'.²¹

The attitudes of Sôseki and Lang toward the supernatural and science

Lang explains about his attitude toward the supernatural:

...all studies have their perils, and these are among the dangers which beset the path of the inquirer into things ghostly. He must adopt the stoical maxim: "Be sober and do not believe"—in a hurry....I do believe, with all students of human nature, in hallucinations of one, or of several, or even of all the senses. But as to whether such hallucinations, among the sane, are ever caused by psychical influences from the minds of others, alive or death, not communicated through the ordinary channels of sense, my mind is in a balance of doubt. It is a question of evidence.²²

²¹ This essay, 'What Psychical Research Has Accomplished', was originally published in the *Proceedings* for June 1896 and in *Science*, and later in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (1897): Gardner Murphy & Robert O. Ballou (eds), *William Jaames on Psychical Research* (1960), Augustism. Kelley, Clifton, 1973, p.37.

²² *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts.*, pp.xi-xiii.

However Tsuda is overwhelmed by a scientific discourse just as the lawyer-narrator is, at least in his attempt to justify the credibility of the supernatural phenomenon. So is the narrator of another short story, 'Shumi no Iden' (The Heredity of Taste, 1906). In this regard, it is difficult to interpret Tsuda as modeled on Lang. Lang's attitudes to science in dealing with the supernatural are exemplified in the following quotations:

- * 'We may not believe in "mental telegraphy," but we can *imagine* it as one of the unknown possibilities of nature'.²³
- * 'Strictly scientific examination of these prodigies has been very rare'..²⁴
- * 'Science admits, if asked, that it does not know everything. It is not *inconceivable* that living minds may communicate by some other channel than that of the recognized senses.'²⁵
- * About telepathy, Lang argues against Izaak Walton's [1593-1683] metaphor of lutes for telepathy: "If two lutes are strung to an exact harmony, and one is struck, the other sounds," argues Walton. Two minds may be as harmoniously attuned and communicate each with each. Of course, in the case of the lutes there are actual vibrations, physical facts. But we know nothing of vibrations in the brain which can traverse space to another brain.²⁶

In contrast to Lang who is persistent in his logic-oriented attitudes to the supernatural, and as

²³ Ibid.,

²⁴ *The Making of Religion* (1898), Bryan S. Turner (ed.), *The Early Sociology of Religion*, vol. IV, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1997, p.360.

²⁵ Ibid., p.106.

²⁶ Ibid, p.28.

a result maintains a cautious attitude towards scientific theorization of the supernatural, Tsuda and the lawyer-narrator are overwhelmed by scientific discourse. In other words, they need scientific discourse whether it is trustworthy or not in order to believe in their own perceptions. To the narrator's skepticism about the ghost story, Tsuda quotes from the book of ghosts he was reading: 'When brain cells of a man respond to another man's brain cells in the distance and [as a result] a kind of chemical change is produced...'. The narrator is not interested in the theory itself, and stops Tsuda's explanation half-way as useless and meaningless for him as a lawyer and as a 'dim-brained' man. For both Tsuda and the narrator, the half-explained theory guarantees the credibility of Tsuda's ghost story.

Is this Sôseki's misinterpretation of Lang, or a parody of Lang's criticism of Izaak Walton, or even Sôseki's agreement with Podmore's theory in *Apparitions and Thought-Transference: an Examination of the Evidence for Telepathy* (1894)?²⁷ It is a matter of interpretation, but when we compare Tsuda and the narrator [as a representative of highly educated young men] with the other set of characters, uneducated and superstitious people, in 'Koto no Sorane', the complex nature of 'civilisation and enlightenment' emerges.

The Supernatural as Materials for Literature

In dealing with a similar motif in 'Shumi no Iden', Sôseki introduces another scientific explanation for telepathic love, in this case, the theory of heredity. According to Ichianagi Hirotaka's analysis of the story, the first-person narrator's theorization of telepathic love

²⁷ Tsukamoto Toshiaki points out that Sôseki relies on Podmore's theory for Tsuda's reference to the theory of telepathy, as Sôseki underlines on the relevant passage in his copy of Podmore's book. *Soseki to Eibungaku*, p.311.

inclines the reader to distrust the validity of the scientific paradigm which is supposed to inquire into the cause, and that is the aim of the twentieth century civilization.²⁸ Sôseki admits it fails as a story due to his logocentrism, and the main reason for that is the lack of time on his part.²⁹ Whether or not Sôseki tries to illustrate in ‘Koto no Sorane’ and ‘Shumi no Iden’ the difficulty of dealing with the scientific paradigm in the subject of the supernatural, this dilemma shows a discrepancy between his theory and practice, as Sôseki argues in *Bungakuron* against a confusion of science with the supernatural as literary materials:

These supernatural phenomena can generally produce strong emotion, and this is evidently manifested in literature where these phenomena exist as literary materials. Needless to say, these phenomena are totally irrational if judged by one’s mind...The value of literature ultimately depends not on whether it is rational or irrational, but on whether or not it enables us to capture an incident or situation which can produce emotions...If one evaluates this material as not suitable as a literary element in the age of enlightenment, simply because it is not rational even though it is interesting, he is confusing literature with science. He must have forgotten the meaning of literature for which the principal requirement is not reason but emotion...It is as if he is trying to calculate liquid by measuring its length.³⁰

²⁸ Ichianagi Hirotsuka, “Rika” to Sôseki: “Shumi no Iden” kara’, *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kyôzai*, 42-6, 1997, p.100.

²⁹ Komiya Toyotaka refers to Sôseki’s comment in ‘Kaisetsu’, *Sôseki Zenshû*, vol.2, p.852.

³⁰ *Sôseki Zenshû*, vol.9, pp.126-7.

As an example, Sôseki quotes another ghost story from Lang's book, which Lang himself describes as 'picturesque', but 'a remarkably difficult story to believe' because of its logical inconsistency.³¹ Sôseki's aim to quote this unreliable story can be detected in the above argument in *Bungakuron*. Lang makes a similar comment in his essay, 'The Supernatural in Fiction', pointing out the fact that the supernatural in fiction is still desired and perhaps even more so in the age of science, and arguing for the value of learning to shudder:

Perhaps it may die out in a positive age—this power of learning to shudder...But has it not grown and increased since Wordsworth wanted the "Ancient mariner" to have "a profession and a character", since Southey called that poem a Dutch piece of work, since Lamb had to pretend to dislike its "miracles"? Why, as science becomes more cock-sure, have men and women become more and more fond of old follies, and more pleased with the stirring of ancient dread within their veins?...As the visible world is measured, mapped, tested, weighed, we seem to hope more and more that a world of invisible romance may not be far from us, or, at least, we care more and more to follow fancy into these airy regions, *et inania regna*.³²

Natural People

The latter part of 'Koto no Sorane' is a comical sketch of a group of artisan-class people discussing how to deal with superstition in the age of enlightenment. Workers at a barber shop

³¹ *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, pp.93-5.

³² Andrew Lang, 'The Supernatural in Fiction', *Adventures Among Books* (1905), pp.153-4.

where the narrator drops in, are making fun of those people who are easily hallucinated. One of them says: 'Ghosts and wraiths are things of the past, aren't they? In this age of electric lights, there shouldn't be such ridiculous things'. Another customer is reading a book, 'Uyamuya Dôjin cho Ukiyo Shinri Kôgiroku' (Lectures on Social Psychology by Mr Ambiguous). The writer-narrator of this book is a tanuki (badger), and he ridicules humans who want to be hallucinated. His argument is that although the badgers' tricks are the same as those of present-day hypnotism, the Japanese have imported it from Western badgers, named it 'saiminhô' (hypnotism), and admire those adopters of hypnotism as doctors. His final argument is: 'I am upset by this kind of admiration of the West. While Japan has its own magic handed down for generations, why should they admire the West for everything? On behalf of Japanese badgers, I would like to ask the present-day Japanese not to despise the Japanese badgers'. The people at the barber agree with this statement, and say 'The badger is right. As long as we stand firm, we would not be tricked'. Hearing this, the narrator of 'Koto no Sorane' thinks that he might have been completely tricked by a badger last night, and he is disgusted with himself. The story ends with the happy union of the narrator with his fiancée and the house-keeper whom the narrator had previously condemned as a 'superstitious hag'.

Both Sôseki and Lang are critical of the notion of superiority of civilized people over superstitious common people. Lang was interested in fairy tales, folklore, myths, legends from all over the world, and he was surprisingly free of racial and social prejudices in his interpretation. He writes about his interest in the study of folklore:

The topic of folk-lore, and the development of customs and myths, is not generally

attractive, to be sure. Only a few people seem interested in that spectacle, so full of surprises—the development of all human institutions, from fairy tales to democracy. In beholding it we learn how we owe all things, humanly speaking, to the people and to genius. The natural people, the folk, has supplied us, in its unconscious way, with the stuff of all our poetry, law, ritual:³³

The old woman in ‘Koto no Sorane’ can be read as Lang’s ‘natural people’. In this story the conviction of the house-keeper does not vacillate unlike the narrator’s, and she believes she has converted him to win the love of his fiancée. In this regard the superstitious woman as a representative of society wins over the narrator as a representative of civilized people. And yet there is no clear-cut distinction between them, once the narrator’s rational and modern veil is uncovered by the dark night world. Sôseki acknowledges the fragility of civilisation in ‘Omoidasu Koto nado’ written soon after his experience of thirty minute coma:

I have thought for a long time that I am qualified, by invoking the privilege of a coward, to meet ghosts. My ancestors’ superstitions run plentifully through my veins. I always believed in ghosts when the flesh of civilization shrank under the whip of society. However as a man who fears cholera does not catch the disease, and as a child who prays to God is abandoned by God, I have passed my days without any mysterious encounters. My curiosity sometimes caused me to regret for the lack of opportunities, but generally I accepted it as a matter of fact that I did not encounter ghosts. To be frank, I felt a shiver as

³³ ‘Adventure Among Books’, *Adventures Among Books*, p.20.

I looked at the lamp in front of me, when I was reading *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* by Andrew Lang eight or nine years ago.³⁴

In order to understand the phrase, ‘I always believed in ghosts when the flesh of civilization shrank under the whip of society’, Karatani Kôjin’s discussion in ‘Consciousness and Nature’ (‘Ishiki to Shizen’) is helpful. He argues that the theme of Sôseki’s novels is his concern about an inevitable devastation of those who repress Nature within themselves under the pressure of social regulations. Nature in this context is more like an ontological notion, and this aspect of Nature is given a freehand in Sôseki’s early short stories.³⁵ ‘Koto no Sorane’ suggests a way of attaining a sense of Nature within oneself, but for the narrator the process of vacillation between twentieth century common sense and the belief in the supernatural continues. The shallowness of the narrator as a person, and his shifting attitudes reflect Lang’s ironical interpretation of Lord Brougham. ‘Koto no Sorane’ ends with the narrator’s self-congratulatory comment about Tsuda’s use of his experience in *Yûrei-ron* (Theory of Ghosts) by ‘Tsuda Makata, BA’. This ending implies Tsuda is interested in ‘the psychological and physiological processes involved in perception, real or false’ as Lang emphasizes in *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*.

Conclusion

‘Koto no Sorane’ is valuable from the viewpoint of interpretation. It is often regarded as a ‘literary failure’, due to its ambiguity about the relationship between the supernatural and

³⁴ *Sôseki Zenshû*, Vol.8, pp.317-8.

³⁵ Karatani Kôjin, *Zôho Sôseki-ron Shûsei*, Heibonsha Library, 2001, pp.11-81.

science. The majority of critical comments about the story from the time of its publication to this day share one stance, that is the supernatural must be treated as a form of hallucination. From this vantage point, the story is interpreted as a rejection of the supernatural either by the narrator's coming to his senses in the morning or by the badger's theory of hypnotism.³⁶ On the other hand, for those who are critical of the story as a failure, the scientific paradigm seems to influence their interpretation, as they criticise the story as being ambiguous and not satisfying their own expectation of only one solution: victory of rationality over the supernatural in the age of enlightenment.³⁷

In analyzing procedures of interpretation, Wolfgang Iser warns against a danger of 'lapsing into another master narrative of human condition', meaning the ideology critique or the oppositional discourses' ranging from minority to postcolonial. And he writes in *Ranges of Interpretation*: 'Life cannot be frozen into a hypostatization of any of its aspects, for it is basically unrepresentable and can therefore only be conceived in terms of the transient figurations of interpretation'.³⁸ The kind of interpretation he means is a form of translation characterized by 'the potential open-endedness' which 'begins to loom large again, as there is no definitive end to self-understanding'.³⁹ And this kind of 'interpretation highlights the fact that human beings live by what they produce, which points to an important facet of the human condition: humans appear to be an unending performance of themselves'.⁴⁰ This reminds us of

³⁶ Yamazaki Kôichi introduces critical comments of the story from 1905 to 1993 in 'Sôseki "Koto no Sorane"', *Bungaku Ronsô*, 47, Tôyô Daigaku Bungakubu Kiyô, 1994, pp.155-156.

³⁷ See the previously quoted books by Satô Izumi and Tsukamoto Toshiaki.

³⁸ Wolfgang Iser, *The Ranges of Interpretation*, Columbia University Press, New York, p.158.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.157.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.156.

Sôseki's often quoted phrase: 'Yo no naka ni katazuku nan-te mono wa hotondo arya-shinai' ('Hardly anything in this world can be finally solved': *Michikusa, Grass on the Wayside*, 1915).