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Tracing *Shumi*: Politics and Aesthetics in Doppo's 'Musashino' and Sōseki's *Kusamakura*

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Abstract: This article traces the significance of the notion of *shumi* through a comparison between Kunikida Doppo's 'Musashino' and Natsume Sōseki's *Kusamakura*. I demonstrate how the language of *shumi* functioned as a mediator between an observing subject and an observed object, ultimately in order to establish an aesthetic vocabulary for a burgeoning middle class. Both narratives make use of *shumi* in order to draw out a specific experience of the narrator's natural surroundings but with very different outcomes. Whereas Doppo's text uses the language of *shumi* to draw the attention of the reader to the aesthetic features of the Musashi Plain and presents this way of seeing as natural and universal, it simultaneously works to mask the socio-political unbalance between the possessors of such sensibilities and the inhabitants of the land that is the object of the aesthetic gaze. By contrast, Sōseki's narrative exposes the untenableness of such an artificial language as the basis for the construction of a bourgeois identity and rejects the narrator's claims to any kind of mastery over the landscape or its occupants as a result of his heightened sensibilities. Analyzing both narratives from the vantage point of *shumi* therefore reveals the political, aesthetic, and ontological tensions present in its own discursive structures.

Keywords: Kunikida Doppo; Natsume Sōseki; *shumi*; landscape; aesthetics; William Wordsworth

1 Introduction

In the first edition of the magazine *Shumi* published in June 1906, the editors of the magazine wrote that the impetus for its publication was the fact that although Japan

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had recently ‘shocked the powerful nations of the world and became the leader of the East’, the state of the country’s literary development was still ‘stuck in old times but a new literature to represent the new Japan has not yet emerged, pushing Japanese literature to the brink of extinction’ and that therefore ‘the world of our tastes [*shumikai*] have arrived at a necessity for both innovation and preservation’. The magazine, itself a spinoff of the more highbrow periodical *Waseda bungaku*, ultimately sought to ‘contribute to our country in the 20th century’ by functioning as a guidebook in the arts for its readership.

The publication of *Shumi* is but one example of the prominent position the concept of *shumi* (趣味) occupied in the discourses of modernity in Meiji and Taishō Japan. As I have stated elsewhere, the word *shumi*, although in contemporary Japanese usually referring to ‘hobby’ or ‘pastime’, was introduced in the 1880s as a translation for the word ‘taste’ as part of a set of neologisms tasked with sustaining a state rhetoric of civilization and enlightenment.¹ As Jinno (1994) and Terada (2012) demonstrate, from its inception, and especially after the Russo-Japanese war (1904-5), the word started to appear with remarkably high frequency in all forms of discourse, but most eminently in relation to artistic practices. In many of these cases, however, it is clear that the term *shumi* had much broader implications than a narrow translation of the word ‘taste’, instead displaying connotations ranging from ‘essence’ or ‘tendency’ to ‘aesthetic quality’ and beyond. But instead of attempting to define the word in each of these instances, it is more fruitful to analyze the rhetorical functions of the word *shumi* in specific circumstances and to assess who benefitted from such discursive frameworks. One perhaps more general statement one could distill from the many examples of usages of *shumi* is that it is almost always part of the larger construction of an (upper) middle class identity, particularly in connection to the cultivation of aesthetic sensibilities. It is therefore important to understand *shumi* as part of the vocabulary of the aesthetic, as the aesthetic is always highly political in nature, directly dictating who are in- and excluded from broader social structures. As French philosopher Jacques Rancière argues, the sensible is a *partage*, simultaneously a ‘distribution’ and a ‘separation’, that ‘establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts’ which is ‘based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner

1 In my recent publication in *Humanities* entitled ‘A Sign of Good Taste: Mori Ōgai, Mitsukoshi, and the Concept of *Shumi*’ (2022) I explore how the term *shumi* functioned as a framework for the marketing campaigns of large-scale department stores such as Mitsukoshi in early 20th century Japan. In addition, in the introduction to my dissertation entitled *Tracing Shumi: Politics and Aesthetics in Modern Japanese Literary Discourse and Fiction* (submitted for review in June 2023) I examine more elaborately how the term *shumi* became one of the buzzwords of discourses on civilization, especially as they pertain to aspects of the aesthetic. For a more precise account of first usages of the term *shumi*, see Tada (2020).

in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution' (Rancière 2004, 7). It is therefore no wonder that in a time such as the Meiji period in which democratization and popular political participation became crucial issues, the cultivation of a sense of the aesthetic gained urgency.

This article examines the function of *shumi* in connection to the notion of place in 'Musashino' (1898) written by Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908) and *Kusamakura* (1906) written by Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916). I argue that *shumi* operates in these narratives as a phenomenological mode that mediates an aesthetic experience of place between an observing subject and an observed object, in turn offering the promise of access to a public identity to those who successfully cultivated the ability to appreciate certain aesthetic qualities. For Doppo, interrogating and rewriting the long-standing poetic tradition that surrounded the Musashi Plain, starting with the *Man'yōshū* and continuing well into the Edo period, was not simply a matter of giving an updated description of place or a demarcation of its current borders, but of presenting a shared modern vocabulary for an aesthetic experience whose appropriation offered the observer a sense of belonging in times of social turmoil. But while the narrative of 'Musashino', using Wordsworthian techniques, attempts to present the outcome of this mediation as harmonious and in favor of the observer, such a dialectic eventually proves highly problematic. As the narrative attempts to establish a stable middle-class subjectivity, it simultaneously suppresses a skewed political distribution of the sensible between the urban elite and those whose existence is rooted in the rural communities of the plain. Reading 'Musashino' through the lens of *shumi* thus elucidates the precarious relationship between the formation of a universal aesthetic mode codified through literary representations of place and the controversies of class conflict it attempts to mask. In the first section of this article, I analyze how Doppo attempted to transform premodern representations of the Musashi Plain, most notably by drawing on Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*. Second, I situate the narrative of 'Musashino' as a cartographic project that, at the same time, served as an appeal to cultivate a set of aesthetic sensibilities in the reader. Reading 'Musashino' through the lens of *shumi* allows us to observe this double function in Doppo's narrative, while also urging us to confront the social ramifications it inherently engendered.

In Sōseki's *Kusamakura*, however, the harmonious subject-object relationship breaks down as the landscape intervenes in the observer's attempt to keep his distance from that which he observes in order to place himself above it. Doppo's call for the cultivation of a sense of *shumi* seems to have been completely embraced by the narrator in *Kusamakura*, who fancies himself artistically and morally superior over his surroundings, which he navigates in order to find the appropriate subject matter for artistic production. Yet, the landscape and its occupants from which he

attempts to keep his distance undermine his efforts and radically plants the narrator within the landscape, forcing him to engage. In this way, *Kusamakura* emphasizes that place is never just observed but always inhabited. In turn, it reveals the tensions inherent in the subject-object relationship and questions the validity of a stable subjectivity that an appropriation of the language of *shumi* pretended to provide. *Shumi* in the narrative of ‘Musashino’ operates under the guise of a democratization of the sensible, masked as a neutral invitation extended to all, but finally reveals itself as a catalyst for social distinction and exclusion. By contrast, the narrative of *Kusamakura* demonstrates how *shumi* highlights a breakdown of this construction of a bourgeois identity and how it is ultimately unsustainable. As such, the rhetoric of *shumi* is foundational to the social construction of a middle class identity but simultaneously undermines the very structures it engenders.

2 The Project of Doppo’s Narrator in ‘Musashino’

Kunikida Doppo’s ‘Musashino’ was originally published in 1898 under the title ‘Ima no musashino’ (‘The Musashi Field of the Present’) in *Kokumin no tomo*, a periodical issued by Min’yūsha under the auspices of Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957) whose aim was to propagate democracy (*heimin shugi*) and to ‘realize happiness and wealth for the people’ (*jimin zentai no kōfuku to rieki*). As will become clear below, this democratic urge plays an important part in the appeal for an aesthetic awareness in ‘Musashino’. The narrative describes the narrator’s impressions of the landscape of the Musashi Plain as its wild natural features are increasingly usurped by modern developments and the encroachment of human activity from the rapidly urbanizing space of Tokyo. At first glance, the narrative gives the impression of a travelogue that attempts to both define the physical boundaries of the space of the Musashi Plain as well as to capture its beauty as the end of the 19th century draws near.²

But ‘Musashino’ is much more than a guide to the geographic locale of the Musashi Plain. First, the act of mapping the space of the plain is a way for Doppo to engage with and overcome the formal constraints of its past literary traditions. What immediately jumps out when we first read ‘Musashino’ is that the work is somewhat

2 Many scholars, for example Miyake (1967), have classified ‘Musashino’ either as a form of travel literature or as a form of nature appreciation, but even a quick survey of the text shows that the narrative is not merely a description of the topographical features of the land. Other scholars, such as Karatani (1993) and Sand (2009), acknowledge at least that the writer projects his psychological state onto the landscape and that it is therefore mediated, while yet others argue that this inner state of the author is again symbolic for the turbulences of Meiji society at large (Tabuchi 2008). However, in this paper I argue that Doppo’s narrative, examined through the lens of *shumi*, reveals much more than a close relationship between text and author.

oddly structured, incorporating a vast array of literary styles and genres. As Stephen Dodd mentions, Doppo's work unfolds as a 'collage' of 'extracts from the narrator's diary, letters from friends, the narrator's own impressionistic passages, a *waka* by an Edo poet, and translations of passages by Turgenev' (Dodd 2004, 37). The narrator's assessment of the Musashi Plain in the present day therefore takes place by means of a playful negotiation through these various narrative forms borrowed from distant times and places. Second, 'Musashino' functions as a manual to cultivate the aesthetic sensibilities of the reader by drawing their attention to a number of distinct features of the landscape in specific ways. Toward the late 19th and early 20th century, the cultivation of an aesthetic sensibility was seen as one of the most constitutive features of a modern subjectivity and, by extension, of the collection of individuals that together formed the citizenry of a civilized nation-state. Presenting a language for expressing such sensibilities, 'Musashino' offered its readers a method for establishing themselves firmly within a broader social context and provided a way to distinguish themselves from others. Doppo's narrative thus opened new frontiers of seeing and experiencing the world in a time of great social uncertainty, in which the successful cultivation of a unique aesthetic gaze provided one with (the illusion of) a reliable public identity as a member of a burgeoning upper middle class.

In many ways, the main objective of Doppo's project was to *read* the landscape. The language of *shumi* in 'Musashino' does not only serve to point to the existing topographical features of the plain, but also actively produces the spaces of which it speaks. As a discursive concept, *shumi* is constitutive of an aesthetic experience of the landscape and is used to define the boundaries of such an experience. To borrow a phrase from Robert Tally, I understand *shumi* as a method for the performance of a 'literary cartography'. As Tally states in his book *Topophrenia* (2018): 'If [...] a place is defined in part as a site imbued with meaning, therefore subject to interpretation and thus an appropriate subject for literary criticism, it also needs to be understood that the language used to describe and to interpret the place itself engenders or conditions the place. The place is a text, but one that is necessarily informed, and indeed formed, by other texts as well' (Tally 2018, 24). This section places such a 'cartographic imperative', as Tally calls it elsewhere, at the heart of the narrative of 'Musashino'. As such, the text of 'Musashino' serves as much as a guide to observing the landscape as it to 'read' it as a text that demands interpretation.

At the same time, place and its literary representations also have a profound influence on broader social structures, one's own self-interpretation, and how we relate to others, and is therefore inherently political. As David Harvey reminds us: 'Locating, positioning, individuating, identifying and bounding are operations that play a key role in the formation of personal and political subjectivities. Who we consider ourselves to be (both individually and collectively) is broadly defined by our position in society and the world. ... The intersection of formal mapping procedures

with this sense of who we are and how we may locate ourselves is far from innocent. The traces of a new cartographic consciousness are writ large in poetry ... as well as literature The literature on this ‘cartographic consciousness’ on ‘mental’ and ‘cognitive’ maps is now growing by leaps and bounds, suggesting an emergent field of enquiry that links thematics in geography with much of cultural and literary theory’ (Harvey 2001, 221). Analyzing literary representations of geographic locales such as ‘Musashino’ are therefore helpful in understanding the socio-political frameworks that shape its contexts, as well as to determine who benefited from such frameworks.

This mixture between the cartographic and the social inform my understanding of the text of ‘Musashino’. But the opening passage in ‘Musashino’ reveals a gap between the objectives of the narrator and the manner in which the narrative proceeds. The story’s narrator makes his intentions clear at the outset of his travels around the plain:

“There is still a trace left today of the Musashi Plain in Iruma.” I saw this somewhere on a map from the Bunsei era. ... In any case, it is not only my aim to merely look for the old vestiges of the Musashi Plain only as they are imagined in paintings and poetry (from the past). I want to find a thorough answer to the question what that Musashi Plain, which has been the source of so much art, looks like today, just for my own satisfaction. This urge struck me about one year ago and now this feeling has gotten even stronger. I’m not sure if I can satisfy this urge on my own. I’m not saying I cannot do it. I believe it won’t be easy; that is how much *shumi* I feel toward the Musashi Plain of the present. Likely, many people will agree.

The language in this passage reveals much about the narrator’s intentions and yet adds to their mystery. The narrator appears to be aware of the plain’s long poetic and artistic tradition that has shaped its history and perception. Although he does not state outright how he intends to engage with this tradition, it is clear that he wishes to overcome it somehow in order to get a better sense of the current state of the plain. The suggestion here is that his (partial) break with the established poetic practices surrounding the plain is an attempt to get a ‘real’ or unmediated view of the area. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the structure of ‘Musashino’ is very much informed by the various literary genres that have shaped the area’s literary history, assuming the form of a diary in one place and a *waka* poem or long detailed geographic description of a particular detail within the landscape the next.³ This intention is only fortified by

3 In line with the idea that the poetic space of the Musashi Plain became its own literary tradition rooted in *waka*, Spafford noted concerning the travelogues of Banri Shūku and Sōboku on the Musashi plain that the ‘expansive views of the plain meant that if the fields of Musashino, even in their broadest definition, corresponded with the Musashino plateau, their mood extended beyond the limits of their geographic reality, drawing areas beyond their borders into the unity of the Kantō’ (Spafford 2013, 52) and yet that, even in the case of travelogues, which often served ‘as framing devices for collections of poems’, the ‘portions in verse remained scrupulously anchored to precedent’ (Spafford 2013, 63). This explains why, while genres for capturing the landscape of Musashino in

the mention of a map in the first line of the passage, positioning the enterprise of acquiring a sense of the area mainly as a cartographic project, rather than a poetic one. This disconnect between the narrator's claims and the actual form his narrative takes on is one of the issues we as readers have to come to terms with.

Another important detail that stands out in this passage is that the narrator's intentions are rooted in the emotional connection he feels to the Musashi Plain, expressed here through the word *shumi*. As we shall see below, *shumi* turns out to be a key term for the narrator's perception of the plain and for his expression of its beauty. The word not only coins an ability in the observer to appreciate the aesthetic quality of the landscape, but also refers to the characteristics inherent in the landscape itself (Howard Hibbett translates *shumi* as 'charm' in his English translation of 'Musashino'). *Shumi* thus forms the point of connection between the observing subject and the observed object and allows the narrator to either place himself within or distance himself from the landscape and its poetic tradition. The paradox that emerges from the passage, then, is that although the narrator pretends to assume an objective, rationalized, and cartographic view of the plain, as a discontinuation from a literary tradition centered on its locale, his gaze is undeniably filtered through another aesthetic lens, here neatly packaged in the language of *shumi* yet presented as natural and unmediated. The concept is thus revealed as harboring a profound double contradiction: on the one hand it appears as a sensuous mechanism upon whose foundation reasoned and disinterested aesthetic judgement can take place, and on the other, in disclosing its own nature in this way, functions as a new lens that colors the observer's interpretation of the world. In order to make sense of these contradictions we must first determine the origins of this aesthetic gaze.

3 Doppo's 'Musashino' and Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*

The notion that *shumi* plays an important role in the narrator's 'reading' of the Musashi Plain become readily apparent in the passage below, taken from the seventh out of a total of nine sections:

verse shifted throughout the centuries, its imagination as a vast and imaginative space showed little change and rather was caught in a self-referential framework of literary tropes. At the same time, this reminds us of how revolutionary Doppo's narrative must have been. By combining various literary forms from different places and times, the text aspires to be a completely different literary form. It is therefore too easy to classify 'Musashino' purely as a form of travel literature or appreciation of nature as so many have done.

Within these perimeters, stations such as Tokorozawa and Tanashi show a lot of charm [*shumi*] Especially with its lush green foliage during the summer. Then from Tachikawa, taking the Tama River as our outer limit, we descend to Kamimaru. Hachiōji we can certainly not include in the Musashi Plain. Within these perimeters, stations such as Fuda, Noborito, and Futako also show a lot of charm [*shumi*]. This concludes the western half. The eastern half runs from around Kameido to Komatsugawa, including Kinegawa and Horikiri, and stops around Senjū. If you disagree with this scope, you can discard it. But as it exhibits a certain charm [*shumi*] it certainly belongs to the Musashi Plain, as I stated earlier.

Clearly, the notion of *shumi* is used to filter which parts of the landscape fit within the image of Musashi that the narrator aims to produce. In this way, *shumi* is not only a way to orientate oneself within the landscape but is it also engenders boundaries that previously did not exist. But besides delineating the physical borders of the space, *shumi* also facilitates the creation of new boundaries necessary to experience that space. *Shumi* is used to produce previously non-existing forms of aesthetic sensibility that call on the observer to witness the landscape in a new way. As Tally asserted, language not only expresses the topography of a space, but it also shapes it. *Shumi* is therefore not just a way to cartographically map the landscape, employing it as a standard for what to include or leave out of its perimeters, but also a mechanism through which to cultivate an aesthetic gaze in the reader-observer.

My claim is that this gaze is informed by the work of William Wordsworth (1770–1850). Of course, Wordsworth's influence on Doppo's writing has been thoroughly documented. Doppo himself, in an essay entitled *Fukashigi naru daishizen* (1908), went as far as to say: 'I picked up Wordsworth's style, believed in it, and it became my foundation'. However, the distinct echoes of Wordsworth's writing in the narrative of 'Musashino' have largely escaped academic scrutiny. In fact, Karatani goes as far as to say that 'in *Musashino Field* it is the landscape descriptions of Turgenev, and not Wordsworth, that Doppo cites repeatedly, moreover, in the translation by Futabatei Shimei' (Karatani [1980] 1993, 67). Yet when we examine Wordsworth's own topographical descriptions in his famous essay *Guide to the Lakes*, we witness an astonishing degree of overlap between the two texts. Wordsworth's *Guide* was originally published in 1810 out of financial necessity as, according to a Washington Post article by Simon Akam dated 6 June 2010, an anonymous introduction to a series of engravings by provincial cleric named Joseph Wilkinson and was later edited and republished several times until arriving at its final iteration in 1835. In the *Guide to the Lakes*, cited below from an edition from 1837, Wordsworth describes the landscape of the Lake District, an area in the Northwest of England that served as a source of inspiration for many poets of notoriety. When compared side by side, it becomes clear that Doppo's text is shaped to a high degree by the Wordsworthian interpretation of the landscape. Here are just a few examples of many:

Example 1: Mapping physical spaces.

I drew a line starting from Zōshigaya, and via the westside of the Nakasendō in Itabashi I arrived in the vicinity of Kawagoe... ('Musashino')

First, we note, lying to the south-east, the vale of Langdale, which will conduct the eye to the long Lake of Windermere, stretched nearly to the sea; or rather to the sands of the vast bay of Morcamb, serving here for the rim of this imaginary wheel; let us trace it in a direction from the south-east towards the south... (*Guide to the Lakes*)

Example 2: The presence of human activity in the landscape.

And the forests do not extend for miles, no, there is not even one that extends for over a mile, and there are also no fields that go on for miles, but each patch of forest is surrounded by fields and each field is surrounded by forest on three sides. Farmhouses are dispersed throughout this landscape, breaking it down even further. In other words, fields and woods are interspersed at random and so the moment you think you are entering a forest, suddenly you find yourself in a field. This also gives Musashino its unique character, there is nature here, there is life here, and the scenery is distinctive, different from the wild great plains and great forests of Hokkaido. ('Musashino')

A historical detail has thus been given of the manner in which the hand of man has acted upon the surface of the inner regions of this mountainous country, as incorporated with and subservient to the powers and process of nature. (...) [Cottages] are scattered over the valleys and under the hill sides, and on the rocks; and, even to this day, in the more retired dales, without any intrusion of more assuming buildings. (*Guide to the Lakes*)

Example 3: Appeals to the gaze of the reader.

Look, a one-eyed dog is squatting over there ... Look, there is a tiny eatery there ... Look, two or three men are whispering about something standing in the shadow of the two horses in front of the blacksmith's workshop. ('Musashino')

I know not how to give the reader a distinct image of these more readily, than by requesting him to place himself with me, in imagination, upon some given point. (*Guide to the Lakes*)

In this way, Doppo borrowed from Wordsworth in a very direct way in his description of the Musashi Plain. It is striking to see the extent to which Doppo was inspired by the *Guide to the Lakes*. In some of the examples mentioned above the similarities between the two texts are obvious to the point that they are almost interchangeable.

But the significance of Wordsworth's influence on Doppo's narrative goes beyond that of unabashed appropriation. What is evident in Wordsworth's *Guide* is that it was not purely meant as a mere topographical map of the Lake District. Instead, the descriptions more profoundly serve as methods for seeing and

experiencing the world. This guiding of the reader's eye in turn echoes through in 'Musashino'. Various scholars of Wordsworth argue the merits of his *Guide* within or contrasting with either the picturesque (Nabholtz 1964) or the geographical tradition (Whyte 2000). However, in her book *Taste: A Literary History*, Denise Gigante states concerning Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* that the 'type of picturesque guide Wordsworth has in mind described not just what but *how* to see, and in so doing so rendered a unique experience reproducible and exchangeable' (Gigante 2005, 84). According to Gigante, Wordsworth was concerned with the increasing encroachment of bad taste on the landscape due to commercial enterprise. His *Guide* was thus as much an attempt to elevate good taste as it was to keep the influence of bad taste at bay. As Gigante mentions, Wordsworth writes in his *Guide* that he wishes to 'be joined by persons of pure taste ... who ... deem the district a sort of national property'. Having the right taste was thus not just a matter of personal development, but also intimately connected to the issue of civilization and national identity. Indeed, as Wordsworth himself mentions in the 1802 preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*: '...an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and long continued intercourse with the best models of composition', adding the hope about his own work that 'if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations' (Wordsworth and Coleridge [1798/1802] 2013). Wordsworth's appeal to the reader in his *Guide* is thus not merely a request for the reader's attention to the beauty of the landscape, but also a plea for a universal aesthetic as the cornerstone of mankind's moral foundation.

4 'Musashino' as Intertext

Although there is this immediate connection to Wordsworth's *Guide* in Doppo's narrative, we must also be mindful of the narratological effect this appropriation induces. What are the consequences of the narrator's frequent references to literary traditions from other times and places? At some point in 'Musashino' the narrator inserts a long description of a Russian landscape from Turgenev. As Dodd mentions, the passage, in a translation by Futabatei Shimei, expresses the emotions of depression in the narrator while he is overlooking the landscape of the plain. It may seem rather strange to evoke the image of a different place to reflect one's emotions overlooking a landscape in Japan, but as Dodd continues: 'Of course, this is a Russian landscape, but for Doppo the sight of Musashi Plain at the same season is "more or less the same thing"' (Dodd 2004, 43). What does this usage of the passage from

Turgenev tell us about the intention of the narrator, and in fact, of the narrative as a whole? Did the narrator not stress his interest in the specific natural features of the present-day Musashi Plain to the reader in the opening passage of the text? What the example of the quote from Turgenev reveals is that it is not so much the physical or material landscape of the Musashi Plain that is important, but the experience of place through an aesthetic gaze. In essence, the landscape is a mere vessel that facilitates the cultivation of sensory faculties of aesthetic judgement in the reader/observer. This is especially clear in the third comparative example quoted earlier, where both ‘Musashino’ and the *Guide* directly appeal to the reader to merge with the perspective of the narrator in order to show them how to digest the landscape through a sense of taste or *shumi*, thus functioning to capture the gaze emitted by the work of Wordsworth and project it onto the landscape of the Musashi Plain. In ‘Musashino’, as is true for the *Guide*, the landscape and the stationary objects in it do not serve a strictly material purpose, but an opportunity for deeper aesthetic and perhaps even moral reflection in the reader. For Doppo, the concept of *shumi* functioned as the standard for such aesthetic judgements and regulated the objects that were included within this reflexive mode. *Shumi* is therefore symbolic of two properties: the rational division of the physical and material world and the emotive reflection upon that world as a mediated phenomenological experience of its beauty. Thus, the abrupt shifts in genre are ways to displace the site of the Musashi Plain, both spatially (through references to distant places, as in the Turgenev example) and temporally (through references to a poetic tradition from the past, which I discuss in the next section), effectively giving primacy to the narrator’s (and the reader’s) sensual perception of the landscape as a universal aesthetic over its actual distinctive material characteristics.⁴

Here, the contradictory internal logic of the language of *shumi* reveals itself. It functions as a mediator between the observed object (the landscape) and the gaze of the observing subject, while simultaneously being constitutive of both. At the same time, it places the subject within the place it attempts to discover and displaces him, both temporally and spatially, through its own language, as it engages with the poetic traditions from the past and faraway places while also keeping them safely at bay, maintaining the position of the disinterested observer. In his book *Blindness and Insight* (1983), Paul de Man refers to this type of displacement in Wordsworth, as well, when he writes:

⁴ Only in a recent paper by Yamaji Atsushi (2021), who accurately identifies *shumi* as a constitutive element in the text, is attention drawn to the significance of the word in the narrative of ‘Musashino’. According to Yamaji, *shumi* acts as a method to heighten a sense of connection (*rentaikan*) within the text, first with the friend mentioned by the narrator, but ultimately with the reader, whose sensibilities toward the beauty of nature are elevated through the device of *shumi*, thereby making the definition of the physical space of the plain of secondary importance.

The distinction between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poetry is made in terms of the determining role played by the geographical *place* as establishing the link between the language of the poem and the empirical experience of the reader. However, in observing the development of even as geographically concrete a poet as Wordsworth, the significance of the locale can extend so far as to include a meaning that is no longer circumscribed by the literal horizon of a given place. The meaning of the site is often made problematic by a sequence of spatial ambiguities, to such an extent that one ends up no longer at a specific place but with a mere name whose geographical significance has become almost meaningless.⁵

The language of *shumi* as it is employed in the narrative of ‘Musashino’ seemingly gives the observer direct access to the beauty and splendor of the landscape as it draws his eyes to the distinct features of its locale. However, upon closer inspection, *shumi* as a way of seeing and experiencing the beauty of the landscape functions as a pair of glasses whose poetic prescription continuously adjusts as the landscape, perceived by the gaze of the narrator, moves through various mediations established in the references to an imagined literary past. The appropriations of the literary forms that shaped the cultural traditions of the Musashi Plain are not utilized simply to point to specific portions of the material space of the plain, but are instead fashioned on top of it, as a way to place the readers of ‘Musashino’ harmoniously within its beauty, a beauty which is presented as pure and natural, but is in fact affected and artificial. In turn, this positioning of the reader by means of an intertextual method is employed to train his awareness and establish him as someone who recognizes the landscape’s aesthetic qualities. In this way, both the signs of a literary Other as well as the imagination of the Musashi Plain in strictly ‘locodescriptive’ terms (as De Man calls it) disappear and give way to a misleading impression of a mellifluous relationship between subject and object. Paul de Man continues:

In the terminology proposed by Abrams, passage of this kind no longer depend on the choice of a specific locale, but are controlled by “a traditional and inherited typology,” exactly as in the case of the poems from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – with this distinction, however, that the typology is no longer the same and that the poet, sometimes after long and difficult inner struggle, had to renounce the seductiveness and the poetic resources of a symbolical diction. ... We have [in Wordsworth] ... a relationship between signs in which the reference to their respective meanings has become of secondary importance. But this relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. The secularized allegory of the early romantics thus necessarily contains the negative moment which ... in Wordsworth [is] that of the loss of self in death or in error. Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification,

5 (De Man 1983, 205–6).

allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference.⁶

The allegorical literary references in ‘Musashino’, too, remain as previous signs of the locale of the Musashi Plain in ‘pure anteriority’, as De Man puts it. It is within this ‘void’ that the language of *shumi* operates as it constantly negotiates the subject-object relationship, which is, both in Doppo and in Wordsworth, always presented as a universal phenomenological mode.

5 The Trope of the Musashi Plain as Literary Tradition

But what is the tradition Doppo’s narrator speaks of and how does this Wordsworthian gaze allow him to overcome it? His assessment of the area’s current state in the opening passage of the narrative quoted earlier is contrasted to its appearance and description in the poetry and paintings of the past. Moving through the landscape of Musashino thus entails a type of coming to terms with the past in a way that the narrator does not yet disclose. The nuance of the word ばかり (‘only’) in the phrase 画や歌でばかり想像している武蔵野 (‘only as it is imagined in paintings and poetry’) is important here. The narrative does not aim to break fully with the tradition that surrounds the area of Musashino, but also does not want to limit its findings of the current state of the space to a mere copy or reappraisal of its depictions from a specific poetic tradition. Instead, the narrative seems to seek to produce a wholly new image of the space that is informed by a certain perception of it through an emotional reaction or attachment to that physical space and the characteristics of its landscape, captured in the concept of *shumi*. Thus, in order to properly assess this emotional state, we must first ascertain the tradition with which the narrative claims to engage.

As Doppo’s narrative implies, there is a long, mainly poetic, tradition surrounding the Musashi Plain. The earliest mentions of the space can be traced back to the oldest extant anthology of poetry in the Japanese literary tradition: the 8th century *Man’yōshū*. This anthology contains a total of nine poems framed around the space of the Musashi Plain, all composed by unknown authors. The poems are mostly love poems that reference to the natural features of the landscape to symbolize the feeling of loss of a loved one or the sorrow felt due to the distance that exists between them. Frequent invocations of the so-called *ukera* flowers, for which

6 (De Man 1983, 206–7)

the area of the Musashi Plain was known, often stand in for a feeling of longing for a distant other.⁷

The imagination of the Musashi Plain in the *Man'yōshū*⁸ formed a blueprint for subsequent references to the space in the waka tradition. The method of comparing one's emotional state, often that of sorrow or nostalgia, is mimicked in subsequent references, starting with the *Kokin wakashū*⁹ and the *Gosen wakashū*¹⁰ in the 10th century. However, these poems no longer refer to a loved one who is separated by a great distance, but rather to the beauty of the nature of the Musashi Plain itself. In particular, the grass of the plain, that grows so high that one can barely get a sense of one's surroundings, become symbolic for the wild and untamed nature of the area. The sublimeness of the plain's natural surroundings thus becomes an allegory for a deep emotional state of the observer. This imagination of the space is further extended in the 12th century and beyond as not only a place of natural beauty, but also as a vast space that is difficult to navigate. A good example of this we find in the 13th century *Shoku kokin wakashū*, in poem number 921:

No matter who you ask, its name never changes. How many days have I spent here, on the Musashi Plain?

The insistence on the vastness of the plain in the *Shoku kokin wakashū*¹¹ becomes a recurring theme to which we find references in other writings as well. Take for example the *Musashino kikō* ([1546] 1905), attributed to Hōjō Ujijyasu:¹²

No matter which way you make your way through the Musashi Plain, whether you go forward or backward, there is no end to it.

The Musashi Plain is imagined as an indeterminable and boundless space in which one can become completely lost. The idea of getting lost – not just in the sense of losing one's way because of the difficult to navigate terrain but rather in the image of

7 As Karasudani Tomoko (2020) argues, these poems in the *Man'yōshū* mostly depicted the rustic and simple daily lives of people and their deep emotions toward their loved ones expressed through an admiration of the natural landscape of the area.

8 I reference the 1957 Iwanami Shoten edition by Takagi Ichinosuke, Gomi Tomohide, and Ōno Susumu.

9 I reference the 1994 Shōgakkan edition edited by Ozawa Masao and Matsuda Shigeho.

10 I reference the 1990 Iwanami Shoten edition by Katagiri Yōichi.

11 I reference the 2019 Meiji Shoin edition edited by Kubota Jun.

12 As David Spafford notes, some scholars have uttered doubt concerning the authorship of *Musashino kikō*, calling into question whether the text was indeed written by Hōjō Ujijyasu. However, I am here not so much concerned with the social position of its author, but rather the existence of the text as a historical document that refers to the Musashi Plain within the confines of the site's poetic tradition.

the Musashi Plain as a place where one goes to get lost – is evidently reflected the *Ise monogatari*:

Once upon a time, there was a man. When he stole someone's daughter and brought her to the Musashi Plain, he was confronted by the governor as he was a thief, after all. He left the girl in the high grass and disappeared.

This conceptualization of space presupposes a first-person or third-person perspective of someone who is on the plain, trying to make their way from one end to the other. Being in the wilderness of the nature of the plain is, in this respect, somewhat of an overwhelming experience. But the Musashi Plain is first and foremost an imagined site. It is not represented as a measurable geographical landscape whose topography is to be traced and mapped. Rather, it is precisely the 'unmappableness' of the plain as poetic space that enables the overwhelming depth of emotions to be conveyed, a vastness on which subsequent literary references were carefully constructed.

In short, the poetic tradition to which the narrative of 'Musashino' refers in the opening passage is one that imagines the space almost as borderless, as a space of which the borders are unknown due to its immeasurable dimensions. The poetics of the landscape are thus based on the beauty of the wild natural environment that is untouched by the hand of man. In its vastness, the nature of the plain overpowers any agency the observer or traveler may have – a sense of direction and a bird's eye vision of the entirety of the landscape are taken away. The image of the Musashi Plain as elusive and inexhaustible is precisely what has shaped the tradition to which the narrative of 'Musashino' refers.

This poetic tradition stands in sharp contrast to the cartographic project of the narrator in 'Musashino'. This cartological insistence is emphasized throughout the narrative. Take for example the following passage, which also appears in the seventh section:

To capture this *shumi*, it is necessary to depict the train stations scattered across the Musashi Plain, and if not the stations, then the rows of houses, in other words, what the cartographer calls connected homes.

The narrator explicitly makes clear that he assumes the gaze of a cartographer here in order to capture the *shumi*, the charm, of the landscape of Musashino. But he does not do so by reverting back to the poetic tradition of a wild and undetermined natural environment, nor are his explorations presented as a complete escape from the urbanized space of Tokyo. Rather, the narrator locates this charm in the act of mapping the borderland, as a place that exists in between the untamed wilderness and the overpopulated big city. The narrator finds *shumi* in the balanced landscape

that combines natural beauty within which traces of human activity have blended together. The railway stations and connected homes (and in other passages, cultivated agricultural land) to which the narrator refers are evidence of this, but they are not simply descriptive elements. They are instead accents within the landscape that help organize and interpret its 'charm'. In other words, these (infra)structures act as signposts that help the observer *read* the landscape. The three aspects delineated in this short passage – the act of mapping, the ordering of the land through points of reference, and the element of human activity – all give us a glimpse into the essence of *shumi* and its significance for the understanding of the landscape. Such an understanding, not only a disinterested appreciation of it, seems to be the exact objective of the narrating subject. As such, it is necessary to come to terms with the narrative of 'Musashino' in both a rational way, as a making sense of the geographic characteristics and physical borders of the land, as well as an aesthetic mode of understanding, as a landscape with certain aesthetic features that have an effect on the observer.

Yet at the same time, there is something curious about the passage. While the narrator alludes to these human interventions within the landscape, man himself is conspicuously absent from the scenery. Although, as the second comparative example suggests, a recognition of human activity within the landscape, those humans remain faceless and their material existence stays repressed. While the narrator sometimes situates himself within the landscape, describing the terrain as he walks through it, in other cases he keeps a distant gaze as he provides a cartographic overview of the land. This suggests that while *shumi*, as a mode of seeing that allows the observer to keep (both psychological and physical) distance from the object he observes, makes visible certain aspects of (the beauty or charm of) the landscape, suppresses other features inherent to its locale. This is a signal that the aesthetic gaze assumed by Doppo's narrator is not an innocent one, but is accompanied by political implications. It not only raises the question of what is described and how, but also what is intentionally left out of the rhetorical framework that functions to capture the plain's *shumi*. In this way, Doppo's narrative is much more than a cartographic project that attempts to describe the landscape in an alternative way. Rather, the hybridity of the text, as a tapestry that weaves together aspects of a long poetic tradition surrounding the plain, also provides a manual that leaves the reader with clues on how to read and interpret the landscape, accentuating its geographical boundaries based on specific aesthetic features within the locale of the plain. *Shumi* therefore not only emphasizes a quality within the landscape itself, but also acts as a guide book for cultivating the discerning faculties necessary to acknowledge those qualities. The fact that the human who dwells within the landscape and whose livelihood depends on it is left out of this equation is certainly no coincidence. We thus have to ask the question what kind of consequences the establishment of such a dynamic entailed.

6 The Skewed Legacy of ‘Musashino’

The ramifications of Doppo’s text as an appeal to a universal aesthetic to promote the advancement of society at large but that only ended up serving to solidify the position of the socio-cultural elite are evident in the aftermath of the aesthetic regime the text engendered. As cultural anthropologist Yanagita Kunio complains in the opening lines of his 1918 essay ‘Musashino no mukashi’ (‘The Olden Days of the Musashi Plain’):

To the best of my knowledge, the founder of what is nowadays called a ‘taste for Musashino’ [*Musashino shumi*] the late Kunikida Doppo. About twenty-one years ago, Kunikida lived at the bottom of a hill on the northwest side of Shibuya Station. Whenever he had time, he would always go for walks in the direction opposite of Tokyo. ... Most of the people who lived there made a living in the city, and so wherever you went Tokyo was all people ever spoke about, but Kunikida did not care much for this, and instead felt an intense longing for the plains filled with pampas grass past the daikon fields, or the oak woods, and he would listen to the voice of the shrike or watch the snow on the top of the mountains at the edge of Kōshū through the trees. And, as the brilliant storyteller he was known to be, he would move his friends who had a love for the past, and eventually turned everyone into a fan of walking and a lover of the Musashi Plain (Yanagita 2003, 119).

The usage of the term *shumi* here is very different from what we have encountered thusfar. Yanagita was a famous proponent of serious inquiry into the Musashi Plain, which he often referred to as ‘Musashino kenkyū’, or ‘research of the Musashi Plain’. The booming interest in the plain that Doppo’s narrative gave rise to two decades after its initial publication, saw the influx of a more casual and leisurely enjoyment of the plain, often by members of the upper middle class who had the means (free time and disposable income) to do so. Yanagita’s use of the word *shumi* here therefore no longer holds connotations of high culture and deep aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of nature, but rather operates as a derogatory term, one that displays Yanagita’s disdain for the cheap commodification of the site. Because of Doppo’s text, despite a refraction of its temporal and spatial situatedness in order to present an aesthetic ideal for universal advancement, the site of the Musashi Plain and the enjoyment of its natural environment gradually became accessible only to those able to travel, while growing increasingly distant and out of reach for those excluded from such activities.

A good example of this is the literary tradition Doppo’s ‘Musashino’ itself put in motion. The narrative inspired a host of different authors to write about the beauty of nature through the aesthetic language and viewpoint that it created. Yamaji (2021) sees this tradition in Sakaguchi Ango’s ‘Kogarashi no sakagura kara’ (1931); Tabuchi (2008) finds traces of it as early as Kōda Rohan’s *Ikkoku no shuto* (1899); Sand (2009)

identifies it first and foremost in Tokutomi Roka's writings on Musashino, after receiving an encouraging letter from Doppo to do so, but Sand also mentions the notion of 'panorama' as a way of seeing that Doppo fostered. As Edwin Michielsen demonstrates in an unpublished article, this idea of panoramic depiction in the novel later becomes a point of contention in Tayama Katai's accounts of the Russo-Japanese war entitled 'Dainigun jūsei nikki' in relation to the photographic. Not only did many literary authors take the Musashi Plain as the site of their story or poetry, but some even started living within the existing communities on the plain. The acclaimed writer Tokutomi Roka (1868–1927), who lived as a farmer in the rustic surroundings of the plain, is perhaps the prominent example. But as Angela Yiu notes, '[k]eely aware of the difference between his way of life in practicing ecological farming for pleasure and that of the ordinary farmer, he applied the neologism of 'aesthetic farmer' (*biteki hyakushō*) to himself, and continued to create an idyllic and idealized vision of the suburb and the pose of a gentleman farmer in his work *Mimizu no tawakoto* (Yiu 2006, 324). As Doppo's 'Musashino' popularized the natural environment of the plain through an appeal to a universal aesthetic, it ended up having the opposite effect of creating a remote, particularized, and closed bubble, whose physical and metaphysical borders were slowly but surely confiscated by a growing class of socio-economic elites. In this way, the aesthetic gaze that is produced by the language of *shumi* is far from innocent, but has real consequences for the way in which the sensible is distributed between the urban elite and the rural farmers, to the detriment of the livelihoods of the latter.

In Doppo's 'Musashino,' *shumi* not only facilitates a reassessment of the physical borders of Musashino, but also reiterates the sharply defined self-referential boundaries constituted by a poetic tradition, blurs the contours of genre, and produces new modes of aesthetic experience. In this way, *shumi* functions to challenge existing borders and produce new ones, both material and immaterial. If, as Robert Tally argues, language indeed engenders and conditions place, then we may also conclude that language frames the limits and possibilities of our experience of that place and the socio-aesthetic boundaries that it produces, as well. However, even though 'Musashino' seemingly attempts to both account for and mask issues of temporality and spatiality by professing a universal aesthetic mode of experience in an attempt to overcome the constraints of tradition and location – an act of erasure that is also symbolically present in the change of title from 'Ima no musashino' ('The Musashi Plain of the Present') to simply 'Musashino' – in the end, the effects of the text are reduced to the historic specificity of a broader narrative: that of the emergence of the Japanese nation-state and the rise of a new middle class. The attempt to define the landscape through the rhetoric of *shumi* is therefore not meant as a submission to the sublime beauty of nature, but a way to tame it, to ingest it, and to make it one's own.

In conclusion to this first section, we can thus state that reading ‘Musashino’ through the lens of *shumi* reveals an irrefutable paradox, both of the narrative itself as a simultaneously rational cartographical and a sensual aesthetic enterprise, as well as of *shumi*’s internal logic. Presented as a natural way of understanding the landscape, as a way of grasping its beauty through an unfiltered, unmediated gaze, the language of *shumi* assumes the guise of a tool that gives one immediate access to the observed object while still maintaining one’s distance from it. In the process, such a rhetoric feigns a democratization of the sensible in the form of an appeal to an aesthetic framed as universal, a direction very much in line with the underlying tone of the platform in which it was published and the ideals of the People’s Rights Movement that lay at its foundation. However, *shumi* proves to be an artificial language, fashioned upon the landscape through a string of references to multiple literary traditions from old times and distant places. This artificiality is revealed in the masking of some aspects of class in the farmer/urbanite dichotomy. But this friction is conveniently concealed by the language of *shumi* itself, in turn presenting a vocabulary whose signs offered the promise of a stable bourgeois identity. *Shumi* therefore not only engenders such a mode of being, but also justifies the attitude of a narrator who remains blissfully unaware (or perhaps intentionally ignorant) of his own accountability as an elite urbanite whose presence is causing the very disappearance of the rural life which he so laments. The limits of this artificial language reach their breaking point in Sōseki’s *Kusamakura*.

7 An Ontology of Displacement: The Disintegration of the Aesthetic Ideal in Sōseki’s *Kusamakura*

Doppo’s proposal must have been, in a sense, a liberating one. In the midst of radical social change, *shumi*, both as an inherent quality of the landscape and as a universal faculty of man to recognize it, provided a means for people to hone their sensibilities and to secure a position within the maelstrom of an unprecedented class mobility. However, as we saw toward the end of the previous section, the cultivation of a sense of *shumi* was performed through an appropriation of the landscape, not just of its beauty but as a physical place of dwelling in which the romanticized image of rural living was forcibly put into practice by the urban socio-cultural elite. The universal nature of Doppo’s appeal is thus somewhat misleading, as it discounts the price paid by those whose livelihoods depended on the land of the Musashi Plain, and in turn, conveniently masked a skewed distribution of the sensible. Despite this inevitable

friction, the relationship between man and nature, between the observing subject and the observed object, is, in line with the text's Wordsworthian influence, presented as harmonious.

But the positive picture painted in 'Musashino' only tells half the story of the effects of *shumi* as a marker of aesthetic enjoyment. The artificiality of the language of *shumi* that served to mask the fissures of its own making so well in 'Musashino' eventually find their breaking point in Natsume Sōseki's narrative *Kusamakura*. Sōseki famously praised Doppo's story 'Junsa', and even praised Doppo by stating that some of his work is permeated by a 'romantic air', but simultaneously stated in a short essay entitled 'Replying to Mr. Tayama' that apart from 'Junsa' Doppo's style was artificial (*koshiraemono* こしらへもの), thus identifying a similar quality in the writing of Doppo as De Man did in Wordsworth. This section juxtaposes the narrative of *Kusamakura*, written by Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) in 1906, with Doppo's 'Musashino' and understands the language of *shumi* as an aesthetic legacy passed down from Doppo's Wordsworthian approach to Sōseki, albeit with significantly different effects. Not only do the narrators in both these works attempt to construct an identity through an appreciation of the beauty of nature, but the narrator in *Kusamakura* also frames his identity as an artist using the language of *shumi*. Sōseki's narrator *Yo*, a painter of Western-style paintings, escapes the bustle of the big city and retreats to the countryside in search of a different world (*betsukenkon*) that is free of the vulgar constraints of human emotions (*ninjō*) and consists in pure beauty. The narrative follows his inner musings, which, in a way that is perhaps somewhat reminiscent of 'Musashino', rapidly move from discussions of Western art to classical Chinese poetry and painting in search of the proper distance and form to express his aesthetic experience of the surroundings. However, whereas in 'Musashino' *shumi* functioned as a positive rhetorical device in the construction of a bourgeois identity, in *Kusamakura* it breaks down the very structures it professed to engender, ultimately rendering such an identity unviable. An appropriation of place enabled Doppo's narrator to reaffirm his own moral superiority and mastery over the landscape through his disinterested gaze, but similar claims by Sōseki's narrator are immediately challenged, ridiculed, or undermined. In this way, a comparison between these two narratives deepens our understanding of the function of *shumi* and problematizes the idea of the stable subject-object relationship proposed in 'Musashino'.

Kusamakura's narrator *Yo* (a first-person pronoun used exclusively by highly educated young men at the time) displays a dependence on the rhetoric of *shumi* to construct his identity as an artist and to position himself in relation to others. This dependency is palpable throughout the narrative of *Kusamakura* but becomes especially evident in the twelfth section out of a total of thirteen. *Yo* reflects here on

his duty as an artist and his role in society at large and to the people he encountered in the countryside in particular.

I am a painter. Because I am a painter, as a man whose specialty is *shumi*, I am more sophisticated than the unrefined lot to the West and to the East of me, even if I were to dwell in the depraved world of human emotion. As a member of society, I am in a position in which I ought to educate others for the better. I am capable of more beautiful deeds than those without poetry, those without painting, and those without the pleasure of the arts. In the world of human emotion, beautiful deeds are righteous, dutiful, and honest. Those who are able to show righteousness, duty, and honesty in their actions are models for the citizens of the world.

The passage reveals that Doppo's appeal to the cultivation of an aesthetic sensibility mediated through *shumi* is completely embraced by *Kusamakura*'s protagonist. We see that the identity *Yo* has constructed for himself hinges on the rhetoric of *shumi*. Moreover, *Yo* uses *shumi* as a method to situated his own 'placedness', and in this capacity, *shumi* is related to a broad range of issues. Not only does he place himself within the landscape of his rural place of dwelling, the hot springs of Nakoi in this case, but he also uses it to distinguish himself from the people in his direct surroundings. He fancies himself an educator, someone who brings enlightenment to those who lack the sensibilities of an artist, and derives a disproportionate degree of morality from his self-appointed status. We furthermore see how such an identity does not merely unfold in an individual sense, but also on a national and international level. Situating oneself as an artist within a specific cultural frame thus helps rebel against or distinguish oneself from a disclosed or undisclosed Other.

However, as we shall see in this section, the rhetoric of *shumi* to which *Yo* lays claim – the same type of *shumi* presented in 'Musashino' – does not hold ground in the narrative of *Kusamakura*. At every turn, the landscape and the people that surround its narrator somehow intervene in his internal attempts to create the ideal distance between himself and the landscape and its occupants as an artistic object. Doppo's double promise of the manifestation of a sense of belonging and distinction through an adaptation of the language of *shumi* appears in *Kusamakura* as an artificial appropriation of such an identity, and is subsequently undermined by the very surroundings over which it claims supremacy. While reconsidering the connection between *shumi* and place in the works and thought of Natsume Sōseki, this section thus unpacks its function in the narrative of *Kusamakura* as a reflection of Doppo's aesthetic legacy and demonstrates how such a discourse ultimately subverts the very formations of subjectivity it sought to embody. Shifting the approach to *shumi* in this way allows for an acknowledgement of the concept's ontological implications. *Shumi* is not just a framework for seeing or experiencing, but also for being, for shaping one's existence against rapidly shifting values of the sensible. In the end, the seemingly stable identity presented in 'Musashino' to which

Yo aspires crumbles under the weight of its own internal contradictions. By focusing on the problem of ontology in *Kusamakura*, my argument diverges from previous studies on Sōseki's relatively short work, which have mainly concentrated on issues of narrative and genre (Mewhinney 2022; Miyoshi 1996; Poch 2018; Sakaki 1999, Zwicker 2006; etc.).

8 *Shumi* as Ontology: De Man on Wordsworth and Heidegger

Before I discuss the ways in which *shumi* accentuates the problematic nature of a public social identity based on its own conceptual foundations in Sōseki's narrative, it is important to understand the deeper ontological issues that are at stake here. In a previous section, I pointed out that Karatani ignored to a significant extent the influence of Wordsworth's aesthetic thought on the text of 'Musashino'. But in order to come to terms with the theoretical gravity *shumi* holds, we need to understand what such a dismissal means, not just for Karatani's argument, but for *shumi*'s function in the text of 'Musashino' as a product of Wordsworth's aesthetic heritage and the literary tropes such representations subsequently produced. In *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Karatani writes about another work by Doppo:

... the man on Doppo's island is not so much a 'person' as a 'landscape'. As the narrator says, 'At such times, it is these people who flood my mind. No, it is these people standing in the midst of scenes in which I discovered them'. The narrator, Ōtsu, offers many other examples of 'unforgettable people', but they are all people-as-landscapes, as in the passage above. Although there may seem to be nothing particularly odd about this, Doppo calls our attention to the eccentricity of this narrator, who is haunted by people-as-landscapes, in the final lines of the novel. ... This passage clearly reveals the link between landscape and an introverted, solitary situation. While the narrator can feel a solidarity such that 'the boundary between myself and others' disappears in the case of people who are of no consequence to him, he is the very picture of indifference when it comes to those in his immediate surroundings. It is only within the 'inner man', who appears to be indifferent to his external surroundings, that landscape is discovered. It is perceived by those who do not look 'outside' (Karatani [1980] 1993, 24–6).

Karatani argues here that there is a clear divide between the observing subject and the observed object in Doppo's work. The landscape, which, as Karatani shows, includes the people that Doppo's narrators encounter, is watched from a distance and with a sense of disinterestedness, on which the internal psychological state of the narrator is projected. Not only is this view in line with a Kantian imagination of the world, in which the aesthetic can only be appreciated by assuming such a disinterested position, but it is also fundamentally Cartesian, as it relies on the idea

that there is an apparent separation between the self and the world. In the introduction to his translation of Kamei Hideo's *Transformations of Sensibility*, Michael Bourdaghs aptly identifies a fundamental difference between the phenomenological thought of Kamei and Karatani's position: 'For Karatani, Japan's modernity is marked by ideological interpolation into a new Cartesian subjectivity of interiority, one marked by an unbreachable gap between a gazing subject and its object. Hence ... Karatani['s] ... brilliant critique of landscape focuses on the binary split between gazing subject and its object ...' (Bourdaghs 2002, xiii–xiv). Indeed, brilliant though it may be, Karatani's dismissal of Wordsworth's influence on Doppo's writing is, undoubtedly among other things, what leads him to his Cartesian approach. It is this position that renders him unable to critically take into account the pivotal role *shumi* plays, both as an idea that problematizes the relationship between the self and the world, and as a conceptual framework for the narrator's comportment toward the world and the language he uses to express it.

On the surface, however, 'Musashino' does seem to profess a Kantian disinterestedness, through the degree of distance the narrator assumes toward the changing landscape of the Musashi Plain, using *shumi* as a tool to navigate it. This type of rationalization of aesthetic pleasure that *shumi* facilitates is very much at the heart of the narrative's proposition to its reader: by adopting a certain approach mediated by a disinterested gaze one is able to cultivate one's own elevated set of sensibilities. But as we saw toward the end of the last section, such a position only serves to mask the skewed distribution of the sensible, in which those who belong to the cultural elite appropriate the landscape for their own benefit (e.g. a leisurely lifestyle amidst the rustic beauty of the rural scenery) at the expense of those who are condemned to a life of hardship and poverty as their agrarian livelihoods are slowly usurped by the urban crowds. *Shumi* in 'Musashino' thus does not only reveal the beauty of the land along with the appropriate means to appreciate it, but it also conceals the problematic social realities this dynamic produces. This tells us that *shumi* is more than a mere discourse of the beautiful, but that something else is going on, something fundamental to our existence as human beings and to the ways in which we relate to the world. It is precisely this foundational essence of *shumi* and the friction between the gazing subject and its object that the narrative of *Kusamakura* reveals.

Yet, such a revelation is not immediately evident. When we follow *Yo*'s thought, we soon realize that the issue of distance toward the object that he is attempting to capture in aesthetic form is at the heart of his quandary as he searches for the perfect conditions for artistic production. For example, in the first section of the narrative, *Yo* thinks the following to himself after having outlined the essence of Matsuo Bashō's poetry.

Perhaps I should also attempt to capture everybody who I encounter from here on out – the farmer, the townspeople, the clerk at the townhall, an elderly man, an elderly woman – as if they were all elements in the landscape of nature. Of course, they are not elements in a picture, so they will move around by their own volition. However, if I emulate the style of a normal novelist who tries to assess these movements, gets involved with psychological effects, and performs a thorough investigation of the conflicted human emotions behind them it becomes vulgar. It is fine if they move. There is no issue as long as I see them as people moving within the picture frame. People who move within the frame can never go beyond its flat surface. When they jump outside the surface and become three dimensional, this is when they start bumping into you and the hassle of a relationship of interestedness occurs. The more it becomes bothersome the harder it gets to discern beauty. From now on I shall view the people I meet from a transcendental height far above and in order to prevent a manifestation of human emotions on both sides. In this way, it does not matter how much the other person moves, they will not easily be able to leap into my heart, and so it will be as if I stand before a picture and watch how the people in it are frantically moving around from here to there. As long as I keep the appropriate distance I will be able to observe them with a calm mind, without risk. Put differently, because I am not distracted by interest, I can observe their movements from an artistic perspective with all my energy. I can judge whether it is beautiful or not beautiful without other thoughts interfering.

As I established earlier, *Yo's* identity as an artist relies heavily on the rhetoric of *shumi*, but in this passage we are confronted with the consequences of such a position and the dissonance, rather than harmony, it causes. The passage makes clear that the artistic gaze to which *Yo* aspires hinges on a firm establishment of distance between himself and the landscape, as well as the people he describes. Such a distance serves, not so much to ensure a measure of objectivity, but rather to separate the self from the other in order to preserve its beauty. If we insist on following, in the spirit of Karatani's argument, *Yo's* intentions in the passage quoted above when we read *Kusamakura*, we indeed arrive at this Cartesian split between a 'disinterested' observing subject and an observed object that never fully interact. Through his meandering thoughts in which he considers various approaches to art and artistic distance, we learn that *Yo* prefers Eastern art, especially the gaze of the old Chinese and Japanese poets, who remove any emotionality of the self from their depictions of a scene, as opposed to Western art, in which, especially in the naturalist tradition, the author identifies with the pains of the object he describes.¹³ But *Yo's*

13 It is perhaps this anti-naturalist tendency in *Yo's* thought that seduces us to conflate his sentiments with those of Sōseki himself. Indeed, some of the language that *Yo* uses to approach this problem of distantiality is very similar to the language Sōseki uses in, for example, his essay 'Sha-seibun' in which he explains that as a writer, one must retain a degree of objectivity: 'What I mean by objective here, is to describe the other without interference of the self. Because we move forward in this spirit, no matter how intricately we proceed or how detailed we progress, or how dissecting our explanation is, we retain the same manner of writing.' By comparison, in section three of *Kusamakura*, *Yo* states: 'When we ask ourselves in these cases how we can return to a poetic standpoint, all

longwinded internal musings tend to distract us from a deeper issue that is at stake here, namely, the tension that arises within the subject-object relationship. Whereas *shumi* in Doppo's narrative was presented as an almost natural and organic way of observing the landscape, as a form of language that grants one direct access to its beauty while still maintaining a disinterested gaze, *Yo*'s distance to his surroundings is far from unaffected. His position feels forced, as if he is trying to resist the relentless appeals of his surroundings to engage. But it is precisely this tension between *Yo* and his circumstances that shapes the narrative of *Kusamakura* and makes visible the contradictions inherent in *shumi* as a mediator of a modern subjectivity through an engagement with place. Karatani's refusal to acknowledge Wordsworth's influence on such modal frictions in Doppo's text thus ultimately prevents us from understanding the deeper ontological issues that are at play in 'Musashino' as well as *Kusamakura*, as the subjectivity that both narrators are attempting to establish are negotiated through the language of *shumi*. This prohibits Karatani from going beyond a surface-level subject-object duality and therefore lacks the recognition of place as *inhabited*. If we were to follow Karatani's Cartesian position in the case of our reading of *Kusamakura* we would end up with an uncritical tracing of *Yo*'s inner thoughts as he struggles to find the appropriate distance to his subject. Yet, if we shift our understanding of space, not as a two-dimensional container for the appreciation of beauty from afar, but as an inhabited three-dimensional space in which subject and object are forced to interact, thus giving the aesthetic object the agency to intervene in the positionality of the gazing subject, we discover a vast array of issues that come to the surface. *Shumi*, in the case of *Kusamakura*, functions to reveal this strained relationship between self and Other.

As the meaning of place thus shifts between the two narratives of 'Musashino' and *Kusamakura*, so too does the function of *shumi* turn away from a cartographic device that attempts to establish a harmonious relationship between the qualities of place and the observer's claim to a specific kind of subjectivity, and instead emphasizes the impossibility of such a Wordsworthian claim. I return here once more to the work of Paul de Man, who explains the significance of a shift from a Kantian/Cartesian position to a Wordsworthian one.

Kant's passage is not like this because the sky does not appear in it as associated in any way with shelter. It is not the construct under which, in Heidegger's terms, we can dwell (*wohnen*). In a lesser-known passage from the *Logic* Kant speaks of "a wild man who, from a distance, sees a house of which he does not know the use. He certainly observes the same object as does another,

we have to do is take our own emotion, as it is, and place it in front of us, take a step back and accept it as it is, and create space where it is possible to interrogate it as if looking at another person. A poet is someone who has a responsibility to dissect his own corpse and to announce its pathology to the world.'

who knows it to be definitely built and arranged to serve as a dwelling for human beings. Yet in formal terms this knowledge of the selfsame object differs in both cases. For the first it is mere intuition [*bloße Anschauung*], for the other both intuition and concept.” The poet who sees the heavens as a vault is clearly like the savage, and unlike Wordsworth, he does not see prior to dwelling, but merely sees. He does not see in order to shelter himself, for there is no suggestion made that he could in any way be threatened, not even by the storm—since it is pointed out that he remains safely on the shore. The link between seeing and dwelling, *sehen* and *wohnen*, is teleological and therefore absent in pure aesthetic vision. . . . Kant’s architectonic world is not a metamorphosis of a fluid world into the solidity of stone, nor is his building a trope or a symbol that substitutes for the actual entities. Heaven and ocean as building are *a priori*, previous to any understanding, to any exchange or anthropomorphism which will allow Wordsworth to address, in book 5 of *The Prelude*, the “speaking face” of nature. There is no room for address in Kant’s flat, third-person world. Kant’s vision can therefore hardly be called literal, which would imply its possible figuralization or symbolization by an act of judgment. The only word that comes to mind is that of a material vision, but how this materiality is then to be understood in linguistic terms is not, as yet, clearly intelligible. . . . Wordsworth’s sublime is an instance of the constant exchange between mind and nature, of the chiasmic transfer of properties between the sensory and the intellectual world that characterizes his figural diction [. . .]. No mind is involved in the Kantian vision of ocean and heaven. To the extent that any mind, that any judgment, intervenes, it is in error—for it is not the case that heaven is a vault or that the horizon bounds the ocean like the walls of a building. That is how things are to the eye, in the redundancy of their appearance to the eye and not to the mind, as in the redundant word *Augenschein*, to be understood in opposition to Hegel’s *Ideenschein*, or sensory appearance of the idea; *Augenschein*, in which the eye, tautologically, is named twice, as eye itself and as what appears to the eye. (De Man 1996, 81–2)

De Man’s observations about the differences in the aesthetic visions of Kant and Wordsworth help clarify the distinctiveness of the latter’s perspective. In Kant’s reasoning, it is impossible to have access to the material world around us. We as observers of the world are just that: outsiders looking on, without the possibility of any deeper understanding of what it is we are looking at or how it relates to our own being. In Wordsworth, however, there is always a presupposition of a ‘mind’, as De Man calls it, that directly interacts with the physical world, attempting to make sense of it in direct relation or opposition to itself. Where Kant simply sees a house in the distance, perhaps as part of a landscape, Wordsworth sees a place of refuge or shelter. In the case of the latter, there is always an ontological imagination at work, one that sees the self in dialogue with its surroundings, whereas in Kant the two are always disconnected. Along this line of inquiry, De Man also mentions Heidegger in opposition to Kant. In his *Being and Time* ([1927] 1962), as well as his subsequent work, Heidegger famously turned away from the then longstanding Cartesian notion that we can never be sure of any form of existence outside ourselves. When Descartes coined the phrase *cogito ergo sum* (‘I think, therefore I am’), the implication was that we can only ever be certain of our own existence but never of anything beyond that.

Indisputable knowledge of the self and its existence therefore automatically precluded any definite cognizance of an outside world.

Returning to the earlier quote from *Kusamakura* for a moment, we notice that when we follow the train of thought of its protagonist, there seems to be an attempt on *Yo*'s side to envision the aesthetic from this Kantian/Cartesian vantage point, in which there is a definitive split between the observing subject and the observed object. As is clear from the passage, *Yo* does not see himself as part of the landscape, but distances himself from all that is contained within his artistic view. He sees the people he encounters not as interlocutors but as 'elements in the landscape' or 'people in a picture frame'. However, as our conclusions already suggested, such a position is problematic, and in *Kusamakura* ultimately becomes untenable, as the balance of the opposition to which De Man refers, between the Kantian/Cartesian position of a subject-object divide on the one hand and the Wordsworthian/Heideggerian position of a 'placed' subject on the other, finally tips in favor of the latter. This deep relationship between subject and object, between a *Dasein* and the world, is what Heidegger calls 'being-in-the-world'. For Heidegger, the only way in which the two sides can exist is in their interaction. As Mark Wrathall notes:

For Heidegger [...] our way of being is found not in our thinking nature, but in our existing in a place with particular things and established ways of doing things. ... Heidegger concludes [...] that *Dasein* is not a subject, self-constituted independently of the objects and world around it. *Dasein* is most fundamentally a 'being-in-the-world'. ... There can't be a *Dasein* without a world, in other words, nor a world without *Dasein*. And what *Dasein* is can only be read off the world as it acts in the world. (Wrathall 2005, 14–6)

For Heidegger, first and foremost, the world is revealed to us through a material reality. But this is not because things in the world exist independently of us. Rather, the world takes on meaning through our physical interaction with it. One example that Heidegger gives is that of a hammer, which only becomes a hammer and takes on the qualities of a hammer when it is appropriately used for the act of hammering. Heidegger, in contrast to Descartes's argument, thus demonstrates that our own existence is deeply connected to a reality outside ourselves. This position forms the basis of Heidegger's argument that we can in fact be sure that not only things but other thinking entities similar to ourselves exists purely because of the manner in which a mode of being in the world are available to us. As we saw in an earlier quote from Heidegger's *Being and Time*, in which he referred to 'they' (or *man* in German), the possible ways in which we can inhabit the world is largely based on the paths opened up by others before us. Carpenter is a profession that is available to us, not just because of the material presence of the aforementioned hammer, but also because others have practiced it as a form of existence. So not only does De Man

inform us that Wordsworth's aesthetic legacy is one that is, as opposed to that of Kant, strongly related to place, but also that Heidegger, who is named in the same context, made a similar intellectual maneuver to Wordsworth in opposition to Descartes, in showing how our ontology is always 'placed' within a set of conventions that result from the practices of others.

While *shumi* might not be a material object, it does leave material traces in the world as a convention practiced by others. The notion of *shumi* through which *Kusamakura's* protagonist gives shape to his existence in the world and to the way he relates to his surroundings, is a direct product of the aesthetic understanding *shumi* helped constitute in Doppo's 'Musashino', which in turn is informed by Wordsworth poetic expression of the landscape of the English countryside. Much more than a mere mediator of mental representations of, say, a landscape, *shumi* acquires the attributes of a skill, both as a way of seeing and as a mode of being, that turns into convention, a way of doing things, that is subsequently passed down through literary writing. The acquisition of such a skill is therefore what situates the self in the world and conditions one's interactions with it. It provides one with the tools for, as Hubert Dreyfus (2016) calls it, a 'skillful coping' with the world.

The narrative of *Kusamakura* reveals how the artificial appropriation of such skills ironically causes a breakdown in the protagonist's ability to deal with his surroundings appropriately. Reading *Yo's* intellectualized musings on aesthetics through Heidegger's ontology thus exposes the tensions inherent in the concept of *shumi* as a symbolic marker of civilization and modernity, as it emphasizes *Yo's* own positionality as 'out of place', that of a visitor whose mistaken adaptations of Doppo's (and indirectly Wordsworth's) ideal prevents him from connecting to his social environment in any meaningful or productive way. The contradictions of *shumi* we saw toward the end of our analysis of 'Musashino' are thus ironically and humorously revealed in *Kusamakura* through the protagonist's blindness toward the indefensibility of his own position.

The reader is immediately confronted with this conceptual breakdown in the very first section of *Kusamakura*. As *Yo* walks up the mountain path, he imagines a world free of human emotions and of pure beauty, one of pure art and poetry, in other words of a pure aesthetic. But all of a sudden, his verbose internal monologue is interrupted as he loses his footing and slips:

As my thoughts have drifted to this point, all of a sudden, my right foot misses its step on a wobbly, pointy rock. To keep my balance my left leg flings forward to compensate and I fall, bottom first, on a boulder of about three feet in length. My painting box strapped to my shoulder, flung from beneath my armpit, but fortunately I was not hurt.

This fall, enveloped in *Yo's* seemingly carefree musings of an ideal poetic world liberated from the vulgarity and pain of the human condition, is symbolic of the ways

in which he is unable to relate appropriately to his surroundings.¹⁴ Not only does he brush off his fall and continues with his imagined world, but the scene is also symbolic of his lack of awareness of his own ‘comportment’, to borrow another phrase from Heidegger, toward his situated, material reality. We see here, in contrast to Doppo’s praise of the common, an escape from the mundane in order to disconnect from it completely. As readers, we may already anticipate at this point that such a stance will not end well for the protagonist. Slipping on a wobbly stone shall prove to be only the first of many ways in which *Yo*’s internal musings are undercut, broken down, and displaced throughout the narrative. Hasumi Shigehiko once remarked that one of the elements that is ubiquitously present in Sōseki’s works, is the fact that their protagonists often set out from a horizontal position (Hasumi 2012, 28). According to Hasumi, this position is symbolic of a detached attitude toward the world. The opening of *Kusamakura*, read from the vantage point of Hasumi’s observation, is telling. While the protagonist is not asleep or idly spending his time in an inactive position, but is instead actively walking uphill, contemplating the difficulties of the world of human interaction and attempting to escape this reality and to create a separate world that is based in pure poetic beauty, his eventual fall brings him back, rather forcefully, in a horizontal position. In this way, even though *Yo* attempts to deny his placedness within the landscape, the landscape in turn imposes itself upon his physical body and puts him in his place.

The intervention of the landscape that results in *Yo* falling over a pebble as he mulls over his self-proclaimed artistic and moral supremacy over his surroundings at the beginning of the narrative should be read as Sōseki’s humorous critique toward the appropriation of an identity through an artificial language of *shumi*. This questioning of *shumi* as a universal aesthetic in the way that Doppo proposed is at once, as Annette Thorsen Vilslev suggests, a questioning of the universality of Western thought itself, as Sōseki is prone to do, as well as the influence of ‘traditional’ iterations of Western artistic form on the production of literature in modern Japan (Vilslev 2016, 274). This tension between motion and stagnancy, between *shumi* and place, and between the observing subject and the observed object is what gives the narrative of *Kusamakura* its movement.

There are many more instances in which the landscape or its occupants intervene in the narrator’s assumed disinterestedness (most prominently in his interactions with Nami, the daughter of the inn where *Yo* stays), but his being out of place culminates into the final scene, in which the narrator returns to the real world symbolically crossing a river by boat, together with Nami, her father, and her

¹⁴ In his book *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions: An Introduction*, Thomas Rimer interprets this fall as a ‘forced loss of “detachment”’ and results in a temporary suspension of the narrator’s objectivity (Rimer 2014, 60).

nephew Kyūichi, whom they are about to send off to the war. As the train leaves the station, Nami catches a glimpse of her ex-husband in one of the last cars, upon which her expression shows a feeling of ‘pathos’ (*aware* 憐れ, which Meredith McKinney translates as ‘pitying love’). The look on Nami’s face excites the narrator, as this has been the expression he had been looking for as the inspiration for his painting.

From beneath his scuffed brown hat, the bearded soldier melancholically showed his neck. At that moment, Nami’s eyes unintentionally met those of the soldier. The steel train started to move. The soldier’s face vanished in an instant. Nami stood there, dumbfounded, as she watched the train leave. Within her dumbfounded expression, there was something mysterious, something that had not appeared before, a ‘pathos’. ‘That’s it! That’s it! That’s what I need to create my painting’, *Yo* whispered tapping Nami on her shoulder. The picture that he had so longed for was realized in this passing moment.

Putting aside the inappropriateness of the narrator’s intrusion in a moment of private suffering of a family who has just shipped off a family member to war, the scene starkly demonstrates *Yo*’s inability to cope with his environment. His relentless persistence to find the perfect expression on Nami’s face in order to paint the picture he has been seeking to paint even in this highly emotional moment for Nami is his last desperate attempt to avoid facing the harsh realities of the war. Many previous studies of *Kusamakura* interpret this final scene as a resolution of the tension between the painting subject and the aesthetic object. Miya Elise Mizuta Lippit states, for example, that ‘the beauty [of] Nami produces the scene, creates the effect, while the painter, like a camera, becomes the passive recorder, the interpreter. The chaotic influence of mixed forms and competing oppositions subsides as the book closes with a separation – Kyūichi (the nephew going off to war) from his family, Nami from her husband, and the artist from his subject – a perfect *Laocoönian* categorization – which brings stability to the novel at last’ (Mizuta Lippit 2019, 170). But in my view, the final scene is symbolic of tensions unresolved. Not only do we never actually witness *Yo* painting his picture, but it also stresses, through the contrasting of Japan’s war effort with *Yo*’s painful, yet almost comical, refusal to face reality, the impossibility of his position in attempting to separate himself from his environment. In the end, he is only able to gain the artistic insight he sought by leaving his idyllic rural surroundings (which, as Kyūichi’s conscription tells us, is perhaps not as idyllic as *Yo* would like the reader to believe) and returning to the real world. Daniel Poch ascribes a measure of composure to the narrator as he keeps his distance from the world: ‘Through this performance [of genre], Sōseki objectified, distanced, and alienated the aesthetic world of traditional letters to distinguish it from, and weigh it against, as it were, the world of the novel. *Kusamakura*’s narrator no longer naturally inhabits the world of traditional letters, but instead ironically performs it

in order to measure how much “electric current of human emotion” it can transmit’ (Poch 2018, 21–2). But it is this contrived distancing, through his meandering considerations of both Western and Eastern poetic and artistic traditions, and a refusal to recognize himself as part of the landscape, and the image of the latter subsequently forcing his engagement that produces the humorous and ironic undertone in the narrative of *Kusamakura*. Thus, the place that is ‘othered’ by the narrator in this way, reclaims an agency that is then forced upon the physical presence of the narrator himself, compelling him to recognize his own ‘placedness’, but who stubbornly continues to resist its demands.

9 Conclusions

This article has examined the function of *shumi* as a lens for the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the landscape through a juxtaposition of Kunikida Doppo’s ‘Musashino’ and Natsume Sōseki’s *Kusamakura*. The rhetoric of *shumi* has different effects and consequences in both narratives. In Doppo’s ‘Musashino’, *shumi* functioned first and foremost as the guiding principle of a cartographic imperative. The narrative of ‘Musashino’ forms a decisive break with a longstanding poetic tradition surrounding the Musashi Plain. This tradition, that starts as early as the 8th century and that continues well into the Edo period, imagines the plain as boundless and vast, as a space that is unmappable and in which one gets lost. However, the objective of the narrator of ‘Musashino’ clearly states that his mission is to go beyond these literary tropes of the plain and to assess the current state of the area with his own eyes by mapping it and defining its borders. *Shumi* acts as a standard as it attributes a certain aesthetic quality to the landscape when deciding which areas to include in the plain and which to exclude from it. But *shumi*, as a method of seeing and experiencing inspired by the topographical descriptions of the Lake District in William Wordsworth’s *Guide to the Lakes*, signifies more than a cartographic project in the narrative. It also acts as a guide, not just to the physical space of the plain, but as a phenomenological guide that educates the reader on how to see and experience the beauty of the landscape. It thus forms an invitation to the cultivation of a certain set of aesthetic sensibilities, one that befitted the ideal image of an emerging upper middle class. But the effect of Doppo’s narrative is far from an innocent appreciation of nature. Instead, the language of *shumi* not only bring to the fore certain characteristics inherent to the landscape and the faculty in man to recognize it, but it also serves to obscure a skewed distribution of the sensible. The publication of Doppo’s narrative spurred on a cultural of tourism and aesthetic rural living among the socio-cultural elite of the urban space of Tokyo whose appropriation of the rural landscape of the Musashi Plain simultaneously entailed a threat to the farmers

whose livelihoods depended on the plain's agriculture. Their inability to actively partake in the aesthetic regimes spurred on by people like the narrator in 'Musashino' translated into a direct disenfranchisement of their political participation. Yet still, the aesthetic language of *shumi* that engendered such inequalities also acts to conceal them, which is why they lack any overt visibility in Doppo's narrative.

However, in Sōseki's *Kusamakura*, the problematic consequences of the attempts to construct an identity on the artificial language of *shumi* finds its humorous demise. Whereas Doppo's narrator was allowed to keep a disinterested distance toward the landscape and its socio-economic activity in order to accentuate its beauty, the narrator in *Kusamakura* is met with a different fate. Throughout his quest for a world of pure beauty that is free of the constraints of human emotion, *Yo* treats the landscape and its human occupants as a two-dimensional canvas from which nothing can escape. But these attempts to distance himself from the artistic object has the opposite effect. The more *Yo* tries to escape into a world of unadulterated poetics the more his surroundings intervene and draw him in, forcing him to engage with the reality he so desperately seeks to leave behind. *Shumi* reveals itself in *Kusamakura* not merely as a standard for the judgement of beauty, of experiencing and seeing, but as a mode of being, therefore exposing the ontological issues at play in the connection between *shumi* and the engagement with place in the subject-object relationship. The Kantian/Cartesian disinterested gaze that, despite its underlying problems, still held ground in 'Musashino' is forcefully brought to its knees in *Kusamakura*. As an exponent of Wordsworth's aesthetic legacy, *shumi* demands a direct engagement with place. As Paul de Man suggested, in the Wordsworthian/Heideggerian imagination, the world is not a container filled with things disassociated from the self, but an inhabited space to which the gazing subject is directly related. This causes the privileged position that *Yo* attributes to himself based on his mastery of *shumi* to be undercut in comical ways, in turn exposing the contradictions inherent in his untenable position. The objectives of both narratives are therefore fundamentally different. The aim of Doppo's 'Musashino' is to follow the eye of the narrator through the landscape as he guides the reader through the terrain of the Musashi Plain in order to offer a new form of aesthetic knowledge in the harmonic relationship between subject and object. By contrast, the point of Sōseki's *Kusamakura* is to pay attention to everything that happens outside of the narrator's purview, as it interrogates the validity of such a knowledge constructed with an artificial language through a relationship of dissonance between the observer and the observed.

In this way, an analysis of the language of *shumi* facilitates a deeper understanding of the political, aesthetic, and ontological issues at stake in the construction of a new middle class identity in late 19th and early 20th century Japan.

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