

Realism and the Body: the dynamics of ideology in the proletarian literature movement

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This paper examines the theories on realism which were the subject of heated debate in the prewar proletarian literature movement; it also shows, through an analysis using concrete examples of texts, the process by which organizational theory, advancing the movement, affects the body of the writer. This organizational theory not only determined the nature of the works down to the smallest detail, but also affected the body of the writer him/herself and prescribed every aspect of his/her social and physical behavior. I demonstrate how each writer concerned him/herself with this theory in its ideological operation as realism, how the writer's consciousness was transfigured and what effect this had on the formation of subjectivity through the connections with the time and space into which the writer's body and his/her work were plunged.

Sata Ineko's "Kyarameru koba kara" ("From the caramel factory") shows the process of what Marx calls reification through a description of the daily life of a young girl who has been positioned as a commodity in the capitalist system, and the way the generation of her emotions enables her to deviate from this position. However, in Sata's subsequent story "Kanojo-ra no kaiwa" ("Conversation among women"), this power is lost in the process of introducing organizational theory into the work.

Nakano Shigeharu's early poetic activity made an issue of the creation of emotion, as an attempt to confront "popularity," the dominant ideology of the time. The theoretical foundation of his work was the concept of class-consciousness as advocated by Georg Lukács and Fukumoto Kazuo.

A comparison of the powerful reality of Kobayashi Takiji's "Tou Seikatsusha" ("Living in the Party") with other contemporary works provides a relative estimation of each activist writer's response to organizational theory.

I will further consider the limits and possibilities of the socialist realism which became mainstream after the collapse of the movement, mainly through an examination of criticism by Kubokawa Tsurujiro, a leading theoretician of the time, and the role which it played in writers' formations of subjectivity in the 1930s. In this way, this paper will examine whether and how literature may preserve its own thoughts and remain autonomous from the ideology which surrounds the writer's body and permeates his/her consciousness.