

example, was aware of and Kreyling's failure to engage himself in a rigorously critical spirit with his subject compromises his work. His book leaves too many problems unsolved and too many questions unasked.

Joan Givner

TAYAMA KATAI

*The Quilt and Other Stories by
Tayama Katai*

Translated and with an
introduction by Kenneth G.
Henshall

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Tayama Katai (1872-1930) is well known in Japan as one of the leading figures in the naturalist movement, even though not all of his works could be called "naturalist."

Westerners usually associate the term "naturalist literature" with the concepts of industrial revolution, urbanization, and the misery of the working classes. Milieu and heredity were considered the determining factors in people's lives; writers "dissected" their heroes like doctors would a corpse. Like scientists, writers wanted to discover "the truth" about man. In Europe, authors like Zola, Gerhart Hauptmann or Arno Holz showed how limited man's so-called free will in reality was: life was determined by biological factors and by society.

In Japan, this new school of thought took roots almost immediately; since Japan had opened her doors to Western ideas and technology in 1868, everything Western was avidly studied and discussed. In most cases, however, this process of assimilation also meant modification. The idea that social pressures and the forces of a specific milieu regulated one's life was not at all new or shocking in Japan. However, that an individual should put up a fight against those forces, that the prevailing social and moral order might be defied—these were shocking thoughts indeed. Because of this, naturalist writers in Japan often told their novels in the first-person singular; almost all of their works are, to some extent, autobiographical. Japanese writers explored the forces of nature in themselves, not so much those in their environment.

Tayama inaugurated that trend in 1907 with *Futon* ("The Quilt")—the story which brought him lasting success and which appropriately opens the present collection. At first, it seems a rather banal story: Tokio, an author who earns his living by working half time in a drab office, takes on a pupil. The beautiful girl wants to become a writer herself; she has been educated in a modern school and has modern ideas about life. Tokio falls in love with her, but does not succumb to his passion. The girl then takes a lover, pretending to her teacher that it is a "pure" relationship. Should Tokio notify her parents? "He could not bring himself to make a sacrifice of his beloved's passionate love affair for the sake of his own unreasonable jealousy and his own improper feelings of love, and at the same time, as their self-styled 'kind-hearted guardian,' he couldn't bear to deal with them like some moralist" (p. 69). Finally, however, his responsibility weighs too heavily on him. He notifies her father, who takes her home with him—far away into a snowy mountain village. Tokio then goes to the girl's old room where he "spread out the mattress, lay the quilt out on it, and wept as he buried his face against the cold, stained, velvet edging" (p. 96).

To appreciate this story properly, one has to take into account that in Japan the teacher-pupil relationship has always been a venerable one. In "The Quilt," this social and moral relationship is destroyed by passions. And the reason for those passionate feelings is the Westernization of Japan. The teacher, his pupil, and her lover have all given in to Western influences: Western literature, Western education, Western life style. The story does not challenge the order of society; rather it shows how individual desires—the result of Western influences—create conflict and suffering.

There are seven other stories: six written between 1907 and 1914, one in 1902. The later ones all hold the reader's interest; the earlier one, however, is rather boring, although it is said to be Tayama's "most successful work to date" (p. 16). A final word of praise for Kenneth G. Henshall, editor and translator: the translations are competent and a pleasure to read; the selection gives a good idea of Tayama's development; the detailed introduction provides the necessary perspectives—with regard to the literary scene in Japan as well as to that in Europe.

Ingrid Schuster