A

FICTIONAL

COMMONS

NATSUME SŌSEKI

AND THE PROPERTIES OF MODERN LITERATURE

Michael K. Bourdaghs

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Michael K. Bourdash,

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F I C T I O N A L

C O M M O N S

NATSUME SÕSEKI & THE PROPERTIES

OF MODERN LITERATURE



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For

VERSEA BOURDAGHS

(1941-2008)

DUKE

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NOTE ON USAGE

In nearly all cases, I list Japanese personal names in the Japanese order: family name first, personal name second, for example, Natsume Sōseki. Following conventional practice in Japan, however, I refer to canonical authors by their given names, often a pen name. For example, Sōseki is the pen name that Natsume Kinnosuke adopted for his literary efforts.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Recent decades have brought an alarming bloat to the acknowledgment sections of scholarly books: what used to be a tidy paragraph now often spills across several pages. And like the interminable end credits of recent Hollywood blockbusters, nobody actually reads through them anymore—except to scan to see if their own name is included. At least, that is what I do. I have a real fondness for older films that simply conclude, "The End," so I will keep things short and simple. More than likely, your name will not appear. Please do not interpret that as a sign of ingratitude: I am profoundly thankful to many, many colleagues, friends, and antagonists.

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INTRODUCTION

Owning Up to Sōseki

If man in the state of nature be so free, as has been said; if he be absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest, and subject to no body, why will he part with his freedom? why will he give up this empire, and subject himself to the dominion and controul of any other power? To which it is obvious to answer, that though in the state of nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the invasion of others: for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equity and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition, which, however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: and it is not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others, who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name, property.

JOHN LOCKE, Second Treatise of Civil Government (1690)

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say *this is mine* and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many miseries and horrors Mankind would have been spared by him who, pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch, had cried out in kind: Beware of listening to this impostor; You are lost if you forget that the fruits are everyone's and the Earth no one's.

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JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, *Discourse on Inequality* (trans. Victor Gourevich; 1755)

The argument of this book revolves around a wager—a wager in which no specific property is at stake, because the idea of property itself is at stake. Modernity arrived in Japan, as elsewhere, largely in the form of a new regime of ownership. A complex and uneven assemblage that patched together embodied practices of everyday life, disembodied ideologies, scientific knowledge, and legal codes—often instituted after the fact to legitimate the existing distribution of resources—this regime became a key framework for understanding not only society and the world, but one's own selfhood. In Europe, liberal philosophers ranging from Locke to Smith and Hegel defined modernity and modern selfhood in terms of ownership just as their critics, ranging from Rousseau and the German Romantics to Marx and beyond, identified property and its inherent threat of alienation as modernity's original sin. When Japan confronted modernity in the form of encroaching Western imperialism, it countered by reinventing itself as a modern empire, complete with the property schema that such an empire demanded. And thinkers and artists in Japan who questioned this transformation often did so by criticizing the emergent property regime.

To explore this problematic, I take up the writings of Natsume Soseki (1867–1916), often celebrated (correctly, to my mind) as Japan's greatest modern novelist. I read his writings as critical and creative responses to the new property system that emerged during his lifetime. Virtually all of Sōseki's fictional narratives revolve directly or indirectly around property disputes: time and again, he spins tales about thieves and burglars, misappropriated estates, stolen affections. He is a master of the inheritance plot, a subgenre that is as prone to render property into "an insoluble puzzle" as it is to reproduce the presumed naturalness of ownership.² Moreover, in his ambitious attempt to theorize the category of literature, Soseki proposed rethinking literature as a domain that inherently troubled conventional notions of ownership. My claim is that Sōseki's writings, both fictional and theoretical, probe the hazy interstices of the new property regime, mining its ambiguities and contradictions for raw materials that could be used to fabricate new kinds of stories, stories that often enact alternative practices of owning and sharing. He liked to spin stories that trouble our ability to distinguish between owner and owned—about animals, for example (chapter 1), or about younger siblings, women, and colonial subjects (chapter 4)—and that imagined what might lie beyond the sphere of private property. Both in practice and in theory, literature provided Soseki a laboratory for experimenting with something like a new commons: an ongoing collective project that belongs to no one and everyone.

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This is in part a historical question. Modernity around much of the globe arrived in the form of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call "the republic of property." In Japan, after the 1868 Meiji Restoration and the launch of the new nation-state's campaign to achieve parity with the Western powers, systems of ownership provided the focal point for practical and theoretical controversies—ranging from state economic policies aimed at accumulating the capital necessary to finance Japan's rise as an industrial and military hegemon to intellectual controversies surrounding the discourses of individualism, success, and family. For the Meiji state, struggling to win revision of the Unequal Treaties (a goal finally attained in 1899, the year before Sōseki headed to London as a government-sponsored overseas student) and attain recognition as an imperial power, the establishment of a modern private property system was a key political task. The promulgation of the Meiji Civil Code in 1898, still today in modified form the basis for Japanese property law, was in many ways the culminating event of the era's Civilization and Enlightenment movement.⁴

The new property system that emerged during Soseki's lifetime was a complex and hybrid machine. It cobbled together older practices from the Tokugawa period (recoded to fit the needs of state-driven industrial capitalism and imperial expansion) with new legal codes, ideologies, and sensibilities translated from elsewhere.⁵ A narrative of its rise might start with the reform of Japan's land ownership system launched as part of the new taxation system introduced in 1873. The unit for tax payment was no longer the collective village, but rather the individual landowner, and tax assessments were no longer calculated as a percentage of anticipated rice yield to be paid in kind, but rather as a percentage of assessed value of the plot of land, paid in cash. Since 1643, it had technically been illegal to sell land in Japan. While the ban was widely violated so that de facto private land ownership certainly existed before 1868, it was only with the new regime that private landed property became a universal reality de jure: one could now legally buy and sell ownership rights in land, rights that were certified by the state. Along the way, various forms of commons and joint ownership were appropriated and transformed into private property. The new taxation system unleashed market forces into the Japanese countryside with unprecedented vigor, resulting in a rural society that was increasingly bifurcated between wealthy landowners and impoverished tenant farmers. It also rewrote the urban landscape, producing new slums, intensified class

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stratification, and intricate neighborhood patterns whose shapes emerged in response to the complexities of ownership.⁸

Another important development arrived in 1890 with the enactment of the Meiji Constitution and its implementation of a property qualification for suffrage. To vote in the new national parliamentary elections, one had to be male, twenty-five years of age or older—and a property owner who paid at least fifteen yen in annual taxes. Two more important steps came with the abovementioned 1898 Meiji Civil Code and with Japan's 1899 signing of the Bern Treaty for International Copyright Protection: Japan's legal codes defining property were now on par with those of other dominant global powers. In 1897 Japan also adopted the gold standard, making the yen fully convertible on world currency markets, linking its property systems all the more firmly to the emerging global capitalist economy. These new legal forms for tangible and intangible property in turn enabled new modes for circulating capital to generate surplus value, the ghostly excess produced through the magic formula of commodity exchange. The new system ensured that such surplus value was directed into the pockets of proper owners, thereby enabling the capitalist economic system to reproduce itself.

As Japan's empire expanded, the new property regime was extended to its colonies via such measures as the Former Natives Protection Law in Hokkaido and the Okinawa Prefecture Land Reorganization Law (both 1899), which resulted in massive dispossession and "replacing communal with private land ownership." 10 Similar measures were introduced in the colony of Taiwan, and then in the 1910s—that is, at the peak of Sōseki's writing career—in Japan's newest imperial acquisition with the Korean Land Cadastral Survey (discussed at length in chapter 4).¹¹ In this expansion, the Japanese empire was following a model previously established by the British and other empires, in which property law provided both an ideology and technology for establishing colonial power. As Brenna Bhandar notes, the modern property regime "operates as a set of both techniques and mechanisms encapsulated in legislation, legal judgments, and myriad everyday practices of ownership that have structured colonial capitalist modes of accumulation. It is also a central fixture in philosophical and political narratives of a developmental, teleological vision of modernization that has set the standard for what can be considered civilized."12 To be civilized meant to have the proper subjective capacity for acquisition, a status that was defined in racial and ethnic terms in the Japanese and other empires.

Our historical narrative of the rise of Japan's modern property regime might conclude in 1925, nine years after Sōseki's death. That year, the

General Election Law abolished the property qualification for adult male suffrage—but only after the Peace Preservation Law enacted that same year made it a crime to advocate the abolition of private property. Questioning the new ownership regime became literally a thought crime.¹³

PROPERTY AS POWER/KNOWLEDGE

This new property regime was as much a question of power as of wealth. As Tateiwa Shin'ya points out, the free-market economy and the exchanges so beloved of liberal and neoliberal economists can only emerge after property rights have been defined by some power—usually, in modern societies such as Meiji Japan, the state. 14 In other words, to participate in this new system of ownership was to accept the authority of the Meiji government to define who owned what. This was hardly unique to Japan: as Dick Pels argues, despite attempts by Marxists, anarchists, and others to distinguish power from property, in modern societies "they are often defined in terms of one another," so that the two concepts "have a curious habit of reappearing in each other's definitions." For example, Hardt and Negri describe as "the really dominant forms of power" today that "power embodied in property and capital." ¹⁶ Karatani Kōjin provides one model (discussed at more length in chapter 3) for understanding this blurring. Revising the conventional Marxist theory of world history, Karatani replaces "modes of production" as the primary stages of social development with what he calls "modes of exchange," noting that these do not form successive steps in a linear temporal development, but rather consist of four different modes of exchange that coexist in any given society, albeit with different degrees of clout. In Karatani's framework, the modern property regime required both mode B (an exchange of submission to state power in return for protection) and mode C (capitalist commodity exchange).¹⁷

Alongside its centrality to legal and economic systems, property also became a dominant scholarly question, generating prolific studies in law, anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, and other modern disciplines that were emerging together with the new university system. For example, as we will explore in chapter 2, scientists in the rising discipline of psychology frequently turned to models of property to explain the mechanisms of our own psyches. Likewise, philosophical debates over the nature of the self, that supposed hallmark of modernity, frequently took place by way of questions and practices of ownership. To own something—that is, to be

an owning subject in relation to an owned object—requires first an objectification of the self, which immediately raises the tricky problem of who owns that objectified self. As one legal scholar notes, "Almost any theory of private property rights can be referred to some notion of personhood" because such theories "must address the rights accruing to individual persons, and therefore necessarily implicates the nature of the entity to which they accrue." ¹⁸ The modern self was a self-contradictory project, a subjectbecoming-citizen that was simultaneously a citizen-becoming-subject (meaning, among other things, that the self always emerges in the company of other selves, as something that is therefore always in some sense shared rather than owned outright), and theories and practices of property were one of the hinges around which this unstable entity revolved. 19 According to the tenets of what C. B. MacPherson called "possessive individualism," property ownership became a fundamental figure for explaining selfhood and a wide swath of human experience.²⁰ A proper self or subject, it was increasingly believed, was one qualified and able to act as the owner of property: in most modern societies, male, heterosexual, and white (or at least honorarily white).

Property simultaneously became a central concept in Japan and elsewhere in demarcating the stages of history in teleological narratives of civilization. In Meiji literature, for example, we often encounter the use of property systems as a yardstick for measuring degree of civilization. Kamei Hideo discusses the following passage from Kanagaki Robun and Fusō Kan's By Shank's Mare through the West (Seiyō dōchū hizakurige, 1870–76), in which the narrator promises to "speak about the transformation of all the nations of the world brought about by the progress of civilization": "In the beginning, there were those peoples who knew not how to cook food, nor how to weave clothing, nor how to set up shelter and mark boundaries, who wandered hither and thither hunting animals for food, who had no such thing as money, who lived in the wilds together with fowl and beast, who did not know how to conduct agriculture. The people of that time are called uncivilized, or, in the Western term, 'semi-barbarian.'"²¹

We find a similar ranking of various peoples of the world by means of the existence or lack thereof of a stable property system in Yano Ryūkei's *Tale of the Floating Castle (Ukishiro monogatari*, 1890). As Kamei notes, these works rely on the knowledge produced in such modern textbooks as *A Brief Geography (Yochishi ryaku*, 1870–75), edited by Uchida Masao. Uchida's text provides the following classification of different peoples:



Semi-barbarians, when compared with the previously discussed group [savages], are somewhat advanced in their knowledge, and in them we see the existence of private property. . . . The first type among them are called nomads. . . . The second type are partially nomadic and partially agricultural, and among its numbers are some that establish villages and live in a fixed place for a year, sometimes even two or three years. . . . The third type engages in agriculture and herds livestock, or, in some cases, in fishing and hunting. . . . As village size grows larger, some emerge that could be called states, and among these are some in which *laws* exist and people submit to the guarantees of their chief.²²

In chapter 3, we will explore how the discipline of sociology mobilized property systems as an indicator of the civilizational stage of any given society.

In sum, from state economic policies that aimed at the capital accumulation necessary to finance Japan's rise as a world power to the intellectual debates surrounding new concepts of selfhood, the question of property was central to the project of modernizing Japan. In his initial canonization in both Japan and the West, Sōseki was often celebrated as Japan's first truly modern writer, so that he became a symbol of Japan's successful modernization.²³ In more recent decades, Sōseki's role as a critic of modernity, particularly Western modernity, has been championed by critics from Japan and elsewhere.²⁴ Still other critics have taken to task his complicity with more unsavory aspects of modernity—including imperialism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. Whichever position one takes, however, my wager here is that for Sōseki, the question of modernity was in many ways one of property.

LITERATURE BEYOND PROPERTY

There is some evidence that late in his life, Sōseki took an interest in left-of-center politics, including a critical stance toward capitalism and its property regime. ²⁵ He had long borne at least some interest in socialist thought. From his time in London (1900–1902), he owned Marx's *Capital* in English translation, but apparently never read it: the pages in his copy remain uncut. In an oft-quoted 1902 letter to his father-in-law, Sōseki wrote:

The failure of civilization in Europe today is clearly based on the extreme gap between the rich and the poor. I am afraid this imbalance has a tendency to starve or freeze to death many promising human resources every year, or leave them without any education. It turns rather to implementing the common ideas of very ordinary rich men. . . . If we tend toward the same conditions in Japan (and I believe we are tending toward them at present), it will be a matter of grave importance for the future development of labor's literacy and intelligence. Although I believe that Karl Marx's theories have faults, even simply as pure rationalizations, it is quite natural that such teachings should appear in a world like the present one. ²⁶

This is not to say that Sōseki outright rejected the idea of private property. Like most intellectuals of his era, he knew and no doubt at least partially sympathized with arguments for the fundamental morality of property developed by such figures as Locke, Smith, and Hegel.²⁷ But as one who lived through dramatic changes in property regimes, Sōseki was also aware of the historical contingency of ownership norms and of the reality that we constantly participate in multiple economies, each characterized by its own practices of property and sharing.²⁸ Sōseki, then, did not necessarily reject market exchange with its presumption of private ownership, but in his literary writings he again and again relativized the increasingly dominant position of that form by probing its lacunae and by situating it in relation to other possible models.

Literature for Sōseki, then, was a realm for thinking not just about, but beyond, property. What did that beyond consist of? Rather than attempt to construct one overarching explanation, I employ a number of different theoretical models—some from Sōseki's day, some more recent—to tease out the multiple alternatives to classic liberalism's notions of property and self-ownership that I think Sōseki's writings gesture toward: primitive communism (such as characterizes much of domestic family life), open-access models such as commons and public trusts (often governed by shared codes of custom and morality), gift exchanges and pure gift non-exchanges, dialogic relationality, and rhizomatic forms of nonexclusionary selfhood. Such a dispersed range of approaches seems appropriate not only to the diversity of Sōseki's writings but also to the messy, uneven reality of modern property regimes.

I also explore how Sōseki's literature probed contradictions inherent to the dominant notion of individual private property presumed by a liberal market economy. Through its legal codes, practices, and ideologies, the modern property regime generated numerous legal fictions: new forms of owning subjects and owned objects, all of which rested on unsteady foun-



dations laced with self-contradictory axioms.²⁹ In fact, private property as a system is from the start something like a commons. As Carol Rose argues, "a regime of individual property is itself a kind of collective property or metaproperty; a private property regime holds together only on the basis of common beliefs and understandings."30 Moreover, property claims require persuasion, often pursued through such techniques as narrative, to obtain consent from others. As Hegel noted in his chapter "Property" in Philosophy of Right, to claim ownership over something, we have to find some way of designating that ownership in a manner that those around us will recognize.³¹ This involves "a kind of assertion or story, told within a culture that shapes the story's content and meaning. That is, the would-be 'possessor' has to send a message that others in the culture understand and that they find persuasive as grounds for the claim asserted."32 Claims of ownership thus depend on narratives and the rhetorical functions of language.³³ For legal codes, this dependence on the productivity of language and rhetoric is a kind of scandal, a source of panic that has to be concealed via ideology: the existing property regime has to acquire the sense of naturalness and inevitability, and the codes of ownership have to be magically granted the status of pure, transparent referentiality.³⁴ The flimsy literary origins of property, that is, have to be repressed: ideologically, the system claims to sit on solid ground that has existed for all time. But, as Soseki understood remarkably well, the repressed scandals underlying property make for excellent stories in the domain of literature, which shamelessly foregrounds the techniques of narrative and rhetoric. They provide another means for literature to imagine what lies beyond modern property systems.

In sum, the modern property regime was riddled with contradictions and ambiguities that were a boon to storytellers. Legal fictions labored to conceal the property system's scandalous lack of grounding, while literary fictions took pleasure in uncovering those scandals. Sōseki was, of course, neither a political scientist nor an economist, neither a socialist nor an anarchist activist; he was a novelist and literary theorist. In other words, his field of practice was literature—a field that already in his day had a considerable history as a realm for countering the forces of capitalist privatization, enclosure, and dispossession. Our modern senses of literature as a part of culture are products of the nineteenth-century reaction against changes that the Industrial Revolution and its political and economic forms were inducing. As Raymond Williams argues, in this process, culture emerged as "the normal antithesis to the market." Literature in the sense of imaginative, artistic forms of writing emerged in the Anglophone

world that Sōseki studied as "a major affirmative response, in the name of an essentially general human 'creativity,' to the socially repressive and intellectually mechanical forms of a new social order: that of capitalism and especially industrial capitalism." ³⁶

The early theorists of literature and aesthetics, in our modern senses of those words, saw them in these terms. In the late eighteenth century, for example, Friedrich Schiller (whose writings Sōseki cited in his *Theory of Literature*) defined "freedom" as a "kind of perceptual superposition," one that served as "a sudden perception of an intolerable present which is at the same time, but implicitly and however dimly articulated, the glimpse of another state in the name of which the first is judged." An emerging alienation in the social realm (under the first wave of the privatization of everything) generated a counterpart in the inner realm, "a spiritual deformation which is the exact equivalent of the economic alienation in the social world outside." The utopian desire to imagine a better world generated an impulse to play, and in particular to literary imagination, in which "beauty . . . is the form freedom takes in the realm of sensory appearance." Literature was to become the realm where we undergo "a practical apprenticeship for the real political and social freedom to come."

Many previous critics have pointed out the limitations of this emancipatory view of literature. It can function ideologically as a mystification that aids in the reproduction of the very social regime it aims to criticize. In Mary Poovey's formulation, the contradictions inherent in early nineteenth-century claims for literary value rendered it unable "to challenge the market model of value that increasingly dominated British society."41 Such critiques are not easily dismissed, and yet part of my argument here is that we need to take seriously the claims made for the aesthetic in modern bourgeois literature, even as we remain alert to its political limitations. The aesthetic is often criticized as a retreat from the political, as an ideological safety valve that participates in the reproduction of modern capitalism, including its property regimes. As I've noted, many studies of Sōseki, both inside Japan and out, have linked his work to the perceived pathologies of modernity: imperialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, nationalism. While acknowledging the relevance and importance of such critical readings of his work, my purpose here is different. If such readings engage (for good reason) in a paranoid hermeneutics of suspicion bent on exposing links between his work and the brutal hierarchies, political and economic, of modern Japan, I will engage in a more reparative hermeneutics, one that seeks to uncover how his works attempt "to provide the self

D

with pleasure and nourishment in an environment that is perceived as not particularly offering them."⁴²

Sōseki's fiction and theory of literature were undoubtedly imbricated in the modern regime of private property that he saw rewriting the world around him in late Meiji Japan, but an important element of that imbrication was the way in which his practice and theory attempted to imagine something beyond that regime, a new commons. Realizing such a vision would require political activism, of course—but also something beyond. As Mark Fisher argues, direct political action is crucial, but on its own insufficient: "we also need to act *indirectly*, by generating new narratives, figures, and conceptual frames." This is because the "reordering" of our imagination and thinking, of our "affects, desires, beliefs, and language plainly cannot by achieved by 'politics' alone—it is a matter for culture in the widest sense."

In his theoretical writings, Sōseki tried to explain why literature provided an appropriate domain for such imagining. Fictional narratives and other literary forms are constantly playing with new forms of subjects and objects, a process that is necessarily shared in common between the writer, fictional characters, and the reader. Moreover, literature's inherent mobilization of the productivity of narrative and rhetoric is one route toward imagining and practicing a new possible commons. Whereas modern property systems abhor contradictions and ambiguities, in literature these are welcome as sources of narrative energy: they make for good stories. For example, whereas the modern property regime asserts that the only genre appropriate to the commons is tragedy, the literary commons suggests we imagine other possibilities: comedies of the commons, romances of the commons, epics of the commons.

And so my wager: that for Sōseki, literature provided a venue for grappling with and imagining beyond modern forms of ownership. A number of his fictional works deal with stories of inheritance, thievery, and the struggle to obtain or preserve material wealth—often as allegories for the impossibility of attaining self-possession. Rivalries between males to assert ownership over females is another vein of narrative raw material to which he returns repeatedly. Ownership is a slippery category in Sōseki's writings: the owning subject often finds himself (or, less frequently, herself) in a relationship of disconcerting dependence on the owned object. Daisuke,

the protagonist of And Then (Sore kara, 1909), issues a scathing critique of

the corrosive power of money in his society, even as he grapples with his father over his share in the family wealth—here, as in so many of Soseki's works, struggles over property define the relationships that structure the family. In the autobiographical novel Grass on the Wayside (Michikusa, 1915), the protagonist is alarmed to find himself a commodity exchanged back and forth between families, complete with disputes over the distinction between alienable and inalienable rights of possession. On a different note, The Miner ($K\bar{o}fu$, 1908) uses the allegory of labor in an industrialized mine for a brilliant exploration of the impossibility of self-possession. Its protagonist vows, "I don't own anything but my body. With neither property nor honor to be robbed or cheated of, I'm obviously an unpromising commodity."44 Kusamakura (1906), the most overtly philosophical of Sōseki's novels, explicitly defines artistic and literary practice as arising from a renunciation of any claim over the depicted object: it requires complete detachment, "being free of self-interested motives." 45 For Soseki, as for many of his contemporaries, aesthetic value can only appear with the negation of use and exchange value, the rights that come with ownership.

This book pursues a three-pronged argument: first, that Natsume Soseki's writing engaged in an imaginative troubling of the modern property regime that emerged over the course of his lifetime. Second, that through an epistemological critique that questioned the very tools through which modern societies produced knowledge, Soseki placed literature as an alternative form of knowing in relation to the sciences, natural and social, that were increasingly dominating the world (even as he accepted the tenets of scientific knowledge). Finally, that in both his theory and his practice, Soseki saw literature as a realm for experiments in modeling what might lie beyond the modern property system. To borrow from Karatani again, literature provided a site for exploring mode of exchange D, the return of a gift economy (mode of exchange A) in a higher dimension. 46 I'll work out each of these lines of argument at length in the chapters that follow. If my wager is successful, I will persuade you that with Soseki, literature becomes a playful, noninstrumental site for imagining a different economy, a new commons, alternative modes of communal owning which is to say, sharing.



UNIVERS 12 · INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Note: *sz* is used throughout as an abbreviation in citations for Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, 29 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993–99.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Modern property regimes, Carol Rose argues, rest on an ambiguous ideological foundation akin to an oil and water mixture, at times claiming to arise from principles involving collective wealth enhancement and preference satisfaction, but at other moments grounding itself in shared notions of what is proper. Elsewhere, she describes modern property regimes as a cobbling together of crystal-clear rules and ambiguous muddy standards. Rose, *Property and Persuasion*, 49–65 and 199–225.
- ² "Inheritance plots usually involve a tangible form of property: a family portrait, a set of diamonds, a country seat. In the sense that inheritance necessitates the transfer of property, novels interrogate the ideology of ownership as an inherent legal right, with ramifications for both personal and national belonging. Fictional narratives often conclude that property ownership is an insoluble puzzle." Hepburn, "Introduction," 3–25. This passage appears on 5.
- 3 Hardt and Negri, Commonwealth.
- 4 According to Ishihara Chiaki, a strong awareness of the Meiji Civil Code is one of the key characteristics that distinguishes Sōseki's domestic novels from those of previous decades. Ishihara, Sōseki to Nihon no kindai, 1:25–27 and 43–46.
- 5 On the Tokugawa-era economy and economic thought, including the increasing awareness of the importance of circulation and market forces (albeit with little discussion of the property system underlying this), see the essays included in Smits and Gramlich-Oka, Economic Thought in Early Modern Japan.
- 6 On the impact of the new taxation system on the property regime of Japan, see Brown, Cultivating Commons; Dunn, "The Property Rights Paradigm"; and Sato, "The Emergence of 'Modern' Ownership Rights."
- 7 The ban was modified in 1723, but outright sale of land in the sense of fee simple ownership remained under de jure restrictions. See Kwon, *State Formation, Property Relations,* and the Development of the Tokugawa Economy, esp. 57–65.
- 8 See Hein, "Shaping Tokyo"; and Matsuyama and Itō, "Meiji-ki ni okeru Yotsuya Samegahashi no toshi kūkan kōzō." I am grateful to Susan Burns for introducing me to these sources.

- 9 On the history of the gold standard and its impact on modern Japan, see Metzler, *Lever of Empire*.
- 10 Suzuki, Re-inventing Japan, 27.
- 11 On the colonial land property system in Taiwan, see Ching, *Becoming "Japanese,*" esp. 86–87 and 135–36.
- 12 Bhandar, Colonial Lives of Property, 4.
- 13 On the political measures imposed to quell potential dissent after the abolition of the property qualification and the granting of universal male adult suffrage, see Rin, Shōwa ideorogii, esp. 13-111.
- 14 Tateiwa, Shiteki shoyūron, 30.
- 15 Pels, Property and Power in Social Theory, 2 and 21.
- 16 Hardt and Negri, Commonwealth, 4.
- 17 Karatani, The Structure of World History.
- 18 Radin, "Property and Personhood," 957. See also Dayan, The Law Is a White Dog.
- 19 Balibar, Citizen Subject. For a productive reading of another Meiji author in relation to Balibar's notion of citizen-subject, see Yoda, "First-Person Narration and Citizen-Subject."
- 20 Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. For a critique of the unresolvable aporia that lie at the core of the notion of possessive individualism, see Balibar, "'Possessive Individualism' Reversed."
- 21 Quoted in Kamei, *Transformations of Sensibility*, 256–57. The following discussion is based on Kamei, *Transformations of Sensibility*, 255–87.
- 22 Quoted in Kamei, *Transformations of Sensibility*, 259–60. This four-stage narrative of the rise of civilization was a product of eighteenth-century discourses in early English liberalism and became integral to the expansion of the modern property system across the British Empire as well as in the US dispossession of Native American land. See Purdy, *The Meaning of Property*, 38–39 and 67–86.
- 23 See, for example, the "Natsume Sōseki" entry (Uchida Michio), *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), 5:349–51.
- 24 For example, Mary Layoun argues that "Sōseki's texts themselves raise a darkly despairing and contradictory objection, not to modernization and the foreign, not to nationalism and the leap from a feudal state to a monopoly capitalist one, but to the stultifying social and cultural effects of the specific direction that modernization, nationalism, foreign 'importation,' and capitalism took." Layoun, *Travels of a Genre*, 116–17.
- 25 Takayoshi, "A Note on the Political Thought."
- 26 Quoted in Takayoshi, "A Note on the Political Thought," 82. Takayoshi's translation.
- 27 For a passionate defense of liberal property norms as the basis for a radical form of egalitarian sociality grounded in an attempt to achieve an integrated balance between negative and positive notions of freedom, see Purdy, *The Meaning of Property*.
- 28 Anthropologist David Graeber, for example, argues that human relationships are grounded simultaneously in three distinct moral principles—communism, hierarchy, and exchange—each of which implies a different schema of ownership. See Graeber, *Debt*, esp. 89–126.

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- 29 Balibar, "'Possessive Individualism' Reversed."
- 30 Rose, Property and Persuasion, 5. See also 37-38, 127, and 144.
- 31 Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right, 81-82.
- 32 Rose, Property and Persuasion, 25. On property's reliance on narrative, see 286-94.
- 33 For feminist analyses of the concept of property and its relationship to narrative, see Rose, *Property and Persuasion*; and Dickenson, *Property, Women and Politics*. On the rhetorical ambiguity of legal practice, see Dayan, *The Law Is a White Dog*.
- 34 See Best, The Fugitive's Properties.
- 35 Williams, Culture and Society, 35.
- 36 Williams, Marxism and Literature, 50. I should note that Soseki's own definition of literature (bungaku) was somewhat different, as we will explore at length in chapters that follow.
- 37 Frederic Jameson, Marxism and Form, 85.
- 38 Jameson, Marxism and Form, 87.
- 39 Jameson, Marxism and Form, 89.
- 40 Jameson, Marxism and Form, 90.
- 41 Poovey, Genres of the Credit Economy, 299.
- 42 Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," 136.
- 43 Fisher, K-Punk, 580.
- 44 Natsume, The Miner, 55; SZ 5:41.
- 45 Natsume, *Kusamakura*, 12. Alan Turney's translation of the passage brings out the relation to property even more vividly: "Three feet away from the canvas, you can look at it calmly, for there is no danger of becoming involved. To put it another way, you are not robbed of your faculties by considerations of self interest." Natsume, *The Three-Cornered World*, 2.4. For the original, see SZ 3:13.
- 46 Karatani, The Structure of World History.

CHAPTER ONE: FABLES OF PROPERTY

- I Sebald, The Civil Code of Japan, 45.
- 2 Haraway, citing the work of dog trainer Vicki Hearne, speaks of dog obedience training as "a place to increase the dog's power to claim rights against the human." These rights, "rooted in reciprocal possession," have lasting impact on both partners. "Possession—property—is about reciprocity and rights of access. If I have a dog, my dog has a human; what that means concretely is at stake." Haraway, Companion Species Manifesto, 53-54.
- 3 See, for example, Karatani, *Sōseki-ron shūsei*, 197–260; Fujii, *Complicit Fictions*, 103–25; and Itahana, "*Wagahai wa neko de aru* ron."
- 4 Putz, "Nachwort," 657.
- 5 I was alerted to the relevance of the Shklovsky essay by Kimata, "Wagahai wa neko de aru." See "Art as Device," in Shklovsky, Viktor Shklovsky, 73–96.
- 6 Söseki's personal library, as preserved at Töhoku University, includes eight titles by Tolstoy, all in English translation, but no version of *Kholstomer*, which is also known