Katarzyna Sonnenberg
Jagiellonian University, Krakow
katarzyna.sonnenberg@uj.edu.pl

Mazes of Memories, Scents of the Past. Natsume Sōseki's Expression of His Experience of London in *Eijitsu shōhin* (*Spring Miscellany*, 1909)

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the expression of Natsume Sōseki's experience of London in a number of short-narratives selected from *Eijitsu shōhin* (*Spring Miscellany*, 1909). The narratives are analysed in the context of Sōseki's interest in sketches from nature (*shasei*) and of his theory of emotions in literary expression as presented in his *Bungakuron* (*Theory of Literature*, 1907).

KEYWORDS: Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, *Eijitsu shōhin* (*Spring Miscellany*), *shasei* sketches, London

STRESZCZENIE

Labirynty wspomnień, zapachy przeszłości. Doświadczenie Londynu w Eijitsu shōhin (Miniatury na wiosenne dni, 1909) Natsumego Sōsekiego

W artykule podjęto zagadnienie poszukiwania przez Sōsekiego formy wyrazu dla jego doświadczenia Londynu, miasta, w którym pisarz

spędził dwa lata swojego życia. Autorka analizuje wypływające z tego doświadczenia utwory zawarte w zbiorze *Eijitsu shōhin* (Krótkie szkice na długie dnie, 1909) w kontekście zainteresowania Sōsekiego szkicami natury (*shasei*) oraz rozwiniętej przez niego w *Bungakuron* (*Teoria literatury*, 1907) koncepcji związku uczucia z literacką ekspresją.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Natsume Sōseki, *Bungakuron*, *Eijitsu shōhin* (Krótkie szkice na długie dnie), *shasei*, Londyn

1. Introduction

In his 1915 novel *Michikusa* Sōseki evokes the memories of his stay abroad. Kenzō, the protagonist often treated as Sōseki's *porte-parole*, senses the novelty (*mezurashisa*) and odd loneliness (*sabishimi*) of his life once he is back to Japan.[1] He can still scent the smell of a foreign country lingering about his own body, which he honestly detests. But what he does not realise at the time is that there is also a great dose of pride and self-satisfaction hidden in the smell. Sōseki also returns to the time spent in London in his speech delivered on 25 November 1914 at Gakushūin. He speaks to young people with great careers ahead of them indicating how the initial experience of overwhelming emptiness helped him to shape his idea of individuality. And he refers to his discovery of self in extremely bright colours: "I looked out on London's gloom with a happy heart. I felt that after years of agony my pick had at last struck a vein of ore. A ray of light had broken through the fog and illuminated the way I must take."[2] This bright description is in sharp contrast with Sōseki's otherwise gloomy depiction of his stay in London: "The two years I lived in London were the unhappiest two years of my life. Among the English gentlemen, I was like a lone shaggy dog mixed in with a pack of wolves; I endured a wretched existence."[3]

Thus, Sōseki's experience of London still echoes in his writings more than ten years after his return to Japan. This encourages statements which present London as "the crucible and crossroads of his life, the place where

1 Natsume Sōseki, *Michigusa*, in: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 8, Tōkyō 2012, p. 293.

2 Natsume Sōseki, *Soseki on Individualism. `Watakushi no Kojinshugi'*, transl. Jay Rubin, Monumenta Nipponica, 34/ 1 (Spring, 1979), p. 35.

3 Natsume Soseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, eds. Michael K. Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, Josepf A. Murphy, New York: Columbia University Press 2009, p. 48.

Sōseki was faced with the intense cultural shock and social alienation that led to the eventual tumultuous release of his pent-up creative urges."[4] It is not, however, the aim of this paper to argue for or against such statements. Neither is it to present a detailed account of Sōseki's possible inspirations drawn from both his stay in London and his great acquaintance with English literature, which has already been given by Tsukamoto Toshiaki in his *Sōseki to eikoku. Ryūgaku taiken to sōsaku to no aida* (Sōseki and England. Between the Experience of Studies Abroad and Creation, 1999). The aim is to focus on a number of rather lesser-known short narratives from *Eijitsu shōhin* (*Spring Miscellany*, 1909) which are related to London and to analyse them in the context of Sōseki's views on literature as presented in his *Bungakuron* (*Theory of Literature*, 1907).

2. Sōseki in London

Sōseki arrived in London on Sunday, 28 September 1900 and spent two years there, changing addresses many a time.[5] He refers to his life abroad in his diaries and letters but the information is rather scant. We learn that he visited some historic sites, went to see a number of theatrical performances, and visited William Craig with the intention (not fulfilled) to learn about the nature of English literature. Above all, however, he stayed in his room reading books, not only on literature but also psychology and modern philosophy. Additionally, there are accounts of other Japanese visitors who met Sōseki in England and reported on his unstable state and deepening depression (referred to as madness or neurasthenia). Watanabe Shunkei (1879-1958), for example, wrote a short but vivid description of Sōseki's room in London, which was badly furnished and "absolutely crammed with books – piled onto his desk, on the floor, on the mantelpiece – everywhere!"[6] Sōseki would use the piles of books as chairs for his visitors.[7] Although the testimony of others sheds some additional light on Sōseki's state, even his wife, who – as Marvin Marcus noted – attempted, in her own memoir, to provide an account of Sōseki's life, had to dig for information.[8]

4 Damian Flanagan, *Introduction*, In: Natsume Sōseki, *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*, transl. Damian Flanagan, London, Chester Springs: Peter Owen 2004, p. 11.

5 See: Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki nikki*, ed. Hiraoka Toshio, Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 1997, p. 20.

6 Marvin Marcus, *Reflections in a Glass Door: Memory and Melancholy in the Personal. Writing of Natsume Sōseki*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2009, p. 33.

7 Ibidem.

8 Ibidem, p. 18.

Before his journey Sōseki already had a vast knowledge of English literature and culture, which he gained during his studies at the Tokyo Imperial University and afterwards. He had access to a number of texts on travelling in Great Britain, including *Baedeker's Great Britain* (1897) and *Baedeker's London and its Environs* (1898).[9] As a consequence, he already had some expectations related to what he was about to see and he must have planned on visiting specific places with the Tower of London on the top of the list. He visited the Tower only three days after his arrival. The visit was brought back to life in a short narrative *Rondon tō* (*The Tower of London*), published in 1905. *Rondontō* indicates that at some point Sōseki was also acquainted with William Ainsworth's historical novel *The Tower of London* and with Delaroche's paintings. As a student of English literature he obviously knew Shakespeare's historical tragedies, including *Richard II* and *Richard III*.

Sōseki's stay in London was therefore an opportunity for him to experience directly what he had already known from books. The "Preface" to *Bungakuron* suggests that his hopes might have been even higher. As a graduate of English literature Sōseki felt disappointed. "[W]hen I graduated – he says – I was bothered by a notion that lingered at the back of my mind – that somehow I had been cheated by English literature."[10] Neither the classes he had attended not the extensive reading he had done provided him with an answer to rather philosophical questions regarding the meaning and nature of literature. Sōseki surely hoped to find some solution in England but there, too, he was on his own in his searches.

It is possible to say that the two lonely years Sōseki spent in London fueled the eruption of his creative energy. Although he wrote haiku and *Bokusetsuroku* in *kanbun* before going to England, it is during his stay in London that he worked on both his projects to define theoretically the essence of literature (later developed into *Bungakuron*) and some of his literary sketches of London life. He arrived in Tokyo in January 1903, but – as Marvin Marcus emphasizes – he never truly left London behind.[11] Sōseki himself indicates the importance of his London experience on his creativity in his *Bungakuron:* "Even after returning to Japan, I apparently remained unchanged – a neurasthenic and a madman. … But it was thanks to my neurasthenia and to my madness that I was able to compose *Cat*, produce *Drifting in Space*, and publish *Quail Cage*."[12]

9 Tsukamoto Toshiaki, *Sōseki to eikoku. Ryūgaku taiken to sōsaku to no aida*, Tōkyō: Sairyūsha 1999, p. 4.

10 Natsume Soseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, op. cit., p. 43.

11 Marvin Marcus, *Reflections in a Glass Door…*, op. cit., p. 17.

12 Natsume Soseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, op. cit., p. 49.

3. Sōseki's letters, diaries and sketches from London

Sōseki's first-hand experience of London found its expression in a number of works published after his arrival in Japan, including *Jitensha nikki* (*Bicycle Diary*, 1903), *Rondontō* (*The Tower of London*, 1905), *Kārairu hakubutsukan* (*The Carlyle Museum,* 1905), *Bungakuron* (*Theory of Literature*, 1907), *Eijitsu shōhin* (*Spring Miscellany*/Short Pieces for Long Days, 1909), *Watashi no kojinshugi* (*My Individualism*, 1914), *Michikusa* (*Grass on the Wayside*, 1915). *Rondon shōsoku* (*Letters from London*) are the only work published while Sōseki was still in England. They were addressed to his friend Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), a haiku poet who is known to have been a strong supporter of *shasei* (or "sketches from life") style of writing. The letters appeared in two issues of "*Hototogisu*" (*The Cuckoo*) in May and June of 1901. Thus, what was primarily meant as the window on the world for Shiki, confined at the time to his room due to a serious illness, became an insight into Sōseki's life in London for a broader public in Japan.

Fourteen years after their initial appearance in *The Cuckoo*, *The Letters from London* were selected by Shinchōsha to be published with a number of Sōseki's other works, including *Carlyle's Museum*, *Spring Miscellany*, *I am a Cat* and one excerpt from *Kokoro*. They all illustrate a range of Sōseki's essayistic endeavours and *Rondon shōsoku* were rewritten for the occasion. Andō indicates a number of deletions, abridgements and changes of style (replacing the personal pronoun "wagahai" with "boku" is one distinct example) which illustrate the process of distilling the novelistic quality from a text previously read predominantly as a letter and a sketch from nature.[13] As a consequence, many passages expressing Sōseki's intimate thoughts and describing hardships related to his daily expenses, changing flats or his disgust with social gatherings were deleted.

The Letters from London, as published in 1901, is a text addressed to a close friend including numerous personal comments in an impressionistic manner. The writing thus foreshadows the style of *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (*I am a Cat*, 1905-1906), much appreciated by Edwin McClellan who claims that "Soseki does seem to be at his best when he ceases to be an intellectual, or, to put this somewhat differently, when he ceases to be concerned with depiction of the plight of the modern Japanese intellectual, and begins to write as the friend of the great haiku poet, Masaoka Shiki."[14]

13 Andō Fumihito, *Natsume Sōseki wa naze* Rondon shōsoku *o kakinaoshita no ka*, Waseda Rilas Journal, no. 2 (2014), pp. 274-286.

14 Edwin McClellan, *The Impressionistic Tendency in Some Modern Japanese Writers*, Chicago Review, 17/ 4 (1965), p. 50.

However – as Sōseki himself admitted – *The Letters from London* were also written with a broader audience in mind, "in the style of the diaries solicited by *The Cuckoo*" (54), and they include sketches of London life from a perspective of an observer who has a direct access to what he is describing but who is also rather detached. The descriptions were highly appreciated by the writers gathered around *The Cuckoo* and were subsequently included by Takahama Kyoshi, Shiki's disciple, in *Shasei bunshū* (The Collection of Sketches from Life) published in 1903 by Haishodō, the publisher specialising in books on *haiku*.

Kyoshi's choice of Sōseki's *Letters from London* for the anthology of *shasei* indicates that the text was read as an example of *shaseibun* having "sketching life" as its main goal. The *shasei* writer was to recreate what he saw as directly as possible in order to make the readers experience what he himself had experienced. In a short essay *Jojibun* (Descriptive style, 1900) Shiki expressed the method of *shaseibun* as follows:

> When you see a natural landscape or a scene with people and find it appealing, in order to make the reader feel the same about it, you should not use ornamented language nor resort to exaggeration, but you should emulate what you see as it is.[15]

Any additional ornamentation used in language may blur the immediate experience of the scene, distort the image and – as a consequence – the emotion it evokes in readers.

Shiki's attitude may have been influenced by the realistic qualities of Western painting but it is not merely a call for detailed description of life as it is. It requires the writer to display the important capacity to select things to be described. Shiki emphasises:

> *Shasei* or realism means copying the subject as it is, but it necessarily involves a degree of selection or exclusion… A writer sketching a landscape or an event should focus on its most beautiful or moving aspect. If he does this, the subject described will automatically begin to live its own life. It should be noted, however, that the most beautiful or moving aspect does not necessarily correspond to the most substantial or conspicuous or indispensable part of the subject. The aspect I speak of often lies in the shade, showing itself only partially in one's range of sight.[16]

15 Masaoka Shiki, *Jojibun*, In: *Masaoka Shiki Zenshū*, vol. 14, Tōkyō: Kōdansha 1976, p.241.

16 Ueda Makoto, *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1983, p. 12.

Sōseki rephrases Shiki's idea in his essay *Genji no shōsetsu oyobi bunshō ni tsuite* (On Contemporary Novel and Style, 1905):

> *Shasei* does not mean simply presenting a given plot of the story but it consists in such a style of description which allows the readers to see the whole vividly with their own eyes. In other words, it is not about detailed presentation of all main elements in the story but about the writer's composure, i.e. the ability to introduce such scenes and conversations which enliven the whole, although they may seem unnecessary in describing the given situation.[17]

Sōseki's ability to depict a number of selected scenes in order to give to his readers the impression of the whole is first exercised in his *Letters from London*. He describes an array of phenomena which attract his attention in the country whose national character has been influenced by "the flourishing of literature" and where there is "no word for samurai but the word 'gentelman.'"[18] He juxtaposes what he finds in written texts with his own observations, which frequently becomes the source of irony. Johnson's *Dictionary* – as he notices – records that oatmeal is given to horses in England but "in Scotland it supports people," but the food became popular in England, which leads Sōseki to the conclusion that "the English must have become closer to horses."[19]

Sōseki frequently compares what he sees in England to what he knows from Japan, a strategy later developed in *The Tower of London*. "If one was to describe my lodgings in terms of Tokyo – he says – then Shinagawa first comes to mind. A suburb across the river from the centre of the town."[20] The lift leading the passengers to the underground station of London Tube brings, to Sōseki, associations with a famous Kabuki play entitled *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* (The Disputed Succession). "If going up, I would be like Nikki Danjo in a suit" – he says, referring to the evil character in the play suddenly emerging from the trap door in the *hanamichi*.[21]

Above all, *The Letters from London* leave their readers with a piercing impression of the narrator's loneliness, which shows through the ironic or seemingly light-hearted descriptions. Here is one example:

17 Natsume Sōseki, *Genji no shōsetsu oyobi bunshō ni tsuite*, in: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, Meiji Bungaku Kankōkai, Tōkyō 1937, p. 527.

18 Natsume Soseki, *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*, op. cit., p. 53.

19 Ibidem, p. 56.

20 Ibidem, p. 58.

21 Ibidem. Comp.: Natsume Sōseki, *Rondon shōsoku*, in: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 10, Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 2011, p. 657.

> Once outside, everyone I meet is depressingly tall. Worse, they all have unfriendly faces. If they imposed a tax on height in this country they might come up with a more economically small animal. But these are the words of one who cannot accept defeat gracefully, and looked at impartially, one would have to say that it was they, not I, who look splendid.[22]

Sōseki – immersed in the London life – is at the same time able to look at things from a detached perspective which was so much postulated by the *shasei* writers. Not only does he detach himself from the tumultuous crowds of the foreign city but he also views himself with an eye of an observer who at least tries to be impartial.

4. Impressions and Literature

Sōseki's life in London triggered in him this "longing for the fleeting vision which calls for hardly more than a response of the senses."[23] It is possible to say, as Edwin McClellan does, that relying on the senses was, for Sōseki and for many Japanese writers, a way to escape "the sharp clarity of the Western vision."[24] However, in Sōseki's case, sensation is also related to a concrete image and the London fog serves to sharpen the senses. This relation between the intensity of sensation and the concreteness of both impression and expression is elaborated on in Sōseki's *Bungakuron*. This ambitious theoretical work, published in 1906 after Sōseki's arrival in Japan and his series of lectures given at Tokyo Imperial University, reflects his interest in the relationship between the impressions or ideas (F) a work of literature brings in the consciousness of its reader and the feelings (f) which are consequently evoked.[25] An attempt to define in *Bungakuron* the form of literary substance as "F + f", i.e. combining two factors: one cognitive and one emotional, indicates that Sōseki was much interested in how literature was read and received. This definition of literary substance may be also linked with Sōseki's search for such a way of artistic expression that would enable him to evoke certain ideas and emotions in his readers.

Sōseki's distinction between impressions (or intellectual images) and emotions was inspired by modern psychology represented predominantly

22 Natsume Soseki, *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*, op. cit., p. 61.

23 Edwin McClellan, *The Impressionistic Tendency in Some Modern Japanese Writers*, op. cit., p. 60.

24 Ibidem.

25 Natsume Soseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, op. cit., p. 52.

by Lloyd Morgan and William James.[26] Not only did he read about it but he also experienced it during his stay in London. Before going to England he already developed numerous intellectual images of what he was yet to see and while in London he looked for emotions correlated with the images. The first-hand experience, however, did not answer Sōseki's expectations. Moreover, he encountered another difficulty related to the question of expression: he was looking for images which would enable him to share his experience, trying to find parallels between what he and his Japanese readers already knew. He famously compared his feeling of being utterly lost to that of "a Gotenba rabbit suddenly set loose in the heart of Nipponbashi,"[27] readily resorted to what he himself called "Zen-like" expressions,[28] and continued to find correlations between the English and the Japanese landscapes.

In his focus on the relation between emotions and concrete images, Sōseki may be said to resemble T.S. Eliot, who – interested as Sōseki was in the art of haiku – insisted that emotion in art has to have its "objective correlative":

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[29]

Sōseki analyses the poetic language of John Milton and William Shakespeare only to notice "the 'concrete element' of sense perception, which, since time immemorial, has always been considered the most essential condition not only for poetry but for all literary expression."[30] He then compares the poetry of Burns and Wordsworth and comments that: "One is direct and arouses the reader's emotions as if it were an electrical flash or an echo of a voice. In the other the reader must first enter a state of contemplation with the poet."[31] While the former is more concrete and thus more immediate, the latter seems rather abstract and indirect to Sōseki.

26 Michael K. Bourdaghs, *Natsume Sōseki and the Theory and Practice of Literature*, in: *History of Japanese Literature*, eds. Haruo Shirane, Tomi Suzuki, David Lurie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016, p. 634.

27 Natsume Sōseki, *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*, op. cit., p. 91.

28 Ibidem, p. 92.

29 T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood. Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1921, p. 92.

30 Natsume Soseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, op. cit., p. 66.

31 Ibidem.

His conclusion is well grounded in his analysis: "[W]e have to accept as a fact that f continues to vary in direct proportion to the degree of concreteness of F."[32]

The musings on the relationship between the impressions and the feelings attached to them included in *Bungakuron* are an important context for understanding Sōseki's early short stories and essays, many of which touch upon his experience of life in London. Facing the urge to share his impression of the surrounding reality with the Japanese readers Sōseki uses concrete images which may be attended by certain feelings.

5. Short Pieces for Long Days

The role of the concrete in his narratives is noticeable in a volume of sketches he published in 1909. *Eijitsu shōhin* (Short Pieces for Long Days translated as *Spring Miscellany*) gathers twenty five short narratives, first published from January 1 until March 12 in "Asahi Shinbun" both Tokyo and Osaka editions, giving the Japanese readers interesting insights into the everyday life of the writer. The broad spectrum of themes and techniques of the collection earned it a name of "an experimental workshop of the 20th century novel", and encouraged comparisons with the works of Edgar Alan Poe and Prosper Mérimée.[33] The volume presents a mixture of styles and themes (*kongōbutsu*).[34] The titles of the narratives more often than not explore the concrete: objects, places, dates, names or particular sensual stimuli.

Seven sketches in the collection are related to Sōseki's life in England: "Geshuku" ("The Boarding House"), "Kako no nioi" ("Odour of the Past"), "Atatakai yume" ("A Sweet Dream"), "Inshō" ("Impressions"), "Kiri" ("Fog"), "Mukashi" ("In Bygone Days"), "Kureigu Sensei" ("Craig Sensei"). With the exception of "Mukashi," all are set in London, which is presented with attention to details but which is also a mysterious and sensuous world of imagination substantiated by Sōseki's memories. Abe Yoshishige, one of Sōseki's disciples, compared *Eijitsu shōhin* to a collection of oneiric narratives entitled *Yume jūya*, claiming that they continued the dreamy mode of narration, although the setting is altered from night

32 *Ibidem*, pp. 67-68.

33 Haga, Tōru, *Sōseki no jikken kōbō.* Eijitsu shōhin *no ippen no yomi no kokoromi*, Nihon kenkyū: Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā Kiyō, no. 16 (1997), p.188.

34 Ninomiya Tomoyuki, *Natsume Sōseki* Eijitsu shōhin *kō. Sanshirō to Sorekara no aida de*, Kokubungaku Kō, no. 172 (2001), p. 13.

to daytime.[35] The narratives in *Eijitsu shōhin* are thus viewed as record of daydreaming.

5.1. Scenting the past

"Geshuku" and "Kako no nioi" explore Sōseki's memories of his lodgings in London at 85 Priory Road, West Hampstead, which he recalls as dreary and grim. Sōseki begins a brief description of the place he rented from November till December 1900, shortly after his arrival, but he soon focuses on the people inhabiting the place. "The lady of the house" – he introduces the main female figure in the story – "had sharp features, with sunken eyes, a *retroussé* nose, a pointed chin and prominent cheekbones."[36] It is revealed that her mother was French. The details of the woman's outward appearance lead the narrator to share his impressions: "All the human weaknesses – bitterness, envy, obstinate, rigidity, doubt – must have taken a delight in playing with that face to give it that ill-favored appearance."[37] The physical reality is thus connected with the realm of feelings, ideas and imagination.

The use of concrete images often helps trigger imagination and evoke feelings. In the room where the narrator converses with the landlady, there is a vase with "lifeless looking narcissi" on the mantelpiece.[38] Perhaps translating the Japanese *sabishii suisen*[39] into a singular rather than plural might enhance the symbolic effect. The woman looks at the flower during the conversation and the narrator reads the gesture as an attempt to emphasize the unfavourable climate of London. "For my part – he adds – silently comparing the narcissi which had bloomed so feebly with the pallour of the woman's hollow cheeks, I imagined the sweet dreams that thoughts of faraway France must have brought into her mind."[40]

The grim atmosphere of the lodgings described in "Geshuku" is further explored in the following "Kako no nioi". The narrative mentions the relationship between the narrator and K. – another Japanese living under

35 Ninomiya Tomoyuki, *Natsume Sōseki kenkyū. Shōhin no dokujisei to kanōsei*. Doctoral dissertation. Hiroshima Daigaku Daigakuin Bungakukenkyūka, 2006, pp. 125-126.

36 Natsume Sōseki, *Spring Miscellany And London Essays*, transl. Sammy I. Tsunematsu, Boston, Rutland, Vermont, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing 2002, p. 38.

37 Ibidem.

38 Ibidem.

39 Natsume Sōseki, *Eijitsu shōhin*, in: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 10, Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 2011, p. 87.

40 Natsume Sōseki, *Spring Miscellany And London Essays*, op. cit., p. 38.

the same roof but soon focuses on the landlady, developing a series of impressions. The sensation of being in her presence resembles that of attending a wedding with "a ghost in the place of the intermediary," everything in her vicinity is doomed to wither and the narrator further imagines that "if one accidentally brushed against that flesh, the blood would freeze at the exact point where the contact had occurred."[41] The ominous aura surrounding the landlady and the obscure atmosphere of the house drive the narrator away, as he senses that the relationships between the people in the house "their feelings, their gestures, their words, and their physiognomy belonged to the hell of secrets."[42] His attempt was to render the hell he sensed via synaesthetic expressions which invite the readers to share the experience.

5.2. Dream-like sensations

"Atatakai yume" and "Inshō" also depend on recreating Sōseki's impressions triggered by the city of London. The wind beating against high buildings, moving like a flash of lightning down to the pavements, the obscure sky forming a belt against the buildings with ash-gray facades, women tapping their high heels on the pavement, carriages waiting for passengers, coachmen beating their chests to warm themselves, people looking minuscule, like dots, rushing in all directions. The narrator feels like "one of these atoms – the slowest of them all,"[43] finding his shelter from the wind, the cold, and the noise in a theatre where people were calm, silent and relaxed. For him, the theatre where he went to see Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* becomes a microcosm which he juxtaposes with the outer world. In this microcosm people are "dreaming of Greece, which was all sweetness and light."[44]

"Inshō," like "Atatakai yume," uses the figure of juxtaposition between the narrator's house and the world outside – a maze of streets and buildings in a "very strange city" of London. The narrator sets out on a journey through the city – as if foreshadowing the oneiric and mythologized journeys in Bruno Schultz's *Street of Crocodiles* or James Joyce's *Ulysses* – feeling that he is "engulfed in a sea of humanity,"[45] vast and inescapable, whose waves are endless and calm. The maze of streets corresponds with

41 Ibidem, p. 43.

42 Ibidem, p. 46.

43 Ibidem, p. 53.

44 Ibidem, p. 55.

45 Ibidem, p. 57.

the miscellany of the narrator's melancholy musings in the darkness of what he himself can only term as solitude.

Although both "Atatakai yume" and "Inshō" give an impression of dreamy, almost unrealistic landscapes of London, they include references to concrete topographical details. In "Inshō" it is "a great bronze column" dominating the square, with two great lions on its sides and "a tiny silhouette rising above"[46] which enables the readers to identify the place with Trafalgar Square with the fifty meters high statue of Horatio Nelson. In "Atatakai yume" it is the building of Her Majesty's Theatre situated on Haymarket. In Sōseki's narrative, however, it becomes a symbolic space of culture which brings perfection to human nature, the idea Sōseki might have drawn from Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).[47]

5.3. Looking for one's way in the fog

For Sōseki, mist or fog (*kiri*) – this well-know attribute of London – symbolizes the uncertainty and the feeling of being lost in a city which resembles an inescapable maze. In the mist, Sōseki seems to despairately look for "any workings of logic in the modern city."[48] The detrimental impact of the hustle and bustle on human psychological state is noticed by Sōseki elsewhere: "If I have to live for two years amongst the noise and these crowds, I mused, the very fabric of my nerves will eventually become as sticky as a gluey plant in a cooking spot."[49] The comment is substantiated with a reference to Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (*Entartung*, 1892), which traces the effects of urbanization on the human condition.

After the time spent abroad Sōseki sees himself as a significantly altered man who has "an unknown future like a fog ahead of him."[50] In *Eijitsu shōhin* he focuses on the cold and bleak quality of the London fog to express his desolate state: "Motionless and melancholy, everything seemed to be set in ice."[51] The fog swallows the landscape, imprisons everything in deep, dense shadows, making things indistinguishable and colourless. The narrator himself feels entrapped: "A thick heavy fog passed around my

46 Ibidem, p. 58.

47 Mathew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1932, pp. 43-71.

48 William Burton, *The Image of Tokyo in Sōseki's Fiction*, in: *The Japanese City*, ed. Pradyumna P. Karan, Kristin Stapleton, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky 1997, p. 223.

49 Natsume Sōseki, *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*, op. cit., p. 91.

50 Etō Jun, *Sōseki to sono jidai*, vol. 2, Tōkyō: Shinchōsha 2006, p. 169.

51 Natsume Sōseki, *Spring Miscellany And London Essays*, op. cit., p. 77.

eyes, lips and nostrils as if liquid coal was being poured on to me. My overcoat was so damp so that it seemed to be stuck to my skin."[52]

The fog not only affects man's sight but also blurs the border between reality and dream. "Plunged into this depressing grayness – Sōseki states – I remained for a moment in a state of semi-torpor."[53] Walking in the city resembles groping in a dream – nothing is clear and certain. The sense of hearing is strangely sharpened but the fog seems to blur also the sounds. When all falls silent and dark the narrator is left with nothing to rely on. This marks the end to his narrative.

There is a noticeable connection between the darkness brought by fog and that brought by death. In Sōseki's poem *Life's Dialogue*, written in English in August 1901, man's eyes "glazed with mists" are also symbolic of death:

> Out of hope and despair,
> Man twists the rope of life,
> As beautiful and fair,
> As born of passion and strife,
> He twists and twists and twists.
> Forever twisting he dies,
> Then his eyes are glazed with mists,
> Then cold and naked he lies.[54]

A parallel reading of Sōseki's poem and his short narrative from *Eijitsu shōhin* provides a link between the spatial fears expressed in "Kiri" and what Angela Yiu terms as "Sōseki's awe and fascination with the space of death, an intimate territory that dominates his consciousness yet remains perpetually removed and inaccessible."[55]

5.4. Recollecting places and people

Two last narratives related to Sōseki's studies abroad are concerned with the intricacies of memory and mechanisms of understanding the past. In "Mukashi" the past is brought back as a consequence of Sōseki's visit to the Valley of Pitlochry in Scotland in October 1902. The narrator describes

52 Ibidem, p. 79.

53 Ibidem.

54 Etō Jun, *Sōseki to sono jidai*, op. cit., p. 150.

55 *Three-Dimentional Rading. Stories of Time and Space in Japanese Modernist Fiction, 1911-1932*, ed. Angela Yiu, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2013, p. 30.

what he sees with vividness and intensity: "a plain with vivid colors on the other side of the hill, stretching towards the mountains," the golden birch trees forming "a harmony of colors, infinitely enriched with the most pleasing shades," the water containing peat "of an antique color, as if it had been used to dilute dyeing powder."[56] The immediate landscape leads the narrator to ponder over the past. His thoughts run towards the battle of Killiecrankie on 27 July 1689 and he envisages "corpses piled up among the rocks" which "held back the water flowing through the valley."[57] The narrator decides to visit the battlefield and upon leaving he notices rose petals on the ground of the valley, which symbolically renders the tendency to aestheticize the past.

While "Mukashi" brings back the memory of one battle which influenced the complex history of England and Scotland, "Craig Sensei" enlivens memories of one man who affected Sōseki's experience of English literature. Sōseki first met William James Craig (1843-1906), an Irishman, admirer of English poetry, scholar and editor of Shakespeare's works, on 22 November 1900 and continued visiting him in his house in the City of Westminster until October 1901. Sōseki comments upon the meeting in his London diaries: "He is Shakespeare's scholar. We agree on around five shillings per hour. Very curious old man."[58] In "Craig Sensei" Sōseki resumes the question of the fee which becomes "seven shillings for one lesson, with payment at the end of each month."[59] He also comments that Professor Craig often asks for an earlier payment and "never thinks of returning the balance of my money, which often causes me embarrassment."[60]

"Craig Sensei," written and published already after William Craig's death, illustrates in vivid detail and with distinct irony the peculiarity of a man whom Sōseki chose for his tutor for one year. The narrative begins with the description of Professor Craig's apartment hidden on the fourth floor like a swallow's nest but – like "Geshuku" – it soon turns its focus on the people living in the apartment: the professor and an elderly woman who performs domestic chores. The narrator imbues his account with his personal impressions. Noticing the age and the short-sightedness of the woman he states that "she is about fifty years old, time enough to know the world, yet she always seems to be frightened."[61]

56 Natsume Sōseki, *Spring Miscellany And London Essays*, op. cit., p. 94.

57 Ibidem, p. 95.

58 Natsume Sōseki, *Natsume Sōseki nikki*, op. cit., p. 24.

59 Natsume Sōseki, *Spring Miscellany And London Essays*, op. cit., p. 111.

60 Ibidem.

61 Ibidem, p. 110.

The focus of his story, like the lens of a camera, moves with the narrator up the stairs through the entrance to the guest room filled with books and occupied by Professor Craig. The relationship between the two men is symbolically rendered by the description of their handshake:

> On seeing me, he calls out, "Well now!" extending his hand, a sign that I should take hold of it. I therefore clasp his hand, but he does not reciprocate. I cannot really say that this is conducive to a feeling of wellbeing in me. I would be glad if this formality would cease altogether. But conscientious as always when he sees me, he exclaims "There!". Always this hairy hand, this passive hand, is extended towards me. How strange habits are![62]

The narrator focuses on physical details to express the sensations they cause in him. The hairy hand – the one that greets him and gathers money from him – is overwhelmingly passive and equally embarrassing. The gesture which seems to show friendliness becomes a token for lack of mutual understanding. Professor Craig, although physically close to the narrator, seems distant and incomprehensible, also due to his accent, which – especially in the moments of excitement – brings association with a quarreling man from Satsuma.

Professor's lectures are as incomprehensible as is his language or his handwriting. The narrator compares them to a chaotic, turbulent journey: "Very often I land with him on the North Pole, only suddenly to be put down on the South Pole."[63] With the irony intensified as the narrative progresses he comments at first that it was silly of him to request "a polished systematic lecture for seven shillings" only to conclude that he was lucky not to be charged more by someone whose disoriented state is best symbolised by his "wild and neglected beard."[64] The direst irony is left unspoken. The readers learn that Professor Craig died before finishing his great oeuvre to which he had dedicated his whole life and it is anticipated that all his efforts might soon be forgotten.

6. Conclusion

Eijitsu shōhin provide an interesting insight into Sōseki's search for literary expression. The author evokes the indelible scent of the past, sketches the oneiric landscapes of London and ironic pictures of its inhabitants. The

62 Ibidem.

63 Ibidem, p. 112.

64 Ibidem.

collection may be read in the context of Sōseki's theory of impressions and emotions in literature developed in *Bungakuron*. To describe his experience Sōseki explores essay and poetic sketching which prove that "intellectuality and dramatic effectiveness were by no means mutually exclusive."[65] However, his choice of form here, just like in his later works, is rather "abrasive," since – as Angela Yiu notices – "he does not cease to reinterpret or invent a form until it expresses fully the complexity of his thoughts and emotions."[66] In *Eijitsu shōhin* Sōseki's form and language are in constant movement towards what may be compared to T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative" – detached expression of those emotions which accompanied Sōseki's most intimate experience.

Bibliography

Andō, Fumihito. 2014. *Natsume Sōseki wa naze* Rondon shōsoku *o kakinaoshita no ka*, Waseda Rilas Journal, no. 2, pp. 274-286.

Arnold, Mathew. 1932. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdaghs, Michael K. 2016. *Natsume Sōseki and the Theory and Practice of Literature*. In: *History of Japanese Literature*. Eds. Haruo Shirane, Tomi Suzuki, David Lurie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 634-640.

Burton, William. 1997. *The Image of Tokyo in Sōseki's Fiction*. In: *The Japanese City*. Eds. Pradyumna P. Karan, Kristin Stapleton. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky 1997, pp. 221-241.

Eliot, T.S. 1921. *The Sacred Wood. Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Etō, Jun. 2006. *Sōseki to sono jidai*, vol. 2, Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.

Flanagan, Damian. 2004. *Introduction*. In: Natsume Sōseki. *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*. Transl. Damian Flanagan. London, Chester Springs: Peter Owen, pp. 9-39.

Haga, Tōru. 1997. *Sōseki no jikken kōbō*. Eijitsu shōhin *no ippen no yomi no kokoromi*. Nihon kenkyū: Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā Kiyō, no. 16, pp. 187-209.

Marcus, Marvin. 2009. *Reflections in a Glass Door: Memory and Melancholy in the Personal. Writing of Natsume Sōseki*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

McClellan, Edwin. 1965. *The Impressionistic Tendency in Some Modern Japanese Writers*. Chicago Review, 17/4, pp. 48-60.

65 Edwin McClellan, *The Impressionistic Tendency in Some Modern Japanese Writers*, op. cit., p. 49.

66 Angela Yiu, *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Soseki*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 1998, p. 2.

Masaoka, Shiki. 1976. *Jojibun*, In: *Masaoka Shiki Zenshū*, vol. 14. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, pp. 241-249.
Natsume, Sōseki. 2011. *Eijitsu shōhin*. In: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 10. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō, pp. 67-154.
Natsume Sōseki. 1937. *Genji no shōsetsu oyobi bunshō ni tsuite*, in: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, Meiji Bungaku Kankōkai, Tōkyō, pp. 526-531.
Natsume, Sōseki. 2012. *Michigusa*. In: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 8. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 2012, pp. 292-582.
Natsume, Sōseki. 2011. *Rondon shōsoku*. In: *Natsume Sōseki Zenshū*, vol. 10. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 2011, pp. 648-680.
Natsume, Sōseki. 1997. *Sōseki nikki*. Ed. Hiraoka Toshio. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten.
Natsume, Sōseki. 1979. *Soseki on Individualism. `Watakushi no Kojinshugi.'* Transl. Jay Rubin. Monumenta Nipponica. 34/ 1, pp. 21-48.
Natsume, Sōseki. 2002. Spring Miscellany And London Essays. Transl. Sammy I. Tsunematsu. Boston, Rutland, Vermont, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing.
Natsume, Soseki. 2009. *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*. Eds. Michael K. Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda, Josepf A. Murphy. New York: Columbia University Press.
Natsume, Sōseki. 2004. *The Tower of London. Tales of Victorian London*. Transl. Damian Flanagan. London, Chester Springs: Peter Owen.
Ninomiya, Tomoyuki. 2001. *Natsume Sōseki* Eijitsu shōhin *kō. Sanshirō to Sorekara no aida de*. Kokubungaku Kō, no. 172, pp. 13-27.
Ninomiya, Tomoyuki. 2006. *Natsume Sōseki kenkyū. Shōhin no dokujisei to kanōsei*. Doctoral dissertation. Hiroshima Daigaku Daigakuin Bungakukenkyūka.
Three-Dimentional Rading. Stories of Time and Space in Japanese Modernist Fiction, 1911-1932. 2013. Ed. Angela Yiu, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
Tsukamoto, Toshiaki. 1999. *Sōseki to eikoku. Ryūgaku taiken to sōsaku to no aida*. Tōkyō: Sairyūsha.
Ueda, Makoto. 1983. *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Yiu, Angela. 1998. *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Soseki*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Katarzyna Sonnenberg, Ph.D. – works as an assistant professor at the Department of Japanology and Sinology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow. She is an author of a number of articles and monographs on the subject of narrative strategies in early-modern and modern Japanese literature and a translator of Japanese literature into Polish.