

# Walking Mobility

## Focusing on the Expression of Walking in Modern Japanese Novels

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### Abstract

This paper analyzes walking as portrayed in Sōseki Natsume’s *Sanshirō* (1908) and Yasunari Kawabata’s *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (1925), Takeo Arishima’s *Descendants of Cain* (1917), and *A Certain Woman* (1919). Of course, walking in everyday life is essential, but the interest of this study is the depiction of the different types of walking and the distinctiveness of each kind in these literary texts. Specifically, the four stories discussed in this paper describe the “types” of walking of two male intellectuals, an illiterate peasant family and an elite woman across the city of Tokyo and the rural villages in modern Japan, which, as the paper tries to show, unravel the ways mobility is experienced historically by human beings on the level of the literary significance of literal motion as experienced socially through physical bodily movement.

The description of walking in a literary text means more than just moving from one place to another. In a capitalist society, humans may crave high mobility. Yet, people have not stopped walking in a post-industrial society although they have walked differently from context to context. Across cultures, walking has various meanings and forms, and literary texts portray the social body as people walk in the midst of the rapid development of mobility technology. In this paper, explored are the different types of walking: walking in a city, walking in a mountain, walking in a civilized manner, and walking to

live in order to explain the various forms and meanings behind this everyday action.

In particular, *Sanshirō* shows how urban space is given meaning as a place only when people move around it. In this novel, a young intellectual who comes to a big city for the first time communicates with his body, as he walks around the city, and develops into a subject. In *The Dancing Girl of Izu*, the protagonist who is walking her way to a travel destination, from which a transient set of experiences of a carefree traveler is accumulated. Such an experience allows for a degree of pleasant but momentary camaraderie with someone with a different social status. It is in stark contrast to *Sanshirō*, whose main protagonist exerts an effort to transform a space into a place quickly upon arriving in the capital from his rural hometown. These stories may be said to represent “civilized walking.”

In *Descendants of Cain*, the depiction of walking extends to a struggle against nature and a wandering image of diaspora, which does not appear in civilized walking. However, in *A Certain Woman*, Yōko catches the gaze of random members of the public, especially men, signaling the beginning of a time when a woman’s walking becomes an object of the masculine gaze. From this attention, we realize how modern culture might have developed from a male perspective in the name of civilization. The analysis of walking allows us to consider that walking in modern times is not a meaningless, plain, and neutral human activity, as the aforementioned novels might suggest. Set across a city, the mountains and rural environment, the novels, if read more closely, imply that the action of walking is embedded in a dense hierarchy of assumed relations of meanings, in a city and the mountains and rural environment. Walking here is thoroughly controlled by the habitus already at work.

### Keywords

Walking Mobility, Modern Japanese Novels, *Sanshirō*, *The Dancing Girl of Izu*, *Descendants of Cain*, *A Certain Woman*

## 1. Why walking mobility?

There are many different types of walking; we stroll or walk in a hurry to a destination, or sometimes we stop for a second before a traffic light and walk again. We take a brisk walk along the river for exercise or take an unhurried walk whilst talking with someone. We take a leisurely stroll, looking at things near us, or we walk, while thinking of what we will talk about with the people we may encounter (Urry 63-65).

Walking is a familiar experience, and people walk at their own unique pace, stride length, and habit. Walking is an act executed by the whole body in its encounter with the environment: roads, people, landscapes, buildings, and shops (Solnit 29). While walking, the human body communicates with the environment—sidewalks, moving vehicles such as cars and bicycles, street noise, birds chirping in the scenic nature, obstacles at construction sites, chaotically parked cars, and traffic lights—with the accompanying senses of sight, hearing, and smell.

There are many images of walking in literature. However, since most people take walking for granted, they do not pay much attention to its meaning. This study explains why walking is organic to the significance of literary texts by exploring some scenes of walking in Japanese literature, the author's main field of interest for research. Of course, we have entered the high-mobility society, away from the era of the minimal mobility allowed by a walking society, where people will soon benefit from hi-tech vehicles powered by artificial intelligence (AI), such as moving cars and drone taxis without the need for drivers. Still, such apparent convenience could limit as well as expand the physical mobility of people and change their culture. In fact, as we already know, horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, automobiles, and trains had changed people's walking culture dramatically when they became widespread (Urry 64).

As people walk, they encounter streetcars, driveways, sidewalks, bicycle paths, subways, shops, cultural facilities such as museums, parks, and many more. Various meanings may be derived from the gait of people walking across these places. Of course, there is a clear difference between walking on a well-maintained pedestrian path in a neat and wealthy residential area

and walking while avoiding cars in a narrow and congested alley. And these differences will create a myriad of cultural meanings and form a hierarchy of significance. Just as Urry has already pointed out in his discussion of the historical phenomenon of walking from prohibition to leisure walking itself is also a site of a kind of “class struggle.” Urry cites the example of the post-industrial Britain, but he also reminds us that walking is not an isolated phenomenon.

The novels depict patterns of walking that embody significance beyond physical movement. By carefully reading the novel, the reader can see that a walking culture is emerging with a hierarchical social structure. In this regard, this paper examines the expression of walking in four novels that are highly regarded among the novels depicting modern Japan. These four texts are about the following: an elite male young man walking through a metropolitan city as a symbol of civilization, an elite male young man going on a healing journey on a country road, a sad peasant family wandering in search of a place to live, and a woman who suffers from the immobility to walk in early modern times. These texts share an important characteristic of walking which we usually call a gait. On the one hand, the elite men of the first two types represent the modern intellectuals of Tokyo Imperial University. On the other hand, the lower-class peasants of the last two types who are marginalized by capitalists and endowed with barbarism and diaspora, show the darker side of modern Japan. Also, work representing women’s everyday life form a theme about how they are alienated from modern cultural life itself through the expression of walking. A social hierarchy in life is revealed more clearly by paying attention to walking.

Indeed, today, people are increasingly dependent on modern technology for the convenience of everyday life. But from a human-centered point of view, the advancement of a vehicle has resulted in a ‘transformation of walking culture.’ In a capitalist society, humans may crave high mobility. Still, it is naïve to think that vehicles with advanced technology serve humans because quite the opposite is true. Literary texts record people’s social bodies when they walk in the context of the rapid development of mobility technology. Indeed, paying attention to walking expressions in the

study of today's literary texts is very useful for reading the text's social and historical context.

## 2. Walking in a city and walking in a mountain

Sōseki Natsume (1867–1916) is one of the most influential modern Japanese novelists. His works depict Japanese intellectuals struggling to adapt to modern times when Japan opened its ports and achieved modernization (Ishihara 251). Yasunari Kawabata (1899–1972), who became known to the world as a representative Japanese writer by receiving the Nobel Prize in 1968, lyrically portrayed the futile intellectual in modernized Japan (Toba 71). This paper analyzes the different aspects of walking of young intellectuals through novels written by two leading Japanese novelists, Sōseki Natsume and Yasunari Kawabata. Sōseki Natsume's *Sanshirō* (1908) and Yasunari Kawabata's *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (1925) are both growing-up-age narratives. Both novels convey walking as a means of expressing the coming-of-age story of two young men who come from the elite class.

In *Sanshirō*, the protagonist is a young man named Sanshirō, who first came to Tokyo from a rural area to attend Tokyo Imperial University. This novel depicts the experiences of Sanshirō, an elite young man from the countryside of southern Japan, as he arrives at the University of Tokyo for the first time. He soon becomes accustomed to his surroundings, fellow students and professors. It also depicts his interaction with several young ladies and his first experiences of love. Through Sanshirō and those around him, the text describes aspects of the Meiji-era Japanese modern society.

After moving to the capital city of an expanding empire to attend university, Sanshirō reflects while walking around the big city.

Many things surprised Sanshirō in Tokyo. First, he was surprised to hear the tinkling sound of trams. He was also surprised to see so many people getting on and off the tram while making that sound... What amazed him the most was that it was still Tokyo, no matter how much he walked. Besides, lumbers and stones are everywhere, piled up for construction works... and everything seems to be under construction simultaneously. It is a great move. (*Sanshirō* 21-22)<sup>1</sup>

The reason Sanshirō walks through Tokyo is to experience modern civilization. He communicates with the city by walking down the streets where construction is underway, for example. The people getting on and off the tram represent a giant modern metropolis where it is no longer possible to move by walking alone. As a newcomer in Tokyo, he experiences the city as a space without a sense of place. He is attracted to building construction sites and a desolate development site with no traces of life: “A place is a space in which traces of a subject’s experiences and historical memories are recorded” (Shin 2021, 606).

On the other hand, space is the basic unit expressed in latitude and longitude without attachment to a place (Cresswell 2). As Sanshirō’s communication with the city did not get a sense of place through walking, he could not imagine the city by his bodily sense. For example, people get a sense of place on their own, and believe that they know everything about a city like a long-time resident, even if they have not actually walked around every corner of it.

The first experience of walking in a big city renders all that is routinary and self-evident unfamiliar. Sanshirō “stands in the middle of Tokyo and sees trams and trains and people in white and those in black moving(22)” and becomes “anxious” (22) that he would fall behind in that world. For Sanshirō, Tokyo is a ‘moving’ city. Indeed, the novel realistically depicts the anxiety of modern times through the relative senses of the city and the subject. People regard trams, trains, construction sites, and buildings as icons of modern, urban civilizations. However, as the protagonist walks around the big city for the first time after leaving his hometown in the countryside, he feels a sense of detachment from civilization with no relationship, causing the subject anxiety in the face of mobility technology.

However, he soon begins to feel a sense of place in this city and uses it to become accustomed to a civilization and eventually becomes a part of it. The country bumpkin Sanshirō explores Tokyo on foot, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by intellectuals he made friends with, conversing whilst walking. He goes to concerts or sports events with his friends or walks together with a girl he has a crush on. In other words, the expansion of

the modern city has also expanded to the urban space from which to source literary material.

That evening Sanshirō went to an area where Mr. Nonomiya lives to meet him, but it was a bit early, so he took a walk to 4-Chome<sup>2</sup> and went into a big import store to buy a shirt. ... Coincidentally, Mineko and Yosiko came in to buy perfume. After saying hello, ...

The two smiled, came to him, and helped him pick out a shirt together. Finally, Yosiko said, “Why don’t you pick this one.” Sanshirō bought it. This time, they turned to Sanshirō for advice on perfume. (*Sanshirō* 211-212)

In novels, walking that even serves to make people’s relationships intimate by accident is a familiar scene. We have also often seen in the media how new relationships are built while walking. Urban space is given meaning as a place only when people walk around it, passing by theaters and shops selling imported goods. Sanshirō once felt uncomfortable in Tokyo, where new buildings were everywhere being constructed. But soon he discovers and becomes familiar with the various places in the city through walking and accepts the city culture over time. After a shopping trip, Sanshirō happens to walk with a beautiful woman named Yosiko because they are heading in the same direction. Walking creates a relationship with people and has a different meaning depending on where they walk. Walking around the library, lecture halls, the pond in front of the medical school, and exhibitions at the Tokyo Imperial University, Sanshirō becomes acquainted with the elite intellectuals he meets in these different places.

Filled with deep anxiety about city life, another young man goes on a trip to destress. Yasunari Kawabata published *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (1925) less than 20 years after *Sanshirō*. It is a story about an elite student living in Tokyo who travels alone to the Izu Peninsula to cultivate mind and body. The narrator, who is also the main character, meets with a troupe of five traveling musicians, one man, and four women, while heading for the Mount Amagi tunnel. He is impressed by the beauty of the youngest-looking woman in the troupe and decides to follow them. After traversing the tunnel, he starts a conversation with her, making him laugh, and realizing that she is still a

young, innocent girl. While walking together, the main character overhears Kaoru, the youngest-looking woman, and the other woman saying what a nice person he is. This innocent voice uplifts him from his melancholia. He does not ignore them, but he realizes that they cannot keep traveling together. So, eventually, he breaks up with them on the way back to Tokyo.

The type of walking in this journey is quite different from the kind that helped Sanshirō discover the “signs” (Kamei 4) of the city. In those days, walking was a common means of travel, similar to the tradition of pilgrimage in pre-modern times. The young man is a typical protagonist of a coming-of-age novel, as he grows up while walking in the midst of and communicating with nature. He is 20 years old and goes to the First Higher School, Japan<sup>3</sup>. While travelling through Izu, he happens to meet a company of itinerant actors and they travel together. The traveling theater troupe consists of a woman in her 40s, a young couple, and two teenage girls, and the main protagonist is strongly attracted to the youngest ‘dancer’ at first sight. The troupes are wandering clowns who are looked down upon even by the old woman at the tea house, but enjoying the comfortable and warm atmosphere, the main protagonist gradually feels free from the restraints of distorted emotions.

As a 20-year-old, I accused myself harshly repeatedly that I had a bad temper as an orphan. I could not resist the choking gloom and came to the Izu Peninsula for travel ...

On the way, notices were on the entrances of several villages.

--No beggars and clowns are allowed in the village. (*The Dancing Girl of Izu* 33-34)<sup>4</sup>

The main protagonist begins to walk when he goes on a trip to figure out the problem that made him a troubled man. For him, travelling is an act of asceticism to feel differently in a touristic space and reflect on how to recover from his suffering in urban civilization. It is interesting to see how different the people and places that Sanshirō encounters while walking around Tokyo with all its intelligentsia and signs of civilization such as trams,



a university library, and magnificent buildings. Walking on a country road is the story of a young man, the protagonist of *The Dancing Girl of Izu*, and a “clown” with whom he walks; a wide gap separates them in terms of social status. Unlike the young man from Tokyo, the wandering clowns, regard the country road as a road to places with memories of episodes that happened in the past. Experiencing discrimination and treated as beggars, they faced an immobility situation because they were not allowed to enter the village.

A hierarchy of walking is also established among people who walk together. The protagonist’s “depression” begins to be alleviated while communicating with companions from a low social status while walking with them on the road trip and begins to feel better. The wandering clowns invite him to their hometown, but despite his romantic feelings about the dancer, he turns down her invitation and heads back to Tokyo. Moreover, he seems to have become more mature when he returns to Tokyo after saying good-bye to the dancer at the end of the trip. What has made maturity possible was that he was not walking in Tokyo. However, since travel is a temporary experience, his walking and travelling are ultimately similar to a tourist’s gaze. Therefore, it is possible to communicate pleasantly with a person from a different social status. Although deeply imbued with lyricism while walking with the young dancer in this narrative, the protagonist has no room to develop his love. He has no intention of transforming the space of his travel into a place, but he is still consuming that experience. It works in stark contrast to Sanshirō, who makes efforts to transform a space into a place quickly upon arriving in the capital from his rural hometown. Walking in modern times between a city and the mountains is not the same or equal between people; it is hierarchical.

Although both young protagonists in these novels walk on unfamiliar land and grow up along the way, walking acquires different meanings. Here we can see that even walking is hierarchical.

### 3. Walking to live

*Descendants of Cain* (1917), written by Takeo Arishima (1878–1923), is set in Hokkaido, where tenant farming was widespread in the modern period. In

this novel, we can see the first part of the novel, where the Ninemon family comes to settle in this desolate land, alongside the last scene, where they leave after failing to settle down. This modern novel depicts the miserable condition of tenant farmers' families in Hokkaido, Japan, where nature is the enemy of the main character. The central character appears at the novel's beginning trying to settle on a farm and fighting against nature; however, in the end, despite his desperate efforts, nature abandons him after causing discord with the villagers and owing so much debt. Although he fought fiercely against nature, his family burns their house and leaves the village.

Casting a long shadow on the ground and holding the reins of the skinny horse, the man walked silently. Carrying a baby whose head is big like an eel on the back as well as a large, dirty bag, his wife limped little by little and plodded after him five or six metres behind.

Winter in Hokkaido stretched to the sky. The west wind, passing from the East Sea into Uchiura Bay, blew like waves through the Iburi steppe leading to the foot of the Makkari Nupuri mountain called Ezo Fuji. It is a bitter wind. .... Not even a single tree grew on the meadow. He and his wife moved like two staggering trees on a lonely, straight road.

The two walked, not saying a word as if they had forgotten to speak. Only when the horse was peeing did the husband reluctantly stop. His wife finally caught up in the meantime, lifted her load on her back, and sighed. When the horse had finished urinating, the two began to walk silently again. (*Descendants of Cain* 87)<sup>5</sup>

The novel's first scene functions as a foreshadowing that hints at the theme. For the main character, walking is a matter of survival. It is not about a metaphorical 'nomad' but about a disadvantaged migrant's mobility in desperate search for a place to live. What draws the reader's attention is how the family walks through the vast expanse of nature, with no infrastructure in society such as paved roads, restaurants, shops, traffic lights, or bus stops. This novel is highly acclaimed by the Japanese literary circle for its depiction of nature that is so far away from civilization. However, it is meaningless to evaluate this novel which depicts "wild and uncivilized" people from a binomial either perspective of "civilization versus barbarism." Instead, it

is natural to simply leave the reader's five senses to the literary sensibility of what such primitive walking is like. If all cultural apparatuses around us disappear and we walk alone, what will it mean to us?

It is common to imagine things not here. We wish for a problematic situation to disappear, travelers look forward to the scenery that will unfold before them, or someone imagines in a flashback images of the days of their old hometown before it changed and became modern. Imagining barbarism from the vantage point of a civilized mind is no different from longing for things that no longer exist if they ever did exactly as imagined. It is like dreaming of rural life because of the difficult life in cities.

In *Descendants of Cain*, the family, plodding along with the child on the mother's back and the horse, represents the most basic state of human existence. This solitary family's walking reminds us of a 'march of suffering' or the wanderings of a diaspora. The novel's title also reminds us of Cain, expelled from the Garden of Eden due to his sin and wandering.

However, there is no communication while this family is walking. There is no cultural activity such as admiring the scenery or conversation about the next destination. The expression "walking silently," implies that in the context of this novel, walking is an act signifying their fight against nature in order to survive. The discovery of "wildness" of nature and the characters received praise from critics due to the strong impression created by the first part of the novel. In fact, in the later chapters of this novel, the protagonist's anti-social violence and anti-moral desires are narrated in the community marked by a peasant culture. Indeed, primitive walking without communication, as expressed in the introduction, had an enormous power on the readers which influenced the overall evaluation of this novel because intellectuals and critics in Tokyo in 1917 must have felt a kind of defamiliarization from scenes depicting the family walking in *Descendants of Cain* (Yamada, 92-94). What matters here is that the act of walking has a significant influence on shaping the subjectivity of characters. Modern Japan has been focusing on civilization, and has formed a huge discourse around the topic, thereby excluding the nature of the diaspora as shown by the main family in this novel.

The family walks in silence as if practicing asceticism. Furthermore, the wife has a disability in one of her legs projecting such a lonely walk without the elements of culture and society, suggesting hardship that lies ahead. As a peasant, Ninemon fails to settle down due to his rebellious temperament. Faithful to his instincts, he leaves the village as if he were exiled. The novel ends with the following passage:

When they came out on the national road, it was covered with snow. Ninemon took the lead and walked carefully to avoid falling into the snow pit. The couple kept on moving forward with large luggage, with faltering steps. As she passed a cemetery, the wife walked with her palms together towards it, crying aloud as if purposely (Note: their child was buried in the cemetery). When the couple came to the village, they had a horse. They also had a newborn baby. Nature has taken the baby and the horse away from them.

From that point on, there were no houses in sight. Dry branches, broken by the raging snow, often ran towards them like spear blades. The tree, swaying violently in the strong wind, ran wild like a witch's hair.

There was an *Abies sachalinensis* forest in the distance. With bare trees all over, a tree had gloomy dark green leaves. Its straight stems stretched endlessly, reaching up to the sky and capturing the sound of the wind like a roar. The husband and wife approached the forest like tiny ants and were sucked into it. (*Descendants of Cain* 127-128)

In this novel, the final scene follows the two people walking silently, as they did in the beginning. They are still walking strenuously, but mobility is getting more difficult for them. They walk painfully due to the threat of sinking snow pits and snow-capped spear-sharp branches. Walking without a future is to walk simply to survive a given situation. This novel suggests that whereas they used to walk to live, now they have to walk to survive.

Unlike the walking in the hopes of falling in love with the prince as in the fairy tale *The Little Mermaid*, walking in this novel might not be that captivating. It is probably because the theme of this novel connects readers to the dark side of civilization through the image of aimless walking. The novelist assumes that the primary issue a human subject who walks upright

needs to tackle is his survival, and culture is only secondary. This memory of the past primitive state, is an area that is hard to imagine for us. Therefore, walking in order to live becomes a powerful expression that deconstructs the taken-for-granted life of the subject. It might be why the literary circle in Tokyo sang the praises of this novel.

#### 4. Walking in a civilised manner

The ethical incongruity between the protagonist and society is discussed in a paper on the protagonist's walking in *A Certain Woman* (1919), another novel by the writer of *Descendants of Cain*. This study examines civilized walking in *A Certain Woman* which is a story about the passionate life of charming divorced woman, Yōko, who is a single mother of 24 (Shin 2021, 601-613). This novel begins with a scene of Yoko preparing to depart for the United States to get married to Kimura after her parents' death. While on a long sea voyage to the United States, Yoko falls passionately in love with an officer on the ship (Kurachi). In the end, Yōko returns to Japan, suffers from bullying and disease, and the novel ends with her demise. As discussed above regarding *Descendants of Cain*, the opening chapters are vital for this novel, too.

As she was passing Shinbashi, the second bell rang indicating the departure. The sound of the bell was heard in the misty September morning air, though it was not as thick as the fog. (*A Certain Woman* 7)<sup>6</sup>

The heroine first appears on her way to the train station riding a rickshaw. Her whole body becomes one with a rickshaw vehicle, protected by mobile devices and invisible to passersby. She is not walking, but the vehicle, more precisely, the person who is pulling it is, carrying her, so readers cannot see her walking at all. In other words, a moving body not only expresses the unique meaning of a person, but also associates it with the cultural and technological contexts of its time. From that point onwards, she appears to the readers as a body whose every movement has a cultural code.

It is common knowledge that the train departs soon after the second time the bell rings at a train station. So, the rickshaw driver carrying the

main character Yōko is running fast to catch the train, and at the ticket gate, a young man named Kotō, who is escorting Yōko, is begging the station attendant to wait for her. It is well known in mobility theory that the modern concept of punctuality began with the advent of the train (Gately 37). As such, the act of delaying the train at the beginning of this novel might be viewed as a kind of provocation against the well-established framework of modernity. Particularly in this part of the novel, because the heroine is late for her departure time, one would expect that she would hurry up to catch the train, but instead she just continues to walk on all too slowly.

Yōko, who is leaving to marry her fiancé who lives in the United States, is on her way to Yokohama to buy a steamer ticket to take her to the United States (See Shin 2017, 218–219). She is accompanied by Kotō, a friend of her fiancé, because it is dangerous for a woman to travel alone. She wants to go shopping in Yokohama where there are many shops selling imported goods.

On the platform, everyone standing, including the station attendants and those who came out to see someone off, looked towards the two people. With no regard for it, Yōko walks slowly, intimately shoulder to shoulder with the young man, guessing what is in the pack the rickshaw man handed him or saying there is no city like Yokohama... When the two entered the train, everyone looked at them, and Yōko enjoyed watching the young man being shy like a naive girl and angry at her. (*A Certain Woman* 8)

When a film that should have been fast-paced turns slow, the effect on the viewer is palpable. Everyone cannot help but anxiously watch Yōko as she is walking too leisurely, she has to be hurrying up. Considering that walking so slowly in a public place and drawing the attention of people as a result is unseemly even for men, it would have been considered more inappropriate for a woman to draw attention in the modern era when the status of women was conventionally believed to be far lower than men (Shin 2021, 605). As she gets off the rickshaw to take a train, her slow movement seems deliberate, as she is conscious of the audience's gaze. Just like what has been referred to as primitive walking without communication as in the first scene in *Descendants of Cain*, walking in *A Certain Woman* delivers a message very strategically.

In the context of the setting, the train station square, waiting room, and platform are modern public places. Indeed, it is the first modern Japanese novel that draws attention to women walking in public places. If the train is a symbol of modernity, walking in public places is also a symbol of the subject's emergence. Having accelerated modernity, mobility also enabled the emergence of the subject, constituting an integral (Pooley 598-599, Kim 222) element of modernity, as walking helped make possible such an emergence into the public realm. Women had access to such mobility, but there were restrictions on women's walking in those days because they were still widely discriminated against. Yōko gets off at Yokohama Station, the largest port in Japan in modern times, and walks around the port with Kotō, but with apparent difficulty.

Using the parasol as a staff, Yōko gingerly descended from the deck and came out to the ticket gates with Kotō's help. But as she walked slowly, the other passengers passed, leaving only the two of them behind. 14 - 15 rickshaw drivers for the station, who had not found customers, gathered in front of the waiting room, looking at the slender Yoko and talking about something. Words such as 'the girl' and 'foreigners' whore' were mixed into their obscene chatter. The coarse, vulgar atmosphere of the open port immediately vexed Yoko's nerves. (*A Certain Woman* 21)

Here, we can think about the characters walking for survival in *Descendants of Cain*, suffering from heavy burdens. A parasol appears as an accompaniment to Yōko's leisurely walking in a large Japanese city around the same time as when a family walks desperately for survival in another part of the country. Her fragility emphasizes her "slender" femininity, as the sight of a woman walking becomes an object of the masculine gaze. From her walking as an object of such a gaze, we realize how modern culture developed from a male perspective in the name of civilization.

We have discussed four types of walking in modern Japanese novels. As suggested by the analysis, the description of walking in a literary text means more than just moving from one place to another. Of course, walking in everyday life is essential, but the types depicted in these novels are quite representative in general.

In 1908, when *Sanshirō* was published, Tokyo was a large city with over two million people. This novel is about a young intellectual who came to a big city for the first time, communicating with his body by walking around the city, and in the process, transforming into a subject. This insight has not attracted much attention from critics engaged in metadiscourse research but it is important to point out, as suggested by this analysis, that through the exploration of walking mobility in literary works, a body's ordinary physical movement becomes more than meets the eye. We realize the significance, for example, of witnessing how a young intellectual who is used to living in a big city walks on the mountain trails in the countryside alongside people with totally different habitus from that of the city, evoking a lyricism that we feel in travel. However, the main character walking here is thoroughly controlled by the intellectual environment already working, because his walking in the mountains is temporary, and his walking in the city is his first time to do so.

Walking as an idea is modern. Walking as understood in a modern sense did not exist in *Descendants of Cain*, where the characters walk in an environment of immobility. There are no palpable cultural and social elements in their silence; no destination, hopes, and desires. In this novel, primitive walking in order to live is a struggle against nature and diasporic wandering—which is very unlike civilized walking. Interestingly, Yōko in *A Certain Woman* catches the gaze of the random public, especially men, signaling the beginning of women's walking, depicting how modernity in the culture of feminine walking began in Japan in the context of modern inventions.

The four novels discussed in this paper describe the walking. Literary texts have helped us look into the lives of humans in the past, and provided a basis of possibly shared feelings with contemporary readers. Finally, through a close analysis of novels that focus on one of the most ordinary physical movements of human beings such as walking, we can begin to imagine how people in the past might have been fundamentally constituted by the development of mobility technology. Of course, the few significant works of this Japanese case cannot incorporate the expression of walking in the larger



context of modern Japan. Nevertheless, beyond the problems of infrastructure and walking that Urry has pointed out, we can validate that modern Japan was not only hierarchical, but also gendered, even when people were walking on the same path.

## Notes

1. Quoted from the Japanese edition (Natsume, Sōseki. *Sanshirō*. Shinchosha, 1986).
2. Chome is the Japanese notation for dividing districts into blocks.
3. It is the best high school in Japan, and students are admitted to the third year of the Tokyo Imperial University after graduation, so it is equivalent to the first or second year of the Tokyo Imperial University.
4. Quoted from the Japanese edition (Kawabata, Yasunari. *The Dancing Girl of Izu*. Shinchosha, 1986).
5. Quoted from the Japanese edition (Arishima, Takeo. *Descendants of Cain*. *The Collected Works of Takeo Arishima*, vol. 3, Chikuma Syobo, 1980).
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