

The Context behind Naoya Shiga's "Rōjin": Bjørnsen and *Current Literature*

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Explanatory Note

"Rōjin (The Old Man)," an early short story by Naoya Shiga, is a work that depicts half the lifetime of an old man based on certain happenings written in chronological order and gives remarkable expression to the loneliness of aging. Shiga's diary from this period as well as his recollections on his writing subject and motive in his later years still exist. However, discrepancies can be found in his memoirs, and precedent research has considered "Rōjin" to have been modeled on Strindberg's "The Phoenix."

Shiga, however, also stated in a memoir written seventeen years after the work's publication that "there were short stories published by authors from the European continent in each issue of the American journal *Current Literature*," and that he adopted the format of his story from "a short piece by Bjørnsen that [he had] forgotten the title of." This paper uncovers this "short piece by Bjørnsen" in *Current Literature* and reveals it to be "The Father (original title, 'Faderen')." Through comparison, it analyzes how "Rōjin" skillfully incorporates both the formats of "The Phoenix" and "The Father."

At the same time, while no studies have been made thus far in regards to the fact that modern Japanese writers used the American literary journal *Current Literature* for their creative work, from the diary of Naoya Shiga and the contents of letters from his friends it has become clear that *Current Literature* was used in critical and creative activities by Shiga and his colleagues. The purpose of this paper is thus to clarify the creative process behind "Rōjin" and to reveal — for the first time — part of the influence of *Current Literature* on modern Japanese writing.

I. Introduction

"Rōjin" is one of Naoya Shiga's¹ early works compiled in his first collection, *Rume*² (Jan. Taisho 2 (1912), Rakuyōdō). It was first published in the November Meiji 44 (1911) issue of *Shirakaba*³ and, while detailed corrections were made when it was compiled in *Rume*, these did not change the overall gist of the work. A copy of the manuscript still remains.

While reviews at the time included critical commentary such as, "It is slightly different from the directionality of his other works and has even achieved a state of harmony in regards to its technique. However, its perfect technique is conversely a factor that exceedingly obstructs its impression on its readers. What remains in mind after

1. Naoya Shiga (1883-1971) was one of the most representative writers of modern-day Japan. He founded the literary journal *Shirakaba* with his friends at the end of the Meiji era and created a major trend called the Shirakaba-ha (the Shirakaba Group) in the history of Japanese literature. He was respected by literary giants like Ryūnosuke Akutagawa and Yasunari Kawabata and called by the name of "Shōsetsu no kamisama (The God of Novels)" after one of his representative works, "Kozō no kamisama (The God of Kozō (boy apprentice))." Other representative works by Shiga include "Kinosaki nite (At Kinosaki)" and "Anyā kōro (A Dark Night's Passing)."
2. *Rume* was Shiga's first collection of works. Its title is taken from the name of his beloved grandmother.
3. *Shirakaba* was a literary journal founded in 1910. It was discontinued in 1923, due to the Great Kanto Earthquake. One of the representative literary journals of the Taishō era, it was a coterie magazine published by those from the Gakushūin, including Naoya Shiga, Takeo Arishima and Saneatsu Mushanokōji.

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reading this work is *simply a kind of pleasure that comes from the technical skill of the work along with the faint shadow of the old man's life.*" (Shigeshi "Jūichi gatsu no shōsetsu to gikyoku (Novels and Plays in November)" / *Mita Bungaku*, Dec. Meiji 44 (1911)), there were also favorable comments such as "Although it is only a six-page short story, it is a piece that lets you enjoy the relative complexities of life. *The stringent and ample depiction more than demonstrates the rich talent of this writer.* At first glance, it seems that the story is narrated very simply, but with more attention, you realize that a considerably sharp observant eye is moving over the work. It is a brisk and pleasant piece." ("Jūgatsu [sic] no omonaru saku to ron (Main Works and Discussions from October)" / *Waseda Bungaku*, Dec. Meiji 44 (1911)) and "His laconic, daunting pen is filled with a pressing emotion and, while the events occur within the realm of a mere six pages, there are many parts that resonate within our hearts, and it can sufficiently be called a masterpiece" (Gettanshi "Jūichi gatsu no bungei (hachi) (November Literature (8))" / *Jiji Shinpō*, Nov. Meiji 44 (1911), 18). As the underlined sections (indicated by the author of this paper, the same hereafter) in each commentary suggest, the focus is on the story's format (this paper uses the word "format" to mean literary style and structure) and mastery of simplicity, and high value is assigned to the writing's "technique" and "skill."

Shiga himself later stated that this work focuses on "format."

"Rōjin" was a short piece, but required a rather painstaking effort. It was an attempt at format, and I do not believe that it has much value apart from this point. However, as an attempt at format, I believe that it succeeded. There were short stories published by authors from the European continent in each issue of the American journal *Current Literature*, including Andreev's "Lazarus" and Strindberg's "The Phoenix," among others. There was also a short piece by Bjørnsen⁴ that I have forgotten the title of, in which a monk from a certain temple looks after the life of a certain human being. It wrote about a scene in which a baby receives christening, a scene in which a marriage ceremony takes place after the boy becomes an adult and lastly, it wrote about the boy's death and his funeral conducted by the monk. These three scenes were written in a simple manner, and I was awed by the way in which one human being's life could strangely be sensed within it. "Rōjin" is a piece that I concocted from it, but is not an imitation of Bjørnsen.

("Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)" / *Kaizō*, July Showa 3 (1928), also included in the *Shiga Naoya shū (Naoya Shiga Collection)* (Kaizō-sha) published the same year and month)

This was a memoir published seventeen years after "Rōjin," and it is not unnatural for Shiga to have forgotten the title of the work. At any rate, he stated that his attempt at the format of "Rōjin" came from a short story by Bjørnsen published in *Current Literature*.

Another twenty years after this memoir, in "Nakano Yoshio kun ni shita hanashi (Talks with Yoshio Nakano)" (*Bungaku*, Jan. Showa 27 (1952)), he also noted, "My 'Rōjin' is something that came from Bjørnsen's short story, but it is not an imitation of it." The fact still remained that "Rōjin" took hints from Bjørnsen's short story.

However, in Shiga's diary from February 10, Meiji 44 (1911), there is an account that states:

I am thinking of a novel about the discordant pains of a "seventy-five year old" elderly man towards sexual desire./ I started writing a bit this evening, and it may be doable./ I am planning to learn from the form of Strindberg's "The Phoenix."

In a diary entry from the thirteenth of the same month, he wrote, "I revised the seventy-five-year-old man as an elderly man (rōjin) and finished writing for now." According to this entry, rather than the work noted in "Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)," "Rōjin" was inspired by Strindberg's "The Phoenix."

So does the format of "Rōjin" come from Bjørnsen's short story or from Strindberg's "The Phoenix"? Or does it include elements from both? In any case, Bjørnsen's short story must be identified first to make any further investigation.

"Rōjin" is a work that has not been mentioned much in the history of research on Shiga and, in my humble

4. Byørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910) was a Norwegian author and laureate of the 1903 Nobel Prize in Literature.

opinion, there have only been a few research papers delving into the details of the work's theory. Even in such precedent research, "Björnsen's work" mentioned in "Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)" has not yet been identified.

Hideo Kuribayashi, who discussed the formation of "Rōjin" in detail in "Shiga Naoya ron nōto – 'Rōjin' no seiritsu to sono zengo (Notes on Naoya Shiga – The Formation of 'Rōjin' and Its Context)" (*Nihon bungaku kenkyū* (Daito Bunka University, Japanese Literature Society) Jan. Shōwa 53 (1978)), and Yukio Kobayashi, who wrote "Shiga Naoya 'Rōjin' ron – kankeisei no shinwa (The Naoya Shiga 'Rōjin' Theory – The Closeness of Relationships)" (*Sakushin Kokubun*, Dec. Heisei 3 (1991)), both focused on the diary and stated that the format of "Rōjin" was based on "The Phoenix."

Thus, although it was noted in "Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)" that "Rōjin" was "concocted from *it*," no mention has been made in precedent studies as to which of Björnsen's works "*it*" was.

This paper investigates the journal *Current Literature* and identifies Björnsen's short story as "The Father," published in Volume 49 Issue 1 (July 1910). The identification was made from the fact that there is no discrepancy in the period the story was published and the time at which "Rōjin" was written and that the content of "The Father" (introduced in Section 3 of this paper) matches the description found in "Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)," in that it was a story "in which a monk from a certain temple looks after the life of a certain human being."

In the following paper, the influence of Björnsen's "The Father" (original title: "Faderen") is investigated, touching upon the formation of "Rōjin" and the relationship between Naoya Shiga and the journal *Current Literature*.

II. Conditions Surrounding "Rōjin" and "The Father": the Writing Process, *Current Literature* and Björnsen

First, the writing process behind Shiga's "Rōjin" was confirmed through diary entries and notes from the period. Because Strindberg's "The Phoenix" is also important for investigating the subjects in "Rōjin," entries that relate to "The Phoenix" were also selected. Although the diary has been studied and introduced in precedent research, it is also referred to here in order to verify the relationship between "Rōjin," "The Father" and "The Phoenix." Related diary entries and accounts in Shiga's notebook were extracted and coded with the letters A to H.

A. February 2, Meiji 43 (1910)

After hearing about Tokunou's *taiin*,⁵ I think that both are to blame. I'd like to make the "taiin sawagi(drop-out incident)" into a novel.

B. October 30, Meiji 43 (1910)

I briefly began working on the earlier drop-out story based on Strindberg's short story, "The Phoenix."

C. February 10, Meiji 44 (1911)

I am thinking of a novel about the discordant pains of a "seventy-five year old" elderly man towards sexual desire. / I started writing a bit this evening, and it may be doable. / I am planning to learn from the form of Strindberg's "The Phoenix."

D. February 11, Meiji 44 (1911)

I wrote a little for "The Seventy-Five Year Old" in the morning and a little at night.

E. February 13, Meiji 44 (1911)

In the two hours or so after I returned home, I revised the seventy-five year old man as an elderly man (*rōjin*) and finished writing for now.

F. February 14, Meiji 44 (1911)

I changed the title, "The Seventy-Five Year Old," to "Rōjin (The Old Man)" and tried writing.

5. *Taiin* refers to withdrawal from school, in this case, Tokunou's withdrawal from the Gakushūin.

G. March 5, Meiji 44 (1911)

After taking a look at Luna Park,⁶ I went to Yoshiwara⁷ and, after walking around for a while, I went to visit a woman by the name of Kinshi. I only talked and left the place around 12, but I thought that this woman would be perfect as a model for the mistress in “Rōjin.”

H. Note 9 (Notebook said to have been written in Meiji 44 (1911), contained in Supplementary Volume 6 of the *Shiga Naoya zenshū* (*Naoya Shiga Collected Works*)⁽¹⁾)

The young wife goes to a friend's place and comes home around 12, the seventy-two year old man faints before that. I suddenly feel very lonely.

According to C~G, “Rōjin” was planned and written in mid-February of Meiji 44 (1911) and, while the writing process ended at one point, the planning and polishing process, as can be seen in G, continued. In the manuscripts is recorded, “written in February of Meiji 44 (1911).” Reasons for the gap between its writing period and its publication in November of the same year are speculated on in the explanatory note (by Yu Endo) to *Meicho fukkoku zenshū kindai bungakukan sakuhin kaidai – Taishō ki* (*Masterpiece Revival Collection, Museum of Modern Literature, Annotations – Taishō Era*) (Apr. Shōwa 44 (1969), The Museum of Modern Japanese Literature) and in Tsutomu Miyagi's “Shoki Shiga bungaku no ichi danmen – ‘Kamisori,’ ‘Kare to muttsu ue no onna,’ ‘Rōjin’ no haikai – (A Section of Early Shiga Literature – the Context Behind “The Razor,” “The Man and the Woman Six Years Older Than Him” and “Rōjin (The Old Man)” –) (*Meiji daigaku nihon bungaku*, Sept. Showa 54 (1979), later compiled in *Shiga Naoya – seishun no kōzu – (Shiga Naoya – the Composition of His Youth)* (Apr. Heisei 3 (1991), Musashino Shobō)), however, it is now impossible to know whether what Shiga wrote during the C~G periods was different from what was actually published.

In regards to Kinshi from account G, a diary entry made a little while before noted, “I visited a dirty house in Yoshiwara for a little bit and went straight to Shinagawa-rō⁸ from there. Kinshi is a beautifully doll-like girl with an absurdly comical air.”

As for learning from the format of “The Phoenix,” according to account B, an initial attempt was made with a different piece called “Taikō (The Drop-out).” “Taikō” was a work inspired by the “*taiin-sawagi* (drop-out incident)” in A and its unfinished manuscript is included in pages 97 to 105 of Supplementary Volume 1 in the *Collected Works*. As Hideo Kuribayashi's paper (previously mentioned in Section 1 of this paper) noted, “Taikō (The Drop-Out),” inspired by “The Phoenix,” is most likely “Shin-en wo gyōshi suru hito (The Man Who Gazed into the Abyss)” from Unfinished Manuscript 104.⁽²⁾ According to these journal entries, “Taikō” could not be completed during the B period, but Shiga could not give up adopting the form of “The Phoenix” in one of his works, and thus tried it a few months later in the C period with “Nanajū go sai (The Seventy-Five Year Old),” in other words, “Rōjin.”

For H, it is not certain whether the memo has any relation to “Rōjin.” However, because a note placed just before it reads “*nyūei* (enlisted),” it has been speculated as being from when Shiga enlisted in the military in December of Meiji 43 (1910).⁹ However, there are also a number of memos related to “Yoshiwara Monogatari (The Yoshiwara Story),” which was also in the making at the time. This “Yoshiwara Monogatari” is mentioned in a journal entry from November 6, Meiji 43 (1910) stating, “I made a note for ‘Yoshiwara Monogatari,’” and also in an entry from February 24, Meiji 44 (1911) — a period that coincides with the writing of “Rōjin” — stating “I think I will include this in ‘Yoshiwara Monogatari.’” It thus follows that there is still a possibility this memo is from the period when “Rōjin” was written, and its content is close to the motif of “Rōjin.”

As can be seen, Shiga's interest in “The Phoenix” is evident in B, from late October of Meiji 43 (1910), and it can be confirmed that the foundations of “Rōjin” were established sometime between February and March of the following year, Meiji 44 (1911). So is there any discrepancy between this writing process and the period when “The

6. Luna Park was an amusement park in Asakusa. It burned down in April, 1911.

7. Yoshiwara was one of the most famous brothels that flourished from the Edo period.

8. Shinagawa-rō was one of the famous houses in Yoshiwara.

9. Shiga entered the military in February of Meiji 43 (1910). Shiga enlisted once due to the conscription system, but he was soon exempt due to reasons of illness.

Phoenix” and “The Father” were published in the journal *Current Literature*? The following is an account of Naoya Shiga’s relationship with this journal.

In “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation),” Shiga noted that, along with Bjørnsen’s work, *Current Literature* contained Andreev’s “Lazarus” and Strindberg’s “The Phoenix.” These stories were published in the following issues of this journal:

Andreev’s “Lazarus (Lazaro)” in Volume 42, Issue 5, May 1907 ;

Bjørnsen’s “The Father” in Volume 49, Issue 1, July 1910 ;

Strindberg’s “The Phoenix”¹⁰ in Volume 49, Issue 4, October 1910

From the aforementioned journal, the period during which Shiga expressed interest in “The Phoenix” more or less coincides with the period in which the piece was published in *Current Literature*. At the same time, there is also a high probability that Shiga had also read “The Father,” published three issues before “The Phoenix.”

On top of this, it seems that Shiga sometimes read a number of old issues in one sitting. This can be seen in Shiga’s “Techō 13 (Pocketbook 13)” and “Unfinished Manuscript 90.” In the “Techō ushiro yori”¹¹ section of “Techō 13” (in Supplementary Volume 6 of the *Collected Works*) is the following statement:

From the last week in February to the first week in March, I read from *Current Literature* and *Bookman*./ Andreev’s “Lazarus” appealed the most to me. I learned the names of Maulice [*sic*] Barrè, Giosse [*sic*] Carducci and Edgar Sultus. As for artists, I learned of the brothers Leon and Theodore Dabo.
(The words “[*sic*]” were found in the original text)

The entry after this in “Techō 13” states, “The 6th. I finished writing the novel *Osoroshii Ichiya* (*The Frightful Night*) (20 pages) and submitted it to Bōya.” The “novel *Osoroshii Ichiya*” is compiled in Supplementary Volume 1 of the *Collected Works* as “Unfinished Manuscript 76,” and the date written at the end of the work is “March 6, Meiji 42 (1909).” According to the postscript to the *Collected Works* Supplementary Volume 6, a date indicating February 19, 1909 can be found at the start of “Techō 13,” so the period during which Shiga “read through” *Current Literature* can be designated as sometime between February and March of Meiji 42 (1909).

And, in “Unfinished Manuscript 90” (*Collected Works* Supplementary Volume 1) is an introductory note titled “The Italian Poet, Giosuè Carducci” “(from the April issue of last year’s *Current Literature*).” This note was derived from “The Most Potent Force in the New Intellectual Life of Italy (with Portrait of Giosuè Carducci),” published in *Current Literature* Volume 42 Issue 4 in April 1907, which would be what Shiga mentioned in “Techō 13” as one of the works he “read through.” Because this was an article written two years before, there is a possibility that he read through a number of old issues at once.

Furthermore, a letter from Kobe (*Shiga Naoya ate shokanshū Shirakaba no jidai* (*Collection of Letters to Naoya Shiga: The Shirakaba Age*), edited by The Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, Sept. Heisei 20 (2008), Iwanami Shoten), written by Torahiko Kōri¹² to Shiga on April 4, Meiji 43 (1910) states the following:

I will send back your *Theatre* and *Current Literature*, just wait a bit longer for the “Wagnery song” in *Current Literature*. Also, when I wrote *Electra*, I lightly penned in the *kana* (definitions) in the memo, thinking to erase them later, but I packed them up and sent them. I’m sorry but could you erase them for me?

“The Wagnery song” is likely “Hugo Wolf” The Wagner of song,” published in the February issue of 1910 (Meiji 43). “Electra” likely refers to “Electra kougai (Outline of Electra),” published in the first issue of *Shirakaba* (Apr.

10. The title found in *Current Literature* is “The Phenix,” but as it has commonly been written as “The Phoenix,” this paper adopts the common spelling of this title.

11. This was the section written from the back of the *techō*, or pocketbook.

12. Torahiko Kōri (1890-1924) was the youngest member of *Shirakaba*. He also wrote under the penname “Hatakazu Kayano” and was known as an international playwright.

Meiji 43 (1910)), and “Kageki to shite no Electra (Electra as an Opera),” published the following month in the second issue, by Torahiko Kōri (Hatakazu Kayano). The former is an introduction to Hofmannsthal and an outline of his play, “Electra,” while the latter is an explanation of its opera interpretation, “Electra” by Richard Strauss. In the latter, there is a note about the journal Theatre, likely made at the time that Kōri borrowed the journal. At the same time, there is a critique of the play in the April 1908 (Meiji 41) issue of *Current Literature*, “Electra – Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s Sensational Tragedy (with portraits of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Mrs. Beerbohm Tree).” And in the March 1910 (Meiji 43) issue of the same magazine is an article titled, “The American Reception of Strauss’s ‘Elektra.’” It seems that Kōri read these articles and used them for inspiration. Because he had to “pack them up” and send them, he must have borrowed a certain amount at once. It can be understood that the journals were thus borrowed and lent between members and that the articles and works within them were used as inspiration for the writers’ own pieces.

From the above, we can see that: Shiga owned issues of *Current Literature*, at least from April 1907 (Meiji 40); he had been reading the magazine, at the latest, since February of Meiji 42 (1909); because he lent a number of issues to his friends, he most likely subscribed to it; and he sometimes read past issues in one sitting. In Meiji 43 (1910), Bjørnsen’s “The Father” and Strindberg’s “The Phoenix” were published in the journal and, as we saw in his diary, Shiga showed an interest in “The Phoenix” just after it was published and wrote “Rōjin” in Meiji 44 (1911). It may thus be said that “Rōjin” was written at a point in time during which Shiga subscribed to and read *Current Literature* in his everyday life.

During the same period that Shiga was reading this journal, he showed an interest in Bjørnsen apart from “The Father” published in *Current Literature*. The following confirms the relationship between Shiga and Bjørnsen.

First, the statement below can be found in “Techō 13,” mentioned earlier — a memo supposedly from Meiji 42 (1909):

- Page 17 [sic] of “Synnöve Solbakken” should be referred to when writing about the relationship between the main character and his father.

Just after this is an outline of the scene showing the father-child relationship in “Synnöve Solbakken.” Two memos considered unrelated to “Synnöve Solbakken” follow, and then:

- (The method of depicting a certain portion by skillfully writing only about the emotions of the main character and not writing from any other perspective, like in the scene where Thor gets hurt on page 108 in “Synnöve Solbakken,” is quite interesting. It is a kind of impressionistic portrayal.)

Bjørnsen’s “Synnöve Solbakken (A Girl from Solbakken)” is a work said to have “instantly heightened his reputation as a national-class author” (Toshiko Nakamura, “Nōmin shōsetsu no seishunzō – B. Bjørnsen to Itō Sachio – (The Height of Peasant Literature – B. Bjørnsen and Sachio Itō –)”/ *Hikaku bungaku kenkyū*, Sept. Showa 51 (1976)). The “scene where Thor gets hurt” is where the main character is stabbed with a knife and, just as in Shiga’s memo, it is written in a format that depicts only the emotions of the main character.

At the same time, in “Note 9” (*Collected Works* Supplementary Volume 6, speculated to be from Meiji 44 (1911), aforementioned as account H in the study of the writing process for “Rōjin”), there is a nine-page outline of “Synnöve Solbakken.”⁽³⁾ As mentioned earlier, a memo thought to be related to “Rōjin” can be found in “Note 9,” showing Shiga’s strong interest in Bjørnsen’s works.

Picking up the pieces of statements made by Shiga on Bjørnsen from this period (the 40’s of the Meiji era), there is also a journal entry from April 26, Meiji 43 (1910) stating, “If I am not mistaken (?) this is the day that Bjørnsen died.” It was indeed the day that Bjørnsen died. An account of Bjørnsen’s death, “Yukeru Bjørnsen (The Late Bjørnsen),” can be found in the June issue of *Shirakaba* published the same year (Vol. 1 Issue 3), and Shiga also wrote on the portrait of Bjørnsen attached to the same account in “Henshū kiji (Editorial article)” (*Collected Works* title, “Shirakaba henshū shitsu nite (At the Shirakaba Editorial Room)”). In “Note 8” (*Collected Works* Supplementary Volume 6), considered to be from Meiji 44 (1911), is a memo titled “Sinding no Ibsen to Bjørnsen zō ni tsuite (About the Image of Ibsen and Bjørnsen by Sinding),” and in a diary entry from June 22, Meiji 45 (1912), Shiga noted “I went to the Teikokuza Theater. Bjørnsen was not well performed just now.” “Sinding” likely refers to the

sculptor Stephan Sinding. The Bjørnsen piece played at the Teikokuza Theater, according to the notes to Volume 12 of the *Collected Works* was “The Newly-Married,” translated by Kaoru Osanai.

As studied above, the period during which Shiga planned and wrote “Rōjin” coincides with the period during which he read *Current Literature* and showed an interest in Bjørnsen. It is with an understanding of this writing environment that I would like to introduce the detailed contents of “The Father” and examine its influence on “Rōjin” in the following chapter.

III. Comparative Study of “The Father” and “Rōjin”

A short explanatory note is attached to “The Father,” published in the July 1910 (Meiji 43) issue of *Current Literature*. It commends the work in that, while it is written in an extremely simple way that seems “destitute of art,” it achieves the highest kind of art, unattainable by the common writer, through an extremely simple technique. The note explains that the story was translated into English for the first time a few weeks before for the *Boston Transcript* and that it is a reprint of the translated story.

The English translation of “The Father” in the *Boston Transcript* was likely not the first, as English translations had been made, for example, by R.B. Anderson in *Stories by Foreign Authors Scandinavian* published (reprinted) by New York’s Charles Scribner’s Sons in 1898. There is, however, no mistake that Shiga read “The Father” in the English translation published in *Current Literature*. And, according to the recollection in “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation),” Shiga must have also been taken with the explanatory note praising its extremely simple format.

The following is an outline of “The Father.”⁽⁴⁾ Thord Overaas is the mightiest man in his parish. One day, he visits the pastor asking for a christening because his son has been born, however, he says that he doesn’t want the christening to be conducted with the other children and wants it done for his child alone. The pastor takes Thord’s hand and says, “God grant that the child may be a blessing to you.” Sixteen years later, Thord once again visits the pastor before his son’s confirmation, asking what seat number his son will be given. Thord is relieved after hearing that his son is to be given seat number 1 and hands money to the pastor. Another eight years later, Thord visits the pastor again with many men to tell him that his son is to be married to the richest girl in the parish. When the pastor registers their names in the books, Thord generously pays the pastor and leaves. However, a fortnight after this, while Thord and his son are rowing and conferring about the wedding, his son accidentally falls into the water and drowns. Thord then searches for his son’s body for three days and three nights, finally finds the body and brings it back home. A year later, Thord visits the pastor again. Thin and white-haired, Thord asks that a fund be made for the poor in his son’s name and donates a large sum of money acquired from selling his farm. When asked by the pastor what he is going to do, Thord says he wants to do something better. Then, as the pastor replies that Thord’s son has finally become a blessing to him, Thord weeps.

This is a story in which a man who was obsessed only with fame and money awakens to a large love with the death of his beloved son. It illustrates the twenty-five years from his son’s birth to a year after his death only through the scenes of Thord’s four visits to the pastor and the scene of his son’s death.

To quote “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)” yet again, Shiga wrote that Bjørnsen’s short story told of “a monk from a certain temple [who] looks after the life of a certain human being,” and he wrote that the three scenes depicting a christening, wedding and funeral “were written in a simple manner, and I was awed by the way in which that one human being’s life could strangely be sensed within it.” While there may be some lapses in his memory, the fact that only the major turning points of a certain person’s life related to the pastor are depicted in a simple fashion to give the sense of the person’s lifetime matches the way in which “The Father” is written. It may thus be said that the work Shiga refers to as the Bjørnsen short story is indeed “The Father.”

What can also be inferred from “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)” is that Shiga forgot about the existence of the main character, Thord, and believed the story to have been composed of the interaction between the son and the pastor. What he means by “that one human being’s life” must also be the lifetime of the son. However, in “The Father,” the son only appears in the scene where he falls off the boat; he almost never utters a word⁽⁵⁾ and never re-

veals his innermost thoughts. Furthermore, there is no scene in which the pastor and the son meet face to face. Shiga also had no strong recollection of the story, in that Thord's way of life changed with his son's death, and was more strongly drawn to the extremely simple composition and writing, within which he felt the son's life vividly surfaces. In the aforementioned paper by Yukio Kobayashi, it was also noted that "the format of 'Rōjin' is completely different from any of Shiga's prior works" and that the uniqueness of its format was that "it talked of a single man's lifetime through accounts of events and vestiges of events, without any dialogue by any of the characters in the work." This he determined to be a characteristic adapted from "The Phoenix." There is indeed no speech in "Rōjin." Scenes where "he" (the *rōjin*, or the elderly man) loses his wife, remarries, retires, buys a *geisha* her freedom and makes her his mistress and where the mistress bears two of her lover's children are told in an indifferent tone, and the story ends with the scene where "he" dies at age 75 and "his" photograph is displayed in the room where his mistress, her lover and their children live. While, unlike the format of "The Father," the loneliness and anguish within "his" heart during this time are depicted, the simple arrangement of major turning points in his life constituting the format — the 21 years from age 54 to age 75, his remarriage and retirement, his newly-built home, his mistress and his eventual death — is something that Shiga adopted from "The Father."

This format, however, is also similar to "The Phoenix." A short explanation like the one for "The Father" can also be found at the beginning of "The Phoenix," published in the October 1910 issue of *Current Literature*, also noting the impact of the simplicity of a technique that hides technique. There is a commonality between it and the explanatory note to "The Father"; both "The Father" and "The Phoenix" are indeed quite similar in that both express a few dozen years of a person's lifetime in an extremely simple format that, upon first glance, looks as if it abandons all forms of technique.

"The Phoenix" is a story about a man who constantly seeks the shadow of his first love. The man meets her when he is still a young boy and falls in love. He continues to love her, even after her beauty fades when she falls ill, and decides to marry her. Of their children, their daughter is just like her mother at age 14, when her mother was beautiful, and the man pours all his love into the girl; however, this girl dies and his wife also dies. The man, at fifty plus years of age, remarries a young girl who looks just like his wife at age 14, but relations between his second wife and his children and between himself and his second wife do not go well. The now elderly man thinks he sees the phoenix of the 14-year-old girl in his daughter and second wife, but he realizes that the true phoenix was the late mother herself, who died caring for their children. And with this realization, he dies.

This story is told with no lines of dialogue, in a brusque, chronological order. It is a story that encompasses a few dozen years (although it is not clear exactly how many) from when the man was a young boy until his old age and eventual death. In contrast to "The Father," where a lifetime can be sensed through the depiction of a mere four scenes of the person's life, "The Phoenix," while centered on turning points like marriage, death and remarriage, tells of events in a flowing, successive order.

In addition to the point indicated in Yukio Kobayashi's paper, Hideo Kuribayashi also noted in his aforementioned paper that, in "The Phoenix," the "method of showing the traces of a man's lifetime through a simple listing of events and covering the main character's thoughts and emotions over his lifetime itself without being stuck on the psychological state of the main character at each point in time" is what is common between "The Phoenix" and "Rōjin" and that Shiga was attracted not only to this format but also to its content, with the wife's death and the couple's life after remarriage. I'd like to keep the "without being stuck on the psychological state" part in mind for later, but the fact that there is a commonality not only in the format but in content as well is exactly as Kuribayashi pointed out.

The format in which events are told in a brusque, chronological order, depicting the inner thoughts of the main character here and there, is common to both "Rōjin" and "The Phoenix," but they differ from "The Father" in that "The Father" does not touch upon the psychological state of its characters. In detail, some scenes where the inner thoughts of the main character are portrayed in "Rōjin" include: the scene where "he" goes to a *machiai*¹³ and he

13. The *machiai chaya* was a place where customers called in *geisha* and where rooms were lent for men and women to secretly meet with one another.

feels that, as an elderly man, he does not fit in to the *machiai* (in other words, the scene from, “the people and *geisha* at the *machiai* were kinder to him than his money’s worth, but there were times when he himself could not help but feel a sense of displeasure,” to “he was aware of how painful it was for the young woman to accompany him to the red lights where people were meeting one another”); and the scene in which he senses his old age as he sits across from his mistress and is “saddened at why his heart could not age like that of other old people,” among others. In “The Phoenix,” explanations of emotions can be found scattered throughout, such as in the deep emotion of the man when he loses his wife:

And then, then, all the old memories of youth revived . . . And when he was honest with himself it was she of the vicar’s garden that he didn’t get whom he missed and mourned, and not the sickly young woman of twenty-four that he did get. He had never been cross to the devoted old mother, and her good food and tireless care came in for consideration in his loss – but that was in a different way.

In addition, there is the revelation of the man’s thoughts in the scene where he is treated as an old man — “‘Old?’ Was he old? He would show her.” In “The Father,” there is no such revelation of emotions, neither for Thord nor the pastor, nor, of course, his son — this point differs from “Rōjin” and “The Phoenix.” This narrative form that does not step into the emotional realm of the characters can be said to further heighten the simplicity of the format in “The Father.”

However, when “Rōjin” and “The Phoenix” are both read and compared, in contrast to the way in which the main character is portrayed objectively in “Rōjin” — or, the fact that there are at least traces of an attempt to do so — in “The Phoenix,” the narrator’s perspective almost constantly remains close to the main character and the story progresses from the perspective of the main character. For instance, the following depiction can be found near the beginning of “Rōjin”:

He suddenly *looked as though* he had aged five or six years. Shadows of deterioration were cast upon the once valiant entrepreneur. — This is at least *what it looked like from others*. . . Securing a young wife had helped him regain the years he had aged after losing his former wife and further, *it seemed that* he had taken even more years off his age.

While the third underline may be interpreted as the emotion of the old man himself, in the context of the preceding sentences, it can also be interpreted that others around him saw him in this way. As the underlined texts suggest, the start of “Rōjin” consciously avoids a point of view from “his” side and tries to depict “him” in an objective manner. This acts in concert with the ending of the work where emotions are not portrayed in the depiction of “his” death:

After April, the young man who was to become the children’s father had come to sit on the cushion that the old man once used to sit on. Behind him, in the half *ken*¹⁴ alcove was a quarto-size photograph of the old man seated neatly in his *haori* and *hakama* (formal attire).

The narrator thus becomes completely removed from “him” and ends by sketching the conditions of the house where “he” no longer exists.

In contrast to this, the ending of “The Phoenix” reads:

He pondered over this a long time, and when at last he laid his tired head on the pillow never to rise again he was sure of it.

The narrator remains close to “him” until the very end, and “he” is still the perspective used to tell the story.

14. 1 *ken* is a unit equal to 180cm. A half *ken* = 90cm.

“Rōjin” differs from “The Phoenix” on this point and is closer to “The Father” with a definitively objective narration. While, as mentioned earlier, the inner thoughts of “his” mind are narrated in “Rōjin” and a perfectly objective portrayal is not realized, because the start and end take on an objective depiction, the work as a whole gives off the impression that, as noted in the aforementioned research, it narrates “through accounts of events and vestiges of events” and depicts “his lifetime itself without being stuck on the psychological state of the main character.”

In summary, the format of “Rōjin,” in which a few dozen years of a person’s life are depicted in a simple fashion through a composition listing the major events of his life, has commonalities both to “The Father” and “The Phoenix.” However, the format of brusque narration within the chronology of time with psychological images inserted here and there comes from “The Phoenix,” while the format of heightened simplicity gained through objective characterization is closer to that of “The Father.” It may thus be concluded that Shiga skillfully adopted elements from “The Father” and “The Phoenix,” both with similar formats, to complete the format of “Rōjin.”

IV. Conclusion

While Shiga mentioned in “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)” that he had been influenced by Bjørnsen’s short story published in *Current Literature*, the work itself has heretofore never been revealed. Strindberg’s “The Phoenix,” noted in diary entries from the period, was instead considered to have inspired “Rōjin.” As discussed earlier, the short story referred to by Shiga in “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)” was “The Father.” The formats of “The Father” and “The Phoenix” are very similar, and both were published around the same time in *Current Literature*. The influence of both “The Father” and “The Phoenix” can be observed in “Rōjin,” and it can be understood that Shiga referred to both works when he wrote “Rōjin.” As for the reason why he didn’t touch upon the influence of “The Phoenix” in “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation),” just as he had forgotten the name of Bjørnsen’s short story, his memory of “The Phoenix” must have also waned with the passage of time after writing “Rōjin.”

The discussions in this paper clarified the notes from “Sōsaku yodan (Notes on Creation)” as well as the details of the formats and formative process behind “Rōjin.” A deep connection between Naoya Shiga and Bjørnsen’s works, as well as the journal *Current Literature*, was also shown. On this, there still remains the possibility of further research.

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- (1) References to Naoya Shiga’s works, letters and notes in this paper are from *Shiga Naoya Zenshū (Collected Works by Naoya Shiga)* (Heisei 10 (1998) – 14 (2002), Iwanami Shoten). Abbreviated hereon out as *Collected Works*.
 - (2) This corresponds to Unfinished Manuscript 101 in the medium-octavo version of the book *Shiga Naoya Zenshū (Collected Works by Naoya Shiga)* Vol. 9 (Mar. Showa 49 (1974), Iwanami Shoten).
 - (3) In Supplementary Vol. 6 of the *Collected Works*, it states, [omitted a nine-page outline of “Synnöve Solbakken By Byörnstjerne Björnson”].
 - (4) “The Father” was first published in *Smaastykker (Short Story Collection)* in 1860. (From *Kuwashii chūshaku de yomu noruweigō chichi (“The Father,” the Norwegian Original with Detailed Annotations)*, translated and annotated by Kenji Okamoto, Daigaku Shorin, Jan. Heisei 6 (1994))
 - (5) The only line of dialogue spoken by the son in this piece is, “This board does not lie securely under me.”

Editor’s notes

This article was translated by Riyo Namigata (RAJP) under the supervision of Masato Yamazaki and Ian Richards (Editorial Board).