

Article

Media as Metaphor: Realism in Meiji Print Narratives and Visual Cultures

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Abstract: This article begins with the assumption that the specificity of metaphors used to discuss narration and mediation matter for understanding them. For instance, arguing for a paradigm shift in literature concomitant with the visual revolution of Meiji, critic Maeda Ai saw Mori Ōgai's famed early work of realism "Dancing Girl" (*Maihime*) as translating the effects of the panorama hall into literature. By the end of his career, Mori Ōgai's narrator of *Wild Geese* (*Gan*) compares his own storytelling to stereoscopy. These two different visual medial affordances suggest two different techniques. However, I argue that it is in a third visual medium (one that draws on the marketing of panorama and the visual techniques of stereography) that we may find a metaphor suggesting a continuity between these two modes of realism, between Ōgai's early career and his later opus, between Maeda's medial understanding and Ōgai's own. This third metaphor for understanding Ōgai's narration implies his mode of narration is never flat, always polyphonous, and advertising one aesthetic on the surface while providing another within. In the end, this view suggests a modernist realism that understood and expressed its own limitations and was, therefore, all the more realistic.

Keywords: panorama; stereograph; media; realism; convergence



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1. Introduction

This article begins with the assumption that the specificity of metaphors used to discuss narration and mediation matter for understanding them. For instance, arguing for a paradigm shift in literature concomitant with the visual revolution of Meiji, critic Maeda Ai saw Mori Ōgai's famed early work of realism "Dancing Girl" (*Maihime*, 1890) as translating the effects of the panorama hall into literature (Maeda 2004, pp. 295–328). By the end of his career, Mori Ōgai's narrator of *Wild Geese* (*Gan*, 1911–1913) compares his own storytelling to stereoscopy.¹ Of course, the metaphoric use of these two different visual medial affordances suggests two different narrative techniques. However, I argue that it is in a third visual medium (one that draws on the marketing of panorama and the visual techniques of stereography) that we may find a metaphor suggesting a continuity between these two modes of realism, between Ōgai's early career and his later opus, between Maeda's medial understanding and Ōgai's own. Like the ocular convergence and parallax effect at the center of stereographic devices, which seems to provide a third point of view by necessitating a toggling between two different—but not entirely incongruous—positions, this third metaphor for understanding Ōgai's narration implies his mode of narration is never flat, always polyphonous, and advertising one aesthetic on the surface while providing another within. In the end, this view suggests a modernist realism that understood and expressed its own limitations and was, therefore, all the more realistic.

When a given medium is conceptually slippery or notoriously difficult to understand, thinkers tend to speak about it by using other words or concepts. In doing so, they tend to employ an analogy or metaphor. When the subject at hand is a medium or mediation as such, they naturally often turn to other media as the source for such metaphoric

expression—so, for instance, a window is used to understand a computer screen connecting users to another place, or a mirror is used in writing about social media to evoke the centering of the self that seems to be at its core. In the case of modern Japanese novels, Maeda Ai famously made the case for a historical metaphor in the visual media of the late nineteenth century—the panorama hall.

Elsewhere, Maeda had previously argued that—since at least the famed relationship between theorist and translator Tsubouchi Shōyō and author Futabatei Shimei, often thought to have together theorized and carried into practice a modernized Japanese literature—modern Japanese literature defined itself through comparison to and eventually in distinction from visual media cultures. Rather than simply a proclamation that a realism focalized on an individual as its core would bring about modern literary revolution, Shōyō's treatise, Maeda argued, provided a key to linking technical innovations of devices of visualization with the Japanese literary arts. Shōyō's *The Essence of the Novel* itself promoted and was imbedded in what Maeda would call an ongoing modern “visual revolution” (*shikaku no kakumei*). Famously, he argues that Shōyō's aesthetic manifesto is muddled by those who take it as a simple argument for realism. Maeda prefers to think of it as a medial argument for “copying”: “I would like to understand this theory of copying (*mosha*) as an attempt to define the novel, a linguistic work, as analogous to the visually structured world.”² Maeda would also emphasize that Shōyō argued that in order to copy the emotions of the characters in the work of art, the artist must be able to observe and copy them as they are, without the insertion of his or her own subjectivity.

In short, Shōyō's image of an ideal writer is that of an observer who keeps a certain distance from the content of the work. In other words, the author is provided with a seat in the audience of a modern theater, where he or she can look at the actors' performance from this side of the proscenium and is not allowed to participate directly in the play itself. Thus, if we reduce the theory of reproduction to a theory of spectatorship, or to a theory of the separation of the scene from the seen, we can see that it is not only a theory of literature but also a theory of culture.³

In this conjoining of the performance arts with visual and readerly experience, Maeda presents a keen understanding of what is now more commonly conceived of as a complex “media ecology” of the mid to late Meiji period.

With this argument using the dramatic stage as a backdrop or metaphor for understanding such realism, Maeda would read Ōgai's first attempt at a bildungsroman in “Dancing Girl” as providing a panorama-like view of the world. Maeda writes:

Ōgai clearly had an interest in the Panorama itself; but it is rather in his use of a panoramic viewpoint as a method for comprehending the landscape of the modern metropolis of Berlin that the reader recognizes the imprint of a unique, creative spirit at work. The surest evidence of this panoramic viewpoint is the description of Ōta Toyotarō, the hero of “The Dancing Girl”. (Maeda 2004, p. 297)

As a way of explaining the paradigm shift from Edo visuality to Meiji print, Maeda compared the narrative positioning of the reader in that story with the panorama hall's positioning of the narrator and viewer. Just as the architectural structure restricted viewers to be limited to one place at the center of the hall to experience the perspective of the 360-degree view, Mori Ōgai positioned his readers over the shoulder of his main character Ōta Toyotarō to cast a panoramic vision of a modern society through the world of the city of Berlin. Maeda argues that the story layers a panoramic or bird's-eye perspective of the city with a close-up vision of an intimate personal life.

Ultimately, this spatial depth is balanced by a temporal perspective in which the “I” as narrator, who reflects back on his past experiences as he tells the story, is contrasted with the “I” as actor, who experiences everything in the moment.⁴ The story is, in other words, divided between two modes of story-telling: a close-up in the moment (presence) and a distant view of the past (nostalgia).⁵ On the strange contrasting perspectives identified in

the story by Ōkubo Takaki on the description of Unter den Linden, in which a bottom-up (or worm's eye) view is explicitly described in the written text and yet the readerly impression feels more like that of a top-down (or bird's eye) view, Maeda finds an explanation for this discrepancy to lie in the difference between the acting I and the narrating I, who writes in Port Saigon five years after the events in Berlin (Maeda 1982, 2004). Where the acting I is overwhelmed by the city, the narrating I is able to see it all at a distance and put it in perspective for the reader. Ultimately, Maeda seeks to cast Ōgai's modernist innovation to be this shifting perspective of a subject's relation to both the public and the clandestine spaces of the city.

This article takes up Maeda's argument and method of thinking hard about visual media in relation to narration, spaces, and temporalities to ask if we might glean a slightly different perspective on Ōgai's relation to the realism of this visual revolution by combining both Maeda's argument with Ōgai's own visual medial metaphor about his narration—that of stereoscopy.

2. The Parallax View: Mori Ōgai through the Stereoscope

Since stereoscopic photography had a deep penetration in Japanese culture at the time, Ōgai's narrator at the conclusion to *Wild Geese* explains the novel's narrative method through the metaphor of the stereoscope, writing: "Just as the two left and right pictures under a stereoscope are seen as one image, I created this story by comparing and combining what I saw then and what I heard later." (Mori 1995, p. 126). This "what I saw then" suggests an "I" as an actor and "what I heard later" an "I" as a narrator. In other words, the novel gains its sense of realism from the converging or merging of these two perspectives into the single voice of an I. More than that, this sense of a modern psychological persona or self that is projected into and made present to our mind's eye vividly through realist narrative is explained through the stereoscope, because the device seems to embody a sense of modernity as an era of tensions, a foregrounding of Hegelian binaries. For the narrator (and perhaps for Ōgai too), the stereoscope stages an aesthetic reaction to modernity, and its mention suggests a multivalent structure to modernism.

The very fact that most summaries of the novel today do not mention the framing narrative and, instead, focus on the love triangle, suggests the accuracy of the narrator's concluding statement: the two stories, like the layers of narration, are easily distinguished. However, as Atsuko Sakaki has vividly pointed out and Christopher Weinberger has rigorously followed, the novel's variegated narration exceeds even this bifurcated understanding. What is innovative about the novel arises from the interplay between the relationship of the narrator and his neighboring student (Okada) in the boardinghouse, which lends a tone and setting to the framed plot of the love triangle between Okada, the mistress (Otama), and the moneylender (Suezō). If there is a modernism to the novel, it resides in the fact that the narration and the plot are distinguishable. Ōgai's modernism showcases an old plot (seemingly straight out of kabuki) which is given a modern tinge by reframing the hackneyed story of a clash between *giri* (social obligation) and *ninjō* (passions of the heart) as an amalgam of modern psychological portraits. With the brief comment at the end of the novel on stereography, Ōgai and/or his narrator make/s the argument that the different narrative levels and versions of stories may not be incongruous but resolvable in the way the mind resolves two different images from each eye, even as the two eyes converge on an object that moves closer to the beholder. Throughout the novel, the gap between the old Japan of male heterosexual merchants and their kept women and the modern one of homosocial students and industry is not just contrasted but shown to be thoroughly imbricated with and, indeed, composes a seemingly new representation of the world—itsself composed of a vision of the world that contains multiple worldviews of the characters and narrator.

This multiplicity of perspectives is visible not only at the level of narration but also within the novel in the ways that the narrator and characters deal with fictions in their everyday lives (whether novels, Chinese mythology, or dreamy expectations).⁶ Ōgai's use

of the fictions that exist in the world of his fictional characters and in ours is more than a “reality effect” dropped into the fiction to heighten the sense of realism, to move it towards fictional truth by distinguishing it from myths (Barthes 1986, pp. 141–48). Atsuko Sakaki takes this even further to point out that the intertextual citations, reworkings, or parodies themselves constitute proof that the characters’ own “perceptions of the Other (Otama) are mediated by analogies drawn from their experiences of reading fictional narratives in a conventional manner.” (Sakaki 1999, p. 174). Consider the following scene, which follows Okada telling the narrator his gallant story about killing a snake:

“Killing a snake for the sake of a woman—it has an intriguing fairy tale air to it. But I don’t think that will be the end of the story.” . . .

Listening to Okada’s account, I accepted it as a fairy tale of sorts. But I did not tell him what it immediately made me think of. Okada had been reading *Chin P’ing Mei*, and I wondered if he had not perhaps met up with its fatal heroine, *Golden Lotus*. (Mori 1915, p. 215; 2020, p. 122)

At this moment, we (like the narrator) are forced to take a critical stance on the narrated happenings, to apprehend the story in contradistinction to the fictions discussed—we are made to take a step back from the story narrated by Okada and to think of his positionality as a narrator who reads romances and fairy tales. This critical position that the story role-plays for the reader should suggest that readers, too, ought to mark some critical distance not only between ourselves and Okada’s narration, but also between ourselves and the narrator’s narration of the entire novel, *Wild Geese*.⁷

Indeed, it is only in this final critical position that we can understand the title of the novel. More than simply a convenient symbol or synecdoche for the novel that emanates from the embedded story of the students killing and eating a goose, the title of the novel plays on the old Chinese legend about a goose as a messenger bird and the historical fact of the goose having recently (in Meiji) been transformed from a protected bird under the shogunate to one available for hunting under the modern regime. The guide to finding the body of a dead goose is the parallax principle (the same principle upon which stereoscopy operates). After Okada threw a stone to scare off geese and accidentally hit and killed one, the students return to the scene of the killing because Ishihara has claimed to know how to retrieve the bird from the meadow. Ishihara tells Okada and the narrator:

“[S]ee that lotus stem bent to the right about twenty feet out? And the shorter one bent to the left in line with it farther out? I must stay directly in line with those two points. If you see me varying from that line, tell me which way to go so I get back in line.”

“Right,” said Okada. “The parallax principle.” (Mori 1915, p. 277; 2020, pp. 158–59)

The fact that the wild goose that has been inadvertently killed is already associated with Otama stages the fact that Okada and the narrator’s guidance of Ishihara towards the bird in this scene is necessarily doubled with our position vis a vis our comprehension of the novel as referring not merely to the one goose killed but also to the many characters themselves as wild geese. In other words, like Ishihara finding his way in the muck to the wild goose, we too are reliant on both Okada’s story (as filtered through the narrator) and the narrator’s own story to navigate our way (to the wild geese and) through the novel *Wild Geese*.

In the moment at the end of *Wild Geese* when Ōgai uses the metaphor of the stereoscope, it may seem at first glance as though he or his narrator is advocating for some technological determinism—because I wrote it this way, you get the novel you have just read. However, the fact that he must include this mention of the apparatus as a template for understanding the novelistic technique shows us that the technique alone is not enough; the narrative tells us the effect of the technique so that we might properly apprehend it. Significantly, there is no sense at the end of *Wild Geese* that the stereoscopic view is somehow more real. Indeed, it feels more like some trick the narrator has played on his reader. Rather, through this

exposing of the trick, the novel reveals to the reader that the narration has been a sleight of hand, that any sense of realism is a trick, a style that may fade.

However, Ōgai's inclusion of discussion of the trick, however, is itself like the necessary manual switching of stereographic cards. Viewers of traditional stereoscopic photographs had to disengage their eyes from the stereo-viewing mechanism to change photographic cards in the stereoscope before resituating their eyes in front of the lenses. In other words, the narrator's seeming meta-commentary on narration adds a layer of the hyperreal to the novel (by breaking the illusion of realism to comment on the trick of the narration, the novel becomes all the more accepting of its own constructedness and, therefore, paradoxically more realistic), drawing attention to how the novel was put together.⁸ In other words, *Wild Geese* shows us that mentioning of the seeming perspective supposedly offered by such media is more important than the tricks of the media themselves or the aesthetic styles in which he wrote. Rather than through the medium or aesthetic innovations themselves, it is in this metaphorical reference to modes of narration that perspective is to be understood.

The metaphor's gesture forces readers to think about narrational levels, even those that might exceed a simple binary structure—from the stories told by the narrator of that bygone time to the stories told to the narrator about what happened, to the Chinese legends read by the main characters. In the inclusion of this reference to media, then we have less a form of metafictional rebirth, as thought by Linda Hutcheon to be the product of self-aware narration in her seminal work *Narcissistic Narrative The Metafictional Paradox*, than something like a radical position proposed by Karatani Kōjin's *Transcritique* (Karatani 2005). Not coincidentally, Karatani's notion that truly radical thought stems from a unitary subject maintaining two or more antinomous positions finds its origins in Kant's "Dreams of a Spirit Seer", which itself gleans new understanding from the parallax principle.

Simply put, in his use of stereoscopic photography for the metaphor in the final framing of the novel, Ōgai names the standard mode of bildungsroman narration in hopes that his readers will more clearly see the combination of close examination and distant reflection, what others told him and what "I" experienced himself, to form more than the sum of their parts—a critique on that very structure. In the parallax gap between the two visions (the old plot structure with the style of a new interiority, the bombastic stories of Edo with the subtle tones of psychology), we may also find a similar modernist that Maeda found in the gestalt effects of the panorama. In this configuration, modernism is neither a foregrounding of things in absence of context nor a radically clean break from the past, but a rethinking of the past through the modern psyche; not a 50–50 split between the two perspectives, but a dominant discourse supplemented by the colors of a different spectrum, which themselves force a transcendental thinking beyond the hegemonic discourse. The text is the place and time where the alternate views of experience and later hearsay appear, but readers will need to cross their eyes to make them converge if a sense of contiguity between them is to be made in the moment of reading.

3. Modernism's Ocular Convergence Culture: Panorama, Stereoscopy, and the Myths of Cartesian Difference

Whether in the form of the architectural panorama hall or the handheld device, such optical mediations as the panorama and stereoscope open our eyes to alternative ways of seeing the world and, as such, provide key means through which realism and spectacle at the turn of the 20th century may be understood. Indeed, this linking of visual media with literary realism was Maeda's primary goal. The existence of a strangely labeled device popular in Japan when *Gan* was published prompts a reconsideration of whether or not or exactly how these panoramic and stereoscopic perspectives differed, and as such, should also make us rethink the question of realism as cast through such medial metaphors. One important though often disregarded example of media and marketing convergences can be found in a peculiar machine, one of Japan's very first vending machines—the so-called "automatic panorama" (*jidō panorama*), or alternatively "panoramic stereo-viewer" (*panorama jittai kyō*).

Since the photos that the machine displayed in a timed sequence were stereoscopic (and not panoramic), many scholars of modern visual culture have written-off the “panorama” in its name as being simply a trick of advertising (Abel 2023). On this kind of device or the related Kaiser-panorama of a slightly earlier moment in Germany, luminaries in the history of media have found the labeling of “panorama” to be a misnomer made solely for the purpose of enhanced advertising.⁹ To be sure, by the time such machines began to appear in Tokyo around the turn of the twentieth century, stereoscopic prints and viewers had already been widely sold and circulating for three decades, and panoramas too were already familiar, so that both media were in need of a new marketing scheme. As John Plunkett wrote about the rebirth of stereoscopy in the US, so too with Japan:

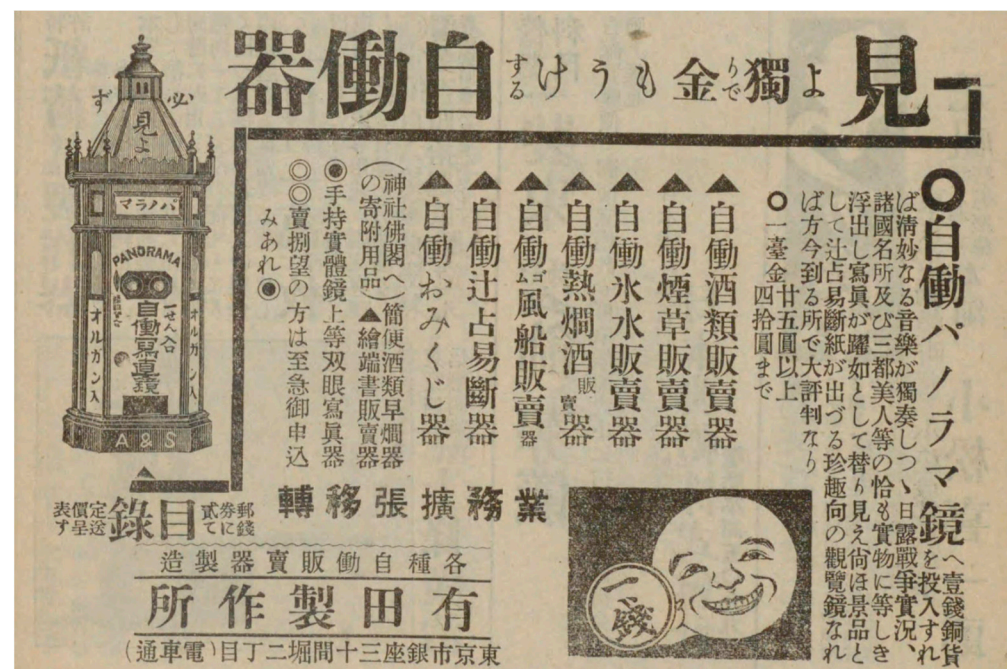
An examination of the rejuvenated appeal of stereoscopy and its relationship to moving-image devices nonetheless reveals much about the broader social and geographical consumption of popular visual media. It demonstrates the importance of consumption in provincial and rural areas, and the way that a proliferation of penny-in-the-slot devices helped to create penny arcades that offered heterogeneous visual pleasures. (Plunkett 2008, p. 240)

The fact that this stereographic viewing mechanism was billed as “panoramic” in European, US, and Japanese contexts shows that the marketing strategy was deemed to be powerful at the time and, perhaps, not solely because “panorama” sounded more exciting.

Stereoscopy and panorama shared some important affordances, despite being quite different modes of visual apprehension. They shared much in terms not only of exterior marketing (the wooden cabinets of the machines looked, for instance, like the real-world panorama halls or the brick twelve-story tower in Asakusa that staged panoramic views of the city) and the interior content (the displayed pictures of beauties, foreign places, and wars) with the stereoscopes and panoramas of the previous decade.

The above advertisement (see Figure 1) for the Arita company’s automatic panorama viewer promises to make money for store owners that install one.¹⁰ The fact that this model also played music (the machine is marked “with organ” [*orugan iri*]) might have made it an even more compelling draw for potential customers. The model on display today at the Japan Camera Museum plays the children’s song “*Moshi moshi kameyo*,” suggesting that at least this model of the machine might have been intended for a younger audience as well as older ones, suggested by the mention of potentially more adult content from “the realities (*jikkō*) of the Russo-Japanese war” to “three beauties in three capitals.” (Sugiyama 2008, p. 134; Hosoma 2001, p. 156).

Media innovations tend to precede and seemingly produce new aesthetic modes, as content producers take advantage of the novel affordances and functions they provide. However, the breathless claims that are inevitably made about any such moments of change do not necessarily correlate with the possibilities created by the new media or aesthetic. Just as the panorama that became popular in the late nineteenth century did not physically transport audiences to the place they depicted, stereoscopic photos conjured sensations of travel while viewers remained firmly grounded, eyes fixed on the photographs within their viewing apparatus. Not only was much of the content in the new apparatuses remediated from other cultural products, but both technologies of viewing were merely logical projections of a Cartesian perspective, which places the viewing eye in a specific relationship with the represented objects and backgrounds in the visual machines; therefore, the media are caught within the very perspectival axes they are purported to sidestep, flatten, or transcend.



For Maeda (like 3D for other media theorists such as Takashi Seori, Hosoma Hiromichi, and Jonathan Crary), (Takahashi 2003, p. 105; Hosoma 2001; Crary 1992, 2001) the panorama is a significant rupture with the past that can only be seen through a particular context; in short, the historical context for the panorama in Japan differs from that of its existence elsewhere. Rather than photography providing the backdrop for the circular amusement hall as in Europe, Maeda finds landscape painting of the previous era as well as ersatz narrative descriptions of the capital to have been the early modern precursors in Japan. He notes the way those earlier art forms focused on emphasizing objects or things (*mono*) in all their glory, whereas the modern panoramic gaze seemed to punctuate things in a monomaniacal way, to take them out of context or emphasize only one angle of vision or only one meaning of an object rather than several possibilities. In doing so, Maeda notes the importance of things within a landscape in the earlier era, but he ignores the presence of things in the panorama halls.

Panorama halls generally featured not simply a backdrop, but also objects (whether cannons or mannequins, see Figure 2) positioned between the central viewing platform and the background walls, upon which a landscape was painted. Maeda associates the isolation of a thing from its multiple meanings (that is, a thing out of context) to be a particularly modern tendency.¹² Similarly, though he acknowledges the existence of other popular Edo period visual devices, such as the tricks of *nozoki karakuri* (peeping devices), Maeda does not mention the various photographic nickelodeons and other *misemono* (visual spectacles) that were circulating at the same time as the panorama hall in Meiji Japan. This emphasis on a distinction between the panorama and the three-dimensional diorama boxes of old Edo amounts to an overemphasis on the power of the panorama, which coexisted, for a time, with the so-called “panoramic stereo-view” machines. Ōgai, for his part, as much as he admired and wrote about the panorama, found objects placed in them to be something of a disappointment to the overall effect, instead preferring the panorama effect that he saw in Harada Naojirō’s paintings of the sea.¹³ His preference for what might in another Burkean context be called the sublime of Harada’s sea paintings, might also have something to do with his eventual leaving behind of the figure of a psychological portrait in the foreground, common to his early fiction for his later more zoomed-out historical fictions.

五月廿二日
パノラマ館
開場告



此パノラマは、佛國有名の畫師、デ・ラ・モント氏が、三ヶ年の長
日、月を費し、巧に神を以て、描きたる活畫にして、
圖は、米國南北戦争の時、故の有名なグラント將軍へ
明治十二年中我國（漫遊ありし公）が、ジャクソン
ルグの合戦に、ミシシッピ河畔なる南軍の堡壘を、撃
し、突進し、之を、搦て、之を、拔かんとするの、實現にて、觀
る、宛然、然、千軍、萬馬、鎗聲、砲聲、の、間に、奔走するの、想ひ、あ
ら、む、る、實に、奇世の、觀たり。

此パノラマは、高式、拾間、周圍、八拾間、にして、拾六角を、爲
る、所に、環列し、其、人物、の、圖は、眞の、人、跡、と、大小、相均しく、
看、客、の、眼、前、最も、近き、所に、實物を、配置し、其、先に、繪畫
を、環列し、して、實物と、綴續せしめ、光線、を、人の、眼裏に、反照
し、繪と、實物との、差別を、分つに、苦しめしむるに、妙あり。

此パノラマは、世人を、益する、あ、ど、不、勝、也、雖、も、其、大、概
の、二三を、舉、げ、ば、軍人、には、グラント、將軍の、戦、場を、實見
せしめ、又、教育、家、には、歴、史、上、著、し、き、處を、實際に、示し、
美術、家、には、潤、麗、美、妙、其、眞に、迫りたる、筆力、を知る、効用
あり、此パノラマは、現に、米國、ニューヨーク、府、シカゴ、府
及、び、サンフランシスコ、港にて、悉く、喝采、を、博したる
もの、なり。

此の、パノラマ、には、南北戦争、時代に、用ひたる、實物の、大
小、砲、サ、ー、ベル、等、其、他、戦、具、一、切、眞、實、爲、し、あり。

淺草公園

日本パノラマ館

Figure 2. Kokumin Shinbun advertisement, 17 May 1890.

Maeda's reactions to and reworkings of Erwin Panofsky's, Andre Leroi-Gourhan's, and Henri Lefebvre's ideas (Lefebvre 1992) about media and aesthetics in the social sphere in the context of Meiji Japan form a solid foundation for imagining a possible alternative to the stark distinctions he makes, one that might account for continuities and convergences of medial forms. However, we must be cautious about making broad, sweeping claims about historical media ruptures and aesthetic regimes that are, in practice, slow to change and always accompany narrative shifts. The idea that new media—be they older forms such as the virtual spaces of stereoscopy and panorama or more recent ones such as the virtual realities purportedly served up by our 21st century headsets—offer radical alternatives to traditional aesthetics, communication, or connectivity is overblown and can be damaging to human relations.

The appearance of the devices fusing panorama rhetoric with stereoscopic affordances showcases the similarities of the affordances between both media and how these similarities were accepted and expected by consumers. However (and this is why we need to take seriously such claims for differences and distinctions), the dream of such differences and distinctions is central to understanding the importance of historical media continuity. In this sense, Maeda's categorical differences can be seen as heuristic ones that we must overcome in order to understand the nature of what Timothy Welch has called "mixed reality," that is the possibility that what is mediated presents a particular reality, one of many which comprise the reality itself (Welsh 2016).

The panorama as a spectacular destination and new medium circulated globally in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Japan, it was an immediate success, with panorama halls springing up across the Tokyo metropole and beyond (over 40 panoramas were set up on the archipelago in the 20 years after the Ueno Panorama Hall opened in May 1890).¹⁴ The mass popularity of panorama halls was echoed by their enchantment of elite literati (from Mori Ōgai to Hagiwara Sakutarō and Edogawa Rampo, to name a few), who discussed their effects and attempted to remediate their affordances in various literary works. However, by the 1920s and 1930s, Hagiwara and Rampo were writing about it not in terms of realism, but rather in connection with dreams, surreality, and fantasy (Gerbert 2013). Even Ōgai, who had written earlier and in a more realist vein, used the media metaphorically to expose the tricks of literary narration rather than to enhance their purported immediacy or realism. The medium had not changed, but the narratives around it had.

The initial popularity of the panorama stemmed not only from their novelty, but also from the experience of connection to other places outside of the city and nation. In this feeling of connection, the panorama was rather like another visual delight of the period—the stereograph. The stereograph was touted as a means of armchair travel by the Keystone Stereoview Company of Meadville, Pennsylvania, and Sears, Roebuck, and Company of Chicago, Illinois, both of which sold viewers along with a series of stereographic pictures from around the world, primarily to schools and middle-class

households (Crary 2002; Huhtamo 2006; Oechsle 2006, pp. 70–78). See also (Oechsle 2023). An early twentieth century advertisement claimed that: “to be within arm’s reach of distant countries it is only necessary to be within arm’s reach of the Underwood Stereograph Travel System.”¹⁵ Similarly, rather than sitting in a room at home to consume stereographic images from around the world, the panorama offered a space in the city for connecting to the world with a crowd of people. Just as it connected Japan to the world in a mode of internationalization, the panorama was used in the promotion of Japan to the rest of the world.

However, the content of both panorama halls and stereographic sets were not solely for connecting to touristic pleasures through images of monuments, beauties, and flowers from around the world. A darker desire for connection to violent events of recent history and contemporary news stories kept both media populated with macabre displays, sometimes even to the extent of including mannequins of corpses in the panorama halls. The panorama hall was deeply connected to modern warfare and empire, as evidenced in subjects of the early panoramas that traveled to and around Japan, such as the Battle of Waterloo, the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, the Boshin Civil War, and the Sino-Japanese War. One advertisement for “The Battle of Vicksburg” exhibition (see Figure 2. Above) read, in part:

It can be said that this panorama has significant benefits for the public; to give two or three of these—it allows military people actually to observe (*jikken*) the strategies of General Grant; it really (*jissai ni*) shows educators remarkable historical points; and informs artists about the truly (*shin ni*) elegant and splendid power of the brush. This panorama was recently received with cheerful applause in the cities of New York and Chicago, and in the port of San Francisco in the United States of America.¹⁶

The emphasis here on questions of reality (*jikken*, *jissai ni*, *shin ni*) reveals that, at least at the level of marketing, the halls were engaged with discourses of realism in this early moment of the history of the medium. In the announcement of the US Civil War battle scene’s success abroad, we can see a public history analogue of what had been referred to as “armchair tourism” in the advertising rhetoric of the stereoscope, even as the panorama itself was what travelled.¹⁷ In addition, panorama halls were not the only media through which war could be envisioned, popular sets of stereographs included 3D images from the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.¹⁸ Marketing of visual forms (stereograph and panorama) used such engagement and connection with the world to cultivate interest.

Early on, the panorama and stereoscope were closely associated with feelings of presence (placing the viewing subject in front of a realistic object); later, in their circulations (both lasted about 30 years in popular culture in Japan), they seemed to be discussed more as passing amusements. The visual ecology of late Meiji and Taishō had become saturated with various spectacles, whose affordances overlapped, converged, and became confused. The near coincidence of so many different new media around visual technologies made the overlapping and confusion of one medium for another almost a mundane feature of the times.¹⁹

If Henry Jenkins’ 2006 book renamed what had been (in a previous generation after Foucault) thought of in terms of discourse studies as “convergence culture” for a seemingly new age of connected digital cultures—to label the remediation of older analogue media and a shared collective intelligence participating in creative behaviors online—then it was merely updating metaphors for understanding the media ecology that had long been apparent elsewhere. Introducing the concept for internet cultural production, Jenkins wrote: “Welcome to convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.” (Jenkins 2006, p. 2). Of course, as true as it may continue to be today, this notion was also true for a Meiji media environment in which consumers of new media could understand them in terms of their seeming

unprecedentedness—like much of the advertising hype would have it—or, alternatively, through old media lenses. By convergence culture, Jenkins means “flow of content across multiple media platforms.” (Jenkins 2006, pp. 2, 17, 104). In Meiji, we may choose to see this in the way the panorama hall would be remediated through Ōgai’s narrative technique as Maeda would have us do; or, we might see this in how early Japanese silent film remediated Kabuki complete with *onnagata*. We can similarly see this happening, for instance, in the way stereography in the 1800s begins to remediate the mass-marketed subjects of early photography to focus 3D attention of major collections on the content of wars, beauties, and vistas. In this complex media ecology of Meiji, in which new media borrowed content from older media content, there were at times mixings and overlaps that could be drawn upon, conflated, and confused in novel ways by even the most erudite of consumers of media, those that had a keen sense of the biotechnical ways in which bodies and environments were conjoined and distanced through media—consumers such as the German-trained doctor, Mori Ōgai.

The existence of these stereoscopic devices billed as panoramic should guide us here: there is no need to choose between Maeda’s vision of a panoramic narrative in Ōgai and Ōgai’s own use of the stereoscopic metaphor to describe his narration—we can have it both ways. Ōgai was studying as a medical student in Germany (a stint that would become the grist for his story “Maihime”) when the Kaiserpanorama was at the height of its popularity in Berlin. Then, he was back in Japan when “panoramic stereo-view” machines were part of the visual landscape of the city. It does not seem farfetched, therefore, to think that even Ōgai’s discussion of panorama halls published in 1890 (the year that the first panorama hall opened in Tokyo) might be inflected by his interest in stereoscopy. In his essay on the panorama, he writes, “[i]n a simple painting, the attention of observers is gathered to one point, but in a ‘panorama’ such points are scattered in various ways.” (Mori 1973, p. 256). Here, Ōgai seems to be ignoring the optical fixity necessitated by the Cartesian perspective active within the halls, disregarding the fact that the same trick of perspective in “simple painting” is at work in the panorama, with the view being restricted to the center of the pavilion, so that images become strange and distorted as one nears the walls or looks at them on a tangent, obliquely rather than radially. Here, he is the perfect dupe of the medium of the panorama who sees it simply as a scientific representation of a 360-degree reality, rather than a very particular Cartesian mode of presenting such a view. In their reliance on Descartes’s mathematics for presenting three-dimensional space in two dimensions, Western realist painting technique, the panorama, and the stereoscope are all the same, though they achieve such perspectives through different mediated affordances. Where realist painting implies its viewer looks through one eye positioned before the 2D surface, the panorama pavilions assume viewers at the center looking out at walls equidistant from the eyes, conveying presence and three-dimensionality through diorama-like composition, with objects strewn in the foreground in front of the wide background painting, while the stereoscope locks the two eyes of the viewer in the apparatus with specific relation both to lenses and the separate images behind them. (Massumi 2003, pp. 22–26). In all three mechanisms, the viewers view is confined so that two-dimensional surfaces begin to take on the sensation of three-dimensionality according to the z-axis of the Cartesian coordinate system.

Crucially, what Alva Noë argues about the moment of being fooled by a *trompe l’oeil* is also true of these other tricky media: “you fail to have any pictorial experience whatsoever, for you fail to encounter the double-aspect, presence/absence dynamic that is characteristic of seeing in pictures.” (Noë 2012, p. 88). However, the moment you see that the picture is a *trompe l’oeil* (or the moment you stop looking outward to the walls of the panorama hall and exit the building, or the moment when you have to change the cards in a stereoscope, or the moment your time runs out in the automatic panoramic stereo-viewer), the doubled experience returns and we see the picture as a picture that depicts another space, as well as a spectacle within our space. What the “panoramic stereo-view” machines suggest, then, is that it is not the degree of fidelity to the world upon which is a visual apparatus (be it the

panorama hall, stereoscopic photographs, or the panoramic stereo-viewing machines) but the revealing of the trick of fidelity through which a heightened realism might be located. In a sense, the “panoramic stereo-viewer” is perhaps the best metaphor for Ōgai’s narration, which compares well with both panorama by Maeda and stereograph by Ōgai himself. It does so not because of any putatively new affordances it may have appeared to provide consumers of the Meiji era, but because it forces us to reflect on the convergences of media and how media are used for thinking through problems of mediation and representation requisite for realism, as such, on the medium as a metaphor from the beginning.

4. Tricky Media

We can position Ōgai’s employment of the trope of the stereoscopic perspective through the lens of Hubert Damisch, a theorist of the Cartesian perspective who sees such perspective not as successfully capturing reality, but as artifice. For Damisch, there is nothing natural or more realistic about the convention of rendering three-dimensional space in two dimensions according to the famed mathematical coordinate system. For him, the discipline of portraying objects along the z-axis after Descartes is simply obedience to a set of rules or laws. Rejection or turning from the laws, as he says of Raphael’s “Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia”, is simply a reaction to and not a radical escape from Cartesianism. Viewed in this light, we can see neither stereoscopic photography nor the panorama hall to be completely outside of the realm of such culturally constructed perspective work. As Damisch so aptly puts it:

For things and the world to become objects of perception, the subject must pull back from itself, having no vision that doesn’t proceed, ultimately, from such a rotation as well as from the *elevation* or *ostension* of the object that is its corollary. But this movement, even its theatrical aspect, remains subject to the law of representation: the distance established by the subject between itself and the object. . . allows it to escape from the immediacy of lived experience; but only to discover that it itself is implicated, inescapably, in a spectacle whose truth is a function, precisely, of its being so implicated. (Damisch 1994, p. 379)

This self-implicatedness is called immersion in virtual worlds, but the logic articulated by Damisch about European oil painting is the same for stereoscopy and panorama—the aesthetic is a product of the very subject interpellated in its rules.

In other words, movement of the viewing eye into and out of the media matters. The inclusion of such media of the means of transit between the real and virtual or fictional spaces (such as Ōgai’s ending of *Wild Geese* that refers to the trick of stereoscopy) helps us name the system of relations that create the situation of distinction between such spaces. That is, by acknowledging the rules by which the system functions (the parallax effect), by casting attention on such binary oppositions, works do not transcend them but push towards the transcendental and radical, as Karatani has argued.

As representation and media are themselves included within the represented or mediated world, they may produce a fleeting sensation that the mediation is somewhat more immediate or the representation somewhat more realistic. In a sense, the meta-representation recognizes the system of representation in which the tricky media purport to capture, recast, or represent reality. However, of course, realism is not a static technique that can be simply achieved and forever repeated as such. Rather, achievement of such realistic effects (in narrative as in visual media) is a historically reoccurring chase of a moving target, so such a method can soon seem camp, kitsch, or surreal if not constantly innovated upon and refined. The uses of historically new media as metaphors for the achievement of such realism through narrative techniques, as discussed here, are clearly part of the Meiji media mix and cultural scene perhaps best described by Maeda. In Ōgai’s novels, such tricky media as metaphors reveal the representation of reality itself as a constructed fantasy—and this overt self-awareness is, indeed, what paradoxically provides the sense of realism, even as it dashes any sense of garnering the truth of what actually happened to the characters in the story. What instead is gained by the use of such media as metaphors is the larger,

modernist fictional truth that realism functions as a dynamic process that ultimately must be rendered at every moment of reception by the reader outside of the medium of the text printed on the page.

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Notes

- ¹ The Japanese language leaves open the possibility for a singular or plural reading of the title. Indeed, the novel has been translated both as *Wild Goose* and as *Wild Geese*. Though I prefer Burton Watson's translation as more complete and accurate on the whole, I chose to follow the Ochiai Kingo and Sanford Goldstein plural translation of the title here because it captures the multiple geese (real and metaphorical) depicted in the novel (Mori 1959). Capturing something of what Atsuko Sakaki calls the "polyphonous nature of *Gan*," insisting on the plural recognizes that these geese are many and sundry. It is not merely that there is a narrating I and an acting I in the novel, as Sakaki points out many of the other levels of discourse associated with the story-telling of other characters (pp. 141–42). It is particularly strange that in a book entitled *Two-Timing Modernity* focusing on reoccurring fictional love triangles between two men and a woman, Keith Vincent chooses a singular translation of the title. While, of course, the clear valences of homosociality that Vincent highlights are undeniable, the text (with its cacophony of voices) is even queerer than that. More than simply characterized by a bifurcation between an acting-I and narrating-I alone—a heterogenous dichotomy aptly denied by Vincent's reading (that insists on the singular reading of *Gan*, perhaps to emphasize what he will call the "homodiegetic" narration" because "*boku* is both a character and a narrator" (p. 61))—the novel's narration needs to be thought of as exceeding every schema that at first glance might appear to grasp it. Therefore, in addition to the actual and metaphorical multiple geese in the novel, I think *Wild Geese* is a more apt translation precisely to foreground these multivocal readings of the style of narration prevalent in all such recent criticism on the novel. (Sakaki 1999, pp. 139–80; Vincent 2012, pp. 43–62).
- ² (Maeda 1982, p. 349). In this regard, the fact that Natsume Sōseki not only painted but, at times, wrote from the standpoint of a painter was significant.
- ³ (Maeda 1982, p. 349). These views are also reprised in (Hasegawa et al. 1979, pp. 89–131). For a view that places this visual revolution in fiction in dialogue with realist painting, also see Miya Mizuta Lippit's citation of Maeda in her essay (M. M. Lippit 2002, p. 16).
- ⁴ Here, it seems Maeda is suggesting something like the contrast between Ōgai's use of the first-person pronoun *yo* in "Maihime" and the sentence-ending past tense copula *-keri*. The work of Tomiko Yoda evokes the possibility of this reading (p. 287). (Yoda 2006, pp. 277–306). See also the narratological distinctions between acting-I and narrating-I in work on autodiegesis and narrating, for example in (Genette 1983, pp. 247–52), and (Cohn 2000, pp. 59–70). While Yoda associates this form of bildungsroman narration with the advent of the modern subject, Maeda is more concerned with the way such juxtaposition itself constructs the panorama-like effect of contrasting a figure with a background. (Maeda 2004, pp. 302–3).
- ⁵ This reading is reminiscent of Auerbach's gestalt model of mimesis, where the Biblical foreground and the Homeric background mix to form the modern version of realism. (Auerbach 2013).
- ⁶ Significantly, Stephen Snyder refers to the novel as "an uneasy wedding of traditions, the romance and the modern novel." (Snyder 1994, pp. 364–65).
- ⁷ Here, I am in debt to and in general agreement with Christopher Weinberger, who reads this passage from Ōgai as "a kind of palimpsest in which the immersive world has been overwritten by acknowledgement of its rhetorical, constructed dimensions." (Weinberger 2015, p. 277).
- ⁸ That Ōgai was aware of and enjoyed the meta-medial component of stereoscopic viewing is evident in another mention of his interest in stereoscopy. Consider this from his *German Journals* during his time in Berlin, when he mentions how conversation and viewing were coupled: "Tonight Olga and her aunt, who lives across the street from the general store where I am staying, came over with a stereoscope, and we looked at pictures and chatted." (Brazell 1971, p. 94).
- ⁹ Of course, today we recognize that in form and function, the stereoscope and the panorama hall have very little to do with one another. Media historian Jonathan Crary has been dismissive of the relation between the function and apparatus of the panorama hall and the Kaiserpanorama, writing: "Except for the fact that its [the Kaiserpanorama's] form was circular, it had no technical or experiential connection to the panorama proper." (Crary 2001, p. 163; Hosoma 2001, p. 160).
- ¹⁰ Some models sold items along with views, for instance, one installed at the Jintan tower in Asakusa sold the Jintan mint (Hosoma 2001, pp. 158–59).
- ¹¹ Other advertisements for similar machines can be found in all manner of print trade magazines and newspapers through the first two decades of the 20th century. One such vending machine was installed at the Jintan Park next to the Asakusa twelve-story tower, which sold not only the Jintan mints, but also stereoscopic views. See (Saishin jidō jittaiyō 1906). An Arita machine like the one depicted in Figure 1 is on display at the Nihon kamera hakubutsukan.

- ¹² (Maeda 2004, pp. 65–91). As Maeda Ai examines the panorama in Ōgai without thinking about Ōgai's interest in stereoscopy, JJ. Origas and Takahashi Seori also mention the visuality and stereoscopy in Ōgai, but neither do so in terms of the panorama. (Origas 1973).
- ¹³ See Ōgai's comments on the western panorama in his "Yomono yama" and on Harada Naojirō's sea paintings. (Mori 1923b, pp. 576–77; Mori 1923a, pp. 691–99). See also his general concern for Harada in the fictional depiction of him in Ōgai's *Utakata no ki*.
- ¹⁴ The advent of the first panorama hall was followed in short order by, among others, the Osaka Panorama Hall later that year, the Kanda Panorama Hall in March 1891, the Asakusa Japanese Art Panorama Hall (*Asakusa Nihon Bijutsu Panoramakan*) in April 1891, the Automatic Panorama in October 1894 (*Jidō Panorama*, which featured automatons (*jidō ningyō*) populating the diorama in front of the panorama walls), and the Imperial Panorama Hall (*Teikoku Panoramakan*) in September 1897. See (Urasaki 1974, pp. 314–18) and (S. M. Lippit 2002, p. 142). For a list of more than 40 different panorama pavilions opened in various parts of Japan between 1890 and 1910, see (Misemone 2013). See also (Okada 1997, p. 102).
- ¹⁵ Underwood and Underwood, "The Underwood Travel System, Catalog No. 28 p. 4 Illustration: Man Holding Stereoscope, Pointing to Egypt on a Large Globe: Line Drawing." *Smithsonian Institution*. <https://www.si.edu/object/archives/components/sova-nmah-ac-0143-ref28096> (accessed on 27 January 2023). 87-2132 (OPPS Neg. No.) AC0143-0000001.tif.
- ¹⁶ Appearing in the 17 May 1890 issue of the *Kokumin shinbun* in (Urasaki 1974) *Nihon kindai bijutsu hattatsu-shi—Meiji-hen* (Tōkyō bijutsu, 1974) p. 315 and at <http://blog.livedoor.jp/misemone/archives/52115984.html> (accessed on 6 August 2023).
- ¹⁷ On stereoscope and armchair travel, see: (Huhtamo 2006, pp. 74–155). (Hoganson 2007). This discourse about stereograph travel began perhaps even earlier with the mid-meiji peep shows; in 1874, Hattori Bushō wrote: "The peep shows offer the latest curiosities of the world and the customs of every nation. It is like touring the world briefly, and should broaden men's knowledge while delighting their eyes." (Hattori 1994, p. 35).
- ¹⁸ See Enami Nobukuni's photos in *Seiro shashin gachō* (Seiro 1904), many of which he would sell as stereographs from his studio on Bentendori in Yokohama.
- ¹⁹ Here, we should recall that Walter Benjamin noted that another stereo device marketed as a panorama—the Kaiserpanorama—was itself to be compared with the cinema, not because it animated motion but because it automatically served up new pictures. (Benjamin 2008, pp. 75–76).

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