NATIONALLY NAKED? THE FEMALE NUDE IN JAPANESE OIL PAINTING AND POSTERS (1890s-1920s)

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Introduction

Nude painting was appropriated by Japanese elites in the late nineteenth century as part of the canon of modern Western knowledge they were eager to master. The academic genre of the nude appeared significant to them precisely as it was beginning to lose its significance for European art; incidentally, this lag put Japanese male artists on a par with European women artists. What the latter had been denied by academism, the former were about to discover at a time when the independence of their country was in danger. Accordingly, the Japanese study of European art was closely tied to issues of nationality. Until the early twentieth century, Japanese painters as well as their fellow countrymen positioned oil painting nationally as non-Japanese (in the sense of "non-native" or "non-traditional") and, paradoxically, at the same time utilized it in the process of creating a modern national culture. The genre of nude painting attracted attention mainly in two respects: on the one hand, regarding the capability of the medium of oil painting to realistically render corporeality and, by means of that, suggest the actual reality of the new nation; on the other hand, regarding the power of fine art to transform the image of a naked body, that is, nature, into the carrier of profound meanings, in other words, culture. The depiction of naked female bodies within the framework of fine art allowed, among other things, for a visibilization of national accomplishments, especially with respect to modernization. Assigning such value to the nude, however, did not necessarily result in a visually discernible nationality.

As I am well aware of the amount of convincing analyses published by art historians about the correlation between academic nude painting and gender, I will focus less on representations of female bodies rather than on how female bodies mediated representations of nationality. Concentrating on Japanese oil paintings and posters

I will pursue under what circumstances pictorial presentations of Japanese bodies looked Japanese, and what invited viewers to "read" them as particularly Japanese (and not more generally as Asian, for example). This investigation is underpinned by a cultural as well aesthetic interest. Without leaning heavily upon the exceptional traditions of European art, the academic nude cannot be appropriated, a fact which is conversely illuminated by the tendency of all anti-European cultural claims to refuse the nude. Yet, as the case of modern Japan reveals, nationality is not always visible: early nudes appear in European disguise. Theoretically, this relates to aesthetics as a practice of mediation, first and foremost, between historic discourses and individual experiences. While such a perspective allows for a consideration of visualities—in relation to tactility on the one hand and symbolization on the other—it also draws attention to ambiguities, or the co-existence of different positions. Consequently, the various impacts of nude painting are to be considered as much in regard to intercultural as intracultural power relations. Representing the nation abroad by means of this genre differed fundamentally from similar endeavors at home in Japan where (male) elites appreciated nude paintings in "secret" rooms, while the more ordinary person (male and female alike) enjoyed posters in quotidian interiors. This essay concentrates on what happened within Japan and, therefore, refrains from highlighting, for example, the so-called "Yokohama photographs" which were mainly produced for pleasure-seeking foreigners.

In tune with this anthology's focus on the late-19th to early-20th century, the two cornerstones of my discussion are a western-style nude painted in 1893 and two years later the subject of a famous scandal, as well as a no less famous photographic poster featuring a semi-nude: Kuroda Seiki's (1866-1924) *Chōshō* (*Morning Toilet*; Figure 10.1) and the *Akadama Port Wine Poster* by what was then Kotobukiya, today the Suntory company (1922; fig. 10.12). Representing a case of implicit "Japaneseness," the first serves as the main example in Section 1, where I foreground how the universalizing which is characteristic of the academic nude correlated with local conditions in Japan. Remaining in the realm of painting, Section 2 explores the shift which occurred from the 1910s onwards: from utilizing the female nude in order to achieve a modern male agency and, as part of that, equality with European men, to deploying the genre for the

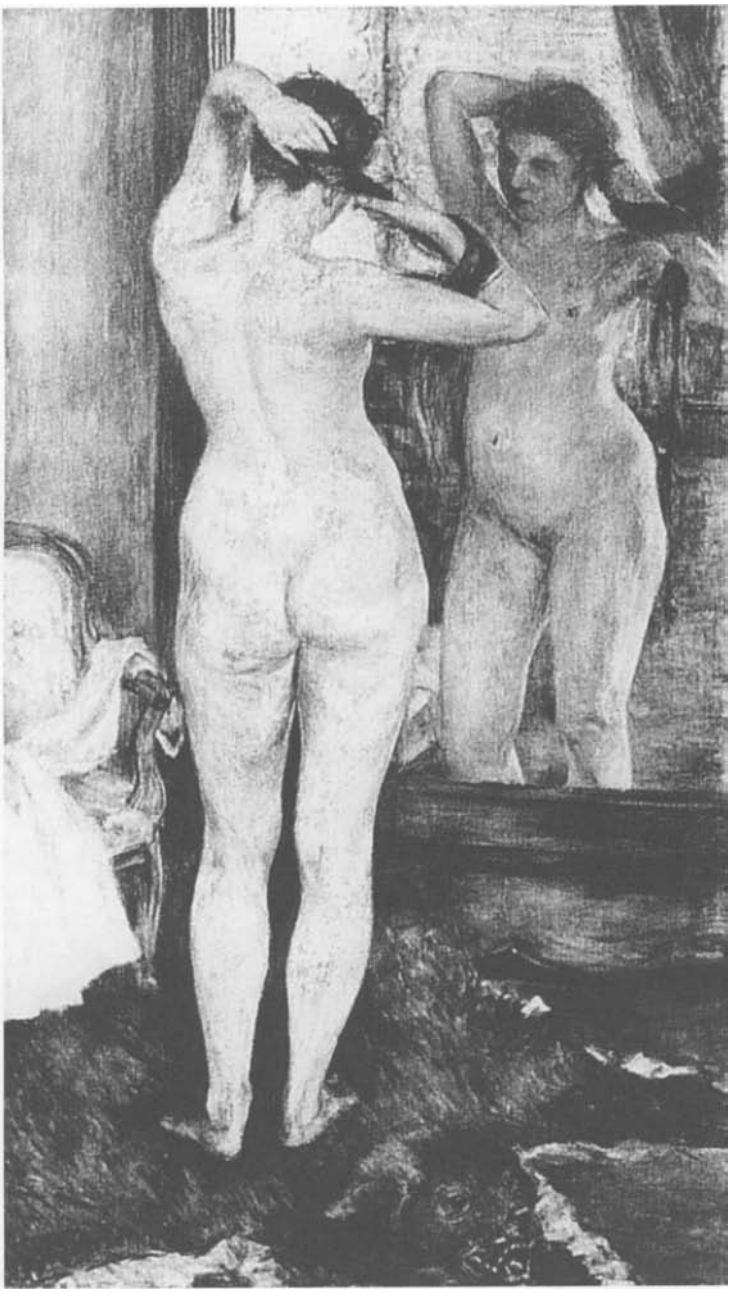

Figure 10.1. Kuroda Seiki, *Chōshō* (Morning toilet), 1893 (destroyed in June 1945), 178.5 × 98 cm.

sake of "Japanization." What attracts attention here are, first of all, bodily proportions. The affirmation of recognizably Japanese nudes went along with a stylistic interest in Japanese pictorial traditions. In the 1920/30s, this lead, among other things, to an encounter between the two branches of native western-style and Japanese-style painting (*yōga* and *nihonga*) due to their shared attempt at "Japaneseness." Section 3 finally changes the line of vision from painting to advertizing. Centered around the above-mentioned *Akadama Port Wine Poster*, it explicates the importance of national connotations assigned to posters. The *Akadama Port Wine Poster* also exemplifies a then-new kind of Japanese advertizing which settled beyond "fine art" and, thus, beyond Europe (as most explicitly epitomized by full nudes of Caucasian bodies).

The genre of nude painting can and should be critically discussed not only in relation to posters but also to modern graphic art (which occasionally allowed for more unconventional approaches to gender issues), to photographs (artistic ones like those of Nojima Yasuzō as well as erotic ones)[1] and to sculpture (in modern Japan, a genre with more male nudes than painting). My choice of posters is underpinned by three facts. First, in modern Japan, paintings and posters were astonishingly close. Until the time of the *Akadama Port Wine Poster*, the task of advertizing was assigned to well-crafted, costly lithographs which were often framed and hung like paintings; these pictures not only drew upon the new visual realism but also appropriated motifs from canonical art works. Second, both western-style paintings and posters functioned as media of exposure and disclosure, visualizing gender as well as nationality. This again was, third, tied to attempts at inciting cultural as well as commercial desires and, by means of that, to the promotion of "Japaneseness" for a domestic audience.

1. *Invisible Nationality*

The academic European nude was characterized by a generalization of bodies for the sake of visualizing certain ideals and, concordantly,

[1] Regarding the first see Philip Charrier, "Nojima Yasuzō's Primitivist Eye: 'Nude' and 'Natural' in Early Japanese Art Photography," *Japanese Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (May 2006): 47-68; for the latter see Shimokawa Kōshi, *Nihon ero shashinshi*, (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 1997).

by a supra-national, extraterritorial universalization, preferably by means of reference to classical antiquity. Whenever there were endeavors to nationalize the nude—as happened in Britain in the 1840-50s in an attempted differentiation from France—the paintings became laden with references to national literature. As a result, the depicted naked bodies were "read" as particularly national although they just "looked" Caucasian (at least, they must have to non-Europeans). In Victorian Britain, the nude was regarded as "the standard against which a nation's artistic achievements could be measured,"[2] and a few decades later this was the case in Japan as well. This can be inferred from illustrations which the western-style painter Fujishima Takeji (1867-1943) created for the magazine *Myōjō* in February 1901 (Figure 10.2). Emphasizing that nudes should be considered fine art, he drew a monument and titled it in French "Figure symbolique de l'avenir de la *nudité* au Japon" ("symbolic figure of the future of *nudity* in Japan") but glossed it with the Japanese phrase "Nihon no geijutsu no mirai" ("the future of *art* in Japan"; emphasis added).[3] While Japanese artists increasingly regarded the nude as "an ideal by which [one] could measure and set a universal even classless standard for national attainment,"[4] in the beginning, they did not consider it as presenting bodies that could be easily identified as Japanese. The nude was supposed to embody cultural modernity—as opposed to traditionalism as well as provincialism—and in tune with that, "western" forms were favored.

One of the first full nudes rendered in oil by a Japanese was created around 1867.[5] Obviously a replica of a European picture, this

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[2] Alison Smith, "Moral Responses to the Victorian Nude," in Onodera Reiko and The Mainichi Newspapers/Cultural Projects Dept., eds., *The Victorian Nude: Morality and Art in 19th-century Britain* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 2003), p. 226.

[3] See Ueno Kenzō, "Hakubakai to rataiga," *Kindai gasetsu. Meiji bijutsugaku kenkyūshi*, no. 5 (March 1997): 22. As distinct from this equation of the nude (*ratai*) with fine art (*geijutsu*), Miya Elise Mizuta Lippit claims: "Yet, because in Meiji Japan the nude was seen in contrast to images of Japanese women, the nude was thought to signify not 'Art' but nature" (Lippit, Miya Elise Mizuta, *Figures of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Beautiful Woman in Meiji Japan*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Proquest Information and Learning, 2002 (Ph.D. Thesis, Yale University, 2001) p.11, footnote no. 16). This is convincing within the context of her dissertation although partly misleading insofar as "Art" is not exclusively defined as a modern institution, which is the case in my essay.

[4] Smith, "Moral Response," p. 227.

[5] *Suiyokuzu* (28 × 28.5 cm.). See Kinoshita Naoyuki, "Unmei no sōseiji—shashin to yōga," *Geijutsu shinchō* (March 1994): 31-39.

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Figure 10.2. Fujishima Takeji (1867-1943), *Nihon ni okeru geijutsu no mirai*, in *Myōjō,* no. 11, February 1901.

painting depicts three nymph-like, voluptuous Caucasian women, half-reclining half-sitting on the shore of a lake and too self-absorbed with each other as to lift their eyes and address the viewer. Its creator, Shima Kakoku (1827-1870), who worked at the Office for the Examination of Barbarian Writings under the guidance of oil-painter Takahashi Yuichi (1828-1894), has not been subject to much art historical attention, presumably because his picture lacked conventional originality, but more so because it did not achieve any discursive relevance in early modern Japan. In contrast, it was Kuroda Seiki's *Chōshō* (*Morning Toilet*, 1893)[6] that assumed the fame of being "the very first," largely due to its scandalous impact when displayed at the 4th National Industrial Fair in Kyoto in 1895.

Kuroda had created this painting two years earlier, at the end of his years of studying in Paris, and had exhibited it under the title *Le Lever* successfully at the Salon de Beaux Arts. As art historians have pointed out, Kuroda was honored by the French jury precisely for not demonstrating his nationality, in other words, for his accomplishment in adapting an established European genre, the nude, and rendering a legitimate *sujet* with a French model, a woman in front of a mirror watched from behind.[7] The depiction of the naked body is justified not by references to antiquity or orientalism as otherwise customary for European nudes at that time, but by the allegedly "natural" setting which—last but not least due to the absence of plain posing—gives the impression of a spontaneous and as such quite modern glimpse into this woman's boudoir. In reality, Kuroda was supported by the Japanese diplomat Nomura Yasushi who placed not only a room of his residence at Avenue Marçeau at the painter's disposal for two months but also paid the model.[8]

Neither in regard to its subject matter nor its rendering does Kuroda's *Morning Toilet* look recognizably Japanese, yet, this painting's nationality makes itself felt in an invisible dimension, that is to say, the specifically Japanese conditions of its creation and reception.

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[6] (178.5 × 98 cm.). Purchased by Sumitomo Kichizaemon, the painting become part of the Sumitomo family's collection together with which it fell victim to the bombardment of Tokyo on 5 June 1945 and the destruction of the Suma villa.

[7] See Tan'o Yasunori, "'Chōshō' shūikō," *Waseda daigaku daigakuin bungaku kenkyūka kiyō*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1997): 149-163.

[8] Takumi Hideo, "*Chōshō* ratai mondai to sono zengo," in Takashina Shūji, ed., *Zenshū: Bijutsu no naka no rafu*, vol. 12: *Nihon no rafu* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1981), p. 122.

These have been revealed by Norman Bryson, among others, who emphasizes the multi-layered gendering characteristic of art's modernization-as-westernization in Japan when he argues: "It is through a focus on the bodies of women. . . that proximity to and intimacy with the West are evoked."[9] Besides the implication that this reference to the "West" facilitated the preponderance of female over male nudes in modern Japanese painting, Bryson's discussion is noteworthy for illuminating intercultural relations in light of gender. According to him, representations of naked female bodies turned into sites of cultural competition between Japanese artists like Kuroda and his European colleagues: in front of the nude model and their common desire for her, the men became equals, irrespective of their cultural origin, and they were granted further recognition as artists among other artists if they successfully created nude paintings. But nude painting empowered men like Kuroda not only abroad. By means of it, they were also able to display their familiarity with the overwhelming foreign culture at home in Japan. One might assume that this effect was diminished by the vehement debates nude paintings evoked as soon as they were exposed to a broader public, yet, this was not the case. In 1896, just one year after the tumult in Kyoto where *Morning Toilet* barely escaped removal from the exhibition venue, Kuroda was offered a chair at the National Art School. Through public indignation, the nude drew attention to fine art as a modern institution, while at the same time it assumed the role of assuring the artist his social distinctiveness, sometimes compensating a bohemian identity that could not be maintained in Tokyo as easily as in Paris.

The case of Kuroda's *Morning Toilet* reveals a complex interrelationship of visible and invisible cultural issues not limited to gender. Pursuing what tied the nude painting to the modern nation-state, I shall point out three aspects. First, it is significant that *Morning Toilet* obviously served a higher cause than the personal quest for self-expression and artistic originality, that is, the appropriation of status as a painter, and the elevation of painting's status to fine art as an

[9] Bryson, Norman, "Westernizing Bodies: Women, Art, and Power in Meiji *Yōga*" in: Joshua S. Mostow, Norman Bryson, Norman and Maribeth Graybill, eds., *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), p. 108. See also Kojima Kaoru, "Kuroda Seiki ni miru rataiga no juyō to sono eikyō," *Jissen joshi daigaku bigaku bijutsushigaku kiyō*, no. 14 (1999): 43-60.

important modern institution. It was precisely the representation of human bodies—and the nude at its core—that were reputed to be crucial for western art. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that some contemporary art historians have paid more respect to the "missionary" than the artistic achievements of Kuroda's early nude paintings, especially in comparison to his later semi-nudes which are often appreciated for their being more intimate and, thus, more "Japanese."[10] Such assessments, however, are apparently founded on stylistic criteria in a narrow sense and risk, for example, underplaying cultural factors like the above-mentioned bohemian claim of artistic freedom. In fact, the connection between nude painting and the nation-state is characterized by an intriguing ambiguity: even an ultimately academic painter like Kuroda, who served as a civil servant at the National Art School, vacillated between loyalty to the state and to individual artistic aspiration, as much as he was torn between his desire for Europe and his concern for Japan.

Second, from an aesthetic angle which does not confine itself to stylistic explorations, Kuroda's *Morning Toilet* appears to be "Japanese" in a modern way; here, "Japaneseness" refers to a peculiar way of incorporating "western" elements that applies to both represented matter and representational manner. The first impression of *Morning Toilet* may be that it just replaced (traditional) "Japanese" characteristics with (modern) "western" ones, in other words, traditions of alluding to female bodies by a procedure of blatantly exposing them. In effect, what set paintings like this apart from previous Japanese art was the novel visuality underlying their realism: they rested upon a clear division between the viewing subject and the viewed object which applied to the relation between painter and model as well as to that between exhibition visitor and art work. Such a separation proved to be vital in order to prevent nude paintings from referring to quotidian sexuality, as was easily presumed by Japanese audiences in regard to their own pictorial traditions.

Before proceeding with my argument, I shall sketch briefly in what regard the modern nude differed from premodern Japanese pictures of naked or half-naked bodies. Across all variations—and excluding religious art—undressed bodies in traditional pictures were not ideal-

[10] Takashina Shūji, "Atarashii bi no hakken—Nihon no rafu, " in Takashina, ed., *Nihon no rafu,* p. 14; and Ueno, "Hakubakai," p. 28.

ized and, accordingly, not laden with national references. Whether it was medieval scrolls depicting commoners as distinct from aristocrats, or even aristocrats in an awkward situation like a robbery, whether it was "spring pictures" (*shunga*) or "pictures of beauties" (*bijin-e*) —both part of *ukiyoe*, that is, paintings and prints for an urban populace often aimed at arousing the viewer erotically—all those bodies had in common was that they were naked, not that they were nudes. At present, the traditional "pictures of beauties" are considered to come closest to an equivalent to the European nude; however, it cannot easily be dismissed that Japanese artists refrained from any idealization other than idolizing, for example, courtesans, and that the artists showed a much greater interest in clothes and accessories than in corporeality.

Furthermore, with premodern pictures—and among them those of (often partially) naked people—the most important things happened precisely in the invisible space *between* the viewer and the picture plane, releasing the image from obligations to accurate objectivization. This relational concept can be found in the supposedly first full nude painting, *Bathing Beauty* (*Nyūyoku bijin zu*, 1799; Figure 10.3) by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806). Rendered not in oil but mineral colors on silk, it depicts a naked woman from behind who is just about to enter a bath tub. Although anatomically incorrect, she gives the impression of being real; the curve highlighting her bottom and the slightly colored, although not actually modulated, skin invite the viewer to get sensually closer. In contrast, modern paintings like *Morning Toilet* transferred this tradition into a concept of the picture as an (allegedly) self-absorbed representation to be appreciated from a distance. Due to this distance, which favored visuality over tactility—and more, precisely, the admiration of beautifully painted bodies over the sharing of erotic situations—both art work and male artist could liberate themselves from all too carnal, or even pornographic purposes, and achieve modern autonomy. Many scholars have stressed that Kuroda's efforts at nude-painting were closely tied to his pursuit of expressive freedom and modern (male) agency.[11] Yet, this freedom must be understood in distinction to traditional interrelationality

[11] For example, Kagesato Tetsurō, "Jinbutsu sekiraga kara rataiga e," in Takashina Shūji, ed., *Nihon bijutsu zenshū*, vol. 22: *Kindai no bijutsu II: Yōga to nihonga* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), p. 179; Takumi, "*Chōshō* ratai mondai," p. 124.

Figure 10.3. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806): *Bathing Beauty* (*Nyūyoku bijin zu*), 1799; 98.5 × 48.3 cm. Museum of Art, Atami.

which was not only a social, but also an aesthetic phenomenon. That said, one should nonetheless consider the possibility of coming across ambiguities here, too; after all, Kuroda was familiar with two cultures and, thus, two ways of seeing.

Before returning to this in the following section, I shall touch upon the third aspect of the rather invisible nationality of early Japanese nude paintings, that is, the issue of where nudes were encountered and how these sites were regulated. To come straight to the point, pictures of naked women, particularly of such a physical presence like the one in *Morning Toilet*, were not to be shown in public, even if they depicted "exotic foreigners." This fact can be deduced from Georges Bigot's (1860-1927) famous caricature of "La femme nue de M. Kuroda" (1895; Figure 10.4). It depicts people in front of *Morning Toilet* at the Kyoto venue: some stand gaping open-mouthed in astonishment, and a girl even covers her eyes as if they hurt while gathering up her kimono and uninhibitedly exposing her legs. *Morning Toilet* did not create much of a stir when exhibited at the exhibition of the Meiji Art Society (*Meiji bijutsu kyōkai*) in Tokyo the previous year, but in Kyoto it caused a scandal precisely because people who were not familiar with the new concept of fine art recalled traditional erotic pictures of beauties after the bath and, consequently, categorized it as a part of daily life (or even pornography). What collided between Kuroda's nude and the exhibition visitors were two ways of seeing, one that aimed at modernization by westernization, and another one that rested upon conventional expectations. Vacillating between European academism and Japanese popular pragmatism, *Morning Toilet* distressed the public.

Fernand Ganesco, in whose book Bigot's illustration first appeared, disputed Kuroda's capability to skillfully depict a European woman: "... le monstre créé par M. Kuroda, dessiné sans habilité, peint avec une lourdeur et une gaucherie extrêmes, a la prétention d'être une femme européenne nue"[12] ("the monster created by M. Kuroda—designed without ability, painted with extreme clumsiness and awkwardness—has the pretension of being a naked European woman"). An opponent to the new kind of Japaneseness, the one closely tied to westernization, he preferred the nakedness on Japanese streets to

[12] Fernand Ganesco, *Shocking au Japon: de l'evolution de l'art dans l'empire du soleil levant, dessins de Georges Bigot*, (1895, place of publication not indicated), p. 32.

Figure 10.4. Georges Bigot (1860-1927), La femme nue de M. Kuroda, 1895; in Fernand Ganesco, *Shocking au Japon: de l'evolution de l'art dans l'empire du soleil levant: Dessins de Georges Bigot* (np, 1895), p. 33.

the Salon painting. Mentioned in passing, western-style depictions of this ordinary, not-yet-idealized nakedness were first exhibited at Japan's 2nd National Industrial Fair in 1881. The term *jinbutsu sekiraga* ("pictures of naked people") that was used to categorize them in the accompanying catalogue,[13] was soon followed by the term "pictures of beauties with naked bodies" (*ratai bijinga*). While the latter still clung to popular traditions and as such also became utilized pejoratively by the authorities after 1889, the new academic nude painting in oil refrained from referring to "beauties" (*bijin*) even in its name: *rataiga* ("nude painting") or *rafu* ("[female] nude").

Remarkably, the unsettled state of the nude reappeared in the semi-public spaces it was restricted to until the early 1920s. Moralism and censorship focused on "real-looking" depictions of naked bodies in public. Therefore, nude paintings and sculptures were sometimes partly covered-up, as had happened already with *Morning Toilet* during the time of the emperor's visit to the exhibition in Kyoto, and at the 6th show of Kuroda's Hakubakai Society in 1901, when the loincloth was for the first time enforced by police intervention (*koshimaki jiken*). Another option was the reduction of publicity as such: from 1903 on, fine-art nudes were placed in extra, or "secret" rooms of the exhibition venue where only adult men from the better circles were allowed admission with a special permit.[14] As an art genre tied to national identity, the nude needed police protection, in other words, regulation of its "reality effects."

Not as easily controllable was a different kind of modern public space, that is, print media which exposed depictions of naked bodies, especially magazines and lithographs (the latter blooming in the period between the predominance of traditional wood-cut printing and the emergence of photo-mechanical printing). The government started to outlaw nude representations in 1889 on the occasion of Watanabe Seitei's (1851-1918) title illustration for the novel *Lady Butterfly* (*Kochō*) by Yamada Bimyō (Figure 10.5).[15] A specialist not in oil but traditional painting, Watanabe was supposedly the first of his

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[13] Kagesato, "Jinbutsu sekiraga," p. 174.

[14] Still in 1924, Rodin's *Kiss* at the *3rd Exhibition of Contemporary French Art* (*Dai-sankai furansu gendai bijutsu tenrankai*) was put in an extra room together with other art works; see: *Kokumin bijutsu* (Special issue: *Ratai sakuhin tokubetsushitsu mondai*), vol. 1, no. 7 (July, 1924).

[15] Published in the supplement to the magazine *Kokumin no tomo*, issue no. 37.

Figure 10.5. Watanabe Seitei (1851-1918), title illustration for *Lady Butterfly* (*Kochō*) by Yamada Bimyō, wood-cut print, 1889; in *Kokumin no tomo*, supplement to no. 37, January 1889.

kind to visit Europe and, at the Paris World Exposition in 1878, was even awarded a silver medal.[16] For Bimyō—a rather provocative author who wrote in vernacular Japanese—Watanabe depicted the scene in which the heroine, a court-lady named Butterfly, appears in front of her rescuer—almost performing a contraposto—after a futile effort to follow her emperor in death by drowning. Often regarded as the first full nude in modern Japanese-style painting (*nihonga*),[17] one should note that, in contrast to Kuroda's oil paintings, this picture entered the public realm as a reproduction. Generally more focused on an aura of refinement than on strong bones, that is, bodies, it took Japanese-style painting about two decades longer than its western-style counterpart to deploy the nude.[18] In part, this can be put down to the fact that the very precedents which academic nudes require in order to legitimate themselves historically could only be obtained from European art. Thus, in the early 20th century, the establishment of a *nihonga* nude had to put up with suggesting the "westernization" of a genre that was initially supposed to dedicate itself to what escaped modernization-as-westernization.

Similar to the above-mentioned example from literature, the distribution of art journals was occasionally prohibited due to "objectionable" pictures. In 1897, the ban hit *Bijutsu hyōron* (no. 2) because it contained a reproduction of Kuroda's nude triptych *Chi Kan Jō* (on which I will focus in the following section). In 1900, issue no. 8 of *Myōjō* was confiscated because of two drawings by Ichijō Narumi (1876-1900) who had adapted photographs of French nude sculp-

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[16] Eiraku Tōru, "Nihonga ni okeru ratai hyōgen," in The National Museum of Art, Osaka, ed., *Rataiga 100-nen no ayumi/Modern Nude Paintings 1880-1980* (exh. cat.), (1983), p. 96.

[17] In regard to modern Japanese-style painting, it should be taken into consideration that already in 1842, Watanabe Seitei's teacher Kikuchi Yōsai (1788-1878) had painted *En'ya Takasada tsuma shutsuyoku zu* (En'ya Takasada's wife after the bath, 114.4 × 47.8 cm, colors on silk), a nude which is often categorized as a historical painting due to its subject matter. This work is counted among Japan's "modern" art; see, for example, its creator's appearance in *Kindai nihon bijutsu jiten* (1989), p. 117. However, it was not only painted before the concept of *nihonga* (as traditionalist modern Japanese painting) emerged, but it probably also escaped broader public attention until Watanabe Seitei painted his version of the same motif in 1881/1882. The reception process of Kikuchi's work in the late 19th century still needs to be explored.

[18] The earliest examples are Tsuchida Bakusen *Ama* (*Abalone Divers*, 1913) and Kobayashi Kokei *Ideyu* (*Hot Spring*, 1918). See the essay by Doris Croissant in this volume.

tures. However, the actual thorn in the flesh of the authorities were nude lithographs, especially those of beauties after bathing (*yuagari bijin*), which around 1890 gained popularity as novelty souvenirs and lucrative commodities (Figure 10.6). Called "fake western pictures" (*nisemono yōga*) for their then-spectacular realism otherwise only known from oil paintings or photos,[19] they did not hide their purpose—the pleasure of looking at female bodies—nor did they aspire to the heights of "fine art" or the "national," although the chance to look at recognizably Japanese women was without doubt part of the pleasure.

2. *Mediating the "Japanization of Oil Painting"*

In 1935, the *Yearbook of Japanese Art* (Nihon bijutsu nenkan) found the "Japanization of oil painting" accomplished and praised its crystallization in those nudes which expressed a specifically Japanese beauty in a specifically Japanese style.[20] Since that time, Kuroda's triptych *Chi Kan Jō* (*Wisdom Impression Sentiment*, 1897; Figure 10.7) has been regarded retrospectively as a landmark pointing the way to that very "Japanization."[21] It was the first nude in modern Japanese oil painting that both deployed a Japanese model and was painted as well as exhibited in Japan. Kuroda created the first version in 1897 and displayed it at the second Hakubakai exhibition the same year; he finished the reworked version in 1899 and presented it at the World Exposition in Paris 1900.

The title, as well as the women, however, are mysterious. Kuroda himself left unexplained whether he was referring to the European motif of the three Graces, to Christian triptychs, or to Buddhist trinities (*sanzon*). Art historians suggest that the women embody *Wisdom*

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[19] Egakareta Meiji Nippon ten jikkō iinkai, ed., *Egakareta Meiji Nippon—Sekihanga [ritogurafu] no jidai*, (vol. 1: exh. cat.; vol. 2: *kenkyūhen*/scholarly essays) (Kōbe shiritsu hakubutsukan and Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 2002), p. 119; Iwakiri Shin'ichirō, "Ukiyoe hanga toshite no sekihanga—sekihan gakue to nishiki-e no hikaku kenkyū," in the same volume, p. 20. I am very grateful to Doris Croissant for pointing out this publication to me.

[20] Tanaka Tatsurō, "Taishō, Shōwa zenki no yōga to ratai hyōgen," in The National Museum of Art, Osaka, ed.), *Rataiga 100-nen*, p. 95.

[21] Ōta Samurō, "Jūkyū seiki no ratai bijutsu," in Ōta Samurō, ed., *Sekai ratai bijutsu zenshū*, vol. 5 (19-seiki) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1931), p. 14; Tanaka Atsushi, *Nihon no bijutsu 8: Meiji no yōga. Kuroda Seiki to Hakubakai* (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1995), p. 63.

Figure 10.6. Machida Shinjirō, *Rafu*, ca. 1890, two-color lithograph; in Egakareta Meiji Nippon ten jikkō iinkai, ed., *Egakareta Meiji Nippon—Sekihanga (ritogurafu) no jidai*, vol. 1, Kōbe shiritsu hakubutsukan and Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan (2002), p. 169.

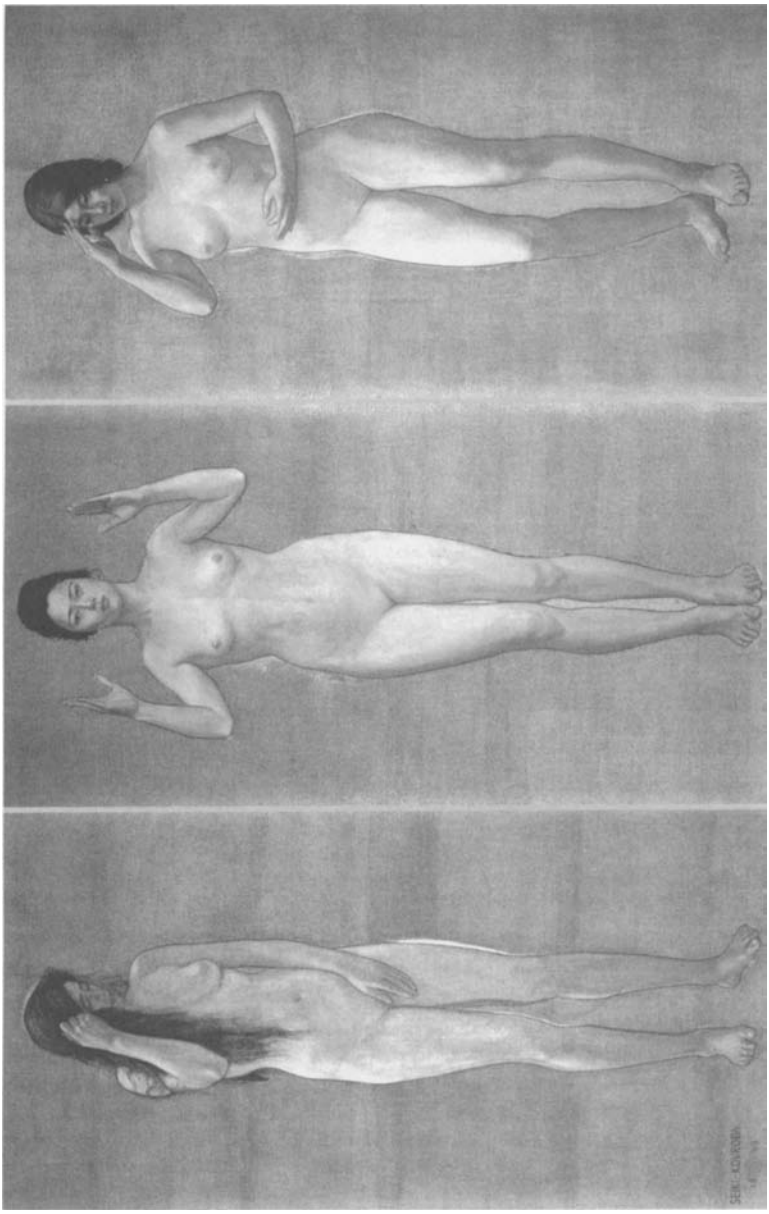

Figure 10.7. Kuroda Seiki, *Chi Kan Jō* (Wisdom, impression, sentiment), 1897; 180.6 × 99.8 cm; in *Nihon bijutsukan* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan 1997), p. 905.

Impression Sentiment from the right to the left.[22] Partly because of its abstract title, which allegorizes the naked bodies into bearers of concepts, (and which was only used for exhibitions in Japan), the painting does not leave a particularly Japanese impression, although its stylized golden ground interferes interestingly with the suggested plasticity of the women's bodies. The first viewers in 1897 took these bodies as real and, thus, Japanese; one even expressed his sympathy for Lady Sentiment on the left, who is using her right hand instead of the conventional fig leaf—after all, it would only be a natural sentiment for a women to cover herself up when exposed at a venue visited by hundreds of people every day.[23] This relates to the issue of distinguishing between "nude" and "naked" which I have already mentioned in regard to Bigot's caricature; below, I shall rather focus on these women's seemingly western physical proportions.

The women's Caucasian-looking body shape can be traced back to Kuroda's late discovery of his home country. After ten years in France, he encountered Japan in an exoticizing and idealizing way. Still seeing things through "French" eyes and eager to distance himself from native graphics and genre paintings, he "latinized" the stature of his Japanese model. According to the critic Kimura Shōhachi, Japanese women at the time were simply inappropriate for nude paintings anyway, with their short stocky legs, their cat's backs, and huge heads.[24] Similarly perpetuating a view formed five decades earlier,[25] in 1965 art historian Nishida Masaaki still considered undressed Japanese women of the 19th century as simply unsightly: "... their heads leaned forward because of the heavy traditional hair-knot, the breast was flattened by means of the *obi* belt,

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[22] See for example Teshigawara Jun, *Rataiga no reimei* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1986).

[23] Kuraya Mika, "'Kunst' durch Grenzen: Der Maler Kuroda Seiki und die Aktbilddebatte," in Steffi Richter, ed., *JAPAN Lesebuch III: intelli* (Tübingen: konkursbuchverlag Claudia Gehrke, 1998), pp. 62, 64. She quotes from the confiscated issue no. 2 of *Bijutsu hyōron* (November 1897, Gahōsha) which published a fictitious panel discussion, partly about the 2nd Hakubakai exhibition where *Chi Kan Jō* had its première (pp. 20-35).

[24] Kimura Shōhachi, "Meiji igo no fūzoku to tai'i," in *Gendai no me*, no. 15, February (1956): 2.

[25] Stratz—drawing upon Bälz—summarizes the flaws of Japanese bodies as follows: "1. the head is too big, 2. the legs are too short, 3. the hips are too slim." C.H. Stratz, *Die Körperformen in Kunst und Leben der Japaner* (Stuttgart: Verlag Ferdinand Enke, 1904), p. 61.

and they walked pigeon-toed in their *geta* sandals in order to avoid flapping their *kimono* seams and unveiling their legs."[26] Such bodies populated Japanese daily life; at least until the 1930s, young ladies were expected to acquire a shape which fit the *kimono*. In contrast, oil-painting did not call for this kind of body, at least not in the beginning.

In early modern Japan, oil painting was found fascinating on account of its potential for visualization. However, "realistic" techniques were not necessarily deployed for reportage-like depictions of everyday life. As can be inferred from Kuroda's nudes, around 1900, not realist, but idealist images were aspired to. Concordantly, oil painting appeared as a window to a not-yet-real world, expressing the real, or actual freight of a utopian longing. The range of this rather abstract desire (which was, among other things, a desire for a modern and male agency) distinguished Kuroda's paintings from former attempts at realism as naturalism in Japan. These had remained in the realm of the particular and the sensual—whether artistic explorations of naturalism in the sense of documentation, for example approaching anatomic realism,[27] or naturalistic representations serving as spectacle at temple fairs (*misemono*). Both were not only loyal to Japanese body shapes but also humorous and, thus, full of understanding for human frailties which obviously needed to be discarded later for the sake of "higher" meanings. An intriguing example of amusing naked bodies were the so-called "living dolls" (*iki-ningyō*) of the early 1850s (Figure 10.8). Although they might better be discussed in relation to nude sculpture than painting, I would just like to mention that their creators, too—if they presented them stripped of clothing at all—preferred undressed foreigners, in order to reassure themselves and their customers of what was native.[28] Yet,

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[26] Nishida Masaaki, "Nihonjin no jintai to rataiga," in *Gendai no me,* no. 126 (*Tokushū: rataiga*) (May 1965): 6.

[27] See for example the astonishing sketches by Maruyama Ōkyo, *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* (Exact depictions of human bodies), 2 scrolls, 31.4 × 992 cm and 31. 4 × 1079 cm, ink on Japanese paper with light coloration, ca. 1770.

[28] According to Kinoshita Naoyuki, "Iki-ningyō no misemono to tenrankai ni tsuite," in Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, ed., *Iki-ningyō to Matsumoto Kīsaburō* (exh. cat.), (Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto and Osaka History Museum, 2004), pp. 104-108. The photographs in the catalogue as well as Kinoshita's explanations suggest that most of these figures invited laughter.

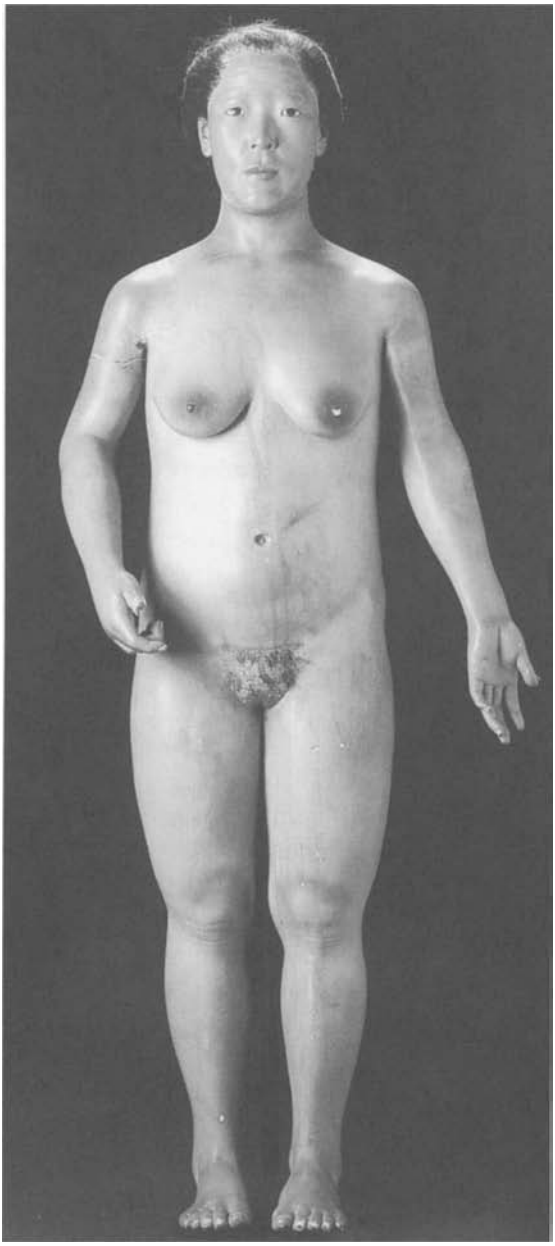

Figure 10.8. Nezumiya Denkichi, "living doll" (*iki-ningyō*) of a peasant woman, 150 × 54 × 34 cm, late 19th century, Smithsonian Institution; in Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, ed., *Iki-ningyō to Matsumoto Kōsaburō* (Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto and Ōsaka History Museum, 2004), p. 65.

as long as this was accompanied by laughter it implied a fundamental doubt about any serious identity claims.

In *Wisdom Impression Sentiment*, Kuroda presents, in all seriousness, Japanese bodies through a western filter. He suggests corporeality but at the same time withdraws its specifity by removing local markers like body shape or clothing, accessories or tangible spaces. This differs from earlier pictorial representations of Japanese bodies, for example by Wilhelm Heine (1827-1885; Figure 10.9) or Goseda Yoshimatsu (1855-1915) which appear to be dominated by the very medium they are deploying to such an extent that they depicted Japanese bodies only in Caucasian proportions. By way of comparison, *Wisdom Impression Sentiment* is not solely characterized by a western gaze directed onto a Japanese woman's body but rather by two ways of seeing which the interculturally experienced painter manages to balance: a distanced appreciation of idealized, beautiful bodies, and a suggested experience of physical presence. As if implying that the national appropriation of the nude could only be achieved by its idealization, Kuroda's work illuminates the domestication of the astonishing corporeality oil painting is capable of, in the twofold sense of the word: it was Japanized and at the same time tamed in order to distinguish it from a different kind of Japanization, that of the above-mentioned lithographs. It goes without saying that this domestication included efforts to avoid equivocation. When *Wisdom Impression Sentiment* was about to be sent to Paris in 1900, debates evolved about whether it would be an appropriate representative of the Japanese nation at the World Exposition, or, on the contrary, whether it matched Paris better than Tokyo.[29] Finally, the Japanese government exhibited it under the simple title *Etudes de femmes*. The French, though, thought it to be Japan's best artistic contribution to the exposition and awarded it a silver medal.[30]

Idealizing native women through westernization in academic oil painting decreased after 1910. In turn, artists began to "discover" a specifically national beauty in rustic—and, as such, more rural than

[29] Ueno, "Hakubakai," p. 17.

[30] Tokyo National Museum et.al., eds., *Seiki no saiten: Bankoku hakurankai no bijutsu/ Arts of East and West from World Expositions 1855-1900: Paris, Vienna and Chicago* (exh. cat.) (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2004), p. 229.

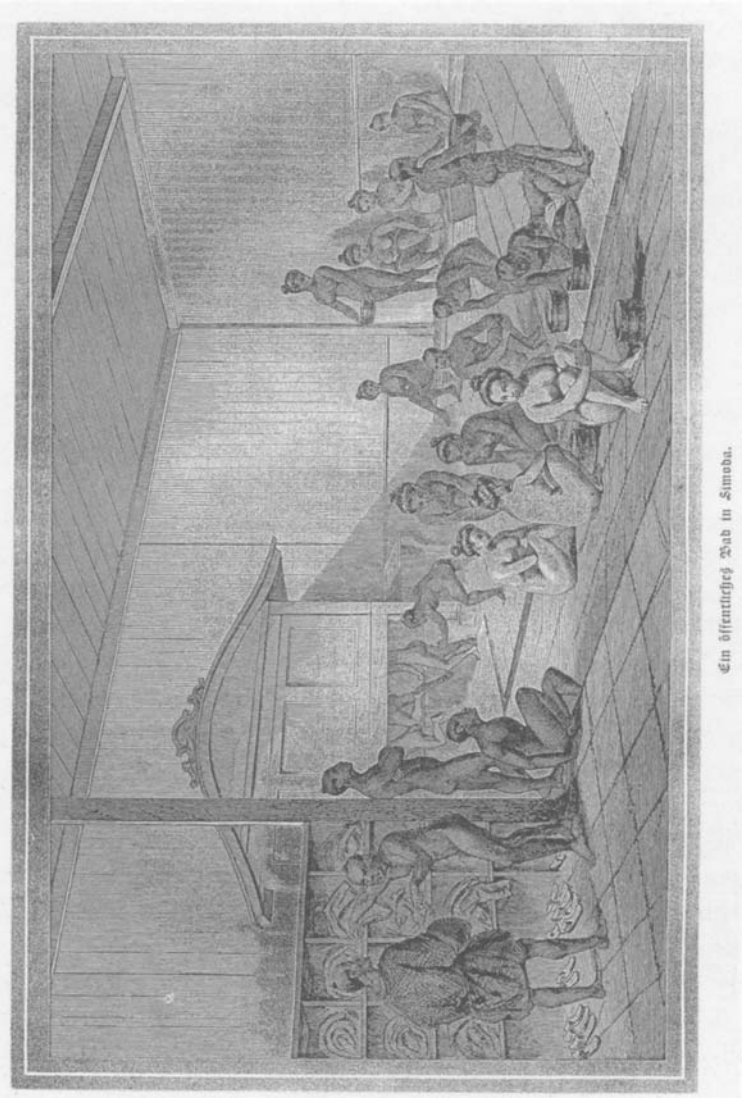

Figure 10.9. Wilhelm Heine (1827-1885), "Ein öffentliches Badehaus in Simoda [sic]," in *Wilhelm Heine: Reise um die Erde nach Japan: an Bord der Expeditions-Escadre unter Commodore M. C. Perry in den Jahren 1853, 1854 und 1855, unternommen im Auftrage der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten; mit fünf vom Verfasser nach der Natur aufgenommenen Ansichten in Tondruck, ausgeführt in Holzschnitt von Eduard Kretzschmar*, vol. 2, (Leipzig: H. Costenoble 1856), p. 34.

urban—nudes.[31] Yorozu Tetsugorō (1885-1927) was one of the first to do so (Figure 10.10). Moreover, the new subject matter corresponded with a novel attitude: Yorozu painted consequently out of personal necessity rather than devotion to ideals, and he treated his models not as mere objects at the painter's disposal but as partners who, thus, also retained recognizably Japanese proportions.[32] Influenced by European modernism, this Japanization of the nude became an increasingly stylistic issue as well. In 1935, modernist Imaizumi Atsuo—later the first chief curator of the Museum of Modern Art Tokyo—pointed to the importance not of traditional motifs but of formal traditional effects (like those generated by ink on paper) emulated in Western *matière*.[33] This is precisely what was pursued by western-style painters such as Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888-1986). Turning back to old Japanese art after having gone through its modern discourse and institution, the "Japaneseness" they foregrounded involved a modern approach towards planarity and the layered construction of pictorial space, formal simplification and decorative stylization, brushwork and colorism. However, this formalization of visible nationality did not necessarily prevent such artists—who were pursuing an apparently autonomous, non-political art—from providing nationalist content under the conditions of imperialism and militarism. The discernible bodily Japaneseness of their nudes played a prominent role in this regard.[34]

The first historical summary of the reception of the nude in Japan appeared in 1931 when the six-volume *Complete Series of World Nude*

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[31] This also implies social status, as Charrier's article on Nojima suggests ("Primitivist Eye," p. 50): whereas Kuroda's idealized women seem classless, Yorozu's seem to be of lower origin.

[32] See Mizusawa Tsutomu, "The Artists Start to Dance. The Changing Image of the Body in Art of the Taishō Period," in Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), pp. 14-24.

[33] In *Atorie* (Special Issue: *Yōga ni okeru nihonteki keikō*), no. 3 & 4, 1935, according to Asano Tōru, "Nihonteki abura-e no keisei," in Takashina Shūji, ed., *Nihon bijutsu zenshū*, vol. 23: *Kindai no bijutsu III: modanizumu to dentō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), p. 152.

[34] Still today, the achievement of a truly "Japanese" oil painting is tied to the "Japanese" bodies in paintings by Maeda Kanji (1896-1930) and Koide Narashige (1887-1931) around 1930, for example by Tōkyō geijutsu daigaku daigaku bijutsukan et. al., eds., *Saikō: kindai nihon no kaiga—biishiki no keisei to tenkai* (Remaking Modernism in Japan 1900-2000: exh. cat.) (Tōkyō geijutsu daigaku bijutsukan, Tōkyō-to gendai bijutsukan, Saison gendai bijutsukan, 2004), p. 107.

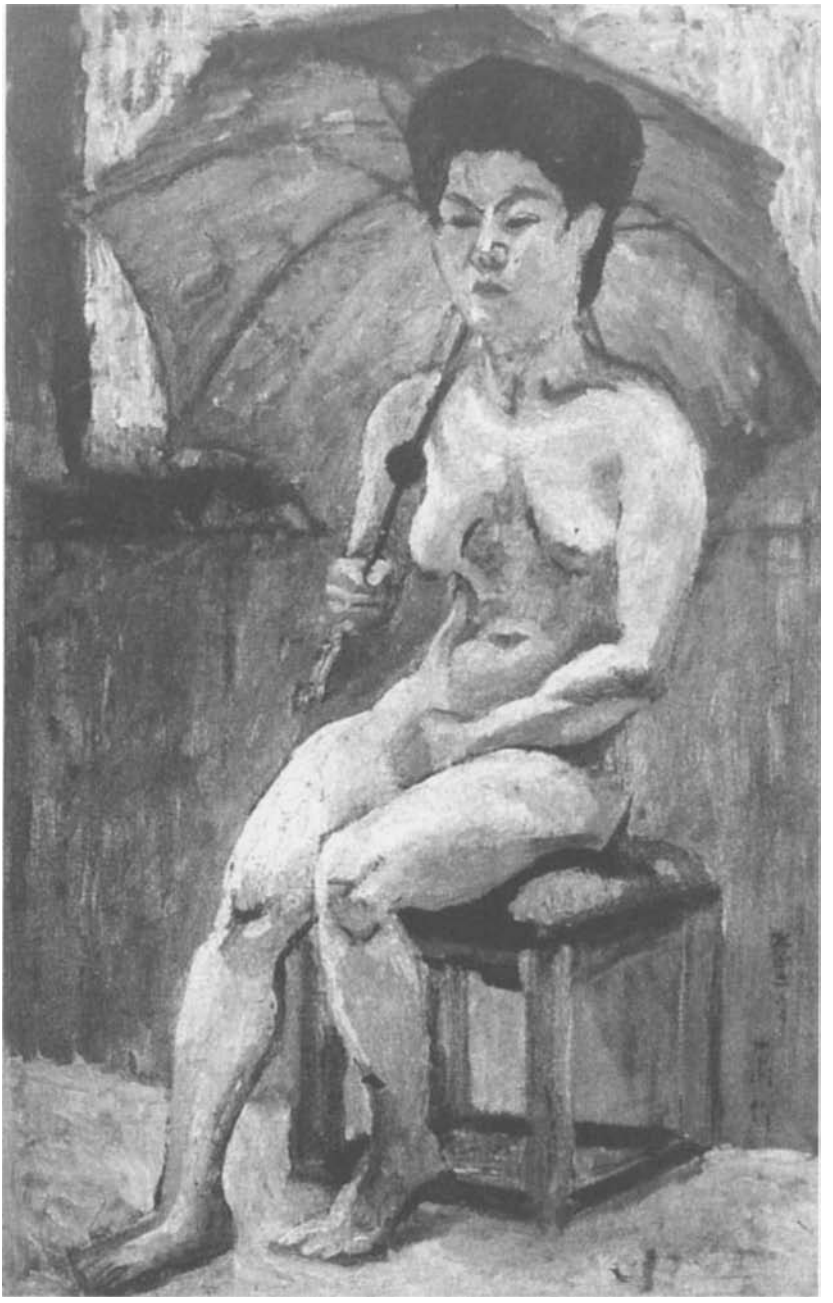

Figure 10.10. Yorozu Tetsugorō (1885-1927), *Higasa no rafu* (Female nude with sun parasol), 1913, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 53 cm. Museum of Modern Art Kanagawa.

Painting[35] was published in Tokyo. The fifth volume, dedicated to the 19th century, contained seven art works by Japanese out of a total of 78. Among these were Kuroda's *Morning Toilet* as well as *Wisdom Impression Sentiment* but also pictures by Kikuchi Yōsai and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) as examples of the late Edo era. In Volume 6 on contemporary art, the Japanese share increased to 24 out of 78 art works and also included some sculptures. Besides the fact that all chosen artists were male, the two volumes had in common a prevailing focus on European art: Japanese art was compared to France, Germany and Italy, but other Asian or non-European cultures did not count, proving once more that the nude was defined as a genre of European art. Additional evidence was provided by the fact that only one traditional-style painting was featured among the Japanese examples. Symptomatically, its creator, Kawabata Ryūshi (1885-1966), was an artist first educated in western-style painting à la Kuroda;[36] only later, after a visit to Boston and the Japanese collection in its art museum, did he turn to traditionalism.

Apart from Kawabata, the nude series neglected *nihonga* painters, even the famous Tsuchida Bakusen (1887-1936), who, according to Doris Croissant, was "... keeping with the tendency to make femininity into the quintessence of Japanese aesthetics as opposed to the masculinity of Western civilization."[37] This "femininity" hints at the other side of modernization-as-westernization; however, as a mere counterpart it remains tied to what it is opposing. Investigating the relations of painting to nationality and nationalism requires considering not only the dimension of gendering as such, but also aspects such as idealizing and prioritizing visuality. From this perspective Tsuchida's semi-nudes appear to be of an unassuming presence: they are not driven by an abstract, yet explicit desire like Kuroda's western-style nudes, and they do not generate an overwhelmingly sensual impact either. The latter, often erotic if not pornographic side was widely domesticated in modern Japan, especially in the generic "pic-

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[35] Ōta Samurō, ed., *Sekai ratai bijutsu zenshū*, supervised by Okada Saburōsuke und Fujishima Takeji, 6 vols (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1931).

[36] Painting in the anthology *Shinju* (Pearls), 1931. Kawabata entered Kuroda's Hakubakai Institute (*Hakubakai kenkyūsho*) in 1904; in 1907, one of his oil-paintings was chosen for the 1st Salon of the Ministry of Culture (*Bunten*).

[37] Doris Croissant, "Icons of Femininity: Japanese National Painting and the Paradox of Modernity," in Mostow et. al., eds., *Gender and Power*, p. 137. See also Doris Croissant's essay in this volume.

tures of beauties" (*bijinga*); yet, it lived on, for example, in Kainoshō Tadaoto's (1894-1978) Japanese-style nude paintings (Figure 10.11). By referring to them I do not intend to open a discussion of eroticism or pornography here, although the fact that they were criticized as decadent and "dirty" (*kitanai*) may sooner or later lead there. I find it more intriguing that an assessment as dirty might have arisen partly from their emphasis on skin. Similar to the above-mentioned "living dolls" (*iki-ningyō*) which were admired for their apparently smooth skin—and in contrast to the beautiful look[38] of a modern full nude —Kainoshō's nudes hold the sense of tactility in high esteem.[39] Refusing the prioritization of a highly symbolic visuality over sensual nearness incorporates a critical potential to escape nationalism, a potential which, admittedly, may materialize itself in pornographic forms, especially in Japan. Whereas Kainoshō's nudes suggest such a potential, the mainstream of the academic nude in Japan reveals what it takes to promote the nation: an idealization-as-universalization which gives priority to (often verbalizable) symbols undervaluing the sensual and accidental; a support by traditions even if those are derived from a foreign canon; and, of course, public attention.

3. *Advertizing Nationally*

Attempts at deploying (at least partially) naked bodies of women for national promotion were not limited to fine art. One of the most astonishing examples in the history of Japanese advertizing is undoubtedly the *Akadama Port Wine Poster* (1922; Figure 10.12) which was even awarded a First Prize at the Werbe-Kunst-Schau Exposi-

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[38] As demonstrated above, for Japanese painters around 1900, "beauty" was characterized by a prioritizing of the visual (that is, the look) over the haptic (that is, the touch), in other words, a certain distance which allowed getting close to ideals.

[39] Fujita Tsuguharu's (1886-1968) nudes put also emphasis on the depicted women's skin and, at the same time, on the Japanized way of their rendering (the praised "milk-white" resulting from a specific combination of traditional and European coloring); they are even admired for their equation of translucent female skin and the tactility of the painted surface (see Kuraya Mika, "Slashing the Skin: Two Motifs of Tsuguharu Léonard Foujita," in Ozaki Masaaki, Kuraya Mika et.al., eds., *Tanjō 120nen Fujita Tsuguharu ten/Léonard Fujita* (exh. cat.) (Tokyo: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 2006), Engl. supplement, pp. 6-10. However, they differ from Kainoshō's nudes not only in regard to explicit eroticism, but also insofar as they require symbolic operations in order to approach the skin's haptic quality, for example, a detour via other pictorial motifs such as cats and clothes.

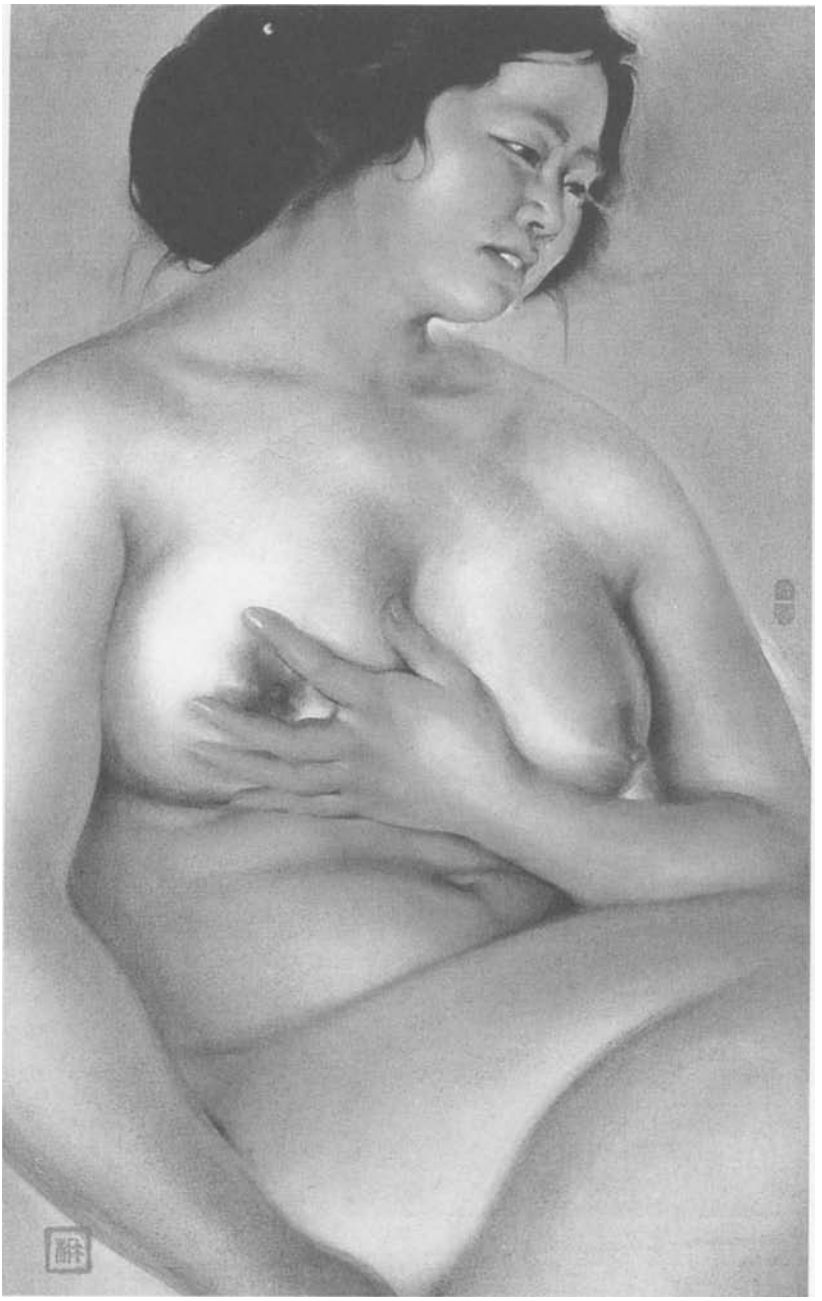

Figure 10.11. Kainoshō Tadaoto (1894-1978), *Rafu*, 1925; colors on silk, 65 × 38.6 cm; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.

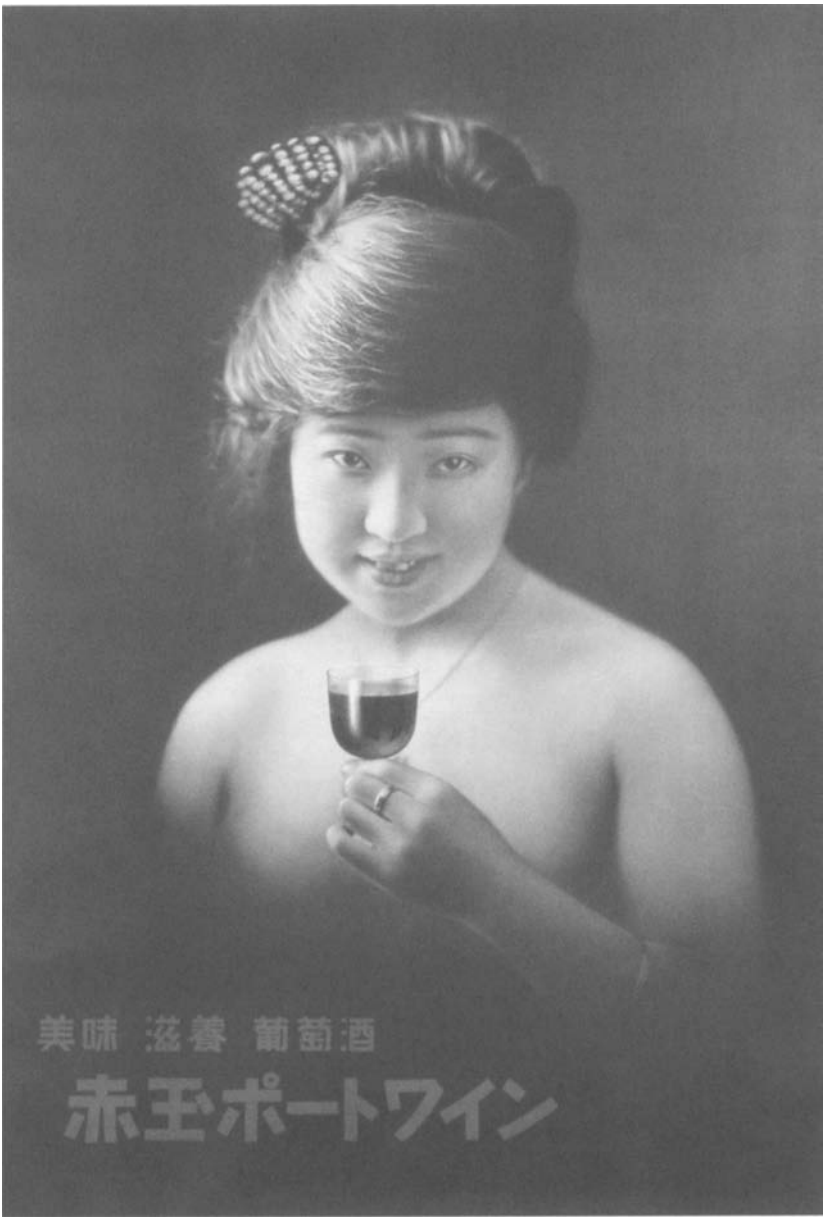

Figure 10.12. Inoue Mokuda and Kataoka Toshirō, *Akadama Port Wine Poster* (1922), HB process offset print, 82 × 58 cm; courtesy of Suntory Ltd. A color plate of this illustration can be found in the color section on pp. xvii-xxxii.

tion Nuremberg in 1922. Made for the liquor company Kotobukiya (today, Suntory), its creation is usually credited to Kataoka Toshirō (1882-1945) and Inoue Mokuda (or, Teizō; 1891-1940).[40] The former had been the head of Kotobukiya's PR department for three years when he acted as artistic director for the *Akadama Port Wine Poster*; the latter—initially a student with western-style artist Asai Chū (1856-1907) but in the prime of his life dedicated to Japanese-style painting—was Kotobukiya's first chief designer. Their *Akadama Port Wine Poster* is usually regarded as conventional in terms of its motif of a "beauty" (*bijin*), but innovative in terms of its technical premises, that is, a HB process offset print on paper, deploying a monochrome photograph of a seemingly half-naked lady[41] and centering on a strikingly red glass of wine. I shall focus on the poster's clearly Japanese appearance here.

The poster features a lady who must, in her time, have been identified as Japanese, at least in Japan and even by those who did not recognize Matsushima Emiko, singer of the Akadama Revue. In addition to her face and hairstyle, the fact that she does not appear in full-body length further underlines the impression of her being Japanese. In Japan, the shape of the shoulders, the nape of the neck and the arms were traditionally regarded the "real national mark of beauty," as Stratz observes, and he even recommends picturing only the upper body part of Japanese women in order to avoid their beauty being spoiled by the sight of their short legs and thick ankles.[42] But the attractive woman on the poster not only looks Japanese, she also promotes a particularly Japanese sort of alcohol: Akadama Port Wine was the first western liquor which Japanese customers found delicious—precisely because it was not authentic. When Torii Shinjirō (1879-1961), the company founder, began to sell port wine in Osaka around 1907, he soon realized that for native customers it needed to be sweeter and more beautifully colored than the imports from

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[40] See James Fraser, Steven Heller and Seymour Chwast, *Japanese Modern. Graphic Design Between the Wars* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).

[41] Whether she actually wears a dark evening dress—as is stated by Uekawa Yoshimi ("Great People of Osaka: Shinjiro Torii, the Founder of SUNTORY—Single-minded devotion to producing liquor", http://www.ibo.or.jp/e/2004_2/01_4/1_4.html; last access 2006/03/31), remains unclear. Concerning the photographer, there are no records of an individual, only of the Kawaguchi Photo Studio.

[42] Stratz, *Köperformen*, pp. 48-51.

Spain and Portugal; consequently, he developed his own blend.[43] Being likewise aware of the fact that the demand for such a product could not be reckoned with but had first to be generated, he placed ads in local newspapers as early as 1909 and facilitated the promotion of a whole "liquor culture," with the emphasis on spirits as pleasurable, not just medicinal, at its core. The red-ball mark (*akadama*) which made Torii's port wine famous, played a crucial role. It goes without saying that it stood in for the sun and, moreover, the "empire of the rising sun." Even the company name Suntory, which was introduced in 1963, leads back to this brand insofar as it consists of the English word "sun" and the founder's name spelled "tory."

In several respects, the *Akadama Port Wine Poster* resembles Kuroda's oil-painting *Chi Kan Jō* (*Wisdom Impression Sentiment*): it impresses with bodily presence and realistic effect while opening a window into another world. Furthermore, both promote: the artistic painting boosts a purely aesthetic art as part of a modern national culture; the commercial poster recommends the "delicious and nutritious grape-wine" (*bimi jiyō budōshū*)—to quote the printed tagline—visually as a national drink. Even how they effect this promotion is similar: both offer female bodies to covetous gazes and at the same time withdraw these bodies from complete possession. The poster, however, does this for commercial rather than political reasons; it creates new needs while at the same time denying final gratification in order to keep consumption going.

To art historian John Clark, the *Akadama Port Wine Poster* is symptomatic of the new tendency of addressing consumers as individuals: "In the 1920s this consciousness of the consuming *group* is reversed toward a *privatized* erotic pleasure, one which mimics the self-conscious use of the most advanced reprographic technology then available in photogravure."[44] What is called "group" here can, with respect to the historical transformation posters underwent, be traced back to how they had been used and, accordingly, composed. Although named

[43] After the so-called Madrid Treaty, which was signed in 1973, Suntory changed the name to Akadama Sweet Wine in order to meet the requirements of distinguishing its product from authentic sorts of port.

[44] Clark, John, "Indices of Modernity. Changes in Popular Reprographic Representation," in Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, John, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 30.

with the English loanword "poster," they did not really function as such until around 1920. Adorning the walls of traditional guesthouses, barber shops, public baths, retail shops and, especially important, the waiting rooms of the National Railway stations, these pictures stayed with their viewers for a while: like calendars, they were usually seen repeatedly and slowly. After all, they were carefully crafted lithographs with more pictorial details to discover than later simplified and therefore eye-catching designs. Well-known in this regard are the posters for the Mitsukoshi department store created after 1907 by artists like Hashiguchi Goyō (1880-1921) or Okada Saburō-suke (1869-1939). Yet, since their ladies did not get undressed, another and even earlier example shall be highlighted here: the poster for *Tengu Cigarettes* (*Tengu tabako*, 1900; Figure 10.13).

Like the Akadama Port Wine, cigarettes of the Tengu brand were a domestic product made from Japanese material, in this case tobacco. Their supplier was the Iwaya Shōkai company in Tokyo which had been in the business since 1884. When facing strong competition by the Murai Brothers from Kyoto, who relied on imports from America, Iwaya developed a marketing campaign around the traditional *tengu* goblin; a whole range of cigarette sorts emerged under this name, and attractive posters were commissioned, too.[45] The example here exhibits a naked, dark-haired lady who neither looks clearly Caucasian nor Asian. This seemingly westernized Japanese beauty is accompanied by a rather small *tengu* who hangs on the upper-left corner of her mirror. Apart from being regarded as native, the goblin has two characteristics: a long nose and a red face (in tune with the latter, many Iwaya Shōkai shops were given a red interior design). In this poster, the *tengu*'s nose does not necessarily have to be related to phallic empowerment through smoking; it points to the pleasant smell of cigarettes from local tobacco as well since the *tengu* is, after all, known for his extraordinary olfactory abilities. His red face again suggests a reference to both Japanese ogres (*oni*), and westerners, who were widely known as "red-faces" and "long-noses." In addition, the *tengu* invades a canonical European painting, taking the place of cupid from Peter Paul Rubens' *Venus at a Mirror* (ca. 1615). In the poster,

[45] Sugita Shinju, "Sekihanga ni okeru shōgyō bijutsu no hatten," in Egakareta Meiji Nippon-ten jikkō iinkai, ed., *Egakareta Meiji Nippon—Sekihanga [ritogurafu] no jidai*, vol. 2 (Kōbe shiritsu hakubutsukan and Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 2002), pp. 65-67.

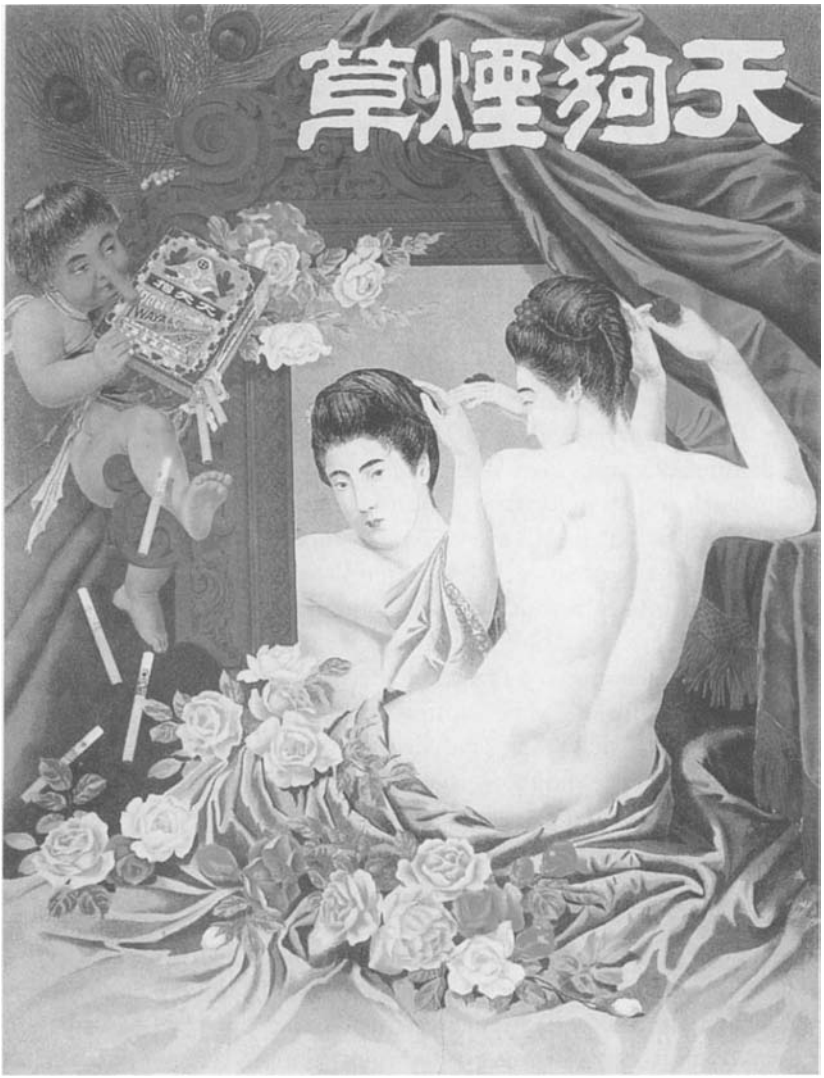

Figure 10.13. "Tengu tabako" Poster, Iwaya shōkai, 1900; multi-colour lithography, 56.6 × 43.5 cm; in *Egakareta Meiji Nippon*, vol. 1, p. 235. A color plate of this illustration can be found in the color section on pp. xvii-xxxii.

the *tengu* is so riveted by Venus' beauty that he lets the cigarettes slip out of his hand. Her gaze, however, addresses the viewer.

The *Akadama Port Wine Poster* presents a similar lady, yet, in a way quite different from its predecessor. First, it is situated beyond the realm of fine art, that is, outside of its spaces, without representational reference to a certain canon and—unlike the early Mitsukoshi posters—without claims to being a painting. In contrast, the *Tengu Tobacco Poster* calls upon "art" to stand in metonymously for "Europe" and accordingly gives the woman's body a Caucasian shape. Second, the *Akadama Port Wine Poster* does not elevate a local product through westernization, but Japanizes a European drink, one of those "objects brought by foreign progress and now made Japanese by advertisement."[46]

In the early 20th century, women's bodies, dressed or undressed, served mainly two purposes in advertizing: luxury goods, and art exhibitions (which, as mentioned in passing, raises the question whether art and its symbol, the nude, were accepted in the 1920s mainly as one of a number of luxury goods). Outside the context of fine art, women's bodies were deployed even for products they had not the slightest logical relation to, just because they ensured adult attention. Among the things they promoted were soap and medicine, but also cigarettes and alcohol, the latter being commodities that symbolize the basic principles of capitalist consumerism as they stir desire (and, occasionally, cause addiction). Investing these things with sweetness, seduction, social status, pureness and even timelessness, the represented women—whether traditional beauties (*bijin*) or European angels—alluded to the academic nude. In modern Japan, they resembled nude paintings furthermore with respect to their functioning as mediators between the familiar and the new. What Norman Bryson asserts about early Japanese nude paintings seems to apply to posters, too: "By possessing what Western men desired, they [Japanese men] could enter into the orbit of the West through identification...."[47]

However, in the *Akadama Port Wine Poster*, the "orbit of the West" can be entered by means of a half-naked Japanese woman who opens her mouth quite lasciviously, shows her teeth in a not very "Japanese"

[46] Clark, "Indices of Modernity," p. 39
[47] Bryson, "Westernizing Bodies," p. 98.

manner and, equally uninhibitedly, returns the viewer's gaze. This raises the question of what kind of masculinity could have been at play in front of her. On closer inspection, the viewer does not necessarily have to objectify this woman; one is equally offered the option of identifying with her and her agency. This woman is capable of literally swallowing the Other, as the composition suggests; the viewer connects sensually, for example, by anticipating a pleasant warm feeling in his or her belly. The assumption that poster beauties such as this one addressed themselves first and foremost to male customers is further undermined by the woman's smile: an open and self-confident smile far away from both the serious ladies in *Chi Kan Jō* (*Wisdom Impression Sentiment*) and the allegedly "false" or servile smile as a cliché-signifier of Japaneseness. If this poster can be linked to nationalism at all, then it must be to a commercial one promoting consumerism as the Japanese citizen's duty no. 1, which in 1922 was hardly to be imagined.

The *Akadama Port Wine Poster* stays ambiguous in regard to the gender of its viewers and potential customers. But there were semi-nude posters advertizing clearly female commodities, too. For the spring exposition held by the Takashimaya department store together with the Asahi Newspaper in March 1929 called *Osaka in Kimono* (*Kimono no Ōsaka*), Takashimaya commissioned a modern "beauty" from Japanese-style painter Kitano Tsunetomi (1880-1947, Figure 10.14).[48] The Japanese lady in the picture, who reveals her left shoulder down to the slightly pink nipple of her left breast, addressed, in her time, not male but female customers, as did the accompanying poem by female writer Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) which appears on the left side of the final poster version. Speaking of the moment when one is about to "put on the likeness of a fragrant modern poem,"[49] it points to the modernity of this semi-nude in traditional attire. Thus, the poem reinforces the painter's attempt at modernizing the traditional "beauty" genre via references to nude painting. Similar to the *Akadama Port Wine Poster*, "Japaneseness" is emphasized, and it is epitomized by a self-confident woman who freely intertwines tradition with modernity. The astonishing sensuality prevalent in both

[48] Tokyo Station Gallery et.al., eds., *Kitano Tsunetomi-ten* (exh. cat.) (Tokyo Station Gallery, Ishikawa kenritsu bijutsukan, Shiga kenritsu kindai bijutsukan, 2003).

[49] The poem reads, *Kakuwashiki kindai no uta no omokage o yosoi sen to meibō no tame* ("I shall put on the likeness of a fragrant modern poem, to appear bright").

Figure 10.14. Takashimaya's poster promoting the exposition *Kimono no Ōsaka* 1929, deploying the original *nihonga* painting by Kitano Tsunetomi, *Fujin*, 1929; colors on silk, 105.8 × 78.5 cm; courtesy of Takashimaya Historical Museum. A color plate of this illustration can be found in the color section on pp. xvii-xxxii.

posters may be narrowed down to the fact that they originated in Osaka,[50] but in view of the issues discussed above they also suggest a national self-image, even though slightly different from that of the artistic nudes, especially those created in the capital.

Concluding Remarks

In modern Japan the nude functioned as a prominent mediator between the familiar and the new. As such it may attract critical attention first and foremost in regard to the history of cultural exchange. However, the nude was not a mere "mirror" of westernizing and nativizing; it became an important cultural site for the formation of national identity precisely as a genre of fine art. Acknowledging the latter implies a consideration of both contexts and texts, in other words, art institutions and discourses as much as matters and manners of pictorial representation. Accordingly my discussion of nude paintings and posters in the sections above focused mainly on three aspects: the issue of in/visible "Japaneseness" as such, the more specific question of what bodies were to represent "Japaneseness," and "Japaneseness" ascribed to certain ways of seeing and their pictorial manifestation. The general concern underlying my examination is whether pictures can be critical, or what kind of pictures are capable of undermining ideological, in our case, nationalist, closure. Forms of visual art which favor relationality, sensual nearness, and particularity (occasionally including pornographic pictures) provide such critical potential, at least, insofar as they have to put up with a powerful counterpart, the hegemonic notion of fine or "beautiful" art which emphasizes clear divisions between viewing subject and viewed object, and the distanced appreciation of idealized, autonomous images by means of a symbol-seeking visuality. Following the European model, the nude as a crystallization of the latter was implanted in modern Japan. To what extent it replaced the previously dominant concept of "the naked" in those days, and whether it has taken turns with a post-modern nakedness today, remains to be explored. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, an aesthetically accentuated "Japaneseness," reminiscent of

[50] Only after the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923 did Torii, the maker of Akadama Port Wine, expand to the Japanese capital.

the modern nude's connotations, has been seeing a revival; now, Japanese state institutions respond to globalization by means of a national branding vacillating between a "cool" and a "beautiful" Japan. Under such conditions the historical issue of the modern nude gains a topicality beyond debates of gender or pornography: its reveals the persistence of clinging to western models especially among those who claim to dismiss them, with respect to promotions of national culture as well as to conservative notions of art.