

Beauty Matters

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BEAUTY MATTERS

Modern Japanese Literature and the
Question of Aesthetics, 1890–1930

ANRI YASUDA

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For Chad, Yuzu, Beni, Stan

There is no answer that would convince someone who would ask such questions as “Why imitate something?” or “Why tell a story as if it were true when obviously the facts are otherwise and it just distorts reality?” Artworks fall helplessly mute before the question “What’s it for?” and before the reproach that they are actually pointless. If, for instance, one responded that fictive narration can touch more deeply on the essence of historical reality than can factual reportage, a possible reply would be that precisely this is a matter of theory, and that theory has no need of fiction. This manifestation of the enigmaticalness of art as incomprehension in the face of questions of putatively grand principle is familiar in the broader context of the bluff inherent in the question as to the meaning of life.

—Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

