



The Gate

S?seki Natsume , Francis Mathy (Translator) , Damian Flanagan (Introduction)

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One of the central masterpieces of 20th-century Japanese literature, *The Gate* describes the everyday world of the humble clerk Sosuke and his wife Oyone, living in quiet obscurity in a house at the bottom of a cliff. Seemingly cursed with the inability to have children, the couple find themselves having to take responsibility for Sosuke's younger brother Koroku. Oyone's health begins to fail, and news that her estranged ex-husband will be visiting nearby finally promotes a sense of crisis in Sosuke and forces him temporarily to quit his life of quiet domesticity. Highly prized for the beauty of its description of the understated love between Sosuke and Oyone, the novel has nevertheless remained in many ways mysterious. An analysis of the novel by Damian Flanagan casts fresh insights into its complex symbolism and ideas, establishing *The Gate* as one of the most profound works of the modern age. Published in cooperation with the Japan Foundation and the Sasakawa Foundation, this novel is part of an international program to bring one of Japan's most popular author to a new international audience.

The Gate Details

Date : Published December 1st 2005 by Peter Owen Publishers (first published 1910)

ISBN : 9780720612509

Author : S?seki Natsume , Francis Mathy (Translator) , Damian Flanagan (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 213 pages

Genre : Cultural, Japan, Asian Literature, Japanese Literature, Fiction, Classics, Literature

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From Reader Review *The Gate* for online ebook

Jim says

This is a book which, at first, did nothing for me. It seemed to be an accretion of details of the life of a childless lower middle class couple circa 1909. Then, just as I was wondering whether I should abandon the book, Natsume S?seki opened abysses where before there had been merely picturesque mud puddles.

Not until the end of the book does one learn the meaning of the title, *The Gate*, as the main character, Sosuke goes to a Zen Buddhist temple for ten days to calm his jangled nerves:

It was apparent that the telling of such anecdotes was [the monk] Gido's way of trying to fortify Sosuke against renouncing all further pursuit of this path [Zen] as soon as he was back in Tokyo. He heard the monk out respectfully, but inwardly felt that this great opportunity had already more or less slipped away from him. He had come here expecting the gate to be opened for him. But when he knocked, the gatekeeper, wherever he stood behind the high portals, had not so much as shown his face. Only a disembodied voice could be heard: "It does no good to knock. Open the gate for yourself and enter."

Why Sosuke felt his life was unraveling was because of a choice he had made earlier in his life which adversely affected a friend of his. When the friend makes his appearance in Tokyo, Sosuke experiences a massive moral cowardice:

But he was left with an ill-defined presentiment that from now on he would have to experience anxious times like this over and over again, to some degree or another. It was destiny's role to enforce this repetition; it was Sosuke's lot to dodge the consequences.

Natsume Soseki has the reputation of being a prototypical Japanese writer. Even though he died in 1916, he is still revered today by popular writers today such as Haruki Murakami. Far from abandoning this book, I have decided to read more of this excellent author's work and to try to pick up on his nuanced hint earlier than I did with **The Gate**.

David says

"We have the right to look forward to better times."

I enjoyed this. Yet I wasn't convinced that the backstories couldn't have been handled with a little more sophistication. Perhaps less would have been more? It felt a bit "Oh ... this odd couple are wistfully listening to the sounds of neighbourhood children ... poor things, they don't have any of their own, I wonder if ... But here's Natsume with ten pages about the deaths of every child they've ever conceived".

Mary says

He was someone destined neither to pass through the gate nor to be satisfied with never having passed through it. He was one of those unfortunate souls fated to stand in the gate's shadow, frozen in his tracks,

until the day was done.

Elie F says

"The only absolute need to be fulfilled for each of them was the need for each other; this was not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition for life." Ever since I started living in Manhattan, I often think to myself how great it would be if I could carve out a small place on earth and live quietly, humbly, and independently with the one I love. The couple in this novel is in some way emblematic of such an ideal which makes this story very relatable and soul-gripping for me. Soseki reveals to the reader through his naturally beautiful depiction of the couple's daily routine the dark undercurrent of this seemingly happy and self-sufficient mode of living. Despite its aesthetic attractiveness, there is a certain sort of moral cowardice and degradation, a constant dodging of responsibility or challenge or whatever makes life complete. Isn't it because of our dread for unfamiliar things that we cling to the existence of a familiar subject for warmth and security? Isn't it because of our self-abasement that we are lured into the dead path of antiquity? Isn't it because of our submission to the power of fate that we relinquish our agency in life whatsoever? The image of "a man standing in the gate's shadow, frozen in his tracks, until the day was done" sticks with me; I wonder if he just opens the gate instead of waiting for someone to respond to his knocking, would his life be completely different? What stops him from doing so? I guess this beautiful novel really makes me rethink my conception of commitment, self-sufficiency, agency, and happiness.

Mariel says

Realizing that both this Sunday and the fine weather that had accompanied it had drawn to a close, a certain mood came over him: a sense that such things did not last for long, and that this was a great pity.

Do you ever feel like you're a better person alone?

When Sosuke bows out of meetings not avoided this time it is said about him that he looks much older than his years. The sad sack flat line of a life line read by cold palm bows. On your knees, look up and grateful. It must get you down to be so grateful. I know the feeling of listening to the nice person you listen to because it was easy at first that they never asked you to explain the life detail stuff you never want to explain. Smile, hope you are nodding in the appropriate places. Hey, you just bought two more games for your new console. Nice. Actually, my name isn't Marie... Never mind. You don't have any friends. University drop outs Sosuke and I. Start the timer no the tick tock of I still have time to do what I wanted to do. Just don't ask me to explain what I have been doing all of this time. He probably didn't need to tell me that he dreads running into someone he knew from his past. I understand. Sosuke runs tired on the bottom of the hamster conversational wheel. It can't go this way forever. Well, things have to get better than they are now.

You look forward to Sunday. You don't have to go to work on Sundays. Do you know that feeling of freedom when you wake up and right when you catch yourself checking the alarm clock with dread you remember that you are off that day and can sleep in? Sosuke is torn between that feeling and having the time for a really good hot bath. That poor bastard. That poor bastard catches himself having time to read

advertisements on the daily commute. The poor bastard isn't too anxious to notice them, this time (I wish he had had something better to read. If only he hadn't given up reading with his school days). When he's living every day for his one day and then that one day isn't big enough to fit in everything good he sags a little more. I was so happy when Sosuke allows himself to spend his spare change on a little inflatable kids toy. It sounded really cool though I had no idea what it is. I like stupid little toys too. Not too long ago I read the comic *Falling Words* and one of the strips was about a man who takes his son he can't say no to to one of these markets. Sosuke would love to have a little kid he couldn't say no to. His wife Oyone smiles in bemusement and says but we don't have any children. She doesn't understand. Sosuke will do what he can't help and make another remark that life would be different if there were children. When his happy reverie of imagining buying his wife some new clothing is spoiled by remembering that he should have done such a nice thing a long time ago... Well, damn but he probably didn't need to tell me for I already knew what he was talking about. Oyone and Sosuke have each other, they are lucky to have each other. They say the wrong thing and walk on each other's soul egg shells or is it hot coals to try and say the right thing that's never the right thing. It would make all of the difference if they were the reason to smile. Things will get better. If he didn't have to work every day and if she had a room in the house to herself after his entitled younger brother moves in (thinking about this Koroku even now makes me feel anxious for her lost personal space and his additional anxiety).

Jim Carrey delivered a moving speech in *Dumb and Dumber* about this. It is when he turns to the window with tears in his eyes (to set the scene they've just found their parakeet with the missing head and all of their booze was stolen) and confesses to his not quite as dumb (but still dumb) friend played by Jeff Daniels that he is sick and tired of having to eek his way through life. But most of all? He's sick and tired of having nobody. Those are the truest words ever spoken. You could tell Jim Carrey to cheer up and point out that spending their life savings on a van to make it look like a dog wasn't so stupid because chicks love it. Fat lot of good that does when you're having a bad day of one thing after another. If you point out when things have improved after they've slightly improved then you're not annoying and missing the point. He needed to cry and Sosuke pushes his head closer to the grindstone by not allowing himself to admit what he's truly feeling.

Sosuke finally takes ten days off from work (he's never missed a day) to attend a retreat on zen. Oh, the poor bastard.

He was someone destined neither to pass through the gate nor to be satisfied with never having passed through it. He was one of those unfortunate souls fated to stand in the gate's shadow, frozen in his tracks, until the day was done.

If you suffer, if you meditate long enough... Blah blah blah. The monks have the secrets of if you find it out for yourself. That kind of enlightenment for a guy who is lonely. Some of them mock Sosuke publicly for admitting privately that he was no closer to the answers than on the day he arrived. I wanted to give those monks a very zen knuckle sandwich at this point. If you find self acceptance you will be happier. I have had this feeling when confronted with some obvious self help method. When I was a teenager I watched this film *Search and Destroy* starring Dennis Hopper as this guru complete with instructional video tapes. I sat in front of the television set with wide eyes and open mouthed murmured his fist pointy pumping. "Don't apologize. I don't have to do that." I don't have to apologize for being who I am. Fast forward to my thirties and I'm still a nitwit and I still apologize for being who I am even though I know I shouldn't. I know all about screw anyone who doesn't like me. I know how Sosuke felt when he went to that retreat for help and how he felt when the meager mental trains that got him through his bleak life broke down. What he wanted was to not do it alone. If those monks hadn't been so lofty they could have talked to him like a human being. It was really

damned cold and hard.

I read when his wife confesses to him about that day she drooped home after a meeting with a spiritualist (of course he asks her how much she paid for this visit). It is your fault you had those miscarriages and you will never have a baby, you terrible person! She looks to outside help to feel better and what she pays for is to get shit on. I felt for when she's telling her husband about this all of these years later, in the dark because she can't tell it to his face, and all she needs is to hear it isn't her fault. Sosuke understands nothing of this. Oyone understands nothing of why her husband needs help beyond it will get better, some day.

The couple have lived their lives in solitude. Running away from the world. Perhaps at first to each other, to get comfortable with someone else. I don't know what that is like to not have awkward silences myself. If Sosuke hadn't been ashamed that his friend and her brother happened to leave school (my money is on him dropping out anyway. It looked it was going that way) after their premarital affair. If they hadn't drooped their heads in fear of conversations of what are you going to do with your life, why aren't you truly happy, what comes next. It is that kind of solitude. Solitude isn't hard to come by for me these days. I couldn't live without it but I also wish I could talk to people about stuff I like. I know how Sosuke feels, all right. I know how Oyone feels eating her meals alone, for sure. If she knows about the world she gleaned it from a newspaper clipping in his pocket to have something to talk about with her husband over meals. They make me sigh. I feel it was because they are not the good thing in anyone's life more than anything else because time stopped and shame set in. If Sosuke made his wife smile it is partly out of pity. Pity is no good. They are not synchronized in their sympathies, anyway. It felt true to me that they were not and I wish it wasn't this way. What is there to be ashamed of if you aren't happy every moment of your life? They were not seeking misery they were only looking around at their lives and feeling lonely in it because it was too quiet. It doesn't have to be that kind of quiet. I know you don't have to be like those monks and mock a guy who is asking you for help. Hey, I understand and it is nothing to be ashamed of. Something like that to get you back on the path of making your own mental fabrics to hang moons on and light up with hey, it is a pretty night out tonight and tomorrow I don't have to work.

I thought it was about the perfect ending I've read in a book that it is a bright sunny day. But it will be winter soon, he goes. That was perfect to the spirit of this book. You can't trick yourself mentally to accept part and parcel something that can be exhausting to live with every day. It is quite possible to feel good sometimes. It drives me a bit nuts sometimes that I can feel pretty good rereading Paterson (the part about the guy diving off the waterfall is so incredibly good) and other times I wish I had that mental capability to be happy like William Carlos Williams. Because it feels so simple and if you were right wouldn't you be like that too? The Gate is so true to that feeling that you can't always do it. Maybe you feel pathetic when the girl at work who has two other jobs nags you for not being super cheerful today and you really, really don't want to explain again that you haven't slept in three days and faking happy just isn't worth the effort today. It isn't your fault she has three jobs, after all, and you don't expect her to smile for you. If they smiled because they just liked you that would be entirely different. That would be the best thing ever. So Sosuke is mildly celebrating that he wasn't among the layoffs at work and how lucky he is that his promised raise is so much lower than was promised because how lucky to get anything at all. It is sunny and he is home again with his wife. It is like when you have a day off on Sunday and your mind is starting to count down the hours until Monday, even if you don't want to count down the hours.

I sometimes felt like Sosuke and Oyone would be better off if they hadn't met but I don't really mean that. It's about not having to trick yourself to not feel what you really feel, right? I feel less pressure to do that if I'm not around other people (just telling people I meet what town I live in seems to be an immediate invitation for the university drop out discussion and so often judgmental expression). But it's not really about that. I don't know how to get into The Gate either for self acceptance and I hope I figure it out some day. It felt

really good to read this book that understood what that is like.

Did you know that I owned this book for two years and didn't read it? (It's my sixth Soseki. *Kokoro* and *Kusamakura* are two of my favorite books ever, also.) I was "saving it". I could have had this wonderful read that consoled me. Oh well, I was really happy to have it when I did.

Rise says

Zen-like beauty. At the start, exquisite sadness and pain. Characters struggle for peace of mind, trying to escape the jaded feelings they have been harboring for so long. The last part of the book is more ruminative, more contemplative, and (I'd like to believe) redemptive. In the end a sense of life affirmation, of renewal, regeneration. If you're into Buddhism, meditation, asceticism, finding the path, and other New Age blahs.

Mon is, for me, better than *Kokoro*. I have a feeling that every book that S?seki wrote is a sad or bittersweet book. Maybe except for *Botchan*, but I still have to read that one. S?seki is my favorite Japanese novelist.

Tony says

For 176 pages this book moved along at its minimalist pace, the protagonist and his wife making do in a quotidian existence. Add a talking cat, some explicit sex and a few Western pop culture references, you get Murakami; add a laugh-track, you get Seinfeld.

Turn the page, and the protagonist is off on a Zen vacation. He is given a koan to think on: *What was his original face before his parents were born?*

Taking this *gate* literally assures a meditative failure. Not that I'm any kind of Zen expert. But I think we are meant to think about the 176 pages of our lives, how there was always this river, but waters change course.

Eddie Watkins says

No one makes dullness stimulating like the Japanese. As if the ultimate in refinement is to find transcendent significance in the utterly blank. Soseki is the melancholy master of this strain of Japanese aesthetic (with Murakami proving more and more to be (perhaps?) unintentionally right on his heels (with progressively less emphasis on "stimulating", i.e. simply dull)). But back to Soseki. This book in particular is so loose and understated as to be either metaphysically profound or thoroughly mundane, with apparent subtleties being possible accidents, and with meaning comprised of accumulated meaninglessness, or else the unspoken transcendent residing within every simple thing. But Soseki is a wily duck, so I give him free reign of the literary pond and prominently display this book on the **Shelf of Perplexity**. A man beaten down by life, a

devoted wife, childlessness, and endless rounds of mundanity punctuated by toothache and angst propel this book on its rambling open-ended path to eventually deposit our man in a Zen temple where he is further perplexed, further beaten down by his apperception of how certain others seem to manage to navigate life's confounding dullness and find ways into larger more significant landscapes. The author of the intro makes great claims for this book, bringing in Nietzsche's theory of the Eternal Return, which I don't discount out of hand, though I do wonder which (if any) character enters "the gate" to become a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, or if the book is rather a treatise, via its narrative of dullness, on the chimerical nature of such a notion. I don't know; chalk it up to perplexity.

Eddie Watkins says

I know of no other novel that ends with its main character so meaningfully trimming his fingernails.

Gazing through the glass shoji at the sparkling sunlight, Oyone's face brightened. "What a sight for sore eyes. Spring at last!"

Sosuke had stepped out on the veranda and was trimming his fingernails, which had grown quite long.

"True, but then it will be winter again before you know it," he said, head lowered, as he snipped away with the scissors.

Going into my second reading of this novel I knew my appreciation would hinge on whether I could understand what Soseki meant by "the gate" in the title. I knew it referenced the time Sosuke, the main character, spent at a Zen retreat toward the end of the book; but on my first read I couldn't figure it out (possibly due to a muddled translation). Given my 5 star rating it should be obvious I have come to an understanding of "the gate".

It refers to a way to enter into a different life, a different way of apprehending life, and is represented in the novel by the actual gate Sosuke enters when he goes to the Zen retreat. But the gate is also represented figuratively, or abstractly, by whatever Sosuke would have had to pass through in order to fully enter a "life of Zen". He does not pass through this gate, rather getting stranded on its threshold (much as Marius is left stranded at the entry of the church in *Marius the Epicurean*). For Soseki there is no escaping the utter mundanity of existence. But for Soseki (and Zen for that matter) the mundane is the gate into a different life - *Chopping wood and carrying water* as the old Zen saying goes. Sosuke does not enter the abstract gate, and at the end of the novel he is essentially right where he was at the beginning of the novel, but is there a subtle difference? I am not sure if he has reached the third of the famous three stages of Zen - 1) mountains are mountains, 2) things are confused and mountains are no longer mountains, 3) mountains are mountains again. When asked what the difference between 1) and 3) was a Zen master once said that in 3) one's feet are slightly off the ground. I cannot say whether Sosuke's feet are slightly off the ground at the end of the novel. His general mood certainly hasn't brightened all that much, but he did manage with the help of his Zen interlude to pass safely through a serious psychic crisis (a welling up of buried guilt) and end up back where he was, so perhaps there is a new appreciation of, or at least a new means of accepting, the ups and downs of his own mundane and rather tedious life.

So "the gate", in worldly terms, is actually no gate, but rather the ineluctable state of things as they are - a gate that leads only to itself. But "the gate" is also something within the self that can open and leads to a new way of apprehending the ineluctable state of things as they are, which in only infinitesimal ways differs from

the old way of apprehending the ineluctable state of things as they are.

In the novel the only appreciable difference I noticed was that Oyone, Susuke's wife, laughed at Sosuke's dour deadpan manner in the last few pages. I periodically laughed at Sosuke's statements throughout the book, but there was no indication that I was right to laugh until the end when Oyone joined in with me. It is entirely possible that this laugh indicated that the life shared by Oyone and Susuke (and the entire novel is very much about *them* as a unit) now had its feet "slightly off the ground".

But that is only a record of the characters' development. I will state for the record that for the entirety of the book my feet were slightly off the ground, which attests to Soseki's power to evoke, through simple words and observations of life's natural detailed flow, how all things and actions can "glow" and be intensely significant in themselves, beyond all the fluctuations of our life situations and moods, and how he can put the reader in the position of detached observer that allows this glow to manifest.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

My taste for Japanese literature grows and grows. While the first two of Soseki's novels (Botchan and I am a Cat) that I found left me unimpressed, this may be because I read them in a Spanish translation...and I know the poor quality of many Spanish translations of English novels, so I gave this one a try when I found it in English. I am so glad I did.

The main character and his wife first seem like an old married couple of many decades' standing. Further into the text, however, we learn that they've only been married for about seven or eight years. Sosuke seems incredibly passive, letting life just happen to him...he can't seem to make a decision and act on it, even something as simple as posting a letter or asking a question. Oyone, his wife, seems almost an exaggeration of the stereotypical Japanese wife of the period (early 20th century), always ready with a smile and a cup of tea, seldom expressing an opinion.

However, the near-hypnotic quality of the narration draws you in to make discoveries. Sosuke is not merely a dull paper-pusher with no thoughts of his own beyond mildly cultivating the favour of his wealthy landlord and neighbour. How did this scion of a well-to-do family end up in his tiny house, in his tiny job, with his tiny present and even more miniscule future? Through Oyone's sudden illness and Sosuke's subsequent cogitations, we discover that this passivity is the natural result of decisive, shocking actions in their past, leading them to be only too glad for a quiet, not to say stultified, life.

The narrative itself has a calming effect which makes the issues it reveals all the more powerful. Many (such as the central drama) are related indirectly, which added to their power when I realised what I'd just read, and what it meant. BTW, I'd skip Flanagan's Introduction if I were you, as it merrily spoils a lot. Don't publishers realise we want to read for ourselves?

We all have "gates" in our lives, and which ones we open and walk through determine which others will be open to us. This novel gave me furiously to think, for which I am profoundly grateful.

Hadrian says

Natsume S?seki's novel The Gate (? in Japanese) is an exercise in emotional subtlety, extensive background detail, and a slow wandering narrative which leads to an ambiguous yet provocative conclusion. This is S?seki.

Dejan says

Out of all Soseki's works I've read so far, Sosuke and Oyone seem like his happiest main characters. As an elderly couple, they lead a calm yet uneventful life, stoically enduring all their hardship. Besides fulfilling their basic existential needs, they require nothing else but each other in order to continue living.

“Every day the couple rose at an hour when the dew still glistened and witnessed a beautiful sun shining above the eaves. After nightfall they would sit together, a lamp with a base of dark red bamboo between them, casting elongated shadows in its light. When their conversation stalled, the only sound to break the silence was the tick-tock of the pendulum clock.”

Despite some minor nuisances, like Sosuke's toothache, nothing particularly exciting happens through the course of this story. However, this is exactly what makes *The Gate* such an appealing read. Because, even though the couple leads a life of monotony, the potential to break free from it lies within them. The state they are in is a result of their past actions (“you reap what you sow”). Thus, the ending is no surprise; the couple observes another changing of the seasons on their veranda, gazing through the glass shoji at the sparkling sunlight.

Agnieszka says

The Gate reminds me in a way other Japanese novels I had read before. I'm not an expert of literature from that region but I value highly that kind of emotion and feelings it elicits in the reader. Almost two-thirds of the narrative here is only an evocation of small every day deeds of two main protagonists, Sosuke and Oyone. Seemingly nothing happens. Sosuke wakes up, goes to his office, walks through six days of a week in kind of dreamy daze thinking of Sunday and how he would spend it. Slowly, very slowly emerges a picture of rather unfulfilled man, undecided and frozen if it comes to undertake any vital decision. But on the other hand Sosuke is a man very devoted to his wife and completely resigned with fate life had offered to them. Only last part of the novel reveals secrets from the past of married couple and sheds light why they live like social outcasts.

Sosuke is such an irritating figure at times. His apathy, his inertia make you yell at him: get a grip, man. You need sometimes to make a choice, there is no sense at all let life to throw you like a leaf in the wind. O my, how I understand Sosuke. How often I was in his situation, how often I was repeating to myself: I'll deal with this or that tomorrow. How often I put the moment to make a decision aside. How many times I felt almost paralyzed with fear to change something in my life. How I dreaded to pass that gate. In Sosuke case it is a gate to Buddhist retreat but it has quite metaphorical meaning as well. There are people designed to stay before the gate and never enter it. Due many reasons. Fear, opportunism, cowardice, shame. There are so many factors that restrict us. Some shackles exist only in our minds, others may be even real.

He was someone destined neither to pass through the gate nor to be satisfied with never having passed

through it. He was one of those unfortunate souls fated to stand in the gate's shadow, frozen in his tracks, until the day was done.

Ben Winch says

Soseki. I hardly know where to start. I've been saving this review for weeks now, for a quiet moment, for inspiration to strike, to gather the strength necessary to try and grasp just what's so *good* about this book, about *all* his books (or the later ones at least – after and including *Kusumakura*), and I feel no closer to a summation. Is *this* in fact the mark of the truly great author – s/he who haunts you but without explanation? There's so *many* things I love about Soseki, above all the sense that, for all his tightly-transcribed settings and claustrophobic relationships between characters, for all that the characters cannot move without setting off a chain reaction in other characters, pretty much *anything* can happen – not the 'anything' of a Murakami, who would bring on a magical sheep or wind-up bird or clairvoyant prostitute, but for my money a far more profound anything, in which cosmic relationships between players and the spaces they inhabit reconfigure endlessly, without censure, as their author unfolds infinite variants and maps out a trajectory unknown even to himself until it is completed, yet all behind a gauze of otherworldliness that renders terms like 'real' or 'surreal' or 'dreamlike' irrelevant, so subtle is its distorting influence. Kafkaesque, or so I say, but lighter, more allusive, and with less of a sense that a lofty 'message' is being communicated. A magic so near invisible that some readers will miss it altogether. Re *The Gate* itself, it's great, maybe his best (according to this new NYRB Classics edition Soseki thought so), and the new translation is (a few jarring modern slang terms aside) very likely better than the old one (which I loved, but which, for all its scintillating atmosphere and suggestiveness, remained in my mind as dark and slightly poe-faced, where this one is funny and sparkling). But, you ask me, there's several contenders for that prize – *Kusamakura*, *Light and Darkness*, *To The Spring Equinox and Beyond*, *Kokoru* – and once you get a taste for his style you'll want to read all of them. To me, it's very easy to see why Soseki is considered, in Japan, the pre-eminent Japanese author. To me, he's one of the pre-eminent authors period. For a detailed review of *The Gate* with an illuminating Zen slant check Eddie Watkins's piece, which I can't better here. Meanwhile, here's the neglected early modernist you've been searching for, the well-mannered eastern answer to Kafka and Knut Hamsun's *Mysteries*, and a conjurer of cathedrals from the dusty loungerooms of the everyman the like of which I doubt have been equalled. Despite yourself, though his books may pass like daydreams, you'll be wiser when they're over, but just how or why I'm still trying to fathom. A master.

Yuki says

Nostalgia, mostly. A more thorough review will have to wait until I get my hands on a Japanese copy.
