Post-Contemporary Interventions

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Karatani Kōjin

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translation edited by Brett de Bary

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the appearance in English of the book. Mr. Karatani therefore confined his revisions to the explanatory "afternotes" that we have appended to each of the chapters. These notes help to provide historical context for the chapters and also suggest directions in which Mr. Karatani hopes to develop related arguments in the future. At the urging of Fredric Jameson and Reynolds Smith (our editor at Duke University Press), I have also added a glossary to the text. There, at the risk of considerable oversimplification, I attempt to identify proper names and other important terms.

I am grateful to Ayako Kano for her assistance in the time-consuming process of annotation, and to Reynolds Smith for astutely suggesting that I provide explanations for a number of other terms in the text that might be confusing for nonspecialist readers. In the course of bringing this project to completion, the support of family and friends was also crucial. I would like to thank Asai Kiyoshi, Karen Brazell, William Theodore and Fanny de Bary, Fredric Jameson, Masao Miyoshi, Victor Nee, Naoki Sakai, Etsuko Terasaki, and Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara for their encouragement. James Fujii and William Haver provided penetrating insights into Karatani's text in the guise of anonymous reader's reports. Coraleen Rooney saw the word processing of the manuscript through to the end, despite the interruption of major surgery. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Karatani Kōjin—first, for his patience with a project that extended longer than both of us had foreseen and, second, for the uncommon turn of mind that enabled him to peruse the final translation, less with a proprietary sense of accuracy than with a philosopher's willingness to be led to consider new interpretations of the "original."

Brett de Bary
Ithaca, New York, 1992

1 The Discovery of Landscape

1

Natsume Sōseki published the notes from his lectures on English literature at Tokyo University under the title *A Theory of Literature* (*Bungakuron*) in 1906, just three years after returning from London. By that time he had already attracted attention as a novelist and had immersed himself in the writing of fiction. Since he initially conceived of *A Theory of Literature* in terms of a ten-year plan, its publication at this point in time signaled his abandonment of that plan. *A Theory of Literature* as we know it today, then, is just one small part of Sōseki's original, ambitious conception. Sōseki expressed mixed feelings in the preface he attached to the work: a sense of estrangement, as one who had become absorbed in creative writing, toward these "vague, impractical speculations," as well as a feeling that he really could not give up his vision. Certainly both these sentiments were genuine; they were, in fact, the very basis for Sōseki's creative activity.

To state the problem in different terms, we might say that Sōseki's preface reveals an awareness that readers of his time would be unprepared for the appearance of his *Theory of Literature* and that they would find it somewhat odd. This surely proved to be the case, not only in Sōseki's time, but in our own. Even if we grant that Sōseki as an individual was compelled by some necessity to produce such a work, there was nothing inevitable about its appearance in Japanese (or even Western) literary history. The *Theory of Literature* was a flower that bloomed out of season and therefore left no seed—Sōseki himself must have been keenly aware of this. Looked at in either the Japanese or the Western context, Sōseki's vision was an abrupt and solitary one which he himself must have found disorienting. In his preface he explains, just as Sensei, in the novel *Kokoro* (The heart, 1914), did in his "Last Testament," why this unusual book had to be written. For this reason his preface is written in an extremely personal style which contrasts strikingly with the formal style of the work itself. Sōseki felt compelled to explain his own passion and what had given rise to it.

> I was determined, in this work, to solve the problem of defining the nature of literature. I resolved to devote a year or more to the first stage of my research on this problem.
>
> I shut myself up in my room in my boarding house and packed all the works of literature I owned away in my wicker trunk. For I believed that reading literature in order to understand the nature of literature was like washing blood with blood. I vowed to probe the psychological origins of literature: what led to its appearance, development, and decline. And I vowed to explore the social factors that brought literature into this world and caused it to flourish or wither.[1]

"What is literature?" was the question Sōseki wanted to address, yet this was the very thing that made his passion so private, so difficult to share with others. The question itself was too new. For British readers of the time, literature was literature. Insofar as "literature" was something that encompassed them, the kind of doubt Sōseki harbored could not arise. Of course, as Michel Foucault has observed, the concept of "literature" itself was a relative newcomer to European civilization in the nineteenth century. Sōseki, although his very life was encompassed by "literature," could not escape from his doubts about it. They were doubts that seemed all the more iconoclastic in Japan of 1908, where "literature" had just firmly established itself. Sōseki's view was seen, not as an anachronism, but as an eccentricity. Certainly this response must have dampened his ardor for theory. We might at first glance take *A Theory of Literature* to be literary theory. It appears, that is, to be something written about literature from the inside. But a number of essays in the book (the one on "Evaluating Literature," for example) suggest that Sōseki originally conceived of something much more fundamental.

The first notion that Sōseki subjected to doubt was that of the universal character of English literature. Of course, by this I do not mean to imply that Sōseki's aim was simply to relativize English literature by juxtaposing it to *kanbungaku*, that diverse corpus of texts written in Chinese ideographs (or *kanbun*) in which he had immersed himself while growing up. His real concern was to point out that that universality was not a priori, but historical. It was, moreover, a universality premised upon the concealment of its own origins. "When I appeal to my own experience, I learn that the realm of poetry created by Shakespeare does not possess that universality that European critics ascribe to it. For us as Japanese it

requires years of training to develop a proper appreciation of Shakespeare, and even then this is only a dim appreciation based on a deliberate adaptation of our sensibilities."[2]

Let me expand on Sōseki's statement. To the poets and playwrights trained in Latin, the "universal tongue" of their time, Shakespeare's work was beneath consideration. It continued to be ignored until the nineteenth century, when the German romantic movement discovered Shakespeare along with "literature." It was at this juncture that the image of Shakespeare—individual of genius, self-conscious artist, poet at once realist and romantic—was born. But Shakespeare's drama was quite different from realism; it was closer, one might say, to the work of Chikamatsu Monzaemon.* This was pointed out by Sōseki when he wrote about the translations of Shakespeare by Tsubouchi Shōyō. Shakespeare was not a realist, and he was not attempting to represent what was "human." When the notion of universality was established in nineteenth-century Europe, its own historicity had to be concealed.†

Sōseki had no choice but to reject such notions as the history of literature (*bungakushi*) because he was aware of the historicity of the very term "literature." History, like literature, was established and came to prominence in the nineteenth century; to view the past in a historical framework meant to take the existence of universals as self-evident.

Sōseki reacted against the "history of literature." But he was not therefore saying that Japanese could be permitted a unique way

*Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724) was the author of plays for the *jōruri* (puppet) and kabuki theatres. While his historical plays (*jidaimono*) dealt with military campaigns such as the Battles of Coxinga (*Kokusenya Kassen*, 1715), his most affecting works explored the tragic dimensions of the subject matter of popular *sewamono* (gossip) dramas: domestic conflict, events in the pleasure quarters, love suicides. Meiji critics often described Chikamatsu as a Japanese parallel to Shakespeare.

†Throughout this chapter, Karatani differentiates between the Japanese terms "*rekishisei*," which I have translated as "historicity," and "*rekishishugi*," which I have simply translated as "history." Karatani's concept of "*rekishishugi*" seems close to the notion of "history" (or "traditional history") described in Michel Foucault's essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History." According to Foucault, "history," as it emerged in nineteenth-century Europe, insisted upon linearity, "dissolving an event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or a natural process." See p. 154 and *passim* in the English translation of this essay in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, edited by D. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

of reading literature. It was his questioning of the concepts of "literature" and "history" that were dominant in his own time that led him to develop his concept of "autonomy" (*jiko hon'i*).

> Whether it be social mores, customs, or emotions, we must not recognize the existence only of those social mores, customs, and emotions that have manifested themselves in the West. Nor should the attainments reached, after many transitions, by Western civilization at this point in time set the standard, however much it may set a standard for them. This is particularly true in the case of literature. It is commonly said that Japanese literature is immature. Unfortunately, I, too, hold this view. But to admit that one's literature is immature is quite a different thing from taking the West as a standard. If the immature Japanese literature of today develops, we cannot categorically declare it will become like the literature of contemporary Russia. Nor will it follow stages identical to those whereby modern French literature produced Hugo, then Balzac, then Zola. Since no one can logically maintain that there is only a single path a developing literature can follow, or a single point it should attain, it is rash to assert that the trends of Western literature today will be those of Japanese literature tomorrow. We should not leap to the conclusion that developments in Western literature are absolute. Perhaps, where the physical sciences are concerned, we may say that a certain idea is "new" or "correct." But since the path of progress twists and turns, branching off at many different points, it is impossible to say that what is "new" in the West is necessarily correct for Japan. If we set aside abstractions and examine the actual situation of literature in many different countries today, we can easily see that there is no orthodox path of development. . . .
>
> For that matter, we might say that it was a very precarious tight-rope act which brought Western painting to where it is today. A moment's loss of balance would have resulted in a very different history. I have perhaps not developed this point sufficiently, but it can be deduced from my earlier remarks that there are infinite possibilities in the history of painting: Western painting has followed one line, and Japanese genre painting another. I have used painting as an example, but there are many others. And it is the same with literature. Therefore, to take Western literature as we have been taught it as the sole truth and constantly appeal to that in determining our own affairs is terribly limiting. I don't deny that there is a factual basis for history. But what we have been taught is "history" can be assembled in many different ways within our minds and, given the right conditions, these other visions are always capable of being realized. . . .

> In the preceding sections I have discussed three problems which arise when history is seen as a continuous development. One is a tendency to abandon the old and indiscriminately pursue the new. Another is the tendency to affix the label of an "ism" to a work which has appeared spontaneously and as a result of treating the work as representative of this "ism," to mistake it for a whole which cannot be broken up, despite the inappropriateness of such an approach. Finally, we have the confusion which arises when, in response to changing times, the meaning of the "ism" itself changes.
> The methodology I wish to propose now, while not unrelated to history, nevertheless does not hinge on a notion of historical development. Rather than classifying literary works on the basis of an "ism" (which, in turn, is based on the notion that a specific period or individual can be identified in terms of distinguishing characteristics) we should look only at characteristics of the work itself, quite apart from its author or the age in which it was written. We should approach all works—ancient or modern, Eastern or Western—in this way. They should be analyzed on the basis of formal and thematic criteria alone.[3]

As the foregoing quote makes clear, Sōseki took exception to the view that history was continuous and inevitable, as well as to the hidden ethnocentrism of the "history" that emerged in nineteenth century Europe. Moreover, he rejected the idea that a literary work could be reduced to a whole called "the spirit of the age" or "the author," and emphasized "only those characteristics manifested in the work itself." Sōseki's approach here may be seen as a kind of formalist analysis, but of course it preceded the appearance of the formalist movement and formalist theory. Sōseki's F+f formula,* which he elaborates in *A Theory of Literature*, is also implicit in the approach he advocates in the cited passage.[4]

"Romanticism" and "naturalism," for example, are products of history, and they appeared in historical sequence, but Sōseki insists that they be seen, rather, as "elements" in a work:

> I've already defined the two types of literature and the ways in which both are important. It is a superficial view to maintain that one school should be expelled from the literary world and the other should domi-

*Sōseki's "F+f formula" is presented in the opening passage of his *Theory of Literature* and represents an attempt to probe the psychological basis of literary expression. Following British psychologist Lloyd Morgan, Sōseki describes consciousness as a constantly fluctuating "wave" characterized by the coexistence of "focal" (F, or intensely vivid) and "marginal" (f) emotions or ideas. See the notes to this chapter for further discussion.

> nate it. Because the two schools have different names, some people assume that they are in fierce opposition, that the Romantic School and the Naturalist School glare at each other from within sturdy fortifications and across deep moats. But in reality it is only the names which are contending with each other, content passes back and forth freely between the two schools and there is a great deal of commingling. We can expect this to give rise to some works which, depending on the reader's viewpoint or interpretation, could be considered Naturalist as well as Romantic. Even if one tried to draw a firm line between the two schools, countless mutations would emerge out of the grey zone between the perfect objectivity attributed to the Naturalists and the perfect subjectivity of the Romantics. Each of these strains would combine with other strains to produce new breeds, which would in turn produce a second order of changes, until ultimately it would be impossible to distinguish the Romantic from the Naturalist. We can escape from the erroneous tendencies in contemporary criticism by carefully dissecting each work, identifying which passages are Romantic, and in what sense, and which are Naturalist, and in what sense. And no matter which way we identify a passage, we should not be content with simply applying one label or the other, but we should point out the admixture of "foreign elements" each contains.[5]

Sōseki is obviously expressing a formalist perspective here. His theory identified metaphor and simile as basic patterns in linguistic expression; the former characterizing the romantic style and the latter the naturalist. He expressed this insight well in advance of Roman Jakobsen, who proposed that the "tendency" of a literary work be identified on the basis of whether metaphorical or metonymical elements predominated. The experience of living in Europe as an outsider attempting to come to terms with "literature" in the West, however, was shared by both men. Since it was necessary for a critique of ethnocentrism from within Europe to arise before the contributions even of Russian formalism were properly recognized, we can imagine just how isolated the efforts of Sōseki, as a Japanese critic, were. But it was not simply because of his sense of isolation that Sōseki finally abandoned his *Theory of Literature*.

Sōseki could not accept what Michel Foucault defines as "the principle of identity" in European thought. For Sōseki, structures were entities which were interchangeable and capable of redefinition. Once a certain structure has been selected and identified as universal, history, of necessity, comes to be seen as linear. But it was not Sōseki's intention to set up an opposition between Japanese literature and Western literature and thereby to assert their differences and relativity, for he was skeptical of identity in the case of Japanese literature, as well. It was simply that once he had discovered that structures could be assembled and reassembled, Sōseki was led immediately to question why history should be defined in one way and not another, and even (with Pascal) why "I" should be "here rather than there." Formalism and structuralism, of course, do not address themselves to these problems.

Perhaps it is relevant to note here that Sōseki was sent out for adoption by his parents as an infant and grew to a certain age believing that his adoptive parents were his real parents. Having seen himself as an interchangeable existence, he must have conceived of the bond between parent and child as not at all a natural but an interchangeable one. The child of natural parents may not immediately perceive an element of cruel gameplaying involved in this. For even if Sōseki had an intellectual understanding of his childhood situation, he would have been compelled to doubt why he was "here" rather than "there." It was very likely this doubt which sustained his creative life. In this sense we might say that it was not because he had given up on theory that Sōseki became involved with creative writing—but rather that his theory that gave birth to his fiction. I do not, of course, mean to imply that Sōseki was at heart a theoretist or that his real aim was to write a theory of literature. What I am saying is that there was no other mode of existence possible for him except as theoretician—that is, as a person who maintained a certain distance between himself and "literature."

2

The strongly personal tone of Sōseki's preface to the *Theory of Literature* suggests that the role of theoretician was something he embraced reluctantly and as if perforce. He explains how he came to entertain the question "What is the nature of literature?"

> As a child I enjoyed studying the Chinese classics. Although the time I spent in this kind of study was not long, it was from the Chinese classics that I learned, however vaguely and obscurely, what literature was. In my heart, I hoped that it would be the same way when I read English literature, and that I would not necessarily begrudge giving my whole life, if that were necessary, to its study. I had years ahead of me. I cannot say that I lacked the time to study English literature.

> But what I resent is that despite my study I never mastered it. When I graduated I was plagued by the fear that somehow I had been cheated by English literature.[6]

There was a basis for Sōseki's fear that he had been "cheated" by English literature. Only those who have come to accept "literature" as natural cannot detect this "cheating." Nor should we invoke vague generalizations about the identity crisis of one who confronts an alien culture. To do this would be to assume there was something self-evident about "literature" and to lose sight of its ideological nature. Sōseki had some inkling of the ideological nature of literature because of his familiarity with *kanbungaku*. Of course, *kanbungaku* as Sōseki knew it was not simply the "literature of China," nor was he attempting to compare it with Western literature. Sōseki was in no position to pursue idle comparisons between *kanbungaku* and Western literature. In point of fact, Sōseki himself could not even grasp *kanbungaku* as a tangible existence, for by his own time it had already become something uncertain and irretrievable, something which could only be imagined on the other shore, as it were, of "literature."

Sōseki uses the term *kanbungaku* in a manner very similar to the way in which the word *sansuiga* (literally, "mountain-water pictures" or "landscape paintings") was used in Meiji Japan to denote paintings of natural scenes done in traditional styles. It was only after the Japanese had been introduced to Western landscape painting that the word *sansuiga* became widely used. As Usami Keiji wrote in an essay on a recent exhibit of such paintings:

> The word *sansuiga* was not actually used in the period when the works exhibited here were painted. At that time they were referred to as *shiki-e* or *tsukinami* (seasonal paintings). Ernest Fenollosa, who played a leading role in Japan's modernization during the Meiji period, coined the term *sansuiga* and established it as a descriptive category for paintings. The very concept of traditional "landscape paintings" arose out of the disjuncture between Japanese culture and modern Western consciousness.[7]

The same may be said of *kanbungaku*. Although Sōseki uses the term to differentiate certain practices from those of modern literature, it is itself rooted in the consciousness that produced the category "literature" and has no existence apart from it. Literature makes the objectification of *kanbungaku* possible. In this sense to compare *kanbungaku* and English literature is to ignore the historicity of literature itself—of "literature" as a kind of "landscape." It is to fail to take into account the fact that, through the emergence of "literature" and "landscape," the very structure of our perceptions has been transformed.

I would like to propose that the notion of "landscape" developed in Japan sometime during the third decade of the Meiji period. Of course, there were landscapes long before they were "discovered." But "landscapes" as such did not exist prior to the 1890s, and it is only when we think about it in this way that the layers of meaning entailed in the notion of a "discovery of landscape" become apparent.

It was precisely this period of transition that Sōseki lived through. Yet to invoke the concept of a "transitional period" is merely to fall back on a construct of linear history. It was only after Sōseki had already decided to study English literature that he became aware that the structure of his perceptions had been fundamentally altered. Nor was there a kind of static triangular relationship established in Sōseki's mind between himself, English literature, and *kanbungaku*. As with his character Daisuke in the novel *Sore Kara*, it would dawn on Sōseki unpredictably at certain moments that he had already made a decision. Similarly, we cannot describe the Japanese discovery of "landscape" as a process that unfolded in a linear pattern from past to present. "Time" has been refracted and turned upside down.

A person who sees landscape as natural will not perceive this reversal. But it is here that we can find the origin of Sōseki's doubt. Sōseki's fear that he had been cheated by English literature expresses the anxiety of a man who suddenly finds himself in the midst of a "landscape."

It is interesting that Sōseki referred to his native literature as *kanbungaku* rather than *Nihon no bungaku* (Japanese literature). The protests of eighteenth century nativist* scholars notwithstanding,

*The term nativism, or Kokugaku (often translated as National Learning), refers to the broad-ranging eighteenth century discourse which sought to define a distinct Japanese identity while contesting the influence of Chinese culture on Japan. Leading nativist thinkers included Motoori Norinaga, frequently referred to by Karatani, Kamo no Mabuchi, Itō Jinsai, and others. Different aspects of nativism are taken up in *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, by Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) and *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth Century Japanese Discourse* by Naoki Sakai (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

kanbungaku has surely been the orthodox literature of Japan. As Yoshimoto Takaaki has pointed out, even the existence of the first imperial poetry anthology, the *Manyōshū*, in the mid-eighth century can be traced to the impact on Japan of Chinese characters and literature in Chinese. We all recognize that it was in Chinese literature that we were introduced to "flowers, birds, wind, and moon" (*kachō fūgetsu*), yet even those things which nativist scholars posited as purely indigenous were intimately related to the structure of perception we refer to as *kanbungaku*. It was only after this structure of perception crystallized that Japanese in the classical period began to compose *jokei* (叙景 compositions about places)—their equivalent of discovering "landscape." Our search for the origins of writing will never take us beyond writing, beyond écriture.

My discussion is complicated by the fact that the discovery of "landscape" in the third decade of the Meiji period is similar to the premodern discovery of Chinese literature, so that we now confront successive layers of inversions. Just as nativist scholars, when they posited the existence of a literature that existed before Chinese literature, could only do so from *within* the epistemological constellation we now call *kanbungaku*, Meiji Japanese who searched for a landscape that predated "landscape" faced the contradiction of being able to envision it only in relation to "landscape." The very question "What is a Japanese landscape painting?" is by definition predicated on an inversion.

The following remarks by Usami Keiji express a profound awareness of this difficulty:

> We must investigate the nature of "time" and place in *sansuiga* in order to understand its spatial dimension. For the depiction of place in this Japanese landscape painting cannot be reduced to the notion of "position" as defined by European principles of perspective. Position, as established by these principles, is the totality of what can be apprehended by a single person with a fixed point of vision. The relationships between all the things that can be apprehended from this point of view at one instant in time are determined objectively on a grid of coordinates. These are the laws of perspective which have conditioned the modern visual sensibility.
>
> By contrast to this, *place* in the landscape paintings we now call *sansuiga* is not concerned with the relationship between the individual and "things," but presents a transcendental metaphysical "model." This mode of existence of place, and its transcendental nature, is something *sansuiga* has in common with medieval European painting. In the former, the transcendental place is an ideal realm to which the enlightened sages awakened; in the latter, it is the realm of Scripture and the divine.[8]

In *sansuiga* the painter is not looking at an object but envisioning the transcendental. Similarly, poets like Bashō and Sanetomo were not looking at "landscapes." As Yanagita Kunio has said, there is not a single line of description in Bashō's *Oku no hosomichi* (Narrow road to the deep north, 1694).* Even what looks like description is not. If we can follow the subtle yet crucial distinction Yanagita has drawn here, we will be able to see both the process of the Japanese discovery of "landscape" and the literary "history" that paralleled that transformation of perception.

In literature, for example, it was only when Japanese naturalism (and the rejection of Bakin) had become a mainstream trend that Saikaku was discovered to be a "realist." But it is doubtful that Saikaku's writing conformed to our contemporary definition of realism. Saikaku did not "see things as they are" any more than did Shakespeare, whose dramas were based on classical models and written within the framework of the morality play.† Similarly, the Meiji poet Shiki praised Buson's haiku for being almost like paintings. But Buson's haiku were in no way related to the sensibility of Shiki and his "sketches"; they were closer in spirit to his own *sansuiga*. This is not to deny that Buson was different from Bashō. But what differentiated them was not what we perceive it to be today. Shiki himself acknowledged this. He described, for example, the "painterly" quality of the poetry produced by Buson's bold incorporation of Chinese compounds into his poetry. The following poem, Shiki held, is enlivened by an intense dynamism because the characters (大河) are not given their Japanese reading (*ōkawa*) but the

*This text is the travel diary recording the poet Matsuo Bashō's journey to the remote northern provinces of the island of Honshu in 1689. The text includes, along with its narrative sections, many famous haiku about sites associated with Japanese literature and history and, allusively, with Chinese poetic and historical texts.

†Karatani alludes to two representative writers of early and late Edo literature. Ihara Saikaku (1642–93) developed a genre of prose fiction known as *ukiyo zōshi* (books of the floating world), dealing with the lives of merchants and samurai and their doings in the pleasure quarters. Takizawa Bakin (1767–1848) was perhaps the most widely read author of late Edo prose fiction. The long historical romance *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden* (1814–42, *Satomi and the Eight Dogs*) was his most popular work.

Sinicized reading "taiga." But what this example really reveals is that Buson was fascinated, not so much by landscape, as by the written word.*

Early summer rains!
Facing the swollen river
Two houses

Samidare ya
Taiga o mae ni
Ie niken

さみだれや
大河を前に
家二軒

The concept of Japanese literature (*kokubungaku*) took firm root during the third decade of the Meiji period. Needless to say, this was both made possible by and interpreted in terms of the newly institutionalized literature. It is not my aim in this essay to discuss the concept of "the history of Japanese literature." But I do want to point out that this very concept of a history of Japanese literature, which seems so self-evident to us today, took shape in the midst of our discovery of landscape. Perhaps it was only Sōseki who regarded this development with suspicion. Yet it is precisely because our discovery of landscape was the type of phenomenon I have described that I cannot refer to it in terms of the chronological sequence of a so-called "history of Japanese literature." "Meiji literary history" certainly appears to progress according to a temporal sequence. But it is only by distorting this temporal sequence that we can perceive the inversion we have repressed from our memories: our discovery of landscape.

3

What I am referring to as "landscape" is an epistemological constellation, the origins of which were suppressed as soon as it was produced. It is a constellation which appeared in nascent form in the literary trend of realism in the 1890s. Yet the decisive inversion

*In this passage Karatani refers to the late Edo poet Yosa Buson (1716–84) and to the Meiji poet Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902). Buson was a leading *haikai* poet as well as an accomplished master of *bunjinga* (literati) painting. He developed a form of unconventional, abstract brush-painting known as the *haiga* (haiku-painting). Shiki was a poet and critic who advocated the "reform" of haiku through the technique of "sketching" (*shasei*). See the note on *shasei* in this chapter.

had not yet occurred. The realistic style of this time was basically an extension of Edo literature. It was Kunikida Doppo's works—*The Musashi Plain* (Musashino) and *Unforgettable People* (Wasureenu hitobito), published in 1898—which embodied a fundamental break with the past. *Unforgettable People*, in particular, offers convincing evidence that "landscape" was an inversion of consciousness before it became a representational convention.

The novel is structured around the visits of an unknown scholar named Ōtsu to an inn along the Tama River, where he tells tales of "unforgettable people" to Akiyama, a man he has gotten to know during his stays at the inn. Ōtsu takes out a manuscript he is writing which opens with the line, "The people I have been unable to forget are not always those I *should* not have forgotten," and tells his friend about it. The people he "should not have forgotten" include "friends, acquaintances, and others to whom I am obliged, such as teachers and mentors"; the "unforgettable people" are those whom "I have not been able to forget, although it made no difference if I remembered them or not." By way of example, he describes something he experienced when he took a steamer from Osaka across the Inland Sea.

> Because of my state of health, I must surely have been depressed. I remember, at least, that I daydreamed about the future while I roamed the deck, and thought of the fate of men in this life. I suppose this is the sort of thing all young men do at such times. I heard the pleasant sound of the ship's hull cutting through the water, and watched the soft glow of the spring day melt into the sea's oil-smooth, unrippled surface. As the ship advanced, one small island after another would rise out of the mist on either side of us, then disappear. The islands, each draped in a thick brocade of yellow flowers and green barley leaves, seemed to be floating deep within the surrounding mist. Before long the ship passed not fifteen hundred yards from the beach of a small island off to the right and I stepped to the rail, gazing absentmindedly at the island. There seemed to be no fields or houses, only groves of small, low pine scattered over the hillside. It was low tide. The damp surface of the hushed and deserted beach glistened in the sun, and now and then a long streak—perhaps the playing of little waves at the water's edge—shone like a naked sword, then dissolved. From the faint call of a lark high in the air over the hill, one could tell that the island was inhabited. I remembered my father's poem, "The soaring lark betrays a farm behind the island's face," and I thought there must certainly be houses on the other side. And as I watched

> I caught sight of a lone figure on a sunlit beach. I could tell it was a man, not a woman or a child. He seemed to be picking things up repeatedly and putting them into a basket or pail. He would take two or three steps, squat down, and pick something up. I watched carefully as he wandered along the deserted little beach beneath the hill. As the ship drew further away, the man's form became a black dot, and soon the beach, the hills, and the island all faded into the mist. Almost ten years have passed, and I have thought many times of this man at the edge of the island, the man whose face I never saw. He is one of those I cannot forget.[9]

I have included this long quote as a way of demonstrating that the man on Doppo's island is not so much a "person" as a "landscape." As the narrator says, "At such times, it is these people who flood my mind. No, it is these people standing in the midst of scenes in which I discovered them." The narrator, Ōtsu, offers many other examples of "unforgettable people," but they are all people-as-landscapes, as in the passage above. Although there may seem to be nothing particularly odd about this, Doppo calls our attention to the eccentricity of this narrator, who is haunted by people-as-landscapes, in the final lines of the novel.

At the conclusion of the novel, two years have passed since Ōtsu and Akiyama chatted at the inn:

> Two years had passed.
>
> Circumstances had brought Ōtsu to make his home in Tōhoku. His acquaintance with the man Akiyama, whom he had met at the inn in Mizonokuchi, had long since ended. The time of year was what it had been then in Mizonokuchi. It was a rainy night. Ōtsu sat alone at his desk, lost in thought. On the desk was the manuscript of "Unforgettable People" that he had shown to Akiyama two years before. A new chapter had been added, "The Innkeeper of Kameya." There was no chapter called "Akiyama."[10]

In reading *Unforgettable People*, then, we have a sense, not simply of landscapes, but of a fundamental inversion. I might even go so far as to say that it is in this inversion that we discover Doppo's landscape. For landscape, as I have already suggested, is not simply what is outside. A change in our way of perceiving things was necessary in order for landscape to emerge, and this change required a kind of reversal. Here, again, is the protagonist of *Unforgettable People*:

> I am not a happy man. Always I am tortured by life's great questions and by my own overwhelming ambitions. In the deepening hours of a night such as this, alone, staring into the lamp, I experience unbearable sorrow. At these times my inflexible egoism seems to shatter, and the thought of others touches me deeply. I think of my friends and of days long past. But more than anything else, images of these people I have described to you come streaming into my mind. No, I see not the people themselves. I see the figures in the background of a much larger scene. They are part of their surroundings, part of a moment. I remember these people and from deep within me the thought wells up: How am I different from anyone else? Part of the life we share is from heaven, and part of it is from earth. All of us are returning, hand in hand, along the same eternal track, to that infinite heaven. And when this realization comes to me, I find myself in tears, for there is then in truth no Self, no Others. I am touched by memories of each and every one. Only at these times do I feel such peace, such liberation, such sympathy towards all things. Only then do worldly thoughts of fame and the struggle for fortune disappear so utterly.[11]

This passage clearly reveals the link between landscape and an introverted, solitary situation. While the narrator can feel a solidarity such that "the boundary between myself and others" disappears in the case of people who are of no consequence to him, he is the very picture of indifference when it comes to those in his immediate surroundings. It is only within the "inner man," who appears to be indifferent to his external surroundings, that landscape is discovered. It is perceived by those who do not look "outside."

4

Paul Valéry has described the history of oil painting in Europe as a process of permeation and domination by landscape painting. He writes:

> Thus, the interest of painters in the landscape was gradually transformed. What started as complementary to the subject of the painting took on the form of a new realm of fantasy, a land of marvels . . . and finally, impression triumphed: matter or light dominated.
>
> Within a few years, painting was inundated by images of a world without human beings. Viewers were content with the ocean, the forests, the fields . . . devoid of human figures. Since our eyes were far less familiar with trees and field than with animals, painting came

to offer greater scope for the arbitrary; even gross distortions were acceptable. We would be shocked at the sight of an arm or a leg depicted in the same way that a branch might be in these paintings. Our ability to distinguish between the possible and the impossible is far less astute in the case of vegetable and mineral forms. The landscape afforded great conveniences. Everyone began to paint.[12]

Valéry is clearly critical of landscape painting and saw its prominence as leading to "a diminution of the intellectuality of art" and a loss of the sense of art as "an activity of the total human being." But he also wrote, "What I have written about painting applies, with astonishing accuracy, to literature. Literature was invaded by description during the same period that painting was invaded by landscape; it went in the same direction, and with the same results."

The practice of "sketching" (*shasei*) developed by Masaoka Shiki in the 1890s exemplifies almost perfectly the type of process described by Valéry.* Shiki adopted and advocated the practice of going out into nature with notebooks and making "sketches" which were actually haiku poems. It was at this point that he abandoned the traditional subject matter of haiku. The subjects of Shiki's "sketches" were ones which could not have been incorporated into poetry before that time. This is not to say that we find in his work the kind of twisted malice that we see in *Unforgettable People*. Rather, Shiki's works appear to be monotonously realistic. Yet there is latent within "sketching" the same type of inversion we find in Doppo, and this cannot be overlooked. We might also cite Takahama Kyoshi's poetry as exemplifying this inversion. The influence exerted on Takahama by "sketching" is, in a sense, the secret of his poetry. "Description," as practiced by these writers, was something more than simply portraying the external world. First, the "external world" itself had to be discovered.

*The technique of "sketching" (*shasei*) was developed by Masaoka Shiki, a practitioner and teacher of verse-writing in the *tanka* (a five-line verse containing lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables respectively) and *haiku* (5-7-5) forms. Asserting that these "traditional" forms were in crisis by the late nineteenth century, Shiki advocated their reform in a series of controversial articles published in the newspaper *Nippon* in 1893. (A translation of one of many passages in which Shiki elaborated his notion of "sketching" may be found in the glossary.) By the mid-1890s the closely related term *shajitsushugi* (literally, "copy reality-ism") was widely used to refer to the growing acceptance of conventions of Western-style realism. Despite its close association with realism, we have consistently translated *shasei* as "sketching" and have used the term "sketching literature" to denote the genre of prose writing (*shaseibun*) that was stimulated by Shiki's early experiments with poetry.

I am not here talking about a matter of vision. This inversion, which transforms our mode of perception, does not take place either inside of us or outside of us, but is an inversion of a semiotic configuration.

As Usami Keiji has suggested, medieval European painting and landscape painting share something in common that differentiates them from modern landscape painting. In both, *place* is conceived of in transcendental terms. For a brush painter to depict a pine grove meant to depict the concept (that which is signified by) "pine grove," not an existing pine grove. This transcendental vision of space had to be overturned before painters could see existing pine groves as their subjects. This is when modern perspective appears. Or more accurately, what we call modern perspective had already emerged at some point before this in the form of a perspectival inversion.

Despite the similarities I have pointed out, it was only European medieval painting that contained elements that evolved into landscape painting; brush painting did not. The nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga's criticism of "place" in Japanese brush painting as being dominated by a "Chinese sensibility" is relevant here. Claiming that the Japanese could only "see" things in terms of perceptions conditioned by their reading of Chinese literature, Motoori asserted that a different type of perception, "of things just as they are," could be found in the *Tale of Genji*. We should bear in mind that Motoori already had some awareness of the modern West and that his criticism might be seen as analogous to a type of thinking emerging in the West. But Motoori's speculation by no means led him to a "discovery of landscape." Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Essence of the Novel* linked Western "naturalism" and Motoori's writings on Genji. But "landscape" emerged neither in Tsubouchi's writings nor in Motoori's.*

*Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) was perhaps the leading nativist scholar. Critical of the "artificial" qualities of Chinese writings which were a pervasive influence in Japanese culture, Motoori wrote extensively on early Japanese poetry and narrative. Motoori's major work was a forty-four volume translation and commentary on Japan's oldest chronicle, the *Kojiki*. Motoori translated the *Kojiki*, originally written in thousands of Chinese ideographs, all with many possible pronunciations, into the Japanese phonetic syllabary or *kana*. Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935) was a playwright, novelist, and literary theorist whose treatise, *The Essence of the Novel* (Shōsetsu shinzui) elaborated a sustained critique of late Edo prose and advocated the adoption of conventions of Western realism. Tsubouchi claimed that Motoori Norinaga had affirmed certain principles of modern psychological realism in the latter's celebration

Thus, Western landscape painting, as an inversion of medieval painting, had its source in that painting and arose out of something distinctive to European culture. I will say more about this later, but let me here point to one blind spot in the passages by Paul Valéry quoted above. Valéry overlooks the fact that he himself is part of the history of Western painting. He depicts Leonardo da Vinci, for example, in idealized terms as a "total human being," yet from the perspective of a Shiki Da Vinci's works would surely appear to be landscape paintings. In fact, in order to understand why "invasion by landscape painting" inevitably took place on a worldwide scale, we must take up the relationship of Da Vinci to landscape painting.

The Dutch psychiatrist Jan Hendrik Van den Berg, for example, suggests that it was in Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" that we find the first European depiction of landscape as landscape. Van den Berg prefaces this comment by calling attention to Martin Luther's "The Freedom of the Christian," written in 1510. He finds in Luther's work the notion of an "interior man" who is brought to life solely by the word of God and who rejects everything external. Interestingly enough, Da Vinci died the year before Luther wrote this work. But as Rilke has pointed out, the inner self captured in the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile did not arise out of the Protestant spirit but was rather a forerunner of it. Van den Berg, commenting on similarities between the Mona Lisa and Luther's draft, wrote:

> At the same time the Mona Lisa inevitably became the first human person (in painting) to be alienated from the landscape. The scene which lies in the background of the figure is, of course, renowned. This is because it was truly the first landscape to be depicted as such because it was a landscape. It is a pure landscape, not simply a backdrop for human action. Here we have a "nature" unknown to the medieval mind, an external nature sufficient unto itself, and from which human elements have been excluded as a matter of principle. It was the strangest landscape that could be seen by human eyes.[13]

Of course, what we see in the Mona Lisa is merely a nascent form of the type of landscape painting that became dominant in the nineteenth century. But Van den Berg has accurately analyzed the process whereby an alienation from the external world—or what we might call an extreme interiorization—led to the discovery of

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of Heian court writing (particularly the *Tale of Genji*) in its difference from Chinese Confucian texts.

landscape. It was with romanticism that this trend emerged in full bloom. Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, describes his sense of oneness with nature when he was in the Alps in 1728. Although the Alps at that time were regarded simply as an annoyance and obstruction by Europeans, they began to flock to Switzerland to discover what Rousseau had seen. The Alpinist was a virtual creation of literature. Needless to say, it was Europeans who discovered the Japan Alps and initiated Japanese into the sport of mountain climbing. Yet as Yanagita Kunio has pointed out, the existence of mountain climbing as a sport in Japan is predicated on a qualitative transformation and homogenization of space which had traditionally been held as "separate" on the basis of religious values and taboos.

In the very moment when we become capable of perceiving landscape, it appears to us as if it had been there, outside of us, from the start. People begin to reproduce this landscape. If this is "realism," it has actually emerged from an inversion of romanticism.

It is clear, then, that realism in modern literature established itself within the context of landscape. Both the landscapes and the "ordinary people" (what I have called people-as-landscapes) that realism represents were not "out there" from the start, but had to be discovered as landscapes from which we had become alienated. Shklovsky proposed the view that defamiliarization was the essence of realism. Realism should make us see that which, through force of habit, we have been unable to see. Thus realism has no specific method. It is a relentless defamiliarization of the familiar. In Shklovsky's view, even supposedly antirealist works like those by Kafka can be termed "realist." This type of realism does not describe landscape but always creates it. It brings into existence landscapes which, although they had always been there, had never been seen. Shklovsky's realist had always to be an "interior person."

Now let us consider what the Japanese literary theorist Kitamura Tōkoku wrote in 1894.

> I endorse realism (Tōkoku uses the term *shajitsu*, with the gloss "riarizumu" in the phonetic syllabary, ed.) completely, but each person has a different notion of what realism is. Some depict only the ugly side of human life, while others focus on the dissection of an unbalanced mind—but all of these emphasize a very narrow aspect of realism; they do not benefit humanity or move our universe forward in any way. Although I do not dislike realism, I cannot say that realism based on such vulgar objectives is attractive. At the root of

realism there must be passion; without passion it is hard for there to be anything more than description for the sake of description.[14]

Tōkoku had already elaborated on the nature of that "passion" he saw as the basis of realism. This was his "inner world" (*sōsekai*); and he was asserting that genuine realism had to be based on the preeminence of the inner self. This was the crucial ingredient that Shōyō's theory lacked.

In this light it appears meaningless to set up a functional opposition between romanticism and realism. Insofar as we are captivated by this opposition, we will be unable to discern the conditions that produced it. Sōseki tried to describe the "proportion" of romantic and realistic elements. While this is a formalistic viewpoint which disregards the historicity of the romantic-realist opposition, Sōseki at least avoids thinking in terms of a universal "history of literature."

Nakamura Mitsuo has written that naturalist literature in Japan had a romantic character; the role played by romanticism in European literature was accomplished in Japan by the naturalists. Yet it is foolish to debate whether a writer like Kunikida Doppo is a romantic or a naturalist. The ambivalence we find in Doppo's writing is merely a very blatant manifestation of the inner link between romanticism and realism. Of course, if we take Western "literary history" as our basis, Meiji Japan, which absorbed Western literature in such a brief period of time, appears as nothing more than a jumble. Yet in fact, Meiji Japan offers us a key to the nature of that inversion which was specific to the West yet was concealed (since it took place over a much longer period of time) under the facade of linear development.

The concepts of realism and romanticism must be discarded when we try to interpret the situation of Japan in the 1890s. Even today Meiji literature is discussed in terms of the very categories Sōseki tried to negate. One exception is the essay "Sources of Realism" (*Shinchō*, October 1971) by critic Etō Jun. Etō attempts to analyze developments in this decade of Meiji by focusing on the "sketching" of Shiki and his disciple, Takahama Kyoshi. According to Etō's interpretation, "description" (*byōsha*) in Meiji literature should not be understood as a process of describing something, but as the emergence of the "thing" itself," and hence, of an entirely new relationship between "words" and "things."

> It was an effort of consciousness, a bold attempt to name that which they had no way of naming—the new "things" which had appeared in the wake of disintegration. "Description" expressed the thirst for a new, more vital relationship between human sensibility, or language, and "things." Meiji artists did not become realists because realism was imported from the West. As Shiki wrote, "Perhaps no one realizes this, but we struck out in new directions hoping to add a drop of oil to a lamp that was about to sputter out." What Shiki is asserting here is that it was because he was in a situation where this direct encounter with "things" was ineluctable, that he had "struck out in new directions."
>
> Accordingly, Kyoshi and Hekigotō had no choice but to make a break with "the old stale *haiku*" and turn to "sketching." It was a time when both the Edo weltanschauung and the world of *haikai*,* which had been brought into being by Bashō and flowered under Buson, seemed on the verge of extinction. Shiki must have cross-examined his disciples desperately about whether there was any other way, short of this, to bring *haiku*—in fact, writing itself—back to life.[15]

Of course, as Etō has pointed out, the views of Shiki and Kyoshi did not concur entirely. Shiki sought to develop an objectivity in sketching which was close to the natural sciences; he wanted to "strip language of its autonomy as language, to move ever closer to a kind of transparent sign." The real differences between Shiki and Kyoshi were made apparent only on the basis of and simultaneous to the emergence of "landscape" (or what Etō would term the emergence of "things").

That Kunikida Doppo was influenced by "sketching literature" (*shaseibun*) is indisputable. Yet if we stand back from conventional literary historical concepts like "influence," it becomes clear beyond any doubt that what all of the writers of the 1890s encountered was "landscape." What Etō calls the "well-spring of realism" was also the wellspring of romanticism. I have chosen to describe this encounter as "the discovery of landscape," not only in an effort to overcome the biased view implicit in conventional histories of literature and histories of the *bundan*, but also because I wish to investigate the source of our own accommodation to the epistemological configuration brought into existence through landscape.

As I have stated in the foregoing, both realism and romanti-

*It was Masaoka Shiki himself who began the practice of using the word *haiku* to refer to an independent three-line verse of seventeen syllables. The word *haikai*, used in the Edo period, refers this practice to its origins in the group composition of linked verse, in which a second poet would wittily respond to the lines of verse composed by the previous poet in such a way as to "finish it," creating a complete, 31-syllable *tanka*.

cism must be seen as products of a certain historical situation, and because of this cannot be objectified as "stages" in literary history. Harold Bloom has argued that we live in an era of romanticism, when the very effort to reject romanticism is essentially romantic. According to Bloom, T. S. Eliot, Sartre, and Lévi-Strauss can all be considered part of the romantic movement and we have only to look, for example, at Wordsworth's "Prelude" or Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* to understand why even an antiromantic stance was part of a larger romanticism. Both these works record an "experience of consciousness" or "maturation" according to which romantic subjectivism evolved toward objectivity. They suggest that we remain caught up in the "romantic dilemma," which renders even the antiromantic position a romantic one. Yet by the same token we could also call this the "realist dilemma." Once realism is defined as a ceaseless movement toward defamiliarization, antirealism becomes another manifestation of realism.

In the case of *Unforgettable People*, for example, the narrator forgets all the people who seem to be important and remembers the ones who don't matter. This process is quite similar to that by which landscape, which had been the background, came to supersede religious and historical themes. With Doppo, people who had been seen as ordinary and insignificant appeared imbued with meaning. Similarly, when the ethnologist Yanagita Kunio* began to use the term *jōmin* ("ordinary and abiding folk") in the early Showa period (1926–89), he was not at all referring to "ordinary people," but to a kind of landscape which had become visible to him through the type of inversion of values I have just described. It was in such a context, indeed, that Yanagita Kunio discarded his earlier terms *heimin* (commoner) and *nōmin* (farmer), which had had very specific referents in Meiji society.

Nakamura Mitsuo has correctly pointed out that "there was a common concern linking Yanagita Kunio, who aspired to study folklore because he sensed poetry in the 'lore of the common folk' and Doppo, who cried, 'What is the history of the family in the

*Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) was involved as a young man in the intellectual movement surrounding the emergence of Japanese naturalism (*shizenshugi*), which established the dominance of realism in prose fiction in the early 1900s. As an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, Yanagita recorded details of the agricultural life which had begun to be irrevocably transformed under the onslaught of modernization. One of the most influential modern Japanese thinkers, Yanagita is credited with "founding" Japanese ethnology.

hut on this riverbank? What is the life-story of that ancient man? That rock—does it not celebrate some human feeling? Here nature, passion, and the gods have written their record'."

Before Japanese ethnology could come into existence, it needed an object. But this object, the "ordinary and abiding folk," was discovered through a process alluded to in Doppo's words. This is why in Yanagita's work the study of folklore has always been linked with discussions of landscape. Yanagita's concentration on the problem of language, moreover, derives from an awareness similar to that of Takahama Kyoshi that "landscape" was really a matter of language.

I discuss Yanagita's theory of language elsewhere, but I will note here that Yanagita had had a Confucian sense of *min* or "the people" (as in the Confucian notion of *keisei saimin* or "ordering the world and relieving the sufferings of the people") prior to his articulation of the notion of "the people" as landscape. This superimposition of concepts makes for an ambivalent quality in Yanagita's thought. Although contemporary advocates of "Yanagita-ism" have lost sight of this dual structure of meaning, Yanagita himself was fully what Natsume Sōseki would call a "Meiji man," a man who was part of the world that predated the discovery of landscape.

It is in the literary criticism of Kobayashi Hideo* that we find no trace of such a dual structure: there the masses, the ordinary survivors (*seikatsusha*) have been discovered as pure landscape. Needless to say, the proletariat has been a romantic landscape for Japanese Marxists. Yet the image of the Japanese masses as sturdy survivors—dupes neither of idealism nor ideology—that has been counterposed to the Marxist proletariat is equally romantic in its rejection of romanticism. If the Marxist proletariat does not really exist, neither do these Japanese masses. By the same token, when poet-philosopher Yoshimoto Takaaki wrote in the 1960s of the "primordial image of the Japanese masses," he was referring to just that: an image.

The "dilemma of romanticism" is indicated throughout Kobayashi Hideo's critical writings. In his essay, "*Samazama naru isho*"

*Kobayashi Hideo (1905–1983) was established as a leading literary critic around 1933, after the repression of the Marxist Proletarian Art movement. Kobayashi's essays, especially his "*Watakushi-shōsetsuron*" ("On the I-Novel"), published in 1935, have been seen as establishing a new genre of criticism which interpreted Japanese literature in a broader context. Kobayashi's influence extended well into the postwar period, when his writing included works on the Japanese classics, Japanese and Western painting, modern philosophy, and so forth.

("Different types of designs"), published in 1929, Kobayashi wrote that for him "the consciousness of an era is neither larger nor smaller than the consciousness of the self."[16] In other words, what we call "reality" is already nothing more than an internal landscape and thus, in the final analysis, self-consciousness. Kobayashi's repeated and persistent attempts to reach, not "objectivity" but the "object" might be seen as an attempt to "shatter the sphere of self-consciousness." But no one knew better than Kobayashi the impossibility of such a project. His book *Kindai kaiga* (Modern painting, 1958) is not only a discussion of landscape painting but narrates Kobayashi's own endless epistemological struggle to break away from the "perspective" he found there. Yet neither Kobayashi nor the painters he discussed in his book were able to escape from that "landscape" which conditioned the painters' very discovery of Japanese woodblock prints and African primitive art. Kobayashi describes no one as having transcended the confines of landscape. I myself, in writing this essay, do not seek to break away from this "sphere." I seek simply to shed light on its historicity.

6

Once a landscape has been established, its origins are repressed from memory. It takes on the appearance of an "object" which has been there, outside us, from the start. An "object," however, can only be constituted within a landscape. The same may be said of the "subject" or self. The philosophical standpoint which distinguishes between subject and object came into existence within what I refer to as "landscape."* Rather than existing prior to landscape, subject and object emerge from within it.

It has been said that Edo painting had no concept of landscape, since it lacked techniques for creating depth and perspective. Yet this is also true of medieval European painting (despite the fact that, as I have already suggested, the differences between these two types of painting are more salient.) In both cases developments in painting were paralleled by developments in philosophy. Cartesian philosophy, for example, can be seen as a product of principles of perspective. For the subject of Descartes's "cogito ergo sum" is confined, ineluctably, within the schema established by the conventions of perspective. It was in precisely the same period that the "object" of thought came to be conceived of as a homogeneous, scientifically measurable entity—that is, as an extension of the principles of perspective. All of these developments paralleled the emergence of "background" as a dehumanized "landscape" in the Mona Lisa.

*For those interested in the history of the translation of the term "subject" in modern Japanese philosophy, it should be noted that in this sentence Karatani uses two Japanese terms for "subject" (*shukan*, or the "subject of vision," with *shutai*, or the "subject of action," in parentheses) and "object" (*kyakkan*, or the "object of vision," with *kyakutai*, or "the object of action," in parentheses).

In her work, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Suzanne Langer described the cul-de-sac of modern European philosophy, which is still preoccupied with the philosophical issues posed by "landscape."

> After several centuries of sterile tradition, logic-chopping, and partisanship in philosophy, the wealth of nameless, heretical, often inconsistent notions born of the Renaissance crystallized into general and ultimate problems. A new outlook on life challenged the human mind to make sense out of its bewildering world; and the Cartesian age of "natural and mental" philosophy succeeded to the realm.
>
> This new epoch had a mighty and revolutionary generative idea: the dichotomy of all reality into *inner experience and outer world*, subject and object, private reality and public truth. The very language of what is now traditional epistemology betrays this basic notion; when we speak of "the given," of "sense data," "the phenomenon," or "other selves," we take for granted the immediacy of an internal experience and the continuity of the external world. Our fundamental questions are framed in these terms: What is actually given to the mind? What guarantees the truth of sense-data? What lies behind the observable order of phenomena? What is the relation of the mind to the brain? How can we know other selves?—All these are familiar problems of today. Their answers have been elaborated into whole systems of thought: empiricism, idealism, realism, phenomenology, *Existenz Philosophie*, and logical positivism. The most complete and characteristic of all these doctrines are the earliest ones: empiricism and idealism. They are the full, unguarded, vigorous formulations of the new generative notion, Experience: their proponents were the enthusiasts inspired by the Cartesian method, and their doctrines are the obvious implications derived by that principle, from such a starting point. Each school in its turn took the intellectual world by storm. Not only universities, but all the literary circles, felt the liberation from time-worn, oppressive concepts, from baffling limits of inquiry, and hailed the new world-picture with a hope of truer orientation in life, art, and action.

> After a while, the confusion and shadows inherent in the new vision became apparent, and subsequent doctrines sought in various ways to escape between the horns of the dilemma created by the subject-object dichotomy, which Professor Whitehead has called the "bifurcation of nature." Since then our theories have become more and more refined, circumspect, and clever; no one can be quite frankly an idealist, or go the whole way with empiricism; the early forms of realism are now known as the "naive" varieties, and have been superseded by "critical" or "new" realisms. Many philosophers vehemently deny any systematic Weltanschauung, and repudiate metaphysics in principle.[17]

But will contemporary philosophers, who are trying to break out of a Cartesian weltanschauung even as they operate within it, really succeed in making their escape? Modern artists, when they studied primitive art, or thinkers like Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his work on the "savage mind," faced the same dilemma. Sophisticated technology and Rousseauian romanticism are paradoxically intertwined in Lévi-Strauss's thought. But both these elements had their origins in the modern "landscape." It is the historicity of that landscape that must be exposed.

In Western Europe it was Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud who, albeit from differing perspectives, first exposed the problematic nature of the European conception of landscape. Nietzsche, for example, claimed that European epistemology itself was "an illusion based on the principles of linear perspective." As a product of interiorization, according to Nietzsche, the very notion of linear perspective was "an illusion of itself." The "self," the "inner," "consciousness," and "cogito" in Cartesian philosophy were all based on an inversion of subjectivity.

In order to expose the historicity of European culture Sōseki did not need to look back to ancient Greece, as Nietzsche did. Rather, he maintained within himself a certain attitude toward life that had existed prior to "landscape" and "modern Japanese literature." Sōseki was able to do this because he lived through the discovery of "landscape." We Japanese witnessed with our own eyes and within a limited period of time the occurrence in condensed form of a process which, because it had extended over many centuries, had been repressed from memory in the West.

Various institutions of the modern nation-state were consolidated, in preliminary form, during the third decade of the Meiji

period, starting with the promulgation of the Meiji constitution. As Nakamura Mitsuo has written, "if we see the second decade of the Meiji period as one of turbulence, the third was one of unification and stability." In the eyes of those born after the Meiji Restoration, this order appeared to be something that had already solidified. What had been malleable possibilities just after the Restoration now appeared shut off to them. In his *Meiji Literature*, Nakamura Mitsuo describes the People's Rights movement* of the 1880s as follows:

> For the movement was a logical extension of that great reform which was the Meiji Restoration, and it had been entrusted with the great hope that this social revolution had awakened in the people. It was through the People's Rights movement that the spirit of the Restoration which until that time had been the sole possession of the warrior class gradually came to infiltrate the popular consciousness. The setback of the movement, therefore, meant the destruction of that vital component of all revolutions, the idealism which is contained within them and which can be transformed into something else at any point in the revolutionary process. The straitened circumstances of the warrior class became a grave social problem in the early years of Meiji. For the few who found themselves in an advantageous situation there were many who had fallen into despair, yet this very fact meant that control of political and cultural life remained the uncontested prerogative of that class. But by 1885 or so, the dissolution of the warrior class became a pronounced trend, the children of commoners began to swell the ranks of students, and Meiji society began to show its true face as a mercantile state created by the offspring of the warrior class.
>
> Vis-à-vis this emerging militarist state dominated by pragmatism and the pursuit of worldly success, the phantoms of freedom and people's rights became the last ideals for which young men who were heirs of the Restoration could risk their lives. The loss of these ideals created a spiritual vacuum which could not be banished and which found expression in a form which was completely different from the political novel.[18]

*The People's Rights movement (*jiyū minken undō*) was launched by Itagaki Taisuke and other samurai disaffected with the policies of the Meiji government in 1874. Agricultural depression and popular opposition to the new uniform tax system swelled the ranks of the movement, broadening its base to include village leaders, wealthy farmers and merchants and, by the 1880s, women. In 1880, the Osaka Congress of People's Rights called for the immediate establishment of a national assembly. The government rejected this demand and imposed severe restrictions on the convening of public meetings. Itagaki's Liberal Party was dissolved in 1884.

This insight may also be applied to Sōseki. While contemporary writers like Masaoka Shiki, Futabatei Shimei, Kitamura Tōkoku, and Kunikida Doppo were agonizing over questions of artistic practice, Sōseki stood at the head of the Meiji government's corps of students of the West constantly pursued by a desire to flee from their ranks. What he wrote while he was in their midst had to be "theoretical," for it represented certain conclusions he had reached with reference to the English literature which he had already decided to study. Later, as a novelist, Sōseki appeared obsessed with the phenomenon of the "belated" nature of choice, a problem which he had confronted during this period. In this sense, *kanbungaku* probably symbolized for Sōseki not so much a corpus of texts as a certain atmosphere that existed prior to the establishment of various modern systems. This was during the same period when the political novel was at the height of its popularity. Sōseki's sense that he had been "cheated" by English literature may have corresponded to his observation that the institutions which were set up in the third decade of Meiji were nothing but a sham.

But such interpretive notions as "political disillusionment" or "the influence of Christianity" cannot be interjected into our consideration of the Japanese discovery of "landscape." These ideas suggest a psychological motivation for the process, but the concept of human psychology itself appeared at precisely this time. To treat the psychological as an autonomous sphere, as the science of psychology does, is a historical, not a timeless, phenomenon. The most significant development in the third decade of the Meiji period was rather the consolidation of modern systems and the emergence of "landscape," not so much as a phenomenon contesting such systems, but as itself a system.

Academic historians of modern literature write of the "modern self" as if it were something that existed purely within the mind. But certain conditions are necessary for the production of this "self." Freud, like Nietzsche, viewed consciousness not as something which existed from the start, but as a derivative of "introjection." According to Freud, it is at a stage when there is no distinction between inner and outer, when the outer is purely a projection of the inner, that the experience of trauma results in a redirection of the libido inward. With this, for the first time, outer and inner are separated. As Freud wrote in *Totem and Taboo*, "It is only after abstract language and thought come into existence that the perceptual

residue of language links up with subjective material in such a way that we first become aware of subjective phenomena."

To speak in Freudian terms, the libido which was once directed toward the People's Rights movement and the writing of political novels lost its object and was redirected inward, at which point "landscape" and "the inner life" appeared. Let me repeat, however, that Freud himself was not aware of the historicity of psychology and of the fact that, like "landscape," it was the product of a specific historical order. The Meiji novelist Mori Ōgai, for example, created characters that appear "a-psychological" in his historical fiction. Toward the end of his life, Ōgai tried as much as possible to return to an awareness that predated modern conceptions of psychology and landscape. We may legitimately use a psychological approach in dealing with writers who emerged after the third decade of the Meiji period, but we must keep in mind that such an approach will not expose the conditions which produced the science of psychology itself.

However, what I find most significant in Freud's thought is the notion of the simultaneous emergence in the human being of the capacity for "abstract thought and language" and of "interiority" (accompanied by an awareness of the external as external). What does "abstract thought and language" correspond to in the Japanese context? Perhaps to the conception of writing which evolved in the Meiji period, known as *genbun itchi*. For *genbun itchi* was a manifestation in the linguistic realm of the establishment, around 1890, of the various institutions of the modern state. It goes without saying that the meaning of this concept was hardly that of bringing "writing" (*bun*) into conformity with "speech" (*gen*), or speech into conformity with writing, as is usually maintained. *Genbun itchi* represented the invention of a new conception of writing as equivalent with speech.

Of course, insofar as *genbun itchi* was an effort towards modernization similar to the Meiji constitution, it could not be a purely "inner" speech. Writers considered to be introverts in the third decade of the Meiji period—Ōgai and Tōkoku, for example—preferred to write in the classical style, and the *genbun itchi* movement quickly lost momentum. Interest did not revive until the end of the decade, which was already the era of Kunikida Doppo and Takahama Kyoshi.

Of course, Futabatei Shimei's novel *Ukigumo* (Drifting clouds),

which appeared between 1886 and 1889, may be cited as an exception to this trend. Notions of landscape and the inner self which Futabatei could elaborate when he was writing in Russian, however, seemed to slip through his fingers when he tried to write about them in Japanese, when somehow the language of Shikitei Samba and other *kokkeibon* writers took possession of him.* The agony of Futabatei was to have discovered "landscape" without being able to locate it in the Japanese language. By Doppo's time this dilemma had disappeared. What influenced Doppo was not the style of *Ukigumo* but the translation of Turgenev's *Rendez-vous*.

For Doppo the "inner" was the word (the voice), and expression was the projection outward of that voice. In Doppo's work the concept of "expression" came into being for the first time in Japanese literature. Before this time, no one spoke of literature in terms of expression. It was the identification of writing with speech which made such a concept possible. But it was only because Doppo, unlike Futabatei, was oblivious to the fact that *genbun itchi* was a modern system that he was spared the dilemma of Futabatei. That the "inner self" was historical, that it was a system, had by that time been forgotten. Needless to say, we live today on the same soil that Doppo did. In order to know what holds us there, we must uncover its source; we must investigate further this historical period when language was simultaneously exposed and hidden.

Afternote to Chapter 1 (1991)

What I have called the "discovery of landscape" was not merely an "internal" event: it was accompanied by the discovery of a landscape that was new in actuality and not enveloped in any way by ancient texts. This landscape was that of Hokkaido, the northern island which, until the Meiji period, had been inhabited by Japanese only on its southern tip. Hokkaido became a new territory for colonists, created by driving its indigenous people, the Ainu, off their lands and forcibly assimilating them. In this way the Meiji government was able to provide large numbers of unemployed members

*Shikitei Samba (1776–1822) wrote in numerous genres, but is best known for two works of comic fiction (a genre given the name *kokkeibon* during the 1820s), *Ukiyoburo* (1809–13) and *Ukiyodoko* (1813–14), describing scenes from Edo's public baths and barbershops.

of the samurai class with new lives as pioneer farmers. With the agricultural school established in Sapporo as its center, Hokkaido became the prototype for the colonial agricultural policy later applied by Japan to Taiwan and Korea. At the same time, Hokkaido was a place where various types of religious reforms flourished, as émigrés lived their lives cut off from the traditions of the mainland. Hokkaido in the Meiji period might in this sense be comparable to early New England, both in terms of its climate and its political role. The first head of the Sapporo Agricultural School, Dr. Clark, who had been recruited from Amherst, for example, had greater influence in Hokkaido as a Protestant missionary than as an agricultural scientist. It was this influence that produced the prototypical Meiji Christian, Uchimura Kanzō. Kunikida Doppo, also mentioned in the foregoing chapter, spent time in Hokkaido as a Christian disciple and an émigré.

Seen in this context, the "discovery of landscape" in the Meiji period was a discovery—if we refer to Kant's distinction—not of the beautiful but of the sublime. For the vast wilderness of Hokkaido inspired awe in human beings, unlike the mainland which had been regulated for centuries and enveloped by literary texts. But in order to grasp this territory as sublime it was necessary, as Uchimura said, to take on the Christian attitude which regards nature as the handiwork of God. It was an attitude, at any rate, which was not continuous with Japanese thought as it had existed up to that point.

Unlike the Meiji Christian thinker Uchimura Kanzō, who rejected his background in the Confucian philosophy of the Wang Yang Ming School when he embraced Christianity, Sōseki remained attached to *kanbungaku*. We should not understand this, however, as a matter of literary taste. The significance of Sōseki's remarking that he "wanted to devote his life to *kanbungaku*" was that *kanbungaku* had political meaning for him. Sōseki made the comment during the second decade of the Meiji period, when the People's Rights movement flourished. By the third decade of Meiji, that movement had been suppressed. Instead the various systems of Japanese modernity were being put into place. It seems that for Sōseki *kanbungaku* was associated with an atmosphere that preceded the establishment of these systems as well as with the Meiji Restoration as a social revolution that had contained within it malleable possibilities. Interestingly, the "political novels" written by members of the People's Rights movement were not written in colloquial

Japanese but in a style of Japanese strongly influenced by *kanbun*. Thus even the People's Rights movement, while flying the banners of Western philosophy (especially the thought of Rousseau), was still grounded in Chinese literature and philosophy. This fusion of democratic thought and *kanbungaku* might appear to be paradoxical. But it was a paradox with which the Meiji Restoration itself was fraught.

The Meiji Restoration is frequently narrated in terms of the restorationism of the nativist scholars and the Enlightenment thought of those who had studied the West. But for the majority of Japanese intellectuals, Chinese literature and philosophy continued, as ever, to constitute the canon. Restoration ideology—the *sonnō jōi*, or "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian" philosophy—was actually a product of the Mito School, which was devoted to the study of the thought of the Chinese philosopher Chu Hsi. Saigō Takamori, a Restoration leader, adhered to the principles of Wang Yang Ming. Chinese philosophy, then, provided one important context of the Meiji Restoration. Moreover, for Saigō Takamori, Japan's Restoration could not be sustained without revolution in China and Korea. Somewhat like a Trotsky or Che Guevara, Saigō sought to export Japan's revolution to China and Korea. In terms of its external manifestations, this export of revolution was indistinguishable from a policy of aggression vis-à-vis other nations. Yet the Meiji revolutionary government, fearing that its own existence might be placed in jeopardy by the attempt to expand the revolution, expelled Saigō, which resulted in civil war (the Seinan Rebellion led by Saigō in 1877). However, the same government which suppressed Saigō commenced its own aggression toward Korea somewhat later. This began with the waging of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894–95. In this context, through his tragic death, Saigō became a symbol of the People's Rights movement and pan-Asianism on the one hand and of Japanese expansionism on the other.

These ambivalent attitudes remained strong throughout the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. It is for this reason that the two wars were widely supported by thinkers of every hue, including members of the People's Rights movement, Christians like Uchimura Kanzō, Enlightenment thinkers like Fukuzawa Yukichi, and advocates of a strong, centralized state. But the disillusionment that followed in the wake of this enthusiasm was also great. Uchimura Kanzō, for example, who fervently supported the Sino-Japanese War and wrote about its "just cause" in English, came to the realization in the year following the war that Japan was engaged in imperialism and shifted to a critical stance. Uchimura's advocacy of an antiwar position during the Russo-Japanese War is well known, but this originated in his reaction to the Sino-Japanese War.

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, however, Japan's sense of cultural solidarity with China was completely severed. Fukuzawa's argument in favor of "De-Asianization" (*Datsuaron*) was an early manifestation of this position, written in 1885. It is within this context that we must place Sōseki's attachment to *kanbungaku*. To further clarify this context, we might consider that Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913) interpreted Japan's severing of its ties with the East Asian cultural sphere as the loss of what he termed, in English, a "universe." Okakura, an art critic and historian who worked closely with Ernest Fenollosa, sought to revive this universe in the fine arts. Okakura was also associated with the Indian independence movement just prior to the Russo-Japanese War. His English work, *The Ideal of the East*, begins with the sentence "Asia is one" and advocates a pan-Asianism which influenced Rabindranath Tagore.

Yet Okakura could not be satisfied with the idea of "oneness" as the destiny of an Asia that was disintegrating under the onslaught of colonialism. For Okakura, "the East" or Asia, is not simply that which was imagined and defined by the West, nor can it refer to a unity created by the common destiny of colonization. Okakura sought historically for principles of unity internal to Asia. To this end he tried to overturn Hegel's philosophy of history and art, trying not only to subvert Hegel's Eurocentrism but to attack the concept of dialectics itself. The notion of contradiction is crucial to Hegelian thought as that which gives rise to struggle and advances history. Okakura counterposed to this the philosophy of Advaita (non-dualism), which had its origins in Indian Buddhism. The Sanskrit term "Advaita" signified the oneness of that which is manifold and contradictory. Okakura sought to transcend the universality of the West in a universality of the East.

Sōseki's inclinations with regard to universality emerge in relief when contrasted with the thought of Uchimura Kanzō and Okakura Tenshin. Uchimura sought an extreme form of Christian universalism which was detached from the historical specificity of the West. In his final years, however, Uchimura withdrew into an attitude of religious belief that was almost entirely removed from historical realities. Okakura's pan-Asianism, on the other hand, was gradually (and against his intentions) made to serve the ends

of imperialist ideology. Sōseki, while refusing to recognize the universality of the West, never attempted to idealize the universality of Asia. In this sense Sōseki's attitude may be described as "scientific"—it was neither the "poetic" spirit of Okakura nor the "faith" of Uchimura. Sōseki did not advocate anything positive. Rather, he continued to think from the unstable position of one who finds himself "between" East and West, seeking refuge in neither pole of the opposition.

The pattern of retreat to interiority and literature after political setback has been continuously repeated in the modern period. The trajectory I suggested in this chapter could also be seen in the 1970s. This kind of move into interiority is unavoidable. But insofar as it can only consist of a return to a structure which has already been fixed as literary discourse and can no longer be subjected to doubt, it is a banal movement. The structure of interiority was already in place by the third decade of Meiji, and has served to efface the kind of political structures I have just mentioned.

2 The Discovery of Interiority

1

The *genbun itchi** movement is thought to have originated with Maejima Hisoka's submission of a petition, in 1866, to the Tokugawa Shogunate entitled "Reasons for Abolishing Chinese Characters." Maejima was an interpreter at one of the shogunate's schools for Western learning in Nagasaki. He claimed that his writing of the petition was prompted by discussions with an American missionary he had met in this school, who had persuaded him that the use of "abstruse and confusing" Chinese characters for purposes of education was inappropriate. Maejima wrote, "Education of the populace is the foundation of the state and this education should be promulgated among the entire population, regardless of status. To this end we should employ words and sentences which are as simple as possible; in the most diverse fields of scholarship, no matter how lofty or profound, we should avoid obscure, roundabout methods of teaching which equate knowledge of words with knowledge of things. I submit that in all cases learning should not be other than an understanding of the thing itself."

Many features of the *genbun itchi* movement are indicated in

Genbun-itchi is usually translated rather literally into English as "unifying spoken (gen) and written (bun) languages." *Bun* in the Japanese expression is an abbreviation for *bungo*, the word still used to denote the classical or "literary" Japanese employed in texts written in Japanese prior to the 1890s. In fact, in the Meiji period, as today, the term *bungo* referred to at least half a dozen distinctive styles. All of these styles, however, employed verb-endings which were not used with any frequency in colloquial speech. In standard literary histories, authors Yamada Bimyō and Futabatei Shimei, mentioned in this chapter, are seen as pioneering the use of the new style, in which the complex system of inflections used in *bungo* was abandoned. Karatani in this chapter takes issue with the prevailing interpretations: first, by noting that the new styles introduced by Yamada Bimyō and Futabatei were not in fact faithful reproductions of the speech of their contemporaries, and secondly, by calling attention to the ideological nature of the phonocentrism (according to which writing was seen as derivative of speech) which was the condition of possibility for the movement. The *genbun itchi* reforms are discussed by Marleigh Grayer Ryan in *Japan's First Modern Novel: Ukigumo of Futabatei Shimei* (Columbia University Press, 1967).