# 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).

this, its earliest document. First of all, Maejima asserted that *genbun itchi* was indispensable for the establishment of the modern nation. Although Maejima's proposal was eventually ignored, it raised issues which emerged as crucial in the second decade of Meiji when the effort to establish the institutions of the modern state was getting underway. It was in the decade whose infatuation with Western ways was symbolized for the public at large by the construction of the *Rokumeikan*, or Deer Cry Pavilion,* that we note the appearance of organizations such as the Kana Society (*Kana no Kai*, established in 1884 to promote writing in the Japanese syllabary or *kana*) and the Romaji Society (*Romaji no Kai*, established in 1886 to encourage writing in *romaji*, or romanized script). It was also in this decade that movements to reform drama, poetry, and fiction emerged one after another. The *genbun itchi* movement, however, may be seen as incorporating all these other movements.

A second point of interest is that the Maejima proposal does not, in fact, make its subject that "unification of the spoken and written language" commonly understood to have been the aim of the *genbun itchi* movement, but rather the proposal that Chinese characters be abolished. This clearly indicates the fundamental nature of *genbun itchi* as a movement to reform the writing system and do away with Chinese characters, *kanji*. Maejima touched only briefly on the issue of correspondence between the spoken and written language: "Defining the national literary canon and regulating grammar does not mean returning to ancient texts and using suffixes like *haberu*, *keru*, and *kana*. We should take words which are widely used at the present time, such as *tsukamatsuru* and *gozaru*, and make these the general rule. It seems to me that all nations are similar in that their languages change over time. However, I believe we should avoid setting up a distinction between the flavors of the written and spoken language such that we consider spoken words colloquial and written texts literary." To take these lines of Maejima's out of context and regard them as articulating the philosophy of the *genbun itchi* movement is to mistake the nature of that movement. For Maejima it was reform of the writing system which was the crux of the matter, while the opinions expressed above

*The Rokumeikan, or Deer Cry Pavilion, was built in 1883 for the purpose of entertaining foreign diplomats. When a costume ball was held at the pavillion by Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi in 1887, Itō and his ministers were ridiculed as the "dancing cabinet" because of their zeal to demonstrate their knowledge of Western social graces.

were secondary. Spoken and written languages diverge because the practices of speaking and writing are different. They do not "correspond" in any language, and the Japanese language hardly represents the most striking case of their divergence. The problem, as Maejima pointed out, lies with the nature of writing as a mode of signification.

Looked at in this way, we may understand that *genbun itchi* was first and foremost a new ideology of writing. As an official interpreter for the shogunate, Maejima found himself captivated by the economy, preciseness, and egalitarian nature of phonetic writing systems. He saw Western superiority as linked to that phonetic system and believed the implementation of such a system was an urgent priority for Japan. Phonetic writing is usually seen as the transcription of speech. Saussurean linguistics, for example, treated writing as secondary and exempted it from the analysis of *langue* as a system. Maejima's proposal clearly reflects a similar notion of writing in the service of speech. It thus inevitably gave priority to the spoken language, and once this view had been established, the question of whether or not *kanji* were actually abolished became moot. Once even Chinese characters had come to be seen as subordinate to speech, the issue became simply a choice between characters and the native phonetic syllabary (*kana*). Once Maejima came to look at writing in this way it was a matter of course that he began to give priority to the spoken language and to consider the gap between spoken and written language—never a concern in the past—a "problem." We must bear in mind, then, that his conception of the spoken language was itself rooted in a preoccupation with phonetic writing.

It is noteworthy that in his discussion Maejima turned first to the matter of suffixes like *tsukamatsuru* and *gozaru*. It was perhaps inevitable, given the nature of the Japanese language, that people came to think of *genbun itchi* as having been from the start purely a question of suffixes. In the Japanese language it is impossible to leave the relationship between speaker and listener unspecified, which is also why one can know which person is being alluded to even in a sentence that has no subject. What I wish to call attention to here is not the existence of words known as honorifics (*keigo*) in Japanese but rather the phenomenon that linguist Tokieda Motoki referred to when he suggested that indication of relative status of speakers was inherent to the Japanese language itself. For Tokieda the notion of *keigo* or honorific speech could be used to describe the

Japanese language as a whole. Maejima proposal that the suffixes *tsukamatsuru* and *gozaru* be universally used was certainly linked to his own status and the types of social relationships he was involved in as a member of the samurai class.

Novelist Futabatei Shimei, in the essay "How I Came to Use *Genbun Itchi*" (*Yoga genbun itchi no yurai*), recalled his own attempts to develop a *genbun itchi* style.

> As for my opinion on *genbun itchi*—since I haven't given the matter that much study let me rather make a confession. The truth is, and my reader will surely find this shocking, that I turned to *genbun itchi* because I didn't know how to write; it was as simple as that. I don't now remember how long ago it was, quite a while back. I felt I wanted to try my hand at literature, but my style was so poor I was utterly at a loss. I decided to visit Professor Tsubouchi to ask his advice. He told me, "You know the comic storyteller Enchō, don't you? Why not write the way Enchō narrates?" I did just as he suggested. Well, as a Tokyoite, I naturally use the Tokyo dialect. So what I produced was a work in the Tokyo dialect. I took it to Professor Tsubouchi's place immediately. He studied it intently and then startled me by slapping his knee and crying, "This is perfect just as it is! Rather than doing piecemeal revisions which will leave you with a mish-mash, leave it alone." Tsubouchi's response disturbed me a bit, but since he had praised the work there was no reason to be upset about it and in fact I was rather pleased. Certainly, as an attempt to reproduce Enchō's narration the work was in the *genbun itchi* style, but there were still problems with it. Should I use the polite form of the first person pronoun, *watakushi*, with sentences ending in *gozaimasu*, or the more familiar masculine personal pronoun *ore*, as in *"Ore wa iya da"* ("I don't like it")? Professor Tsubouchi was of the opinion that there should be no honorific speech used. I was not entirely happy with this idea, but it was after all the view of the expert whom I had even contemplated asking to revise the manuscript for me. So I went ahead and finished the work without using honorific speech. This is the story of how I began writing in *genbun itchi*.
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> Not long after that Yamada Bimyō published his *genbun itchi* manuscripts. I discovered that he had chosen the polite *watakushi* and the polite verb ending *desu:* we belonged to different schools. Yamada was of the *"desu* school," I was the *"da* school." Later I heard that Yamada had initially experimented in writing without honorifics and had tried ending sentences with the familiar *da*, but had given it up as unsatisfactory. Whereas I had been inclined to *desu* and ended with *da*. We went in opposite directions.[1]

Futabatei claims that he used the *da* style to avoid honorific speech but insofar as *da*, too, expresses his relationship to the speaker it must be considered an honorific suffix (a polite suffix), broadly speaking. For the use of *da* in conversation signals that the addressee is the speaker's equal or inferior. It is virtually a matter of indifference whether one chooses *da* or *desu;* neither is a neutral term that transcends relationality. The *da* style is assumed to have become dominant because it appears closer to a style that would avoid honorific speech, or *keigo*. Futabatei and Yamada, both attempting to incorporate the spoken language, went in "completely different directions" because Futabatei sought to abstract conversational speech for purposes of writing. Of the two, he had a better understanding of the nature of *bun*, or writing.

Nevertheless, it is reductive for us to consider *genbun itchi* merely a matter of verb endings. The experiments of writers like Futabatei and Yamada sputtered out when, for example, "The Dancing Girl" (*Maihime*) of Mori Ōgai, published in 1890 in a classical literary (*bungo*) style, was highly acclaimed. The *genbun itchi* movement is generally seen to have stagnated over the next four years. But let us examine the style of "The Dancing Girl."

Aru hi no yûgure narishi ga, yo wa jûen o manpo shite, Unteru den
或る日の 夕暮れなりしが、 余は 獣苑を 漫歩して、 ウンテル・デン・
Rinden o sugi, wa ga Monbishûgai no kyôkyo ni kaeran to, Kurosuterukôji
リンデンを過ぎ、我がモンビシュウ街の僑居に帰らんと、 クロステル巷
no furudera no mae ni kinu. Yo wa kano tomoshibi no umi o watarikite, kono
の 古寺の 前に 来ぬ。余は 彼の 燈火の 海を 渡り来て、 この
semaku usuguraki chimata ni iri, rôjô no obashima ni hoshitaru shikifu,
狭く 薄暗き 巷 に 入り、楼上の 木欄 に 干したる 敷布、
hadagi nado mada toriirenu jinka, hohohige nagaki Yudayakyôto no okina ga
襦袢 などまだ取り入れぬ人家、頬髭 長き 猶太教徒の 翁 が
kozen ni tatazumitaru izakaya, hitotsu no hashigo wa tadachi ni takadono
戸前に佇みたる 居酒屋、 一つの 梯 は 直ちに 楼
ni tasshi, hoka no hashigo wa anagurazumai no kaji ga ie ni tsûjitaru kashiya
に達し、 他の 梯は 窖住まひの 鍛冶が家に通じたる 貸家
nado ni mukaite, ôji no katachi ni hikikomite tateraretaru, kono sanbyakunen-
などに向ひて、凹字の形に 引籠みて立てられたる、此 三百年
mae no iseki o nozomu goto ni, kokoro no kôkotsu to narite shibashi
前の遺跡を望む毎に、心の恍惚と なりて 暫し
tatazumishi koto ikutabi naru o shirazu.
佇みし こと 幾度なるを 知らず。

One evening I sauntered through the Tiergarten and then walked down Unter den Linden. On the way back to my lodgings at Monbijoustrasse, I came in front of the old church in Klosterstrasse. How many

times, I wonder, had I passed through that sea of lights, entered this gloomy passage, and stood enraptured, gazing at the three-hundred-year-old church that lay set back from the road.[2]

Compare this to the opening sentences of *The Drifting Clouds* which was said to have been written in the *genbun itchi* style.

Chihayafuru kaminazuki mo mohaya ato futsuka no nagori to natta nijuhachi-
千早振る 神無月 も 最早 跡 二日 の 余波 と なツた 二十八
nichi no gogo sanji goro ni, Kandamitsuke no uchi yori, towataru ari, chiru
日 の 午後 三時 頃 に、 神田見附 の 内 より、塗渡る 蟻、 散る
kumo no ko to uyouyo zoyozoyo wakiidekuru no wa izure mo otogai o kini-
蜘蛛の 子と うようよ ぞよぞよ 沸出で、来るのは 孰れも 頤 を 気に
shitamou katagata. Shikashi tsuratsura mite toku to tenken suru to, kore ni
し給ふ 方々。 しかし 熟々 見て篤と 点検 すると、是れ に
mo samazama shurui no aru mono de, mazu hige kara kakitatereba, kuchi-
も 様々 種類 のある ものて、まず 髭 から 書立てれば、 口
hige, hohohige, ago no hige, yake ni oyashita naporeonhige ni, chin no kuchi
髭、 頬 髯、 頤 の 鬚、 暴に 興起した 拿破崙髭 に、狆 の 口
meita bisumarukuhige, sono hoka chabohige, mujinahige, ari ya nashi ya no
めいた 比斯馬克髭、 そのほか 矮 鶏 髭、 貉 髭、 ありやなしやの
maboroshi no hige to, koku mo usuku mo iroiro ni haewakaru.
幻 の 髭 と、濃くも 淡くも いろいろに 生分る。

It is three o'clock on the afternoon of a late October day. A swirling mass of men stream out of the Kanda gate, marching first in ant-like formation, then scuttling busily off in every direction. Each and every one of the fine gentlemen is primarily interested in getting enough to eat.

Look carefully and you will see what an enormous variety of individual types are represented in the huge crowd. Start by examining the hair bristling on their faces: mustaches, side whiskers, Vandykes, and even extravagant imperial beards, Bismarck beards reminiscent of a Pekinese, bantam beards, badger's beards, meager beards that are barely visible, thick and thin they sprout in every conceivable way.[3]

Ōgai's writing is much easier to translate into English. While written in the literary (*bungo*) style, "The Dancing Girl" has the conceptual and grammatical structure of a work written in a European language and translated into Japanese. It is "realistic." *The Drifting Clouds*, on the other hand, is almost impossible to translate literally into English, and despite its array of moustaches has nothing "realistic" about it. In this sense, it is a very crude form of explanation that asserts that Futabatei abruptly abandoned his writing,

leading to an impasse of the *genbun itchi* movement. *The Drifting Clouds* is permeated with stylistic elements drawn from the comic fiction of Shikitei Samba, and despite its use of the verb-ending *da*, it cannot be considered a *genbun itchi* work. It is true that Futabatei was dissatisfied on this score, and that he attempted to compose the second book of the novel in Russian which he then translated into the colloquial written style (*kōgō*), an undertaking which would be nearly inconceivable for a contemporary Japanese. But I would interpret these developments differently. First, although possessed of a kind of self-awareness produced by his reading of Russian literature, Futabatei was unable to completely resist the pull of the *ninjōbon* and *kokkeibon** styles. Moreover, since these styles were in fact a form of *bungo*, they existed in a different realm from conversational speech. Secondly, in order to write in *genbun itchi* Futabatei had to distance himself from both the existing literary and conversational forms of Japanese. The conversational speech we are supposed to discover in *genbun itchi* was already quite different from the conversational speech of Futabatei's time.

By merely changing verb endings, one can transform Ōgai's writing into a fully contemporary style. This suggests that "The Dancing Girl" was not necessarily a retreat from *genbun itchi*. When we consider the real nature of the *genbun itchi* movement, it is Ōgai's work which represents an advance, and it is his work, rather than Futabatei's, that brings the issue of *genbun itchi* to light.

## 2

I have asserted that it was a reform of writing, "the abolition of *kanji*," that was at stake in the *genbun itchi* movement. Of course, the issue here was not the actual abandonment of Chinese writing but rather a profound undermining of the privileged status of writing (as *kanji*), which was accomplished through advocating an ideology of phonetic speech. Since we can analyze the privileged status of writing in a number of different contexts, let me now turn to developments in an area which may initially seem unrelated,

* "Comic books" (*kokkeibon*) and "erotic books" (*ninjobon*) denoted two genres of writing which circulated among a mass readership in the last century of the Edo period. Futabatei, like most early Meiji readers, was highly conversant with these genres.

but which represent an extension of the *genbun itchi* movement. Consider the following passage from the *Travel Essays* (*Kikō bunshū*) edited by Japan's first ethnologist, Yanagita Kunio. The works in the anthology, according to Yanagita, are "a few works composed by distinguished travellers of the late Edo period which I read and reread as a youth, and which I knew I would want to dip into in the future if they were available." He comments,

> Works like these are all referred to as belonging to the genre of *kikōbun*, or travel literature, but grouping them in a single category gives rise to a misconception on the part of readers, since there are in fact two distinct types of works: the first consists of a string of poems and lyrical essays; the second consists exclusively of description, narrated by a traveller who is simply a discreet presence hidden in the shadows of the actual scene. In Japan, among the works known as *kikōbun*, beginning with the first travel diary written by Ki no Tsurayuki (*The Tosa Diary*, c. 935), the former predominate. This is the reason why books describing scenery which have begun to appear in recent years have so often been dismissed, and scorned as vulgar, by connoisseurs of literature, and why the efforts of those who wish to bequeath such documents to posterity have been viewed as the products of futile toil.[4]

In this passage we find Yanagita narrating the "discovery of landscape" in terms of a change in the way *kikōbun* were actually written. Let me suggest that this transformation consisted of the liberation of travel literature from the literary, from the convention of what Yanagita describes as "a string of poems and lyrical essays." Why, in fact, was it that for so many centuries Japanese recognized as landscapes only the famous places celebrated in literature and could be satisfied with "stringing together poems and lyrical essays"? It was because this was the "landscape" given to them by their encounter with Chinese literature—the Imperial poetry anthology, the *Kokinshū* (905), provided the basic model. Even Motoori Norinaga did not deviate from tradition on this point. The iconoclast was Masaoka Shiki, who exclaimed that "Ki no Tsurayuki was a terrible poet and his anthology, the *Kokinshū*, is rubbish!"[5]

Conversely, we may say that all those who were not the least bit bored with strings of poems and lyrical writings felt that way because for them literary landscapes were much more "real" than actual landscapes. I have already noted that for a brush painter to

depict a pine grove meant to depict the signified "pine grove," not an existing pine grove, and that this vision of transcendental space had to be overturned before painters could see existing pine groves as their subjects. From such a topos, the concept "pine grove" was not something dull and empty but rather sensuous and vibrant.

T. S. Eliot wrote of Dante that "Dante's is a *visual* imagination. It is a visual imagination in a different sense from that of a modern painter of still life: it is visual in the sense that he lived in an age in which men still saw visions."[6] What Eliot asserts is the figurative nature of Western medieval thought, in terms of which conceptions of the transcendental belonged to the realm of the visual. We may find a parallel here with Japanese poets before the *genbun itchi* movement. However "painterly" Buson's poetry may have appeared in the eyes of Shiki, it could not have been what Shiki imagined it to be, and its visual qualities were of a different order from those produced through the process of sketching that Shiki advocated. Similarly, we must ask why even a writer like Futabatei was irresistibly attracted to the style of Takizawa Bakin, even though his teacher, Shōyō, had rejected Bakin's "didactic" allegorical writings. Although it has already become almost impossible for us to conceive of this, it was because, in the literary age dominated by Bakin, allegory, however abstract, was thoroughly visual.

Maejima, pointing out that a compound combining the characters "pine" and "plain" ( 松平 ) can be given four alternative phonetic readings (*matsutaira, matsuhira, matsuhei, shōhei*), among which it is impossible to determine which is correct, decried *kanji* as "eccentric, unwieldy, an evil without parallel in this world." But without any phonetic reading at all the characters 松平 immediately evoke a meaning. The same can be said about Buson's poem on the summer rains. We interpret it, as it were, visually. Contrary to what Shiki maintained, what makes possible the painterly effect of Buson's poem is the superimposition of sound and visual form. If Japanese words possessed what Maejima advocated, "the virtue of having one fixed pronunciation, recognizable at a glance by anyone," the effect of Buson's poem could not be achieved.

Furthermore, the movement to free Japanese poetry from figurative writing also entailed freeing it from the human voice, from rhythm. Shiki's disciple Takahama Kyoshi, for example, wrote the following in his essay, "The Origins and Significance of Sketching Literature" (*Shaseibun no yurai to sono igi*):

> I think I can safely claim that today's sketching literature (shaseibun) was pioneered by members of our group, and the public would acknowledge this. Of course, I would not deny that Tsubouchi Shōyō's *The Temper of Students of Our Time* (*Tōsei Shosei Katagi*) represents the first emergence of a kind of sketching literature, but Tsubouchi's work, still fettered by the 5-7 rhythm, conveys a sense of clinging to the old forms. The Kenyūsha writers who emerged slightly later were also involved with sketching, but they were not able to escape the legacy of earlier *gesaku* writers. When we look back at the writers of the third decade of the Meiji period from a contemporary vantage point, we have the sense that, while trying to break away from the old molds they were nevertheless unable to write without them.
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> I think it was around this time that Western-style painters—the one that we had direct contact with was Nakamura Fūsetsu—began to advocate "sketching." The view of traditional Japanese brush-painters was that one should respect the conventions bequeathed to us by the old masters: beneath *ominaeshi* flowers one must always paint quails, with rushes, wild geese, and so forth, adhering to established traditions just as earnestly as the performers of Nō or kabuki. Western-style painters, however, opposed this, claiming that to follow the old forms just as they were was degenerate, that one should copy the natural world as one saw it with one's own eyes, and from there obtain the new.[7]

The first thing of note in Kyoshi's observations is his sense that those who were "fettered by 5-7 rhythm" were "clinging to old forms." Futabatei's *Drifting Clouds* is interesting to look at in this respect. The reason a lively rhythm predominates in that novel is because it has none of the visual quality cultivated by the sketching technique. Conversely, *genbun itchi* had to negate a certain notion of rhythm as transcendental in order to come into being. As Kyoshi suggests, the same was true of Nō and kabuki. This is the basis for my earlier assertion that the movements to reform poetry and drama were simultaneously a part of the larger *genbun itchi* movement and that it is only by considering it in this broad context that we can understand the nature of this movement.

## 3

If we set aside the novel-centered bias of canonical narratives of Meiji literary history, we can see that it was the movement to reform

drama that was most significant among Meiji reform movements. The viewpoint that privileged the novel was in fact born out of this movement. A Society for the Reform of Drama was organized in 1886, at the height of the zeal for Westernization of the Rokumeikan era, at the suggestion of oligarchs Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru. It is noteworthy that it was first and foremost the reform of drama that the Meiji government supported in the realm of literature and the arts. They appear to have thought it as indispensable to the establishment of modern institutions as Maejima did *genbun itchi*. It was only through its connection with the reform of drama that the movement to reform prose fiction, that is, the modern novel, was able to exist. As Nakamura Mitsuo explains in his *Japanese Fiction in the Meiji Era* (*Meiji Bungakushi*), "The Society to Reform Drama achieved no results to speak of and soon vanished, but insofar as it represented the emergence even in Japan of a movement to elevate the status of the arts through reform, it was enormously influential in fostering a resurgence, not only of drama, but in every area of the Meiji arts. Tsubouchi's reform of prose fiction rode the crest of this wave and, we may say, received its content from it."[8]

The reform movement in drama, however, preceded the wave of zealous Westernization and had already gotten underway by the second decade of the Meiji period. The impetus was provided by the actor Ichikawa Danjūrō, of the Shintōza kabuki troupe, and the troupe's dramatist Kawatake Mokuami. Itō Sei has described their activities: "Ichikawa was scorned as a poor actor in those days because of his innovative techniques. He stopped applying powder to his face in the exaggerated manner of the traditional theater and he resuscitated patterns of ordinary speech. Furthermore, rather than employing spectacular acting techniques which involved ridiculously grandiose bodily movements he struggled to develop expressions which would convey a sense of psychology to the audience. All of these efforts were in perfect accordance with the philosophy for the reform of drama developed later by Morita Kanya. The new intelligentsia of the Meiji period gradually became acclimatized to the realist, humanistic appeal of Ichikawa's technique, accepted him, and came to see him as the foremost actor of the day."[9]

If the acting techniques of Ichikawa were realistic, they were also a form of *genbun itchi*. With its origins in puppet theatre, kabuki began with the substitution of humans for dolls. In order to dehumanize the actors on the stage and make them more doll-like, it

was necessary to apply powder "in an exaggerated manner" and perform spectacular actions which "involved ridiculously grandiose movements of the body." The heavily made-up, boldly patterned face of the kabuki actor was nothing other than a mask. What Ichikawa brought to kabuki, and what can be seen even more clearly in later Shingeki performance, was the naked face.

Perhaps we may say that before Ichikawa's time it was the face decorated with make-up that conveyed a sense of reality to the audience. For them, the *face as concept* could be apprehended sensuously, in the same manner in which they found satisfaction in landscape as concept. In this sense what I have called the discovery of landscape was also the "discovery" of the naked face as another kind of landscape; we find the same developments occurring in relation to both landscape and drama. As Lévi-Strauss has observed in *Structuralist Anthropology*, in primitive tribes ornamentation *is* the face or produces the face. It is through ornamentation that the face is endowed with its social existence, its human dignity, and its spiritual meaning. In other words, the human face was originally a figure, something like *kanji*, and it was only through a process of inversion that the "face as face" came into view. Of course, I do not mean to say that landscapes and faces had not previously existed. But for them to be seen as "simply landscape" or "simply face" required, not a perceptual transformation, but an inversion of that topos which had privileged the *conception* landscape or face. It was only through such an inversion that the naked face—the naked face as a kind of landscape, took on meaning in and of itself and what had been insignificant became profoundly significant.

We can see such a process taking place in the opening sections of Yanagita Kunio's *Mountain Life* (*Yama no Jinsei*, 1926). Referring to a case of infanticide, Yanagida writes that "the *hidden realities* are much more profound than the worlds we create through fantasy. It is they that provoke us to reflection. This incident is not directly related to the matters I am going to discuss, and yet were it not for this occasion I probably would not have remembered it, nor had an audience, so I have written it here by way of a preface."[10] This is exactly the kind of inversion I have called the "discovery of landscape." Yanagita, by the way, mentions that when he read Futabatei's *Drifting Clouds* he was surprised that the characters were not accomplished gentlemen and beautiful women but ordinary people. The protagonist of Kunikida Doppo's "Ordinary Man" is

a seemingly insignificant person. But no matter where one looks during this period, the ordinary face has begun to take on meaning.

Itō Sei describes how Ichikawa Danjūrō "struggled to create expressions that would convey a sense of psychology to his audience," but in fact it was the familiar naked ("realistic") face that emerged at this time as something that conveyed meaning, and that meaning—to be precise—was "interiority." Interiority was not something that had always existed, but only appeared as the result of the inversion of a semiotic constellation. No sooner had it appeared than it was seen as "expressed" by the naked face. In the process of this transformation the meaning of dramatic performance was reversed. That Ichikawa Danjūrō was originally thought of as a poor actor was symbolic of the change, as is the story of Futabatei Shimei, who switched to *genbun itchi* because he "didn't know how to write." Before Ichikawa audiences had found a vibrant meaning in the doll-like movements of the actors and in the masked face, the face as a figure; now they had to search for meaning "behind" the actor's ordinary face and gestures. Although they were by no means radical, Ichikawa's "reforms" were substantive enough to influence Tsubouchi Shōyō to envision the reform of the novel.

It should by now be clear that the reforms in drama and *genbun itchi* were of the same nature. I have defined *genbun itchi* as a reform of writing motivated by the aim of abolishing *kanji*. Writing and voice were originally distinct from each other, for as André Leroi-Gourhan has demonstrated, it was not painting that gave birth to writing but hieroglyphic writing that gave birth to painting. With the evolution of phonetic writing where voice and script combined, the memory of the origins of writing was lost. Moreover, in the case of Japan, there was a unique experience of the ideograph which was different even from that of the Chinese. Like the decorated face, the Chinese character has a direct, figural meaning. Once a phonocentric ideology of language had been adopted, however, even when *kanji* were used their meaning was subordinated to sound. Similarly, the conception of the face came to be that of the naked face as a kind of phonetic cipher. Meaning was then constituted as an inner voice recorded and expressed by the face. The Japanese discovery of realism and interiority was thus profoundly linked to the *genbun itchi* movement.

## 4

We can see the clearest articulations of a phonocentric ideology in the movement to reform poetry. Yamada Bimyō's *Treatise on Japanese Verse* (*Nihon inbunron*, 1890) is particularly noteworthy. Yamada attempted to establish a basis for Japanese verse writing by analyzing Japanese phonology. His argument, in brief, introduced a concern for stressed and unstressed syllables into an area which previously had been seen only to be a matter of *hyōshi* (often translated "rhythm"), the alternation of 5 syllable and 7 syllable lines. Yamada maintained that a composition in which stressed and unstressed syllables were not skillfully balanced could not be called verse, even if it was composed of alternating 5-7 syllable lines. It is clear that Yamada was simply trying to introduce principles of European poetry. Yet it is significant that as a result of his text a conception of poetry that up until that time had been seen as self-evident was relativized. That is to say, the body as rhythm was relativized. For if initially the "face" was the decorated face, and the "body" was the rhythmic body, what was discovered in the reform of poetry was a Cartesian conception of the body as mechanism. This is strikingly suggested by the following passage from the essay "The Future of Haiku," in Masaoka Shiki's *Talks on Haiku from the Otter's Den* (*Dassai Shooku Haiwa*, 1892).

> A certain contemporary scholar conversant with mathematics has said: "It is evident from the theory of permutations that there is a numerical limit to the tanka and haiku of Japan, which are confined to a mere twenty or thirty syllables." In other words, sooner or later, the tanka . . . and haiku will reach their limit. He says that even now it has reached the point where not a single new poem is possible. . . .
>
> Although one may place the blame on the many mediocre teachers and poets who have appeared in this age of decline, part of it must certainly be assigned to the intrinsically narrow confines of the tanka and haiku. You may ask, "If that is so, when will the end come for the haiku and tanka?" And I reply: "I can't, of course, predict the time of their total extinction, but speaking approximately, I think the haiku has already played itself out. Even assuming that the end is yet to come, we can confidently expect it to come sometime during the Meiji period. The tanka allows more syllables than the haiku and thus, from the mathematical standpoint, the number of tanka possible is far greater than that of haiku. However, only words of the classical language may be used in the tanka and since there are extremely few, the

> tanka is in fact even more limited than the haiku. I conclude, therefore, that the tanka has been practically played out prior to the Meiji period.[11]

Shiki's thesis, widely referred to as the "thesis that *tanka*'s days are numbered" paradoxically revealed the secret of *tanka*'s long life. This was, of course, rhythm. Short verses, whose content if rendered in prose would have been trivial, took on meaningfulness through rhythm. To Shiki, however, this was merely a matter of syllable count. By his time, *tanka* and *haiku* had come to be seen in terms of a linear, phonetic script. Shiki's advocacy of sketching was not unrelated to this, for an ideology of "copying" becomes possible only when the human body has been liberated from the figural and from rhythm. This is why Takahama Kyoshi, while acknowledging that Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Temper of Students in our Times* represented the "emergence of a kind of realism," nevertheless found it "fettered by the 5-7 rhythm." Shiki's concept of sketching, moreover, could be extended to the prose writings called *shaseibun* because in essence it was a liberation from rhythm, which Shiki acknowledged in poetry only as an object to be manipulated. When Shiki turned to traditional poetry in his "Tanka's Days are Numbered," however, he had to pose the fundamental question of what enabled poetry to be poetry.

And what of the relationship between the rhythm of classical poetry and writing? Since the publication of "Eight Treatises on Japanese Poetry" (*Kokka Hachiron*) by the National Learning scholar Kadano Arimaro, a distinction has been drawn between poems which were chanted aloud and written poems. Motoori Norinaga proposed that the poetry in the *Kojiki* had been chanted and should be regarded as the prototypical form of poetry in Japan. Yoshimoto Takaaki, however, following the assertion of Kamo no Mabuchi, states that far from being the origin of Japanese poetry, these poems in the *Kojiki* represent a fairly high level of development.

> One may discover many words which sound quite unfamiliar among Shinto *norito* (prayers), for example, *iisoku*, *kamunaobi*, *oonaobi*. Initially, these were spoken words, but as the rituals were codified Chinese characters were applied to the words phonetically, and they were written as 言排　神直備　大直備 . These characters were, in their turn, read as Japanese, as *iisoku*, *kamunaobi*, and *oonaobi*. Although this process may seem rather insignificant, it suggests one facet of the profound influence that Chinese characters—figures used to suggest

> either meaning or pronunciation—had on early versification. *Iisoku, kamunaobi, oonaobi* were indigenous words used in formal ceremonies, at any rate until the time when the *Shukushi* was compiled. The *soku* in *iisoku* was probably a widely used familiar word. The word *naobi* referred to religious rituals, or the places in which they were performed. *Kamu* or *oo* expressed respect. In this period, it is thought that Japanese freely combined existing words into new words and ascribed them meanings. When these words were adopted for use in official ceremonies and transcribed with Chinese characters, however, the Chinese characters as graphic figures endowed them with a kind of new meaning. It was in this manner that the process of endowing indigenous words with sacred meanings began, and if we interpret this sacralization, in turn, as an impulse toward versification, we can see that we already have here the germs of poetry. Standardization of phrases and codification of laws further intensified the impulse to versification. For this involved arranging words and phrases in lines, which is a kind of versification.[12]

On the basis of this noteworthy formulation of Yoshimoto's, we may posit that it was the adoption of Chinese characters which stimulated the development of poetry and versification. The poetry in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi* which Norinaga saw as the prototype of Japanese verse represented, rather, an advanced stage which could only have evolved through the mediation of Chinese characters. Although it is true that these poems were chanted aloud, their composition was made possible only through the use of script. As Yoshimoto observes, "Perhaps Norinaga did not have an awareness of a qualitative difference between 'written words' and 'uttered words.' He did not perceive that vocalization of a written word and oral speech which precedes the development of writing are utterly different."[13]

Yoshimoto's observations help bring into view the topology on which Masaoka Shiki was standing. Shiki assumed that writing was phonetic in nature. The written word for him was merely a means of transcription, and Chinese characters were one kind of means. His position was therefore different from that of the National Learning scholars who attempted to expunge Chinese characters while nevertheless remaining under the sway of those characters through their concern for rhythm itself. Norinaga's work for this reason remains within the canon of classical poetics which made the *Kokinshū* the standard for poetic composition. Shiki had no interest at all in

the *Kokinshū*. On the other hand, writing itself was no longer an issue for Shiki. It had been reduced to a process of transcription.

My own concern, however, has been to consider the kind of inversion of semiotic constellation which makes transcription possible. In order for us to assume it to be natural that things exist and the artist merely observes them and copies them, "things" must first be discovered. But this requires the repression of the signification, or figurative language (Chinese characters) that precedes "things," as well as the existence of a language which is supposedly transparent. It is at this point that "interiority" is constituted.

## 5

The theme of the exploration of the modern self, however diverse its articulations, dominates discussions of modern Japanese literature. Yet it is laughable to speak of this modern self as if it were purely a mental or psychological phenomenon. For this modern self is rooted in materiality and comes into existence—if I may put it this way—only by being established as a system. What I want to emphasize is the systematicity of the very "inner self" that is usually seen as challenging systems. In explaining literary developments from as early as 1890 on, for example, Japanese critics have relied on an opposition between "politics and literature" (*seiji to bungaku*), but since the historicity of this opposition is never questioned, it is a sterile paradigm.

Accordingly, I have attempted to reverse the assumption that it was the needs of the inner self that gave rise to the *genbun itchi* movement and to propose instead that it was the formation of the *genbun itchi* system that made possible the so-called "discovery of the self." Not to do so would be to fail to historicize, and indeed to further legitimate, a metaphysics which sees the existence of a "self" and its "expressions" as natural and self-evident. Those, for example, who discuss *The Drifting Clouds* and *The Dancing Girl* in terms of "inner struggle" and so forth disregard the issue of writing, as if it were something quite separate from interiority. I want to stress that it is *genbun itchi* that sustains this very illusion: that there is an inner self existing in and of itself.

Earlier I have described how modern landscape was discovered, not by those with an interest in the external world, but by

introverts who had turned their backs on that world. I was not proposing that such introverted individuals existed *and then* discovered landscape, nor was I speaking of a psychological process. Certainly the Edo period had its full share of introverts and those who were excessively self-conscious. What I mean by the "discovery of interiority" is something different.

According to van den Berg, the first landscape painted simply as a landscape in Europe was the "Mona Lisa," in which for the first time the human was presented as alienated from the landscape, and vice versa.[14] But we must be wary of the question which seeks the meaning of the Mona Lisa's smile. We must not regard this as expressing some kind of interiority. For here, too, the case is the reverse of what we assume. It was because for the first time in the Mona Lisa the naked face, not the face as signified, appeared, that some kind of inner meaning expressed by this face has been incessantly posited. Interiority was not expressed here—the naked face, suddenly disclosed, began to signify interiority. This inversion took place contemporaneously to, and in the same manner as, the liberation of "pure landscape," from the figurative.

Da Vinci was of course a scientist, but in his case to be both a scientist and a painter was in no way contradictory. Interiority was profoundly linked to modern science. Descartes's conception of "extension," by which he referred to the object of thought, similarly conceived of the "landscape as alienated from the human." Extension for Descartes was unrelated to the medieval conception of figurative space which was assigned meaning in qualitative terms. Descartes's *cogito* belonged solely to the realm of extension. Thus the discovery of interiority must be differentiated from a concept of simple self-consciousness or consciousness of "existence." Existentialists have claimed Pascal as their predecessor but Pascal, himself a distinguished scientist, was expressing fear of the space discovered by modern astronomy when he wrote in the *Pensées* of the terror inspired in him "by the silence of infinite space." Medieval society had no conception of an infinite space. Moreover, Pascal's query, "Why am I here, and not there?" was a modern one, for such a question could not have arisen in the stratified world of medieval cosmology where "here" and "there" were qualitatively different spaces. Medieval theology could account for why one was where one was, in the same way that members of Edo society did not question their membership in the samurai or farmer class. Such a question is only possible within the context of a homogeneous

sense of space, a bourgeois society. Pascal's so-called existentialism was therefore inextricably linked to the worldview of modern science and distinct from something like St. Augustine's concept of existence. Although modern existentialist thought has attempted to make existence its starting point, it has repressed awareness of the conditions which make this mode of philosophical inquiry possible. Those who begin with interiority or inner consciousness are oblivious of the historical origins of their project.

It is said that in his final years Husserl attempted to examine the basis for interiority rather than take it as a starting point. For example, the thesis that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west accords with both our perceptions and our experience. Copernicus adopted heliocentrism because it made it possible to coordinate observable movements of the planets with mathematical calculations. The introduction of analytic geometry by Galileo set the stage for this rejection of ordinary, experiential actuality. Scientific objectivity was guaranteed solely on the basis of transcendental principles of mathematics; perception had already been rendered irrelevant. It is thus mathematics and not experience that verifies our "objective" statement that the earth revolves around the sun. Because we have become oblivious to this, we speak of such things as if they were purely objective matters. It was this very attitude that Husserl was addressing in his work *The Crisis of Western Science*. Husserl wrote, "But we must note something of the highest importance that occurred even as early as Galileo: the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is even experienced and experienceable . . . our everyday life-world."[15] Husserl was questioning the very nature of the transcendental in mathematics. But he was not investigating it as a historian, since the discipline of history, as a Western science, may itself be seen as based on a kind of mathematical logic. To put it quite simply, when diagrams which had originally been developed for practical use in measurement were made the basis for the abstract principles of geometry, transcendental mathematics evolved. The origin of the transcendental lay in the repression of the figure. This was not the case in mathematics alone. As Jacques Derrida has demonstrated, in Western history the repression of the figure led to the privileging of the voice, and it was this kind of phonocentrism that was inherent in Husserl's phenomenology. Against this background we can see that, far more than the readily apparent

introduction of modern science or the systems of the modern state, it was *genbun itchi* that had profound implications for Meiji Japan, even while its real nature has remained hidden.

I have already referred to Yanagita Kunio's remark that Japanese travel literature, as a "stringing together of poems and lyrical essays," was deficient in the documentation of fact and "of no scientific value." Years later Sakaguchi Ango echoed this sentiment. In doing research for a work on Oda Nobunaga, Sakaguchi noted that the reports of Western missionaries, beginning with Frois, were quite objective and detailed in their descriptions while Japanese historical chronicles were general, abstract, and completely lacking in concreteness. Sakaguchi commented, "When I compared the two types of writing, it seemed to me that the European method, which consisted of observing and describing in a very realistic manner the specificity that can only belong to the individual object, to each object in and of itself, had enormous documentary value."

It goes without saying that the "scientific" and "documentary" value that Yanagita and Sakaguchi recognized were attributes of modern science. Perhaps documentation has been even more important to modern science than mathematics. The following passage from anthropologist Konrad Lorenz's *Eight Great Sins of Civilized Man* suggests this.

> The so-called exactness of scientific research has nothing whatever to do with the complexity and the integration level of its subject; it is dependent only on the self-criticism of the scientist and the purity of his methods. To classify physics and chemistry as "exact sciences" is to insult all the others. Well-known sayings, such as that all research is science insofar as it involves mathematics, or that science consists in "measuring what is measurable, and making measurable what is not measurable," are epistemologically the greatest nonsense that ever came from the lips of those who should know better.
>
> Although these pseudowise dicta are demonstrably false, their influence still dominates the picture of science. It is *fashionable* to make use of methods as physicslike as possible, irrespective of whether or not they promise success in the investigation of the particular object. Every science, including physics, begins with description, goes on to classification of the phenomena described, and, only from there, to abstraction of the laws prevailing in them.[16]

If we discard the preconceptions that Lorenz criticizes here, we may concede that when Shiki and Kyoshi went out to the fields with

notebooks to sketch they were acting as true scientists. At the same time, a certain kind of inversion was already latent in their obsession with documentation, the inversion that produced the notion of a transcendental interiority. They were not themselves "inward personalities," but their practices established a basis for interiority.

Meiji Japanese absorbed many European ideas, and I would not deny that their influence was significant. But the significance of material practices went far beyond that of European ideas. As evidence, I would like to suggest that the prototypical manifestations of Japanese interiority did not appear until the end of the third decade of Meiji, when *genbun itchi* was solidly established, indeed, so firmly entrenched that Japanese writers were no longer even conscious of it.

## 6

Kunikida Doppo's *Musashi Field* (*Musashino*, 1898) has become known as a text which severed the connection between landscape and "famous sites." A "famous site" was nothing other than a place imbued with historical and literary significance. However, Doppo accomplished an even more radical form of severing when he wrote about his experiences participating in the government-sponsored development of Hokkaido in 1895 in "On the Banks of Sorachi River" (*Sorachigawa no kishibe*, 1902).

> As someone who grew up in the densely settled Chūbu area in the mainland, accustomed to landscapes in which both hills and fields had been thoroughly absorbed by the products of human labor, how could I find myself gazing on Hokkaido without my heart leaping up? They say Sapporo is the Tokyo of Hokkaido, but I found its scenery completely bewitching.
>
> No sooner had dusk settled on the woods than an autumnal rain came pattering down from branches high above. It stopped as suddenly as it had begun, returning the woods to hushed silence.
>
> I gazed intently for some time into the darkened woods. Where was society, where was the "history" that humankind transmitted so triumphantly? At this moment, in this place, a person could feel only that he or she was in the charge of "life" itself, of a single breath of nature. A Russian poet once wrote that, sitting in the forest, he felt the shadow of death approach, and it is true. And also that "when the last human being vanishes from the earth it will not cause a single tree leaf to tremble."[17]

This passage by Doppo bears out Marx's observation that what we see as "nature" is always already humanized or Yanagita's insight that landscape is "a human creation." For we find in Doppo a viewpoint that discovers history, not in the realm of politics or human activity, but in what Yanagita has called "the commingling of humanity and nature." It is a viewpoint made possible by discovering landscape beyond literature. This radical scission underlies the following position articulated in *Musashino Field*.

> There are of course no bare mountains in Musashino, but the countryside undulates like the surge of the ocean. At first glance, Musashino looks like a level plain, but it is set high and here and there are shallow depressions and valleys. At the bottom of these valleys you usually find paddy fields whereas the higher spots which are normally divided between field and wood are given over to dry fields. The plain is so constructed that you might get mile upon mile of woods or fields or perhaps just a little of each so that a wood is surrounded by fields and sometimes the fields are surrounded on three sides by woods. The farmers have their dwellings scattered about over the plain and divide the fields among them. Fields and woods are so confusedly scattered that sometimes you enter a wood and come straight out into fields again. This is a special feature of Musashino. Unlike the pristine nature of Hokkaido's vast plains and great forests, here life and nature exist side by side, giving Musashino a flavor all its own.[18]

Doppo asks "Where else could one find such a pleasant mingling of wood and field, a place where life and nature are so thoroughly intertwined?"[19] What Kunikida Doppo calls "life" is what Yanagita terms "hidden reality"—the life of Yanagita's *jōmin* or common people. Yanagita's ethnology should be seen, not as the importation of ethnology from the West, but as a "discovery" sustained by the same kind of process through which Doppo discovered landscape.

"Observation" and "factual description" are two other qualities that have been noted in Doppo's *Musashino Field*. For example, Doppo delineates regional boundaries. But what is significant about the way he does this may be remarked in the following comment. "I consider that Tokyo lies at the heart of Musashino, but that we must leave out, because it is impossible to imagine what it must have been like in days of old, when now it is filled with . . . busy streets and soaring government offices,"[20] Doppo writes. For Doppo, Tokyo's political history is simply one facet of the history of Musashino as

a relationship between human and nature. To discover landscape also meant to discover history.

The newness of Kunikida Doppo's work lay in the severing of connections that the foregoing passages illustrate. Doppo himself described it this way: "I began my first compositions without having absorbed either the sensibility of Edo literature or the influence of Messieurs Kōyō and Rohan, and almost completely lacking in contact with established literary society. Yet there must have been some stimulus. When I asked myself what it could have been, I concluded it was Wordsworth."[21] But I would emphasize that the act of writing itself had greater significance for Doppo's evolution than what went on in his mind. As was the case with Futabatei Shimei, whatever European influences may have been at work, the process of writing itself was a different matter. Surprisingly, in *Musashino Field* it is the landscape descriptions of Turgenev, and not Wordsworth, that Doppo cites repeatedly, moreover, in the translation by Futabatei Shimei.

It was a new mode of representation that brought landscape into being. By contrast to *The Drifting Clouds* and *The Dancing Girl*, in Doppo's work the sense of being distanced from writing seems already to have disappeared. Doppo accepted the new writing as natural, and because he had undergone this process of familiarization, we can speak of Doppo as possessing an interiority "that could be expressed." Words for Doppo were no longer to be identified as written or spoken, for they had already sunk deeply into interiority. Or rather, it was only when language was perceived this way that interiority could be seen as something self-sufficient, immediate, and present. The origins of interiority are simultaneously repressed from memory.

Let us consider in a similar light the decisive influence of Rousseau on the People's Rights movement of the second decade of Meiji. What did that influence consist of? Who was Rousseau? Rousseau was a sign with many different and conflicting meanings: the Rousseau who discovered landscapes in the Alps which up until that time had been seen as nothing but an obstacle to travelers; Rousseau the political philosopher; Rousseau, the author of *The Confessions*. In his book *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, Starobinski offers one lucid perspective on the polyvalent text that was Rousseau. He addresses the issue of transparency.

For Rousseau, Starobinski observed, only self-consciousness could be transparent. Only what was immediately present to one-

self was transparent, the rest was derivative, ambiguous, opaque. Rousseau's anger toward the opaque and his glorification of the primitive consciousness in which he posited the qualities of transparency and immediacy suffused his writings on politics and culture. It was not surprising, then, that Rousseau's attack on obscurity was first directed to writing, a derivative phenomenon which undermined immediacy and transparency. But it was not oral speech itself that Rousseau privileged. It was the hearing of one's own voice, the inner voice, that constituted transparency for Rousseau. As Starobinski writes, in this sense, "The relation between writer and language . . . is no longer a relation of exteriority. The writer is his emotion, and emotion is immediately language. Writer, language, and emotion cannot be distinguished."[22]

This is how Starobinski defined the newness of Rousseau.

> Only now does the full novelty of Rousseau's work become apparent. Language has become a locus of immediate experience even as it remains an instrument of mediation. It demonstrates two things: that the writer is bound up with his inner "source" and that he needs to face judgement, that is, to win justification in the universal. This new language has nothing in common with classical "discourse." It is far more imperious and far more precarious. Language *is* the authentic self, yet at the same time it reveals that perfect authenticity has still not been achieved, that plenitude remains to be conquered, and that no possession is secure without the consent of others. No longer does the literary work call forth the assent of the reader to a truth that stands as a "third person" between the writer and his audience; the writer singles himself out through his work and elicits assent to the truth of his personal experience. Rousseau discovered these problems; he truly invented a new attitude, which became that of modern literature (beyond the sentimental romanticism for which he has been blamed). He was the first to experience the dangerous compact between the ego and language, the "new alliance" in which man makes himself the word.[23]

Kunikida Doppo's freshness was no doubt analogous to Rousseau's. His "obscurity" was the product of his "transparency," of precisely the kind of "new fusion" in which subjectivity and language were not exterior to each other. The short story "Death" (*Shi*, 1898), written after the suicide of a friend, is suggestive of the nature of Doppo's "obscurity."

> The doctor's attitude toward "death" is extremely cool, but I cannot believe that those of you gathered here are much different. Once one understands the physiological processes involved in the transition from life to death "death" is no longer mysterious. Once the cause of the suicide is discovered the matter will have been settled and there will be nothing left to wonder at.
>
> As I was thinking all this, I had the sense that I was enclosed in a kind of membrane, and that my perceptions of all existence were somehow distanced by that single layer of skin. My anguished self believes, even now, that if I cannot confront facts and phenomena directly, face to face, then neither god nor truth nor beauty exists, they are simply an empty game. This is all that I can believe.[24]

We find even more pronounced examples of Doppo's sense of interiority in the work "Beef and Potatoes" (*Gyunikū to bareisho*, 1901). The protagonist Okamoto has a "strange desire" to be "surprised." As he puts it, "it is not a desire to penetrate the mysteries of nature but to be astonished by mysterious nature . . . not a desire to understand the secret of death but to be astonished by the fact of death," not faith itself "but a desire to be so tormented by the mysteries of life in this universe that I can never be at peace without faith." We find in Doppo a sense that the self is severed from the self. This gives rise to opacity, "a kind of membrane." For Doppo, to be astonished is to break out of that membrane and arrive at transparency. The illusion that there is something like a "true self" has taken deep root. It is an illusion that is established when writing has come to be seen as derivative and that voice which is most immediate to the self, and which constitutes self-consciousness, is privileged. The psychological person, who begins and ends in interiority, has come into existence.

## 7

Modern Japanese literature could be said to have attained spontaneity in writing for the first time in Kunikida Doppo's work. This spontaneity was linked to a sense that interiority and self-expression were self-evident. I have treated this as a product of the writing system known as *genbun itchi*. Interiority is brought into being through a sense of the presence of one's own voice, to which one listens. Jacques Derrida has defined this phenomenon

in the West as phonocentrism, with its basis in a phonetic script or alphabet. Since Plato's time the written word has been devalued as a mere instrument for transcribing the voice, and the privileging of the voice as presence to consciousness has been the distinctive feature of Western metaphysics.

By now the implications of *genbun itchi* should be quite clear. As I have repeatedly stressed, it consisted in the repression of the figurative, of Chinese characters. We can now understand why Natsume Sōseki, although he was deeply immersed in Western literature, nevertheless remained stubbornly attached to *kanbungaku*—not to those forms of premodern literature represented by court poetry, which were written in phonetic Japanese. Although his whole being was submerged in an interiority from which there was no exit, Sōseki still sought a world beyond that of linear, phonetic speech, a world where the meaning of writing was polysemic and radial. It is a world that has become difficult for us even to imagine. As André Leroi-Ghouran has written, "Homo sapiens has spent the longest portion of its evolutionary history employing modes of thought which have now become remote to us. Yet these modes of thought form the basis for major areas of our behavior. Because in our lives we carry on unitary forms of linguistic activity in which sounds are transcribed according to a phonetic system of writing, we can no longer conceive of modes of expression in which thought is recorded through radial structures."[25]

By "we" Ghouran of course refers to Westerners, but this already includes us, Japanese. When we examine the literature of the third decade of Meiji, we have to imagine an "interiority" which did not really exist at the time. As a system, "interiority" was not, in fact, inside us, but rather we who were incorporated within it. Literary scholars who discuss the modern self in "The Dancing Girl" forget that it was written in the classical style. They forget that what they are discussing is first and foremost a text, not "self-expression." Indeed, the theme of interiority was not deepened by Ōgai in any fundamental way after he wrote "The Dancing Girl." In "Delusions" (*Mōsō*, 1901), for example, Ōgai made the following observations about himself. "Although I have contemplated the physical pain involved in death, it is not the pain of the annihilation of the ego as Westerners conceive of it." He writes,

> Westerners think of a culture which does not fear death as barbaric. Then I must be what Westerners conceive of as a barbarian. When I

> reflect on this it also occurs to me that when I was a child both of my parents instructed me from time to time that since I was a member of a samurai household I had to be able to commit suicide (*seppuku*). I remember thinking then that it would be physically painful but that I would have to endure that pain. This must make me all the more a so-called barbarian. Yet I still cannot accept the Western view as entirely correct.
>
> I don't mean to imply that I am completely indifferent to the fact that my ego will disappear. I regret that I will die without ever having a clear sense of what the ego is or knowing it, although supposedly I possess one. This is truly a shame! It is what Confucian scholars describe as "living in drunkenness, dying in a dream." Yet while this strikes me as a shame and regrettable I am also filled with a keen sense of emptiness. It is a loneliness I simply cannot express. This, for me, is the source of agony, the source of pain.

Perhaps Ōgai's attitude here seems similar to Doppo's "desire to be astonished." But if Doppo's opaque "membrane" can be described as somehow internal, for Ōgai it is external. In Ōgai's writing the "self" has no substance, it is an "assemblage of threads pulled together from different directions," precisely what Marx described in *The German Ideology* as "a totality of diverse relationships." Ōgai's pain is the reverse of Doppo's and derives from the fact that he has no illusion of a tangible, immediate self as conceived of in Western thought.

Ōgai's deepest desires were therefore realized in the historical fiction where he wrote of samurai characters. In these works Ōgai tried to thoroughly eliminate any trace of the "psychological." In doing this Ōgai had something in common with the later Sōseki who wrote fiction in the morning and lost himself in a world of Chinese poetry and ink-brush painting in the afternoon. For both men "literature" must have retained a certain unfamiliarity; both must have developed a perspective which rejected the concept of "expression." The mainstream of modern Japanese literature continued along lines set forth by Doppo rather than by Ōgai or Sōseki. All the germs of the literature which was to be produced by the next generation were contained in the writing of Doppo, who died so prematurely. It was Doppo who produced the first work of confessional literature in "An Honest Account" (*Azamukazaru no ki*, 1893–97). Not only was there his relationship with Yanagita Kunio, but he was spoken of by Tayama Katai in "Doppo, Man of Nature," as "Kunikida, the father of the carnal novel," and later by Akuta-

gawa Ryūnosuke (who compared him with Strindberg, Nietzsche, and Tolstoy) as "the poet who could vividly understand the mentality of the poor laborer killed by a train."[26] Shiga Naoya, too, was clearly under the influence of Doppo when he began his career as a writer. That Doppo, like Rousseau, has seemed to speak with many voices (it is for this reason that controversy has always surrounded the issue of whether to classify him as "romantic" or "naturalist") is because Doppo was indeed standing for the first time on a new horizon. As Paul Valéry observed, the person who discovers a new way of looking at a single phenomenon will immediately discover a host of other phenomena. Edgar Allen Poe took the basic form of the detective story to its limits, yet it was his bold experiment in exploring the consciousness of poetic composition, not crime, that constituted his advance. The multiplicity of Doppo has nothing to do with which literary school he belonged to, but results from his having been the first Japanese writer to attain "transparency."

## Afternote to Chapter 2, 1991

The problem of *genbun itchi* is considerably more complex than I have shown it to be here. Let me discuss just one aspect of this. I have focused only on the question of whether Futabatei Shimei, for example, chose the *da* or *desu* endings, but what was more important was that Futabatei used a fixed form, the past tense *ta*, to conclude his sentences. Of course, the Japanese *ta* form does not, strictly speaking, express a past tense. *Ta* unifies into a single form the many complex suffixes used in *bungo*, the classical literary language, to correspond to what in English would be the perfect, past perfect, as well as other tenses. In the passage from Mori Ōgai's *Dancing Girl* that I cite, for example, there is a diversity of suffixes that creates an effect quite different from a *genbun itchi* style in which all sentences conclude with *ta*.

Why was it that this diversity had to be sacrificed? *The Dancing Girl* is written in the first person, with its narrator as protagonist. This was epoch-making at the time. But this feature did not constitute the kind of third-person "objective narration" that was indispensable for the modern novel. In other words Ōgai does not here present us with a mode of fiction in which the narrator is only an implicit, rather than explicit, element in the text. The use of the *ta* form was required to bring such narration into exis-

tence. The premodern literary suffix *keri*, for example, expresses hearsay. The well-known opening line of each episode in the *Tales of Ise* (c. 950), "Mukashi otoko arikeri" (Long ago there was a man), means that "it is said that there was a man." In other words through the suffix the tale announces itself as narration and indicates the presence of a narrator. Once *ta* is used, the narrator's presence is not made explicit, even though the function of the narrator remains. Narrator and protagonist become subtly fused. It was the use of the *ta* suffix which produced this form so familiar to readers of modern fiction. Thus *ta* not only signifies the past tense, it makes the narrator a neutral feature existing on the meta-level of the text. This produces a sense of "reality" in the text. It also makes possible a temporality from which the development of events in the tale can be surveyed retrospectively from a single point. Narration takes the form of retrospection, in which the narrator and the interiority of the protagonist are subtly fused. The use of *ta* was indispensable in bringing about this neutralization, or effacement, of the narrator.

The Japanese *ta* may be compared to the use of the preterite in French. Barthes described the preterite in the following way: "Even from the depth of the most sombre realism, it has a reassuring effect because, thanks to it, the verb expresses a closed, well-defined, substantival act, the Novel as a name; it escapes the terror of an expression without laws: reality becomes slighter and more familiar, it fits within a style, it does not outrun language."[27] *Ta*, then, has to do with the nucleus of narration in the modern novel. Third-person narration could not emerge until the narrator had been neutralized by the use of *ta*.

Sōseki deliberately resisted the use of this *ta*. He perceived the use of *ta* for sentence endings as the basic posture of the modern novel. Sōseki's fictional writing began with the composition of "sketching literature" or *shaseibun* writings, which generally employed the present progressive tense and which featured an overt narrator. This type of writing was pioneered by Masaoka Shiki, but I would like to make some broad amendations to the discussion of Shiki presented in the foregoing chapter.

The concept of "sketching" or *shasei* developed by Shiki should not be confused with a notion of "realism" that had already become conventionalized by Shiki's own time. The originality of Shiki was to have discovered a kind of realism in that shortest of Japanese verse forms, the haiku. Shiki himself tells us that he studied

sketching when learning to paint (oil paintings). But everything Shiki describes as "like sketching" (as "realistic") or as "painterly" in haiku has to do, in fact, with language. For example, Shiki praised the painterly quality of haiku by Buson and of *waka* poetry by Minamoto Sanetomo (1192–1298), but what he meant by this was that we find many Chinese ideographs in their verses and that nouns predominate while particles are few. Shiki discussed the decadence of *waka* thus: "The decadence of waka is due to its failure to develop a new style, and this failure to develop a new style is due to a paucity of vocabulary."[28] For this reason Shiki advocated that "elegant diction, vulgar diction, Western words, and Chinese words should all be used as necessary."[29] It is clear that for Shiki, what was more important than sketching as a concept was language and linguistic diversity. This is really the basis of "sketching literature," or *shaseibun*. Sōseki alone, composing in multiple and diverse genres, demonstrated an awareness of this. But for the most part "sketching" was understood in terms of an orientation toward "realism" (*shajitsu*) based on a monotonous language. It was Takahama Kyoshi, who had originally aspired to becoming a novelist, who encouraged this tendency.

It was extremely significant that Shiki's point of departure was haiku. Sōseki had similar views on haiku, such as the following: "Although it is regrettable that no literature exists that adequately represents the Japanese people, in some senses we might say that, contrary to expectation, a literature which uplifts and refines human beings to an even greater extent than Western literature is not lacking here: this is that haiku literature which is unique to Japan and which is also a literature of the common people."[30] The search for a literature "worthy of the Japanese people," a "literature of the common person", and furthermore the discovery of these very qualities in haiku, was common to both Shiki and Sōseki, who had been close friends since their university days. Shiki started out attempting to reform haiku and subsequently became involved in reforming *waka* and prose writing. His criticism of *waka*, however, already emerges in the book *Principles of Haiku* (*Haikai taiyō*), which he published in 1895. Actually, the very fact that Shiki proposed that haiku poetry be seen as representing the Japanese poetic tradition since the *Manyōshū* constituted a critical stance. But Shiki was not obsessed with the specificity of haiku. "Haiku is one part of literature. Literature is one part of art. This is why the standard for art should be the standard for literature, and the standard for literature should

be the standard for haiku. In other words, we should use the same standard in evaluating painting, sculpture, music, drama, poetry, and prose narrative."[31] What Shiki asserts here is that haiku is "one part" of art (or beauty) and that as an artistic practice—regardless of whether it is Eastern or Western—it adheres to the same principles. Furthermore, although each haiku is rooted in a discrete feeling, it is susceptible to intellectual analysis and thus capable of being criticized. Especially in the case of something like haiku, there is a tendency for people either to abandon it in its particularity or to privilege it through the development of exclusionary attitudes on the part of haiku poets themselves. This has also been true of *waka*, which Shiki later criticized even more vehemently. Practitioners of *waka* will probably defend it against its critics by claiming that it possesses a subtle, mysterious quality that cannot be analyzed. But this kind of argument is not only made in relation to *waka* and haiku. Many speak broadly of Japanese literature itself as that which cannot be analyzed or which rejects analysis because it is of a different nature from Western literature. What Shiki asserted was that for the time being this difference should be left behind. It was probably only Sōseki, trying quite literally in his *Theory of Literature* to inquire into the "standards for literature old and new, Eastern and Western," who carried on the legacy of Shiki, who died at the age of thirty-five while Sōseki was in London.

Yet it is in no way contradictory to aspire to the universal while adhering to that which is extremely specific. The two are interdependent. Nevertheless, why did Shiki choose haiku? It was not only because haiku, unlike *waka*, had its origin in what is often called the "early modern" (*kinsei*) Edo society and was an art of the common people. It was because haiku is doubtless the shortest poetic form in the world. To write in the haiku form is to probe to its very limits the poetic nature of language itself. In this sense Shiki's methodology as a critic is a formalist one. This is because the brevity of haiku makes it impossible to critique it purely in terms of meaning or content. In fact, in the West at this time there was no critic who brought language into focus as sharply as Shiki did. Thus it was that the Japanese practice of haiku composition, in its very specificity, could provide a point of departure for inquiring into the nature of the universal.

# 3 Confession as a System

## 1

Modern Japanese literature may be said to have come into existence together with the confessional literary form. Literary confession, however, should not be confused with an act of confession, for in this case it is the form itself that produces the "inner life" that is confessed. For this reason, no matter how often Japanese literature has tried to reject or transcend confession in the narrow sense of the word, the form itself has survived intact and has even thrived on criticism. A binarism persists according to which the inner life that the novelist expresses is seen as independent from the content of the work. Criticism of the "I-novel," for example, has not negated the notion of confession in and of itself. Rather, Japanese critics have objected to the conflation in the Japanese I-novel of the "I" who confesses and the subject of confession. According to their view, although the literary work is a form of self-expression on the part of the author, it should create a world which is different and autonomous from that of the author's "I"; by conflating the author's "I" and the "I" of the work, the Japanese I-novel has failed to create a self-sufficient fictional world. On the basis of such criteria, Futabatei's *Drifting Clouds*, although written as early as the late 1880s, has been deemed to have succeeded far better than many later works in realizing the novel form as it had been defined in the West. Shimazaki Tōson's *Broken Commandment* was another step in the right direction, but the development of the Japanese novel was thrown off course by Tayama Katai's *Futon*—this schema has attained the status of a truism in Japanese literary history.

Yet this schema is premised on several assumptions. One is that there is a "self" in need of expression whose existence precedes that of expression—in other words that a binary distinction can be made between the self that expresses and the content of expression. By now we have extended this binarism to our discussions of premodern literature. We characterize poets of the *Manyōshū* (c. 750) as "naive" yet "direct" in expressing themselves. But it is pure anachronism to find self-expression in these early poems. Poets of the