The language of self, power, meaning: Japanese literature and the cultural boundaries of ideology

James A. WREN (SJSU)
jameswren1@charter.net

Resumo: Entender as expressões idiomáticas utilizadas na representação da individualidade literária como encenações e afirmações retóricas é observar sua construção contextual dentro de variáveis campos de poder e significado inseparáveis das situações específicas e discerníveis, convenções culturalmente específicas que afetam sua narração, em suma, a especificidade do momento histórico. No contexto japonês, a identidade não é claramente a essência unificada implicada pela premissa cartesiana, mas pode ser a apresentação ou a realização de uma localização espaciotemporal de contradição e desunião, um nexo em que múltiplos discursos coincidem temporariamente de maneiras notáveis e discerníveis que apreendemos no *self* abstraído. Mas não basta que nós, como leitores, celebremos na particularidade dessas *performances* como expressões do que é muitas vezes ignorado como "conhecimento local". Em vez disso, devemos questionar o que instituições sociais — sejam elas alienígenas ou indígenas — essas performances abordam. A que convenções elas se opuseram? Que aparato de poder a dialética do olhar coloca em oposição? Pois apenas questionando as estratégias

que ergueram a fachada de limites em geral e uma em particular que criou as ilusões de isolamento do *self* do jogo de relações de poder em obras específicas de auto-representação ficcional, podemos esperar forçar uma maior reconsideração de si mesmos e seus caminhos para o aparecimento. Em muitos aspectos, minha tarefa como membro de uma determinada audiência de leitura foi e sempre será visualizar o impacto global das forças culturais sobre os padrões de auto-representação ficcional e aceitar que a identidade é negociada, aberta, cambiante, ambígua, resultado de significados culturalmente disponíveis e encenações ilimitadas e poderosas destes significados em situações diárias.

Palavras-chave: Pronomes de primeira pessoa. Japonês. Ideologia.

Abstract: To understand the idioms used in representing literary selfhood as enactments and rhetorical assertions is to observe their contextual construction within shifting fields of power and meaning inseparable from the specific and discernible situations, culturally specific conventions affecting their narration, in short, the specificity of historical moment. In the Japanese context, identity is clearly *not* the unified essence implied by the Cartesian premise, but it *can* be the presentation or performance of a spatiotemporal locatedness of contradiction and disunity, a nexus wherein multiple discourses temporarily coincide in remarkable and discernible ways we apprehend in the abstracted self. But it is not enough that we as readers celebrate in the particularity of these performance as expressions of what is often dismissed as "local knowledge." Rather, we must question what social institutions--be they alien or indigenous--these performances address. What conventions did they oppose? What apparatus of power does the dialectic of the gaze set itself in opposition? For only by questioning the strategies that erected the facade of boundedness in general and one in particular that created the illusions of insulating the self from the play of power relations in specific works of fictional self-representation can we hope to force a larger reconsideration of selves and their pathways to emergence. In many ways, my task as a member of a particular reading audience has been and will always be to visualize the overall impact of cultural forces on patterns of fictional self-representation and to accept that identity is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of these meanings in everyday situations.

Keywords: Self-referential pronouns. Japanese. Ideology.

Initial remarks

That the omniscient narrator of Yamada Emi's recent novel *Animaru rojikku* (Animal Logic, 1996) speaks confidently in the first person but is hardly what we might call human seems, circumstantially, to support what Nobel laureate Oe Kenzaburô has prophesied, Cassandra-like, for well over two decades, the irrelevancy of serious fiction in contemporary Japan and the imminent death of *jun bungaku*, pure literature [1]. This unusual voice, a nexus representing a particular moment in the production of narrative forms where ideology, history and culture converge, however, suggests to me just the opposite. The

1 See, for example, Kenzaburô (1986, p.6). A similar concern punctuates his 1986 address at Duke University, reprinted as Kenzaburô (1989); as well as his 1992 series of NHK broadcasts, reprinted in Kenzaburô (1994).

presence of a self-referential AIDS virus on the contemporary Japanese literary scene, on the one hand, demonstrates *de facto* both that the worlds we inhabit are symbolically constructed and that our cultural symbols are endowed with and have the potential for power. On the other, by recalling previous family histories of infection, by recognizing people who share the same fate as its carrier, a black prostitute named Jasmine who walks and works the streets of New York, and by confronting from its limited vantage such difficult social issues as racism, miscegenation, and sexual promiscuity, for example, it underscores a point that Gallimard had tried to get across to his own captive audience, namely that "we are all prisoners of our time and place."[2] How it perceives reality is, this particular equal-opportunity virus confidently chides us time and again, how it lives it. Likewise, the variety of activities, interests, networks and movements that shape its reality determines how it represents itself to us. However much we might deny it, those conventions by which it recognizes its universe of flop houses, casual romps, and racial segregations enable us as readers to assume our current place within our own familiar settings. Erecting both a world uniquely suited to those of us who will populate it and actively fashioning us so that we can, in fact, live there, those conventions we recognize under the rubric of culture are, we are shown rather than told, doubly constructive. More important, all such constructions are necessarily ideological.

   What ought to be immediately obvious from my discussion, the term "culture" as it is most often found in anthropology corresponds closely with my own usage of "ideology." Both alert us to a "whole way of life" in the processual and the potential and simultaneously implicate a kinetic "state of interaction" where any number of factors, the legal and commercial, the technological and artistic, and the moral, contribute to a larger, complex system of values. On closer scrutiny, however, there is at least one significant difference. By justifying and criticizing the fundamental conditions under which a group of people live, cultural conventions are themselves contributed to and arise from another sphere of influence, ideology. In a very real sense, then, culture simultaneously conditions a group sharing the same environment, the same education and life experiences, for example, and, as such, is *not* individually determined, but insofar as it represents at any particular point in time a marvelous synergy of individual responses--

2 Emi (1996); Hwang (1988).

143

discernible movements between personal empowerment and avoidance or willful confrontation, between expressions of overt individualism and collectivism, between discipline and spontaneity, deference and intimacy, and between the masculine and the feminine — it *is* of necessity ideologically bound. What Gordon Childe sees as a discernible artifact at once the concrete expression *and* the embodiment of "human thoughts and ideas," is, Yuri Lotman reminds us, "a text--a complexly structured text, divided into a hierarchy of intricately interconnected texts within texts." Fashioning human environments in their interactions, power, gender, and the like, in short, not only fuel the interdriven dynamo behind the semiotics of a culture. They become it.[3]

Thus, as we speak of the text so, too, are we necessarily speaking of its inherent or internal ideological framework, but in a world where "human thoughts and ideas" exist within a discernible context and are always as much historical as they are rhetorical, ideology is left exposed for what it is: an historical process framed by the very machinations of rhetoric. By boldly applying such a situational approach in this instance, arising from Martin Heidegger's work) to literary theory, for example, Hans-Georg Gadamer reintroduces the notion of culture as text into our discussions of representations; as he does so, he simultaneously divests and disabuses ideology of its universalist pretensions. Put differently, what we abstract as the marvelous, neatly parceled bundle of meaning inherent to a work in general does not suddenly materialize *sui generis* into the world as a finished product but arises, instead, out of the multifaceted, complex relationships between culture and ideology. His argument, furthermore, implies that literature in particular finds its continued existence within any given number of ideological fields, not the least of which is the introduction of difference into personal reading by an individual reader. Existing in time and space and ranging across cultural contexts, it nonetheless does not transcend these dimensions but rather must be perceived through them.

Accepting that literature is inseparable from the totality of culture and cannot be studied divorced from its cultural contexts, ideology included,[4] we are left to question those very characteristics Oe

---

3 For a fuller discussion of the implications of culture, see Williams (1953) and Marcus; Fischer (1986, p. 25-33). My discussion benefits from other approaches to the subject as well, among them Hofstede (1980); Lotman (1994); Childe (1956); Geertz (1980); Marcus; Fischer (1986); Clifford; Marcus (1986); Douglas (1973); and Binford (1972).

4 I am not suggesting that a text can only be read within the cultural contexts within which it arose. On the contrary, I am arguing that any given reading of a text must,

valorizes as "serious" and "relevant" in modern Japanese literature. Put unceremoniously, the hunted, haunted individuals whose arduous labors had freed Japan from two and a half centuries of oppressive isolation and whose thoughts, feelings, and actions now merit our closer scrutiny deviate in no significant ways from a character type originating with the *Sturm und Drang*, with Goethe's Young Werther and Höderlin's Hyperion, for example.[5] Certainly, Japan during the first decade of this century witnessed the emergence and, to differing degrees, the dispersion of a monological idiom of self, based upon the demands and complexities of one's own private being. And just as certain, the resulting *watakushi shôsetsu* loosely "I novel"), the expression de *jeur* of the Naturalist movement as it evolved within a Japanese context, in conjunction with a wide variety of experimentations with first-person representations, provided not only a means to place this newfound self at the center of literary pursuits but also established a viable vehicle by which disenfranchised or marginalized writers might "confirm their isolation" as they "pondered larger questions of human life."(LIPPIT, 1980, p.4)[6] . The most unforgettable characters from the period — the likes of Mori Ogai's schizophrenic, increasingly misanthropic narrators, Natsume Sôseki's hapless vagabond miner-turned-accountant, Mishima Yukio's auto-intoxicated Ko-chan and beyond--exhibit, in accordance with current scholarly prejudices, a monolithic sameness. They are, we are told, heroic figures whose role vis à vis society typically assumed precisely the moral isolation and spiritual autonomy common to Oe's high-brow disaffected rebels. We are virtually never told that such readings of these representations depend upon the most distinct and commanding features of an alien realist practice for their very existence

---

from the beginning, take into account the culture within which it is being read. Certainly, then, my readings of works by the American writers Toni Morrison and Amy Tan, for example, are just as valid and just as insightful as those of my reading peers from Ethiopia or Brazil, Norway or Japan, provided that each of us as readers accounts for the current cultural contexts that affect, indeed define, the process.

5 In fact, Hôlderlin's description of Hyperion in many ways became the standard archetype for the romantic hero, the figure of which has until recently dominated our representations:

> *Der Wildersinn in ihren Sitten vergnügte mich, wie eine Kinderposse, und weil ich von Natur hinaus was über all 'die eingeführten Formen und Bräuche, spielt' ich mit allen, und legte sie an und zog sie aus, wie Fastnachtskleider.*
> (HÖLDERLIN, 1957, p.22)

6 Insofar as the term *watakushi shôsetsu* has come to represent the controlling philosophy of the intellectual life of the late Meiji, its usage implies a complacent assumption of sameness about reading an entire literature from a single perspective.

and that they grant cultural authority to a distant entity from without at precisely that moment when Japan herself was grappling internally with the notions of identity, self, and modernity.

But it is less the characters and their representations than their intricate boundedness with culture and ideology as physical, corporeal, and linguistic sites of multiple and inextricable histories, however, that concern me here. When appropriated and rendered indigenous, twisted to form vibrant new figures for Japanese-styled *Angst* against a background of rapid and uncertain social change, these narratives expose in one way or another the gap between themselves and the cultural milieus into which they were born. Possessed of an alien voice with which they have yet learned to cope, they shape their lives as texts in effect to become the bodies of their learning, the instruments by which they may eventually become the owner of their voices. Concomitantly fixed and trying to find some ever-elusive place within a larger cultural process they still cannot understand, they have little choice but to negotiate unendingly their positions in order to lend some validity to their very "being." Unambiguously chauvinistic, their quest for just such a modern self in the singular, I believe, arrogantly presumes both the existence of a cohesive, self-contained "whole," to be conceived of, grasped, condensed and, through dissection, understood and controlled--or, in the case of writing, articulated within existing frames of knowledge.

It is perhaps helpful to recall at this point in my discussion that this modern, thoroughly Western notion of the individual as a conventional trope is most frequently traced to René Descartes' concept of thinking substance or self-consciousness, constituting as it were one-half of the metaphysical world. From there, the notion of conscious individual substance reaches its fullest development in the writings of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz with the idea of the *monad*, where, metaphysically speaking, individuality is all there is. Sometime later, Johann Gottfried von Herder historicizes the Leibnizian concept of individuality by suggesting that the evolution of the individual monad from culture to personality becomes essential for understanding its identity and not just its formal self-conscious or apperceptive self. Certainly trumpeting the success of Meiji-period *bunmei kaika* ideology as Japan arrived among the "world of civilized nations," this particular act of subjection, I willingly concede, did in fact authorize the emergence of a new cultural hero, the private individual prone to self-

reflection. But as I do so, I acknowledge both that his representation as such is a product of language and that as a representation he reflects the various aspects of an emerging nationalism. If we recall that the State-authorized dictates of *genbun'itchi undô* ostensibly eradicated any vestigial differences reflecting the earlier Tokugawa mind set in favor of a single voice and that this new voice was intended to serve the demands of national construction, we cannot deny that his newfound equality betrays, as Saeki Shôichi suggests, a larger truth at work whereby the "I" assigned to these first-person narrators is "partially" a narrative convention, a medium that enables writers to construct their works within the particularities of their cultural frames. His observations echo those by Tosaka Jun, who as early as 1936 i.e., amidst the Pacific War) argued that, whereas the individual is a cultural construct, prevailing notions of self are reducible to matters of "literary representation." Put differently, however transparent and unmediated, however quotidian and parochial these narratives of everyday life may appear on the surface, their narrators--Saeki describes them as "recognizable individuals" — are rendered intelligible to us as outside readers only via a profound, culturally-sanctioned illusion, namely an image of wholeness premised upon a unified, autonomous self, created within discernable parameters of convention.[7]

Resorting to a contemporary disposable idiom that challenges this premise and exposes the illusion that is the essence of her "being," Sakurai Mikage, the recently orphaned narrator in the first section of Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchin* Kitchen, 1988), muses to herself: "Have I lost my senses, I wondered. It was like being falling-down drunk." "My body," she candidly remarks, "shared no connection with me."[8] Her newfound understanding tacitly confirms that self-awareness makes virtue of necessity, so to speak, as it accounts for the particular historical circumstances and the generative principles that lend unity to its particular cultural contexts. Moreover, insofar as her self-realizations

---

7 Compare Saeki Shôichi (1981, p.76) with Tosaka Jun (1966, p.265). Although they were unable to articulate it as such, both seem to suggest that neither the abstract theoretical self signaled by the Cartesian *cogito* nor the Kantian transcendental ego stands up well in articulations of personal character in Japan. Recent scholarship is only beginning to adddress these shortcomings. See, for example, Odin (1997); and Ames et al. (1993).

8 "*Jibun no kinô ga kowaretaka to omotta. Monosugoku yopparatte iru toki mitai ni, jibun ni kankei nai tokoro de. . . .*" (BANANA, 1988, p. 56). Richard Rorty gives an excellent overview of the problems inherent to Descartes' understanding and the ensuing mind-body problem as it has since been termed. Cf. Rorty (1979, p.17-69, p.131-64); and Deutsch (1992).

rescue modern Japanese literature from the passive category of display discourse by privileging an activist perspective and emphasizing its impact as well as its subversive potential, they require the construction of a poetics of narrative that defamiliarizes, as it accounts for, the importance of narrative voice, not by subordinating or reducing particular characters to the unilateral intentions of their authors — already a commonplace in Japanese literary criticism — but by positioning texts, narrators, and authors into the larger, far more dynamic *poesis* of the culture itself. But perhaps most important, by breaching a point almost completely neglected in discussions of first-person narratives and the emerging concepts of self and selfhood in post-Restoration Japan, her words demonstrate that the very terminology necessary to describing such representations is *not* universally applicable.

The historical moment

Heralded by the restoration of the Emperor Meiji in 1868, Japan embarked upon a tempestuous and dizzying, increasingly vociferous course of profound political and social, economic and intellectual transformations in an attempt to align herself with the modern industrialized West, and her efforts resulted in an eventual shift away from a vertical society with its increasingly overt threats of civil disorder toward the horizontal, no longer inscribed in terms of hierarchy but by the notions of center and periphery. Although it is beyond the scope of my discussion to trace either the historical development of a *Meiji* system of values or to present a cohesive or comprehensive statement on late Meiji culture, it is worthwhile that to recognize that modes of representation, too, underwent equally profound changes. The particular self-reflexive, self-conscious performative spaces we now recognize collectively as modern selfhood *gendai jiga*) are the result of a shift in paradigm, the product of historical and contemporary forces taking hold and fighting for dominance upon the Japanese stage. Just as borders across the nation fell and margins crept forward to become the center, on the personal level, a single person might merge with the Other to cross borders and boundaries and, in doing so, might dare to move from the peripheral to the center, as erstwhile samurai and outcasts alike would try to do. It was equally possible to fall back, out of the limelight and into oblivion. But whatever the case, it was now possible to conceive of an individual standing alone — a "figure of a great soul

living apart," as Thomas Carlyle had observed of this particular form of heroism in its Western manifestations — and, as important, to define him without reference to a certain group. On a theoretical level, as an individual he was free to "find place and subsistence by what the world would please to give him. . . ."(CARLYLE, 1840, p. 182)[9]. But a word of caution is in order here: in practice, this unprecedented degree of freedom often meant the conscious rejection of living older cultural roles and thus manifest itself in a widespread desire to live, to some extent even to invent, new ones. The varied trajectories with which Japanese writers enthusiastically and assiduously experimented to express the dynamics of such a concept resulted in an active search for appropriate modes of expressions, at times bewildering and widely ranging, but always multiplicitious and diverse, and potential. Unwilling to "number the streaks of the tulip," as Johnson might have put it, they did not succumb to a rigid criterion of self imposed from outside but instead used this criterion to embrace extravagantly imaginative conceptions of Japanese selfhood "from the inside." Even as they did so, they were actively fashioning their own cultural history by problematizing the nature and practices of representation in a modern Japanese context.

Riddled with a contradiction that belabors this point, the terminology used to describe these representations, in fact, coexists alongside of a very different set of assumptions according to which the self is culturally conditioned and, as such, enjoys neither individuality nor personal freedom except as consoling illusions. Whether it be Mori Ogai's *kojinshugi* individualism) in his 1911 dramatic scenario *Robinson Kurusô*, or Natsume Sôseki's more frequently recognized usage of the same term, usually traced to a particular lecture given in 1914, as a concept and in the final years of the Meiji a highly negative–laden one) individuality reflects in one sense no more than the culmination of an on–going dialogue that characterized the early decades of the post–Restoration period. But a point that we should not overlook, the expression of such a concept can be found far earlier. In the third book of Ihara Saikaku's *Kôshoku gonin onna* (Five Women Who Loved Love, 1686), for example, when Moemon and Osan flee the household, they are, in effect, exerting their own will, their individuality, as a dangerous expression of their desire to act completely and utterly without regard for others. Clearly, their actions prove their downfall and, ultimately,

9 He first delivered his observations on the hero as "man of letters" in a lecture dated 19 May, 1840.

are responsible for their deaths.[10] Ogai remarks on a similar danger as he translated Henrik Ibsen's verse-drama *Brand* in 1903. Notice how he interprets the plot of this work for his readers:[11]

> . . . . [Brand] seeks the ideal. He does not think twice of sacrificing his wife and children for the sake of what he is seeking. He even destroys himself. Some people have even made the mistake of interpreting Brand as a satire. But in point of fact, Ibsen is absolutely serious; serious in pointing out the way upward. All or nothing--this is Brand's ideal (MORI, 1903, s.p)

And it is squarely within this very same tradition that Omi falls in Mishima Yukio's *Kamen no kokuhaku* Confessions of a Mask, 1949). For once he expresses himself as an individual, by creating a world with its own rules, he is literally expelled from school and excised from the novel, never to be seen from or read about again. In Japanese literature, as in Japanese culture, the belief that overt expressions of individuality eventually lead to unhappiness for all concerned has a long and distinguished history.

Nor do other related expressions fare much better. First coined to express the notion of independence by Fukuzawa Yukichi during the early-Meiji in a series of privately-circulated pamphlets and later gathered as *Gakumon no susume* An Encouragement of Learning), the term *dôkuritsu*, for example, originates with John Stuart Mill's ideal of individuality. The related term *dôitsusei* identity), however, begins to deconstruct itself almost from the beginning, bifurcating as it does into the qualifying terms *dôitsuka*, the identification *with* something, and *dôtei*, the identification of something *as such*.[12] In fact, any adherence to this particular terminology when trying to articulate conceptions of

10 On one level as an example of *ukiyo-zoshi*, a literary genre describing the illusory world of entertainment often completely different from the reality of day-to-day living, *Kôshoku gonin onna* is a novel of amorous men and women whose rollicking adventures provide amusing pictures of seventeenth-century life in the "floating world." On another, it quite clearly underscores the wages of trespassing. Cf. Ihara Saikaku (1991).

11 Compare, for example, the concept of individuality in Mori Ogai, *Robinson Kurusô* (in *Ogai zenshû*, 1971-75, vol. 8, p.331-42) with Natsume Sôseki, (1974). In fact, within the context of his novel *Seinen* (Youth, 1903), Ogai discusses the potential social dangers inherent to Western conceptions of individuality (See Ogai, *Seinen*, in *Ogai zenshû*, vol. 6, p.315-6).

12 Yukichi (1980). Nor should such bifurcations come as a surprise to us, especially since in his own life he experienced their profound effects. We need only recall that the once liberal Fukuzawa had by 1876 become clearly "protectionist" in outlook, a perspective that would affect his approach to Korea with the Kabo Reformation some two decades later.

self and self-realization within the disparate cultural experiences of Japan obscures and thereby erases any native dialogue: the vernacular terms comprising the descriptions of the dyadic relationship of identity — *amaeru* to indulge oneself at another's expense, a process whereby self/Other distinctions are blurred), *wagamama* indulging the self), *amayakasu* to indulge another), and *magokoro* a sensitivity to social context and to the demands of social roles), for example--are stripped of their so-called mimetic impulse.[13] Unfortunately, the introduction of certain Western nuances left the door ajar for the simplistic, even puerile, understanding of identity as the representable awareness of self as self that eventually found its way into and came to characterize the emerging Naturalist trend in Japanese literature.

That is not to say that the Japanese do not and did not possess a notion of self prior to the Restoration. They most certainly do and did. Nor is it to argue that the various culturally-bounded accoutrements of selfhood--*identity* and *individuality*, for example--have no place in descriptions of personal character in Japan, for again they do and did.[14] Rather, we must move beyond simply translating the ideas and transposing the perspectives of one particular cultural and historical setting onto a Japanese context. To illustrate this point, consider the final scene of Ogai's best-known drama Ikutagawa The Ikuta River, 1910). As the young heroine contemplates suicide, a priest appears outside of her window. There, he intones four passages from the *Yuishikiron*, the Buddhist doctrine that all phenomena, Self included, are in essence Mind. Suggesting that all human suffering lies in man's wayward desires, that the five senses are illusory, that the concrete world is not true reality, and that dualities argue for a false doctrine, the sutra sets forth the same doctrine uncompromisingly: that the distinction between Self and Other can only result in inevitable conflict and that the only true concept is a oneness of things, for if all perceived reality is merely Mind, then oppositions are in fact meaningless. That is to say that because all representations of selfhood as commodifications

---

13 Cf. Hisa (1981, p. 249-72); Hajime (1967); Rosaldo (1984); Akira (1986); Rosenberger (1992).

14 Cf. Ogai, *Ikutagawa* (in *Ogai zenshû*, vol. 6, p. 485-500). Defending the presence of a discernible notion of selfhood in women's writings from the Heian period, Richard Bowring's argument holds true for the modern period, as well, I believe. "It is often assumed" he argues, "that because Buddhism brands the self as a pernicious illusion a sense of self could never really develop, but the opposite might well be argued: namely that such emphasis had to be placed on this denial precisely because the concept was very much alive." (SHIKIBU, 1996).

are themselves at one remove cultural artifacts, concrete expressions of culturally-framed ideas, they are necessarily remarkable and peculiar reflections of that culture and that culture alone; they embody the very ideological matrices that comprise a discernible cultural fabric and that delimit one culture from another. They are, the priest purports, no more. Read in this light, the concepts of self and individual identity emerging during the late-Meiji--those particular concepts that continue to dominate the Japanese cultural landscape even today — are by definition radically different from the Cartesian ones with which we are more comfortable and far more familiar. It is my task to dispel some of their enigma to see just how.

Cultural contexts for self-representation

Both for the sake of understanding these differences and for scrutinizing the ways in which ideology and culture act as a mediating factor in lived social and individual experience, it is necessary to sharpen the distinctions in terms of the spatial to demarcate the boundaries within which the very notions of self and self-realization function. In keeping with the metaphorical singular entity that has dominated the contexts comprising Western tradition at least since Aristotle, the Cartesian *Je*, at the risk of oversimplification, represents the central point in a highly regular geometric space. But the historical moment within which this notion was introduced to Japan remains different precisely because the cultural background is different. The philosophical concerns for the self and the possibility of self-knowledge preoccupying the mind set of writers in mid-Meiji Japan and underpinning such diverse and contradictory social movements as *genbun'itchi undô* and *jiyû minken undô* People's Rights Movement) are, therefore, reducible neither to expressions of egoistic individualism nor to remote abstracts.

In his *Ways of Seeing*, the art historian John Berger observes — in no small measure *via* Sigmund Freud's discussions of scopophilia — that visual representations often depict a woman's self as being split into two, caught in an unceasing act of self-reflection. Sometime earlier, Kobayashi Hideo had arrived at a similar understanding of the self in general, albeit without regard for gender, in his *Watakushi shôsetsuron* An Essay on the "I-novel"), as had William James, who argued that "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize

him and carry an image of him in their mind."[15]   Similarly, Freud's division of the self between consciousness and unconsciousness only gives the appearance of undermining this metaphysical certainty. In *Civilization and Its Discontent*, for example, he argues a point anticipated by such eighteenth-century writers as David Hume and Denis Diderot, namely that the contemporary subject no longer exists as a stable fact, a coherent self, so to speak, because the person at the center of identity, as organic form, has been stripped of all such metaphysical trappings.[16] Although each of these critics appears on the surface to challenge the Cartesian premise, in fact, their focus on dualities in general and on the dialogical concept of the social self in particular prevents this from happening. Their methodologies are reductionist, characterized by an affection for and the maintenance of facile distinctions perpetuating the same set of tired, old binary oppositions on hand in their contemporary usage at least since Descartes e.g., inner vs. outer, order vs. chaos, us vs. them, same vs. different). Betraying itself in the affable Eurocentric suppositions *mimesis*, *universalism*, and *humanism*, for example, the Cartesian model allows us--indeed, it encourages us--to reaffirm images of ourselves in it, and perhaps for this reason alone, it continues to dictate the direction of most theoretical discussions, either in or out of Japan.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise when the Japanese psychoanalyst Doi Takeo employs cultural constructs sufficiently masked in the guise of a Western psychoanalysis to perpetuate an overly simplistic image of Japanese selfhood far more at home in Cambridge than in Tokyo or Niigata. Showing a marked preference for the metaphorical singular, he begins with a lesson in word origins that summarily obliterates any sense of nuance, noting, for example, that the classical usage of *omote* is best rendered with the contemporary *kao*, face. Similarly, *ura* must be taken to mean *kokoro*, mind. The mind-body problematic firmly anchored, he then asserts that the gradients of selfhood characterizing the Japanese psyche are reducible to universals, binary oppositions, end points along a continuum subsumed, wholly and neatly, in his earlier duality: at one extreme, the *tatemae*, the social face à la T. S. Eliot's Prufrock, juxtaposed to the opposite extreme, the *honne*, true feelings. While he ventures that the relationship between the *tatemae* and *honne* is symbiotic, even mutually constitutive, he does

15 Berger (1972); Hideo (1962); and James (1950, p. 294).

16 Freud (1989, p. 198).

153

so only after hanging a plethora of similar binaries e.g., *ura* vs. *omote*; *uchi* vs. *soto*) out to dry. Ultimately, his linguistic manipulations prove his undoing. For example, by invoking the usage of *ura-omote*, as he sees it the successful fusion of polarities, to underscore the beneficial necessity to all such symbiotic relationships, he inevitably introduces an element of categorical confusion as his example deconstructs itself in the more substantial usage "inappropriate side" or "insincerity." Damning with its cultural erasure and smacking of an imperialist bent not toward his own culture), his apologetic framework, in its reliance upon illumination from without to defrock the mysteries within, concomitantly eradicates by his very conceptualization the original nuance of existing native insights and lends to an overwhelming sense of mystification.[17]

But let me not be misunderstood: I am not suggesting the absence of indigenous nuances of self-awareness. The mere existence of a native terminology lends credence to the opposite. Rather than dualistic or essentialist categories, however, they are to my mind contextually constructed and are ever shifting. Foreseeing how cultural contexts result in shared intelligibility and suggesting the Modernist contention that an individual is somehow located *within a world of signs* and not within the world itself, Judith Butler's work offers, I believe, a different model by which to approach the machinations we recognize as the modern self in Japan. Summing up the inherent shortcomings of the Cartesian paradigm, she contends that any discussion of a stable and interior self, of identity as a singular entity, or of a coherent subject must necessarily espouse

> the point of view of an agent who masters its environment and the social relations it is in without ever being of that environment or of those relations. If the structure of agency, reflection, or internalization, is identical to itself throughout its travels, then it is ontologically immune from the social field that it negotiates and, in keeping with the enlightenment versions of anthropocentrism from which this subject is derived makes itself the ontological center of a world from which it is nevertheless ontologically distinct. (BUTLER, 1989, p.23-4).

---

17 Takeo (1985, p.24, 26-87). Hardly surprising given his training in Western psychoanalysis, Doi overlooks a long tradition of "self" in Japan, albeit one that does not conform neatly to the Western need for definition. Doubtless, Buddhism has long advocated the annihilation of the very idea of an individual ego, the summation of modern Western understandings of self. Completely comprehensible if we insist on situating the particularity of Japanese culture within Doi's paradigm, Buddhism simultaneously encourages individuality *apropos* of free-will.

Anticipating this process of "self-subjection," whereby the narrating subject attempts to lay bare such distinctions in becoming the narrated object, Martin Heidegger had earlier argued in his essay "*Bauen Wohnen Denken*," for example, that the verb *bin* in the phrase *ich bin* originates with the root *bauen*, "to build" or "to inhabit." His understanding would profoundly color Gaston Bachelard's conclusion that the self is, therefore, no more than the sum of the various functions of *habitare*. In stark contrast to James' social self, Marcel Mauss' acceptance that the *personne morale* is in large part a social creation similarly embraces the possibility that the various roles I insist on recognizing as the Self in myself are in effect defined by ritual observations and are, therefore, by their very nature culturally specific and ideologically determined.[18] Efficiently eliminating one-half of Descartes' metaphysical premise with the swipe of their pens, they have in one fashion or another likened the self to the spatiotemporal unfolding of the very proposition "I am." Arising through communicative interactions between the individual and society, it embodies, in short, a particular conceptualization of the categorical "I," disingenuously concealed behind a universal, arguably beneficent Humanism, intricately and inextricably linked with larger notions of self-realization. Appropriating Heidegger's and Bachelard's metaphor, Dorrine Kondo (1990, p.35) challenges us to think of individual representations not in isolation but as complex, as-yet unfinished compositions within which the preposition of existence is penned through social interactions with others. Relationships--and the dynamic of power inherent to any such notions must be reckoned with when discussing the Japanese context--define the roles of the individual and, equally so, enable our definition of others.

Thus, in order to range beyond the limits of parochialism to challenge old theoretical boundaries that do little more than delimit or pigeonhole our readings of texts as they construct, maintain, and amplify our cultural identities, we must concomitantly embrace, encourage, and promote, even facilitate, readings that do more than reaffirm our Eurocentric identities. This requires the close reading of individual texts, not as an end to itself but in order to illuminate their functioning within broader and institutionalized systems in which cultural and social meanings are constructed and contested. Because those bridges linking art to artist, text to author, as well as the relationships between art

---

18 Butler (1989); Heidegger (1967, p.21); Bachelard (1988); Mauss (1985; 1969).

155

and social and historical reality--"Je suis artiste," the gros monsieur announces in Eugène Ionesco's *Le Tableau*, "J'ai surpassé le modèle! J'ai fait mieux que le peintre ..."— comprise the particularity of a given cultural tradition and the archetypal creative imagination undergirding it, they, too, provide the basis for a conceptual framework within which we may understand the dynamics of Japanese subjection. In short, issues of selfhood refer to themselves as ongoing performances, vibrant cultural spectacles that refer to their own and to the Others' mutually constitutive powers of stylized interpretation.

Regardless of the nature of the text, any insights into the identity of the self I happen to tender as a result of the act of narrating are simultaneously apprehended through, as well as an apprehension of, a particular linguistic ideology itself.[19] Western constructions of the individual, for example, place emphasis upon the self as a mental and physical life centered on the linguistic first-person singular. A distillation of a particular linguistic ideology, this autonomous personality is reducible to the space of "I," although an abundance of like terminology — being or essence, consciousness or humanity, for example — demonstrate *fait accompli* the problem of its representation in writing. Joan Webber observes the dynamic of this monological conception within precisely the same historical frame that the Cartesian premise finds its origins thus:

> seeing and seeing that he sees--and is seen; writing, and conscious of the complex relationship between the "I" he thinks of as himself and the "I" which emerges on paper; conscious too that this relationship--and his attitude toward the literary "I"--will differ from the reader's, he may produce an "I" that plays games with the audience, teasing them about his identity in a way that had very seldom been tried in earlier literature. (WEBBER, 1968, p.12-3).

In point of fact, the linguistic ideology characterizing the English language presumes in its very nature an isolated self the equivalent of which is the whole, bounded subject, the projection of and embodied in the first-person pronoun "I." Its singularity is obvious. Equally obvious is its invulnerability: it meanders in and out, from one scenario to the next, forever remaining immutability and unscathed. The "I" is always and forever just that "I." The autonomous self as it is often framed in professional and leisurely discourses, then, is at once the sedimentation of historical and cultural contexts and linguistic

---

19 My approach is indebted to Silverstein (1979).

ideology; its representing "I" is no more than a convenient sign, caught as it is in relationship between signifier and signified, between "the impression it makes on our sense" and "the psychological imprint of the sound." Yet, when self and contexts chance to merge, beneficently, benignly or pathologically, and dissolve into nothingness, the "I" is revealed, Vincent Crapanzano (1982) observes, in and for its "referential emptiness." Perhaps because he sensed in the possibilities of openness and multiplicity a threat, Ferdinand de Saussure (1966, p.66) dismissed the importance of context in constituting meaning, as well as the potential for multiple meanings betrayed in multivocality, by including it under the rubric of *parole* ("spoken language," as opposed to the more highly regarded organizing principle, *langue*). Our challenge is not to do the same.

First-person referentials in modern Japanese

Inscribed within this *difference*, the emerging self in a Japanese context is dispersed *through* the space from which it takes its shape and is, therefore, *fragmented* in its very existence. Such a conception of individuality is, Marvin Marcus (1993, p.72) notes, "irreducibly rational, the locus of crosscutting hereditary, familial, and affinitive lines," although his usage of the term "locus" betrays a reticence on his part to abandon once and for all the Western-focused implications *locatedness* and *centrality*. This objection aside, the first-person grammatical category, when viewed as Marcus does, demonstrates similarly extraordinary complexities as an artificial construction arising out of dispersed and discontinuous fragments. In fact, the contemporary usage of *jiritsu*, loosely rendered as "independence" in English, connotes, Allison (1996, p. 109) argues, "not the ability or inclination to chart one's own course in life and act in isolation *from others* but the aptitude to internalize certain habits of self-maintenance that are expected." Thus, the first-person singular, encompassing in Elliot's words (1982), "the thousand and one selves that constitute a 'Self,'" is for Japan the product of the spatiotemporal functions *presentation* and *situation*. That is to say that the entity characterized as the "I" in these instances is defined by--and cannot be separated from--*cultural context*, thereby calling into question both the very distinction between and the representation of the two.

Not necessarily linked to the Western use of pronouns as anaphora,

158

where the "I" equals and merely stands in for that which has already been registered in discourse, identity from a Japanese perspective is remarkably different. Jane M. Bachnik (1982) and Patricia Wetzel (1984) have empirically demonstrated, for example, that *daimeishi*, the category in traditional Japanese grammar most closely corresponding to European notions of pronouns, are indexical; they are characterized by a shifting in terms of social positioning and relational distance between Self and Other.[20] Hardly the metaphorical singular entity we are accustomed to seeing in the West, Japanese usage encodes for a politically powerful metaphor taking its lead from and shaped by an extraordinarily wide range of contextual factors, including but not limited to issues of age, gender and sexual orientation, levels of formality, degree of kinship, occupation both status within the community at large and degree of skills mastered within one's field), and contemporary and regional usages. More importantly, because it changes over time in response to the highly kinetic environment of even a single discourse as contexts shift, this "I" does not so neatly equate with the Cartesian notion of self. We need only recall, for example, the frequency with which the narrator Ko-chan in Mishima's *Kamen no kokuhaku* shuttles between the first-person pronouns *watashi* and *boku* to appreciate the implications. A performance arising from and intricately bound to the act of reading, his confession provides the vehicle whereby he re-inscribes himself within his world, not merely by attempting to assimilate himself to his environment but also by creating for himself a fresh mode of relation toward his present and his past. What we apprehend as the narrator is in actuality a "self" that, despite changes, has been implicit from the beginning, awakening when read as an act of self-cognition that will integrate the past in the ubiquitous "I," *watashi* or *boku*, depending upon the circumstances of the present moment. Because what we recognize as personal pronouns in Japanese offer convincing evidence of a larger ideological principle to define selves contextually,[21] we as readers are

---

20 Compare Bachnik (1982) and Wetzel (1984). To be sure, pronouns represent a less frequent phenomenon in Japanese discourse than, say, in English, French or German. In fact, first-person pronouns need never be used, but their absence, as in the case of much of Mori Ogai's short story "Takasebune," for example, by no means implies the larger absence of identity or of a discernible self/selves. A measure of a non-native speaker's Japanese language skills remains the degree of intrusion of first-person pronouns into ordinary conversational usage.

21 The sorely polite term *tonji*, "son of a pig," is used by fathers when introducing their sons, the implication being that, as the saying goes, "*kaeru no ko wa kaeru*" (literally, the child of a frog is a frog, or "like breeds like"). Admittedly rare these days, its usage among middle-class Japanese is taken to reflect a very high degree of

routinely confronted with a profoundly different way of thinking about and interpreting the relationship between selves and the social world they inhabit.

Furthermore, because living, breathing individuals refer to themselves as constituted in and through their social relations and obligations, the boundaries often being fuzzy, blurred, or wholly indiscernible, their representations, too, are marked by self-reflexivity, deliberately signifying as it were a marshaling of attention, conscious or not, to the medium of the reflection. Of equal importance, the very existence of terms unobtrusively substituting for such pronouns--titles, honorifics, or certain verbs, for example[22]--and, in doing so, virtually assuring the absence of self-reference demonstrates in the extreme the importance of context in self-definition. When Mochizuki Akira, a character from Kawatake Mokuami's kabuki *Karigane* (The Flying Crane Family Crest, 1881), speaks to his wife, the one-time courtesan Oteru, about the alleged amorous skills of a particular singer, "*Wari ni wa iro ga dekinai sô da*" ("In the field of amour, he can't get it up, I hear"), he does at least two things (MOKUAMI, 1966, p.221-2).[23] In place of a personal pronoun, he interjects his presence but not himself) into his utterance with "*sô da*," "I hear," thereby deflecting attention away from himself and onto the elements of hearsay. Verdictive in effect, his words do more than disarm his competition; they concomitantly castrate him. As speaker, Mochizuka is in the enviable position of attacking verbally the object of his criticism for being, euphemistically speaking, hardly a

---

"social polish" and sophistication on the part of the speaker.

22 Titles include, for example, sensei, ("teacher," used when the addressee is older or has a higher social status relative to the speaker), okusan, okâsan and mama ("wife," "mother," and "mama," respectively, the first used as a term of address comparable to the English usage "Mrs." without the family name, the second is used to a woman around whom there are children, and the third to the female proprietor of a bar or restaurant), and *kachô* ("head of a household," used to addressee men at home). Honorifics include the use of go and o as prefixes underscoring the relative superior position of the addressee, as in *goshimpai wo okakete shimashite, moshiwake arimasen* ("I am very sorry to have caused you so much concern"), *Gomewaku ja arimasen ka* ("Isn't it a bother?"), and *O-kaimono desu ka* ("Shopping?"). Furthermore, certain verbs such as *hossuru* ("to desire") and *hoshigaru* ("to desire")--the former used with first- and second-person subjects of reference, whereas the latter is used most often when speaking *about* the desires of a third person or in rarer cases to the addressee when admonishing or warning about the dangers of particular desires in question-- are person- or subject-specific in nature and, therefore, understandable in context. Cf. Takao (1978, p. 93).

23 In fact, *Karigane* is most often performed as a Kiyomoto *jôruri* (a chanted performance from the puppet theatre), although the text itself was incorporated by Kawatake Mokuami as the third act of his *Shimachidori tsuki no shiranami*. (cf. MASATAKA, 1992, p. 30-2).

"stallion" among the other quite ordinary "beasts of burden," without having to place himself directly within the same field of contestation, a position where he might be held to the same exacting standards and where he, too, might be found lacking.

The late Emperor Hirohito's remarks to President Richard Nixon in September 1975 provide an example somewhat closer in time and space to the here-and-now. Presumably intended as an expression of profound sadness and remorse for Japan's involvement in the Second World War, his words, "*Fukaku kanashimi to suru ano sensô,*" (KIYOSHI, 1986, p.102) did *no* more than tease its audience on a number of levels. Later, when asked whether his diction implied that he felt responsibility, he replied to the effect that he did not understand figures of speech *kotoba no aya*) because he was not a student of literary matters.[24] I have intentionally *not* translated his remarks, for to do so would be tantamount to "putting words in his mouth." To do so would also imply that I understand the intention behind them. I do not, since there are at the very least two problems hindering my fuller comprehension. First, the syntactic complexity of his utterance contributes to an enormous semantic rift in meaning. Is the term *ano sensô* the subject of the sentence (indeed, inverted subjects represent a common rhetorical strategy in Japanese) or does it stand as an isolated noun, modified by the clause, "*fukaku kanashimi to suru*" ("I feel profound sadness," where the self-referential stance is conveyed allusively by the choice of verbs)? Second, the moment is rendered "empty" with the term *ano sensô*, where *ano* indicates in this instance something far removed from the present. Indeed, this may have been how he perceived the war, but it is difficult to imagine any genuine feelings of remorse arising from an event once it has intentionally been stripped of its immediacy. The force behind his words, therefore, speak far more than is at first evident, for they deconstruct themselves almost from the beginning, any sense of modesty having been summarily laid bare, betrayed in the highly articulate and skillful turn of phrase at just the right moment. To be sure, the original speech has been interpreted by those who seek a deeper understanding of the historical events during the war as no more than an inconsequential public address penned by another but presented by--many Rightists apologetically argue of similar occasions,

---

24 Inoue Kiyoshi, *Tennô--tennô-sei no rekishi* (Tokyo: Meiseki, 1986),102; and John Whittier Treat, "Beheaded Emperors and the Absent Figure in Contemporary Japanese Literature," *PMLA* (January 1994): 110.

puppeted by--the Emperor, somewhat akin to the strategic withholding of the narrative indict, "he said," during instances of plagiarism. The same defense, however, cannot be made for his later, clearly unscripted and therefore personal response. Tinged with arrogant condescension, his injudicious words did nothing to assuage public uncertainties about his suspected role in and his guilt for Japan's militaristic past. On the contrary, reflected in the deliberate and capricious ambiguity of his statement is the complicitous nature of his relationship to the events that haunted him, quite literally, "to the very end."

However interesting such silences are, the remarkable variety of first-person pronouns prove far more revealing.[25] At precisely that moment during the *Meiji* period when the Western concept of self was being imported, native lexical elements corresponding to the personal pronouns in European languages were recognized, quite simply, as nouns the original significations of which in most cases remained both perfectly clear and easily discernible from the context of their usage. The sheer number of self-referential terms in Japanese, Edward Fowler observes, reveals

> a very protean notion of self, one that depends for its existence more on the person or situation with whom or with which one is associated at a given moment than on one's own unilaterally initiated thoughts and actions. We can think of a true pronoun as a sign of separate and autonomous presence, making an indelible boundary between self and other (FOWLER, 1988, p. 5-6).

The partial list below illustrates the variation in, if not necessarily the number of, these first-person singular references. For convenience, I loosely follow conventional categorically divisions by separating those terms conveying an awareness of unequal position on the part of the speaker from those underscoring the speaker's intentional self-depreciation, regardless of actual social position.[26] Because both usages share in common an awareness of and abeyance toward complex

---

25 Absence is a possibility, as the deceptively simple sentence "*Monku nashi*" demonstrates. Rendered variously, *monku* as the noun "complain" and *nashi* as a verbal conveying the sense of "nonexistent," the utterance includes as one possible meaning, "I have no complaints."

26 I have limited my discussion to first-person *singular* expressions precisely because to do otherwise would be to invite the unwieldy. Consider, for example, that during the early Meiji, Fukuchi Gen'ichirô coined the idiosyncratic use of the terms *gosô* and *gosôshi*, both of which roughly translate as "we." Borrowed from ancient Chinese, they represent Fukuchi's attempt to mimic the Victorian "we," at the time a new concept upon the Japanese cultural stage.

positioning, it is wholly inconceivable that any utterance at the level of the sentence might escape unscathed the inscription of relationship between speaker and addressee. Moreover, when both categories are taken together, they signify the web-like effect of an obvious inherent linguistic ideology relational in and of its very nature, as well as the permeability of self and self-constructions, of identity, in Japanese culture. Arguing for the overwhelming relational aspect inherent to all first-person terms, Harada (1975) posits a "distance cline" between self and other. While still dependent upon preexisting Cartesian modes of interpretation, his observations clarify for us that notions of self necessarily embody many of those values recognized as peculiar to a given culture. Conspicuous are the parameters of usage i.e., the degree of self-awareness conveyed) and the latitude i.e., the number of affiliations or clusterings) commonly available to a speaker of Japanese.

162

Perhaps the most frequently encountered grouping includes *watakushi* and *watashi*, the latter abbreviated and only slightly less formal in usage than the former. Both originally connoted "selfishness" on the part of the speaker. It is precisely for this reason that Sei Shônagon records in *Makura sôshi* The Pillow Book) her response of shock and disbelief on overhearing certain visitors to the Heian court assert their own self-assessed importance by overtly referring to themselves in the first person in the presence of the Emperor and Empress. In *Karigane*, however, self-awareness seems entirely in keeping with the moment as Oteru reflects upon the uncertainty of her current state of affairs:[27]

> *. . . watashi ga aiso wo*
> *tsukasarete, moshi mo rien ni*
> *nattaraba, mata mo ya moto no*
> *tabigeisha. . . .*

. . . if he loses his patience with me, worse if he divorces me, I would have to return to the life of a traveling geisha. . . .

A related term, *wasshi* is considered by many linguists to be non-standard, as connoting the speaker's use of dialect and indicative of his peripheral origins. More often than not, the degree of power associated with the term is overlooked. Nagura Toshie has observed of contemporary spoken Japanese that *wasshi* remains in use in such

---

27 Sei Shônagon, *Makura sôshi*; Mokuami, *Karigane*, vol. 9: 221.

areas peripheral to metropolitan Tokyo as Hiroshima and Nagoya among older males. In rarer instances, it is elected by self-employed females who financial contributions to the economic well-being of the household demand a higher degree of respect from those on the receiving end. In Nakano Shigeharu's *Nashi no hana* (Pear Blossoms, 1957-8), a remembrance of the closing years of the Meiji period, the youthful narrator, recognizing "how language can mark power," arrives at a similar conclusion as he catalogues those around him who elect the pronoun *wasshi*. A point that the politically-active Nakano could not have failed to note, his list as a written artifact excluding children and farmers but including the village doctor, the priest just returned from the Russo-Japanese War, and "most probably" the local chief of police damns by its very presence. Fixing an ideological dynamic of power and position not so very different from that in Japan's feudal past, its existence suggests that, despite government claims to the contrary, the postwar sociopolitical climate remains significantly unchanged.[28]

A number of truncations of these pronouns similarly convey degrees of power. The first-person references *watte* and *wate*, as well as *wa*, *wai*, and *wasu*, for example, clearly mark the speaker as peripheral to metropolitan Tokyo and, therefore, removed from the centers of power, be they political, economic, or social. Whereas the former grouping occurs in Kansai dialect and may, when elected in the company of non-Kansai speakers, represent a challenge to prevailing notions of the importance of Tokyo by suggesting that areas in Western Japan have long been and are equally central to the life of the modern nation, the latter remains limited in its usage to areas in rural Northern Japan.

Compare these usages with *waga*, "my," a highly formal and stylized possessive pronoun, as in conventional phrases *wagaya* my home), *wagakuni* my country), *wagami* my fate), or *wagako* my child) demonstrate. It is this sense of formality we find in *wagahime*, "my lady" as Ogai lends his particular interpretation to William Shakespeare's words in "Oferia no uta" Ophelia's Song):[29]

28 Nagura Toshie, "The Use of Address Terms between Japanese Spouses," *Sekai no nihongo kyôiku 2* (March 1992): 61; Miriam Silverberg, *Changing Song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 27; and *Nakano Shigeharu, Nashi no hana*, in *Nakano Shigeharu zenshû* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1980), vol. 6: 68-9.

29 Mori Ogai, "Oferia no uta," in *Ogai zenshû*, vol. 9: 47-8; and William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, vol. 3: IV, 5, 1150. One year after his return from Germany, Ogai published an anthology of translated poems entitled *Omokage* (Visions, 1889) in the magazine *Kokumin no tomo*, among them his translation of

kare wa shi ni keri wagahime yo
kare wa yomiji e tachi ni keri
kashira no kata no koke wo miyo
ashi no kata ni wa ishi tateru. . . .

He is dead and gone, lady,
  He is dead and gone.
At his head a grass–green turf,
  At his heels a stone.

In fact, given the Japanese contexts where insanity per se does not excuse social indiscretions, Ophelia must, in spite of her loss of self, maintain a degree of respect in the presence of Hamlet's mother; hence, Ogai's particular rendering remains culturally appropriate even as it deviates from the original. Half a century later, however, the *tanka* poet Miya Shûji's (SHÛJI, 1989, p.137) would elect *waga* in self–reference for precisely the opposite reason, to underscore his loneliness as a lowly foot soldier in China fighting to stay alive:

korobu shite
jû kakaetaru
wagakage no
kôga no kishi no
hitori no hei no kage

falling to the ground
rifle still in tow
my shadow
along the bank of the Yellow River
the shadow of a lone soldier.

The highly unusual image of *wagakage*, where the stylized

Ophelia's Song. While Koboro Keiichirô has argued that Ogai is translating from the English, I believe that he used the Schlegel and Tieck German translation as his source, a text incidentally that he mentions in an article from May, 1893 concerning his own translation of Hans Christian Andersen's *Improvastoren as Sokkyô shijin. Ogai zenshû*, vol. 23: 212; Kobori, "Omokage no shigaku," *Hikaku bungaku kenkyû* 25 (1974): 46–50. Aside from the facts that Ogai did not study English before leaving for Germany and that he only met with his tutor Ferdinand Ilgner for private English lessons during his brief stay in Berlin, the most compelling evidence is a single song from Lord Byron's *Manfred* also included in the anthology. It is, indisputably, a translation from Heinrich Heine's version of Byron's work. Ogai, the entry dated 24 October, 1884, in the *Doitsu nikki*.

pronominal reference hints initially at pretensions of self-importance with "my shadow," is made all the more disturbing as the poet either juxtaposes it to--or qualifies its description as--the haunting, moribund reality that is "the shadow of a lone soldier."

Another related term asserting the importance of the speaker, the archaic *wagahai* has until recently been used only by individuals of high rank or achievement, political leaders during times of military insurgence, for example. The wildly sardonic tone of Natsume Sôseki's novel, *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (I Am a Cat, 1905-6), arises initially because this particular self-reference is elected by its narrator, a nameless cat. Recently, a nationally-televised sales pitch aimed at promoting airbags in cars has cleverly exploited the degree of misunderstanding involved in its usage. The spokesman, the popular and impish baseball player Ichiro, humorously twists Sôseki's words into "*Wagahai wa neko duaru*," meaning "I am in a duel with a cat" before he either does battle with a Garfield-like feline or is intimately pawed by a leopard-skinned nymphete. In either instance, secondary referents comprising the play on the English terms *duel* and *dual* further increase the sense of incongruence and thereby contribute to the humor of the moment. The logical consequence that a consumer-in-the-know ought to demand two airbags in a car is rendered in one sense of the word subliminal as expectation is subverted: the power held in reserve by the term *wagahai* gives way unexpectedly before more pressing economic--and from the visual implications, libidinal--powers that be. In fairness to the discussion, however, I must note that among native speakers, including those who teach in the field of *kokubungaku*, the original irony captured in Sôseki's precarious balancing of *wagahai* with *neko* is now all but totally lost.[30]

Further stressing the vulnerability of the self to exercises in affectation and stylization are such extremes as *midoro*, *chin*, and *taikô*. Whereas the term *midoro* connotes familiarity, *chin*, limited in its usage by the Emperor, more accurately upholds distance. Its exclusive nature bore the brunt of Occupation-period humor as many began to refer to General MacArthur as *Heso-sama* Mr. Navel) and the Emperor as *Chinpo-*

---

30 The term *kokubungaku*, relatively conservative in its usage, refers to Japanese literature as a field of specialization erected by and held in trust for Japanese nationals only (*kokumin*, as the postwar Constitution makes it perfectly clear). Time and time again, I *am* reminded that my specialty is *Nihon bungaku* (Japanese literature), a term liberally used in connection with foreign specialists. On occasion, derogatory in nuance, it is more often than not *only* pejorative and dismissive.

sama Mr. Penis).[31] Marked with the inequality inherent to their postwar relationship, the former located anatomically superior to the latter, the resultant word play subverted any prewar notions of exclusivity in favor of something that roughly half of the entire population shared in common. The Emperor's postwar position is rendered cliché; "if you've seen one," as the Occupying Forces were bound to respond and as Japan's postwar citizenry was apt to realize, "you've seen 'em all." The term *taikô*, however, has two usages, as a reference to oneself as speaker when the addressee is perceived as socially inferior or as a highly self-referential usage imploring "for my sake." In his compilation of the official record of Commodore Perry's voyage to Japan, Francis Hawks (1857) recalls that the American Squadron frequently encountered this usage. He fails to take into account the possibility of confusion resulting from the intercultural encounter, however, and extrapolates incorrectly the direction of its reference. As a pronoun, *taikô* demarcates social levels in terms of their presence and, as such, should have been taken by Perry's group more as an indication from the Japanese perspective of the relative social inferiority of an alien presence in general and their utter insignificance in the presence of the shogunate in particular, than as specifically signifying any individual entity.[32]

Under certain circumstances, still another group of terms carries on the pronominal function of referencing, including, *uchi*, and *jibun* and its complement *tagai*. The former is used by men in Tokyo or by men and women alike primarily in and around Kyoto to signify in the absence of further modification "me," "my household," or "my group." Although it conveys the nuance of belonging within a group setting, it does connote dependency.[33] And while the latter pair has recently gained acceptance as a feminine stance suggesting, as Blanche Dubois

---

31 The terms *chinpo* and *chinchin* are characteristically used by children, further emphasizing the perceived disparity of power between the two figures. Not surprising, a number of similar expression, all of which built upon a humorous genital-fixated incongruities (e.g., *pray* and *play*, *election* and *erection*), enjoyed wide circulation in the immediate postwar period.

32 Foster Rhea Dulles does an excellent job of juxtaposing American accounts of the Perry expedition with those of the Japanese who observed the same events. See Dulles (1965).

33 Suggesting that contemporary Euro-American notions of masculinity--especially a rugged individualism--are gaining widespread usage in Japan, it is hardly surprising that those terms reflecting self-reference will also change. In Niigata, for example, the usage of *jibun* by younger men when addressing other males within a group can attract considerable and considerably negative attention for its obvious feminine displays. (Cf. Bachnik, 1982, p, 14-5).

could appreciate, the "kindness of strangers," the narrator of Natsume Sôseki *Kôfu* (The Miner, 1908) challenges the accepted boundaries of the self as he elects one half of the pair to describe himself. The "I" in this highly anachronistic novel, *jibun*, Noriko Lippit (1980, p.192) argues, represents "the establishment of the relationship between the self and the world by tracing the growth of the self as an historical as well as a personal existence." Her insights are correct insofar as they go, but she ignores the narrator's reliance upon monologue. It is less the fragmented insights of the narrator's psyche than his performances of a *character* from a novel — and Jay Rubin's masterful reading makes this point perfectly clear — that ought to signal to us the marvelously parody of competing depictions of self at play and not a *lived life* per se (RUBIN, 1986). Doubtless, his performances reflect not only marginalized individualism--*jibun* is rent from *tagai*--but, as a cultural framing device necessary to the representation of character, they also implicate larger issues of ideological blindness resulting from his and our own complicity as members in society.

Hinting at a larger and pervasive controlling principle characteristic to the vertical nature of the culture as a whole, Basil Hall Chamberlain has also recognized an abundance of self-depreciatory terms used to position the speaking self within the context of dialogue, however momentarily, in relation to the addressee. Perhaps the most frequently encountered of these is *boku*. Once used exclusively by men outside of a formal setting, Nagura Toshie notes that the term has recently gained widespread usage among youth, regardless of gender, to underscore equanimity within a relationship (CHAMBERLAIN, 1924, p.13).[34] *Boku*, however, original carried the meaning of "servant," the sense of which remains in the contemporary term *bokuhi*, a household or at times public) servant. It is in this sense, I suspect, that the largely unobtrusive narrator of Mori Ogai's novella *Gan* Wild Geese, 1911-13) elects its usage. Narrated from the perspective of someone identified only with the self-referential *boku*, the novella opens with an incontrovertible statement of fact: "It's an old story." This declaration not only locates the narration in a particular point in time; it also sets into play a specific set of nuances, vestiges of its earlier usage particular connotations of intimacy, fidelity, loyalty, or trustworthiness on the part of the

---

34 Disregarding the breadth of its usage in public, however, Nagura Toshie abandons his descriptive stance of *boku* in favor of pedantry, lecturing us non-native speakers of Japanese that "the reference is not prescribed as adequate in formal speech." (Cf. Nagura, 1992).

speaker. Read in this way, these nuances dictate his rhetorical stance, the particular perspective from which he observes the hero Okada's situation and through which he relates the drama of his life. Accepting the cultural particularity of this strategy, it seems likely to me, at the risk of overstatement, that this first-person narrator functions as a trustworthy character who as a matter of decorum identifies himself in an unobtrusive but characteristic fashion by removing himself to the periphery of the action as quickly as possible. From there he looks onto the action as it unfolds, and from there he disseminates his view accordingly. Put differently, as a storyteller faithful to his material — Bowring (1979. p.149) dismisses him as the "ostensible narrator" — he withdraws himself from center stage and allows the story itself to come to the fore (cf. MARCUS, 1993, p.308).

On the theoretical level, the female equivalent of *boku* is the reference *atashi*, although its specific connotations remind us how different its usage is in practice. Rather than nuancing intimacy and trustworthiness, for example, it conveys either a feigned absence or the willful relinquishing of power in the presence of others who are presumed (or propped up) to be stronger. Inscribed with a high degree of insincerity and artifice, it is most frequently used by women who wish to affect a more feminine, coquettish demeanor in the presence of men. Further complicating the situation, because its usage reflects an expected culturally behavior from a male perspective in certain appropriate contexts, *atashi* is also invariably elected by *okama*, drag queens, as the first-person pronoun of choice. And because of its affectations, many gay men at one time or another may resort to *atashi* in the "sophisticated repartee" we recognize as "camp," a language of spectacle where the speaker participates in a hissing, gender-switching, self-dramatizing piece of "street theater" in the company of like-minded men as an overt sign of personal empowerment.

The other frequently encountered self-deprecating reference is *ware*, a term elected by males and females alike. Because it carries the meaning of "oneself" while concomitantly connoting the speaker's position as a member within a recognizable group, it is frequently rendered with such extremes in English as "we" and "ego." Miya Shûji (1989, p.149) makes use of the implied sense of intimacy to underscore both the humor and the horror of his own wartime experiences thus:

> *tama ga ware ni*
> *atsumari ari to*
> *shirishi toki*
> *hirefu shite kakuru*
> *kinshi gankyô wo*
>
> a bullet right at me
> as it closes in
> when I know
> I throw myself at another's feet, cowering
> these short-sighted spectacles.

Ware emphasizes for us that the poet's experiences, however personal, are hardly unique: wayward bullets are a common hazard in a soldier's life. As all soldiers are prone to do in similar circumstances, he instinctively "cowers" at "another's feet" and, only once the danger passes, attempts bravely to make light of his fears. His usage is nothing if not poignant, since it demonstrates what we as readers already know but may be less willing to admit. There is no shame in fear. Who among us, if so confronted, would not find ourselves prostrate on the floor, seeking cover in the boot laces of those around us?

Other self-deprecatory references include, for example, *shôsei*, *soregashi*, and *yo*, as well as *ore*, *ora*, and *oidon*. Originally meaning "small born" or "young," *shôsei* was often used by male students prior to the Second World War in deference to their own relative insignificance within a larger patriarchally-aligned State-as-family.[35] Although it continues to be used by some elderly men in highly formalized letterwriting as a substitute for *watakushi*, its usage in spoken Japanese is now all but obsolete, except among the most extreme of Rightist or Neo-nationalist groups. Originally meaning "a certain person," intimating a high degree of politeness by signifying a speaker's willful negation of any measure of self-importance, the contemporary usage of *soregashi* is, likewise, sorely limited. Oddly enough, it has recently undergone a transformation to become third-person referential. And the term *yo* is a highly stylized self-reference found exclusively in

---

35 I consciously have retained the pronoun he in this particular instance as an example of selectively sexist, intentionally exclusive language because I have found no evidence that *shôsei* was ever widely used by women, at least during the period following the restoration of the Meiji Emperor. Its absence among female speakers is wholly in keeping with larger ideological concerns for the period.

169

the written language; there, it is further limited in its usage to native academic authors or to contexts where the authoritative stance or artifice of a literary style are deemed appropriate.[36]

Not all such self-deprecatory references need be so overtly marked either by a degree of sophistication or pedantry or by a speaker's comfort with an adherence to a centralizing authority, however. A once vulgar term, ore is increasingly the mark of masculinity among youth outside of Tokyo, both as an overt marker of adolescent rebellion and in flagrant disregard for the implications of their relative social distance from the refinements of Tokyo still privileged by society as a whole. In fact, it is precisely this earthy quality that held Ogai's attention as he translated the first act of Goethe's *Faust*. Although Ogai himself would have been the first to acknowledge that he sacrificed rhyme to tone, he did so in order to preserve the raciness of the original. Agitated, Faust begins:[37]

Hate sate, ore wa tetsugaku mo
hôgaku mo igaku mo
arazu mo gana no shingaku mo
nesshin ni benkyô shite, soko no soko made kenkyû shita.
Sô shite koko ni kô shite iru. Ki ni doku na, baka no ore da na.

Habe nun, ach! Philosophie,
Juristerei und Medizin,
Und leider auch Theologie
Durchaus studiert, mit heissem
Bemûhn.
Da steh' ich nun, ich armer Tor,
Und bin so klug als wie zuvor!

---

36 On several occasions, recently, editors for literary journals in Japan have "corrected" my Japanese usage. Invariable, they insist that my phraseology "*yo ni iwasereba*" ("If I am permitted to say so"), an eloquent expression of humility used to bolster an author's conclusions, be rewritten as "*watakushi ni iwasereba*," their logic being that *yo* is appropriate in its usage only to those who command a degree of authority and sophistication when discussing literary matters. From their perspective, a non-Japanese can never do so.

37 While sitting in Auerbachskeller on 27 December, 1885, Mori Ogai joked that he might translate the *Faust* into a Chinese metre. In July, 1911, when he began his translation of the *Faust* in earnest, he resorted to a colloquial Japanese idiom. (Ogai, *Doitsu nikki*, vol. 35: 122). It took him six months to complete and was eventually published in two sections, in January and in March, 1913 (Ogai, *Fuausuto*, in *Ogai zenshû*, vol. 12: 43).

Likewise, *ora* remains a vulgar expression used by men and women alike in rural areas of Northern Japan, and *oidon* enjoys widespread acceptance on the southern island of Kyûshû.

But for the sake of discussion, it is important to recognize that self-referencing of the sort characterizing the Japanese language in no way represents an anomaly. From my own sorely limited linguistic experiences, I am aware of at least two other languages employing such systems. In spoken Korean, for example, there exists a similar variety of self-referential pronouns, including *ju*, *na*, *so-seng*, *chae*, *mohm*, *so-inn*, and *ah*, to name but a few. Or in Bahasa Indonesia, where the variety is, relatively speaking, somewhat less expansive, the pronominal system is however similarly daunting for its remarkable nuance: from the polite standard *saya*, through the somewhat awkward *aku* originally from the Javanese), *daku* a poetic form only), *gua* a slang term heard primarily in Jakarta and surrounding locales), and *beta* used only in classical texts and indicating the speaker's affiliations with traditional Malay royalty), to *diri* meaning "personal," as in *lepar diri*, a personal report) and *diriku* myself). In both instances, the linguistic ideologies are reflected directly within the pronoun system itself and, by association, by modes of self-characterization. Self-referential terms are, I suspect, the most revealing of layers of ideological nuance, precisely in the culturally-bounded notions of intimacy and distance, engagement and detachment.

Taking my cues from this underlying linguistic ideology, I argue for the value in viewing self-reflection as a product of the culture itself and not as imposed from without. Selves in this view cease to hold their attractiveness as referential symbols--Saussure's Transcendental Signified--in favor of signification, as constructs the nature of which is oppositional and relational. Jacques Derrida (1978) cautions that the privileging of the signified--as the Saussurean sign is tied to a larger logocentricism, it empowers the Eurocentric desire to fix and master meaning--should by no means be assumed to have some self-evident and rational basis for self-constructions. Rather the sign always already bears the "trace" of difference in the sense that Ludwig Wittgenstein (1975, p. 114) had suggested: as a "trace," it is already defined through difference and absence. In no less significant a way, the "I" elected in self-representation, however exposed it may seem, is hardly monolithic. Within the Japanese context, it/they is/are the site, temporal by its transient nature, for shifting and conflicting meanings.

No longer universal essences as the Cartesian model had long insisted, selves and their constructions must, therefore, be viewed as part and parcel of a culturally specific strategy of rhetorical assertions. For as Barthes (1974, p.139) recognized somewhat earlier, the subjectivity embodied in the usage of the "I" is "not the ship but its wake, not the plow but its furrow." His implication cannot be clearer: identities resist closure and in doing so reveal a complex of shifting multiple facets of self-positioning. Or later, he qualifies with an observation that the "I" is nothing more than "the person who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance 'I,'" an attempt at representing what Chris Weedon (1987, p.25) terms the "temporary retrospective fixing" of meaning and identity. The consequences of such an understanding portend no less than the radical overthrow of those traditional discussions of self and selfhood that by and large have dominated our study of all national literatures. No less than the evolution of a radical and radically new idiom for representing "modern" although hardly new) identity, what has long been heralded as the autonomous subject stands before us as an Emperor defrocked for all to see. In some parts of the world, the self is no longer unified. No worse for wear, it never was.

Concluding remarks

If we accept that the ultimate goal of narrating the self, as Lacan suggests, is somehow to do away with that space creating it as a separation from the object of its desires, then we can say that fictional self-representations mandate by definition a reactivation of the search of origin, for a reference, however momentary and fragmented that will not only precede all judgments but will in effect have given rise to them. As Ogai's fictional Rodin vindicates the actress Hanako's rare beauty to the student Kubota, "The human body as a form in itself is of no interest. It is a mirror of the soul. What interests me is the internal flame that appears through the form."[38] Whether a catch-all term incorporating modes of distinction based upon the lure of an impossible identity of the speaking subject or a monadic reduction of the context in which

---

38 To understand Rodin's explanation, however, we must first recall another significant detail from the narrative: while Hanako posed in the nude, the student Kubota is held up in the library of Hôtel Biron (the actual building has no library), preoccupied with his readings from Baudelaire's *The Metaphysics of Toys*. See Ogai, "Hanako," in *Ogai zenshû*, vol. 7.

the beginning and the end of first-person discourse somehow coalesce to keep the subject from being alienated from a past over which he assumes authority, Hanako's internal flame--her multiple, relationally defined selves--offers us as readers culturally specific possibilities for representation via the intercalating of desire with the inextricable connectedness of selves certainly, but how does the narrator represent an image of the self at once divorced from external reality, arising from, and exposing the recesses of some as-yet uncharted interiority? The answer we find during the late Meiji is deceptive in its simplicity: he invents an idiom for identity, thereby facilitating the acquisition of knowledge that is simultaneously local and non-centralized. That is to say, *via* identity a narrator performs, and what s/he performs is, as Dell Hymes (1981, p.86) would recognize, a "discourse that [makes] no sense outside of its own local context." Self-referential works, then, are at the very least ambiguous. They, too, raise the most perplexing theoretical questions, especially when sincerity is made an issue. If the sincere writer maintains the facade of telling the truth about himself--whether that truth be historical, psychological, or fictional--the reading audience is forced to problematize the notion of self-representation, forced to confront the likelihood that the self is itself reducible to the manipulation of linguistic and cultural conventions.[39]

Hence, narrators in fictional contexts of necessity devote tremendous energy to self-awareness, as reflected by their degree of concomitant sensitivity to the boundaries of self and non-self, the Other comprised by society and social values. But because of an awareness of distance implying the degree of difference, the parameters of self-consciousness--the incomplete or as-yet unwritten self, the perceived object of desire, and those events leading up to this need for self-narration--convey the illusion of simultaneously being revealed within the act of their reading. Any search for ontological certainty, a hallmark of the Cartesian premise, however, is rendered futile from the outset by the temporal and spatial limitations of our faculty of perceptions. Furthermore, in keeping with their performative nature, representations of the fragmentation of self and of the collapse of identity arise from a complicit collaboration between narrator and the reading audience: the result of narrating the *multidimensionality* and the *cyclical* movement of the experience in terms of a wholly linear line of progression toward or away from) self-fulfillment is a perceptible quilting or warping effect

---

39 Cf. Ganz (1980, p.170); and Hampshire (1971)

in which the abstractable "I" becomes the sum of rhetorical strategies in combination with the election of pronominal shifting. What we as readers come face to face with is the *representation* of a "virtual life," as much an illusion as is the space created in painting, and what gets narrated is but a semblance, a virtual history. Narrative, then, becomes the processing of what Dorrine Kondo (1990, p.10) terms an "emerging order" we recognize as culture.

Stuart Hampshire (1971) once questioned the means by which a particular narrative voice may watch for and endorse its own moments of spontaneity and natural passion without an ironical awareness of its own duplicity,[40] but the answers we now know are hardly universal. Within the Japanese context, for example, it cannot. It can only accept the fictionality, as well as the fragmentation, inherent in the performative representative of itself. Hence, any invocation of the "I" is simultaneously the describe both of the process by which the problematic of identity and self-representation emerged and of the particular contexts from which it took its form. Catherine Lutz's emphasis on the "emergent contested" natures of identity where "meaning is . . . a social rather than an individual achievement--an emergent product of social life," (LUTZ, 1988, p. 124) implicates the underlying culturally and historically constructed ideological practices themselves. Her questioning of the cultural strategies behind self-construction is, as Kondo shrewdly demonstrates, tantamount to questioning the role of ideology in the arena of emerging selfhoods.

Furthermore, to understand the idioms of selfhood as enactments and rhetorical assertions is to observe their contextual construction within shifting fields of power and meaning inseparable from the specific and discernible situations, culturally specific conventions affecting their narration, in short, the specificity of historical moment. In the Japanese context, then, identity is clearly not the unified essence implied by the Cartesian premise, but it *can* be the presentation or performance of a spatiotemporal locatedness of contradiction and disunity, a nexus wherein multiple discourses temporarily coincide in remarkable and discernible ways we apprehend in the abstracted self.

But it is not enough that we as readers celebrate in the particularity of these performance as expressions of what is often dismissed as "local knowledge." Rather, we must question what social institutions--be they alien or indigenous--these performances address.

---

40 Cf. Langer (1953).

What conventions did they oppose? What apparatus of power does the dialectic of the gaze set itself in opposition? For only by questioning the strategies that erected the facade of boundedness in general and one in particular that created the illusions of insulating the self from the play of power relations in specific works of fictional self-representation can we hope to force a larger reconsideration of selves and their pathways to emergence. In many ways, my task as a member of a particular reading audience has been and will always be to visualize the overall impact of cultural forces on patterns of fictional self-representation and to accept that identity is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of these meanings in everyday situations. "We are all different," Murasaki Shikibu (1996) once had reason to remark to herself, "And it is often difficult to know on which aspect to dwell." Transcending the vast differences in time, space, and cultural origins, her observations share an unusual affinity with those by Sula, the object of--as frequently the impetus behind--the narrator's discerning gaze in Toni Morrison's novel of the same name:

> She had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be--for a woman. And that no one would ever be that version of herself which she sought to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand. There was only her mood and whim, and if that was all there was, she decided to turn the naked hand toward it, discover it and let others become as intimate with their selves as she was. (Morrison, 1973, p.159).

175

Murasaki's and Sula's depictions of their respective worlds, however characterized by absence--of unity, of coherence, of meaning--cease to be that of presenting certain narrated actions alone. "In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted," Samuel Johnson remarks in his *Dictionary of the English Language*, "Let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed." In addition to problematizing the devices through which they construct themselves and their lives in all their complexity, contradiction, and irony within discursive fields of power and meaning, in culturally-specific situations and at specific historical moments, their use of multiple, shifting voices facilitating this de-centering and de-essentializing of selves represents a concerted effort to oppose and, in doing so, to authorize the collapse, the obfuscation of the mimetic and the universal. Insofar as they question the particularity of cultural boundaries, their myriad voices,

too, demonstrate that the intertextual relationships we apprehend in first-person narrative acts are less a name for the dynamic of the ideology of one text to particular prior texts and their inherent ideologies than a designation of its participation within the discursive discourses called Culture. Read in this light, literary depictions of self and the process of distancing inherent to all acts of subjection promise us no less than a marvelous heteroglossia wherein intimacy becomes both an essential vehicle for configuring reality and a bridge to our increased understanding of the roles of and interrelationships between representation and culture on the one hand and being and knowing on the other.

References

AKIRA, Miyahara. A Need for Culture-Particular Criteria for Observation and Evaluation of Persuasiveness in Public Communication: The Case for Japan. **Studies in English Language and Literature**. Taiwan, v. 27, p. 85-101, December. 1986.

ALLISON, Anne. **Permitted and Prohibited Desires**: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996, 109

AMES, Roger T. et al.. **Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice**. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.

BACHELARD, Gaston. **La Philosophie de Non**. Paris, 1988.

BACHNIK, Jane M. Deixis and Self/Other References in Japanese Discourse. **Working Papers in Sociolinguistics**. Austin, n.99, p.1-36, jul. 1982.

BANANA, Yoshimoto. **Kitchin**. Tokyo: Fukubu Shoten, 1988.

BARTHES, Roland. **S/Z**. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

BARTHES. "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" in MACKSEY, Richard; DONATO, Eugenio (ed). **Baltimore**: The Structuralist Controversy. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970.

BERGER, John. **Ways of Seeing**. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

BINFORD, L. R.. **An Archeological Perspective**. New York: Seminar Press, 1972.

BOWRING, Richard. **Mori Ogai and the Modernization of Japanese Culture**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

BUTLER, Judith. **Gender Trouble**: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1989.

CARLYLE, Thomas. **Heroes, Hero Worship and The Heroic in History**. Chicago:

The Book Supply Company, 1840.

CHAMBERLAIN, Basil Hall. **A Simplified Grammar of the Japanese Language: Modern Written Style**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924.

CHILDE, V. Gordon. **Society and Knowledge**. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1956.

CLIFFORD, James; MARCUS George E. (ed). **Writing Culture**: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986.

CREPANZANO, Vincent. The Self, the Third, and Desire. in LEE, Benjamin (ed). **Psychosocial Theories of the Self**. New York: Plenum, 1982.

DERRIDA, Jaçques. Structure, Sign, and Play in the Human Sciences. in **Writing and Difference**. Trad. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

DEUTSCH, Eliot. **Creative Being**: The Crafting of Person and World. Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Press, 1992.

DOUGLAS, Mary. **Rules and Meanings**: The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge. London: Penguin Books, 1973.

DULLES, Foster Rhea. **Yankees and Samurai**: America's Role in the Emergence of Modern Japan. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

ELLIOT, Robert C. **The Literary Persona**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

EMI, Yamada. **Animaru rojikku**. Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1996.

FOWLER, Edward B. The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishôsetsu in **Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction**. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988.

FREUD, Sigmund. **Civilization and Its Discontents**. Trad. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1989.

FUSAO, Hayashi. **Seinen "Youth"**. s/l. s/ed. 1932.

GANZ, Arthur. **Realms of the Self**: Variations on a Theme in Modern Drama. New York: New York University press, 1980.

GEERTZ, Clifford. **Local Knowledge**: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology. New York: New York University Press, 1980.

HAJIME, Nakamura,. Consciousness of the Individual and the Universal among the Japanese. in MOORE, Charles A. (ed). **The Japanese Mind**: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1967.

HAMPSHIRE, Stuart. Sincerity and Single-mindedness. In: **Freedom of Mind and Other Essays**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

HARADA, S. I. Honorifics. In: SHIBUTANI, Masayoshi. **Syntax and Semantics 5**: Japanese Generative Grammar. New York: Academic Press, 1975.

HAWKS, Francis L. **Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, Performed in the Years 1852, 1853, and 1854**. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857.

HEIDEGGER, Martin. **Bauen Wohnen Denken, Vorträge und Aufsätze**. Berlin: Pfullingen, 1967, vols. 2-3.

HWANG, David Henry. **M. Butterfly**. New York: Plume Books, 1988.

HIDEO, Kobayashi. Watakushi shôsetsuron. in **Selected Writings of Kobayashi Hideo**. Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1962.

HISA, Kumagai. A Dissection of Intimacy: A Study of "Bipolar Posturing" in Japanese Social Interaction––Amaeru and Amayakasu, Indulgence and Deference. **Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry**. Cleveland. V.5, p. 249–72, 1981.

HOFSTEDE, Geert. Motivation, Leadership, and Organization: Do American Theories Apply Abroad? **Organizational Dynamics**. V.43, summer 1980.

HÖLDERLIN, F. Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland, in BEIßNER, Friedrich (ed). Sämtliche Werke. **Stuttgart**: Großer Stuttgarter Ausgabe, 1957, vol. 3.

HWANG, David Henry. **M. Butterfly**. New York: Plume Books, 1988.

HYMES, Dell. **In Vain I Tried to Tell You**. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

JAMES, William. **The Principals of Psychology**. New York: Dover Publications, 1950, vol. 1.

JUN, Tosaka. **Tosaka Jun zenshû**. Tokyo: Keisô shobô, 1966, vol. 4.

KENZABURÔ, Oe. A Novelist's Lament. **The Japan Times**. Tokyo, s/p.. 23 nov. 1986.

KENZABURŌ, Ōe. Japan's Dual Identity: A Writer's Dilemma," in Miyoshi, Masao; Harootunian, H. D. (ed) **Postmodernism and Japan**. Durham: Duke University Press, 1989.p.189–214.

KENZABURŌ, Ōe. **Shôsetsu no keiken**. Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1994.

KIYOSHI, Inoue. **Tennô––tennô-sei no rekishi**. Tokyo: Meiseki, 1986.

Kobori, "Omokage no shigaku," Hikaku bungaku kenkyû. 1974

KONDO, Dorrine K. **Crafting Selves**: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

LANGER, Suzanne K.. **Feeling and Form**. London: Routledge, 1953.

LIPPIT, Noriko Mizuta. **Reality and Fiction in Modern Japanese Literature.**

White Plains. New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980.

LOTMAN, Yuri M. The Text within the Text. **PMLA**. Trad. Jerry Leo and Amy Mandelker. vol. 109, no. 3, p.384, 1994.

LUTZ, Catherine. **Unnatural Emotions**. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1988.

MARCUS, George E.; FISCHER, Michael M. J.. **Anthropology as Cultural Critique**: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

MARCUS, George; FISCHER, Michael. **Anthropology as Cultural Critique**: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

MARCUS, Marvin. **Paragons of the Ordinary**: The Biographical Literature of Mori Ogai. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1993.

MASATAKA, Kageyama. **Kabuki ongaku no kenkyû**: kokubungaku no shiten. Tokyo: Shitensha kenkyû sôsho. V. 48, p.30-32, 1992.

MAUSS, Marcel. A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self. in CARRITHERS, Michael (ed). **The Category of the Person**: Anthropology, Philosophy, History. Trad. W. D. Halls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

MAUSS, Marcel. Mentalité archaïque et catégories de pensée. In: **Oeuvres**. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969.

MOKUAMI, Kawatake. Karigane, in TOSHIO, Kawatake (ed). **Kawatake Mokuami shû Meiji bungaku zenshû**. Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1966, vol. 9: 221-2.

MORI Ogai, Oferia no uta. In: **Ogai zenshû**, 1972, vol. 9.

MORI, Ogai, Hanako. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 7.

MORI, Ogai, Ikutagawa. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 6.

MORI, Ogai. Doitsu nikki. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 35.

MORI, Ogai. Fuausuto. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 12.

MORI, Ogai. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 23.

MORI, Ogai. Robinson Kurusô. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971-75, vol. 8: 331-42.

MORI, Ogai. Seinen. In: MOKUTARÔ, Kinoshita et al.(ed). **Ogai zenshû**. Tokyo:

Iwanami Shoten, 1971–75, vol. 6.

MORI, Ogai. **The Ikuta River**. s/l, s/ed 1910

MORRISON, Toni. **Sula**. Trad. Richard Bowring. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973, 159.

NAGURA, The Use of Address Terms between Japanese Spouses. **Seikai no nihongo kyôiku**. 2 March 1992: 48.

ODIN, Steven. **The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism**. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.

RORTY. **Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

ROSALDO, Michelle Z.. Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling. In: SCHWEDER, Richard (ed). **Culture Theory**: Mind, Self and Emotion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

ROSENBERGER. Nancy R.. Tree in Summer, Tree in Winter: Movement of Self in Japan. In: ROSENBERGER, Nancy R. (ed). **Japanese Sense of Self**. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1992.

RUBIN Jay. The Evil and the Ordinary in Sôseki's Fiction. **Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies**. Cambridge, v.46, no. 2, p. 333–52, 1986.

SAIKAKU, Ihara. **Kôshoku ichidai otoko. Kôshoku ichidai onna. Kôshoku gonin onna**. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991.

SAUSSURE, Ferdinand de. **Course in General Linguistics**. New York: McGraw–Hill, 1966.

SHAKESPEARE, William. Hamlet. in **The Complete Oxford Shakespeare**. vol. 3: IV, 5, 1150

SHIGEHARU, Nakano. Nashi no hana. In: **Nakano Shigeharu zenshû**. Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1980, vol. 6: 68–9.

SHIKIBU, Murasaki. **The Diary of Lady Murasaki**. Trad. Richard Bowring. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

SHÔICHI, Saeki. The Curious Relationship Between Biography and Autobiography in Japan. In: FRIEDSON, Anthony (ed). **New Directions in Biography**. Honolulu: Biographical Research Center, 1981.

SHÔNAGON, Sei. Makura sôshi.

SHÛJI, Miya Sanseishô, in **Miya Shûji shû**. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989, vol. 1.

SHÛJI, Miya. Sanseishô, in Miya Shûji shû, vol. 1.

SILVERBERG, Miriam. **Changing Song**: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

SILVERSTEIN, Michael. Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology. In: CLYNE, Paul R. et al. (ed). **The Elements**: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels. Chicago: The University of Chicago [Chicago Linguistic Society], 1979.

SÔSEKI, Natsume. Watakushi no kojinshugi. In: **Sôseki zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974.

TAKAO, Suzuki. **Japanese and the Japanese**: Words in Context. Trad. Akira Miura. Tokyo: Kôdansha International, Ltd., 1978.

TAKEO, Doi. **Omote to ura**. Tokyo: Kôbundo, 1985.

TOSHIE, Nagura. The Use of Address Terms between Japanese Spouses. **Sekai no nihongo kyôiku**. 2 March, p.61, 1992.

TREAT, John Whittier Beheaded Emperors and the Absent Figure in Contemporary Japanese Literature. **PMLA**. January, 1994.

WEBBER, Joan. **The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose**. Madison. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.

WEEDON, Chris. **Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory**. London: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

WETZEL, Patricia. **"Uti" and "Soto" In-Group and Out-Group**: Social Deixis in Japanese. 1984. Ph.D. diss, Cornell University, New York.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. The Idea of Culture. **Essays in Criticism**. v. 3, no. 3, p. 239–66, 1953.

WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. **Philosophische Untersuchungen**. Berlin: Surkamp Verlag, 1975.

YUKICHI, Fukuzawa. Gakumon no susume. In: **Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshû**. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1980, vol. 3.