

I think that in this disruptive move and in the reinvention of Japanese culture in the foreign land of Ezo that took place along with it, both the people *and* their deities were significantly changed. Ōuchi Seiran claimed that “by virtue of their trades and the very land they live in...the people of Hokkaido are profoundly religious.”<sup>19</sup> The *kaitaku seishin* is itself creative, expansive, and directed toward the unknown. In their daily engagement for survival in Hokkaido, the colonists were engaged in resolving the ultimate questions of human existence. The possibilities for Buddhism there seemed limitless.

The colonization of Hokkaido was certainly not a seamless transfer of a hermeneutically sealed tradition and culture into a completely receptive and open land. There are numerous radical sparks of important difference. While I fear I have very imperfectly addressed this topic here, let me close with a verse that catches something of the legacy of Hokkaido Buddhism. The following was inscribed upon a temple bell cast for a temple in Otaru in 1862:

Reaching the end of the eastern frontier  
and the harbors of the northern sea  
we open the land with our labor  
we open the doors of purity.  
The dragon's call shatters our dreams  
and the whales' song heralds the dawn.  
Our senses inundated—  
voice upon voice, so new.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ōuchi, “Hokkaidō fukyo ron: dai san,” in *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2864 (March 22, 1891), 46.

<sup>20</sup> On the bell of the Sōtō Zen temple, Eizenji. Cited in Hoshino, *Hokkaidō jin*, 99.

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## IDEOLOGIES OF NOVELTY AND AGEDNESS: NARRATING THE ORIGINS OF THE MEIJI NATION

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Our conference and its focus on new approaches to the study of the Meiji period is founded on a contradiction that could be called the paradox of progress-as-return: going “back” to the Meiji period in order to move “forward” in the paradigms by which we construct history. This contradiction seems to spring from a deep sense of Meiji as novel, a period of sweeping disruptions and reorganizations in social structures. The novelty of Meiji suggests to us that by studying the period, we can uncover the origins of modern Japan.<sup>1</sup>

Meiji's novelty, however, poses a particular problem for us. The ideology that became dominant in Japan by the third decade of the period was founded on precisely this trope of novelty: through it, an image emerged of Meiji as radically new. This image in turn became a justification for wide-ranging social restructurings. This is not to deny that sweeping changes occurred, but rather to point out that the durability of the structures of power that emerged during the period derived from an ideology that presented both these structures, and the sweeping social reorganizations that were their cornerstones, as novelty and progress. Any attempt that we make to discover new approaches to Meiji therefore needs to come to terms with the coincidence between our desire to discover Meiji as new, and Meiji's self-representation as “novel.”

Meiji's ideology of novelty is laden with a contradiction of its own that parallels the contradiction at the heart of our project. By the mid-1880s, Japanese ideology had begun to incorporate a discourse of continuity, of the ancient origins of Meiji society. The contradiction between novelty and ancient origins comprised the historicity of the emerging social order: if exposed, it had the potential to suggest that the social order constructed in ideology

<sup>1</sup> In the approach and content of this paper, I owe a great debt to the Northeastern regional workshop on Meiji history, and particularly to Carol Gluck, Naoki Sakai, and Brett de Bary for their comments made in meetings.

in middle Meiji was justified neither by linear and ordained progress nor by time-honored continuity. This historicity was unspeakable in mid-Meiji ideology; indeed, its obfuscation was a basic structure of that ideology, as it is of ideologies in general. As Louis Althusser observed, "ideology has no history": its operation is premised on the representation of the social order of the present moment as inevitable and unchanging. Ideology must be invisible to the historical gaze.<sup>2</sup>

The contradiction within mid-Meiji ideology posed a problem of beginnings: how to account for the emergence of new social forms if the essence of Japanese society was unchanging. Texts from the late 1880s and 1890s suggest that for the moment, the contradiction was resolved through the construction of teleological narratives of history that represented the unchanging essence of the Japanese people as coming to fruition through a process of movement toward an unmediated self-presence. In mid-Meiji ideology, the people's emergence into self-presence is represented repeatedly as a rupture in history in which what could be called a "national present" begins.<sup>3</sup> I will single out two texts from this

<sup>2</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 159. Prasenjit Duara has argued that the contradiction that I have observed within Meiji ideology is characteristic of national ideologies in general: "While on the one hand, nationalist leaders and nation-states glorify the ancient or eternal character of the nation, they simultaneously seek to emphasize the unprecedented nature of the nation-state, because it is only in this form that the 'people' have been able to realize themselves as the subjects of their history...There is thus a built-in ambivalence in modern nationalist ideology toward the historicity of the nation..." In Prasenjit Duara, "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30 (July 1993), 12. For Duara, this ambivalence toward the "historicity"—or what I call the historicity—of the nation is a fundamental aporia of nationalist ideology. The slippage that is inherent in the imperfect match between narratives of the nation as novel and as ancient opens up a space in which national identity can be disputed, he argues in "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," 13. Duara's point is important not only for its statement of the basic instability of national ideologies, but also for its suggestion that, in order to maintain their dominant position, such ideologies must constantly seek to obscure the contradiction at their heart by closing the gap between the discourses of novelty and agedness that compose them.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Duus has pointed out the importance of teleological constructions of history to mid-Meiji criticism of the state by Tokutomi Sohō, Takekoshi Yosaburō, and Yamaji Aizan. He ignores the importance of such constructions of history to the construction of national identity, however, and thus passes over the points on which these "oppositional" figures were in basic agreement with the state. Clearly the discourse of Meiji ideology, and especially its construction of nation-

period, Tokutomi Sohō's *Shōrai no Nihon* (The Future Japan, 1886) and Mori Ōgai's *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl, 1890), as examples of the way that such representations constructed Japanese national identity.<sup>4</sup> To borrow a phrase from Etienne Balibar, these narratives "produce the people." The comparison between *Maihime* and *Shōrai no Nihon* is compelling because, despite apparent differences of "genre," these texts use a nearly identical narrative strategy to produce the Japanese people.<sup>5</sup>

The parallels in the narrative strategies through which these texts construct the people and their history suggest that they are examples of a broader ideological discourse of nationality. At the same time, their narrative strategies construct the "national present" as the locus of historical knowledge. This is a point to which I will return later, because it bears on our own present, the one in which we work. The entwining of nation and knowledge in mid-Meiji ideology suggests that they together comprise a shift, both political and epistemological in its dimensions, that I would call "a narrativization of thought."<sup>6</sup>

al identity, extended far beyond the state itself. See "Whig History, Japanese Style: The Min'yūsha Historians and the Meiji Restoration," *Journal of Asian Studies* 33.3 (1974), 416-417.

<sup>4</sup> *Shōrai no Nihon* was published in 1886 by Tōkyō keizai zasshi, the parent of the journal of the same name founded by Taguchi Ukichi; *Maihime* was published on January 3, 1890 in issue 6:69 of *Kokumin no tomo*, the magazine founded by Tokutomi largely with profits from the sale of *Shōrai no Nihon*. They have been translated as *The Future Japan*, trans. Vinh Sinh (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), and "Maihime," trans. Richard Bowring, *Monumenta Nipponica* 30:2 (1975), 151-166.

<sup>5</sup> Etienne Balibar, "The Nation-Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 93.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault has called this period the "Age of History," but I prefer the idea of narrativization because, if indeed such a shift toward time as the basis of knowledge has occurred, the only place that we can hope to find evidence of it is in the mimesis of time in narratives—the specific ways that narratives encode and represent time in their structures. See *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (translation of *Les Mots et Les Choses*) (New York: Vintage, 1973), 217-219. Foucault cautions, "Obviously, History in this sense is not to be understood as the compilation of factual successions or sequences as they may have occurred; it is the fundamental mode of being of empiricities, upon the basis of which they are affirmed, posited, arranged, and distributed in the space of knowledge for the use of such disciplines or sciences as may arise" (219). Duara, pointing out that the idea of movement toward what he calls national "self-awareness" is a basic trope both of nationalist ideologies and of the practice of writing history today, has called persuasively over the past several years for historians to

Each of these texts produces the people through an interplay between a frame that it erects around the past, and a historical narrative, located within the frame. The way that this structure works is as important to understanding the ideological significance of these texts as the details of their national stories, which I will summarize briefly. *Shōrai no Nihon* is an examination of the history of Japanese society in light of a purportedly universal law of social development from military-aristocratic to industrial-democratic organization. Tokutomi calls this the *taisei*, or “general trend,” of history, and he elaborates it at length in the first half of the book, drawing on Taguchi Ukichi and Herbert Spencer.<sup>7</sup> *Maihime* is a first-person story of a young Japanese bureaucrat’s involvement with a dancing girl in Berlin, whom he abandons after impregnating her. The young man writes the story as a diary on his trip back to Japan.

Turning first to the question of framing, in Tokutomi’s and Ōgai’s texts, the moment of the speech act of narration—the “narrative present”—is separated from the past by a break that is encoded in the structure of their narratives. Tokutomi’s anonymous historian-narrator and Ōta, Ōgai’s autobiographical stand-in, are located explicitly in the present of middle Meiji but describe events that are at a chronological remove.<sup>8</sup>

*Shōrai no Nihon* opens with an overture entitled “Kōzui no ato ni wa kōzui ari,” or “After the deluge, there is a deluge.” The changes seen in Japan in the last thirty years have been so great that a citizen from Tokugawa Ienari’s time, brought back from the grave and set down in the middle of the Ginza, would not

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extricate the practice of history-writing from its predominantly nationalist framework. See “De-Constructing the Chinese Nation,” 1-2, and “Bifurcating Linear History: Nation and Histories in China and India,” *positions* 1:3 (Winter 1993), 779. Yet the challenge remains far more complicated than Duara admits, because the narrative of self-presence not only is a foundation of specifically national ideology, but also of the system of knowledge through which we constitute and investigate our historical subjects.

<sup>7</sup> Duus discusses Tokutomi’s reception of Taguchi and Spencer in “Whig History, Japanese Style,” 419-424.

<sup>8</sup> The pronoun *gojin* of Tokutomi’s narrative—which variously signifies an anonymous historical “we” as well as the “we” of the people—and Ōta’s first-person pronoun *yō* are located explicitly in the present of middle Meiji but describe events that are at a chronological remove. In Russian Formalist terms, these two texts incorporate a disjunction between the time invoked as the beginning of the *sjuzet*, or narrative, and the time invoked as the beginning of the *fabula*, or story.

recognize a thing. Yet this is only the beginning, not the end of change, Tokutomi says.<sup>9</sup> Following this invocation of the present, Tokutomi begins his discussion of the laws of social progress, a continuing preface leading to the narrative précis of Japanese history that forms the center of the book’s argument. When he does turn to Japanese history, he begins with the establishment of the Tokugawa regime and an attack on Tokugawa Ieyasu. Because the narrative present thereby is separated decisively from the past that Tokutomi narrates into history, it is figured as the site of knowledge of the laws of history.

Ōgai’s severing of the narrative present from the past in the opening of *Maihime* is still clearer. Ōta, the protagonist, is in Saigon when he writes:

Truly, I, returning to the East now, am not the person of long ago who sailed to the West. In my heart I am deeply unsatisfied with learning, I have learned the pains of this sad world and the unreliability of people’s hearts, but even more, I have come to understand the caprice of myself and my own heart.<sup>10</sup>

When Ōta resolves to write the experience that wrought this drastic change, he begins with his early childhood, the deepest past that this personal history can encompass. The gulf of time between the narrative present and the events that Ōta narrates to create his personal history thus is inscribed in the frame of the story; the frame becomes the locus of maturity and knowledge of the self. It is important to note that in both cases, the invocation of the narrative present in the frame casts all of the narrative that follows as movement in time toward the present of the frame, and toward a convergence with it. This situation, in which both we and the narrator know how the story is going to “turn out,” lends its movement a necessity and a teleology.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Tokutomi Sohō, “Shōrai no Nihon,” in *Tokutomi Sohō, Yamaji Aizan, Nihon no meichō* 40 (Chūō kōronsha, 1971), 67-68.

<sup>10</sup> Mori Ōgai, *Maihime*, *Mori Ōgai shū I*, *Nihon kindai bungaku taikai* 11 (Kadokawa shoten, 1974), 40.

<sup>11</sup> In one of his classic discussions of history-writing, Roland Barthes observed that the commencement of a historical narrative poses a particular problem to the writer because at that point, the beginning of the narrative (*sjuzet*) and the beginning of the story (*fabula*) coincide. As a result, there is no accounting for the historian’s knowledge of what is to come. The solution, he argued, was the development of the preface as a customary pre-text for the main text itself. The preface “de-chronologizes” the narrative speech act, locating it outside of the chronology of the events under representation and explaining the historian’s pre-

As for the historical narratives themselves, in *Shōrai no Nihon*, Tokutomi finds that the history of Japan has been a history of suspension and distortion of the *taisei* of universal history and of the Japanese people's essential nature. At the end of his long prologue, Tokutomi argues that by nature Japan has a single polity (*kokutai*), a single race (*jinshu*), a single system of customs (*fūzoku*), and a single language (*genko*). He concludes that "because of its natural cohesion, our country is one with a natural polity [*shizen no kokutai*]," and could have been expected to follow the paths of other nations.<sup>12</sup> In other words: the laws of *universal* history are also the laws of *Japanese* history. It is Japan's nature both to have a unified *kokutai* and to progress toward an industrial and democratic organization of society.

Tokutomi's attack on Tokugawa Ieyasu follows on this evocation of nature. He then proceeds to discuss the Tokugawa period in two chapters entitled "Kako no Nihon" ("The Past Japan"). In *Shōrai no Nihon*, Japanese history begins with the establishment of the *bakuhan* system. By implication, everything that comes before belongs to the temporally undifferentiated pre-history of "nature." The *bakuhan* system "restrained" the natural qualities that were

dictive position, Barthes argued. In Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 130-131. In light of the prefacing strategies that are evident in Tokutomi and Ōgai, it is clear that the institution of the preface also objectifies the past by separating it decisively from the present of the speech act. Such objectification is an assertion of knowledge on the part of the historian-narrator: the narrative present becomes the locus of knowledge. This observation helps to explain why history-writing is characterized by the "systematic absence" of references to the historian, as Barthes noted. The "referential illusion," in Barthes's phrase, that is established by such systematic absence is the basis of the system of so-called "objective" history-writing. See "The Discourse of History," 131-132. The assertion of "objective" historical knowledge, whether it is knowledge of the forces directing Japanese history or of the caprice of one's heart, is founded on the objectification of the past through framing techniques.

Viewed in these terms, the problem posed by the contradiction within the ideology of the mid-Meiji period is a problem of representing the objectified past as the necessary pre-condition of the apparently "objective" knowledge of history in the present, while still maintaining that the past itself remained incomplete, in a state of latency that lacked self-knowledge. The narratives that are enclosed within the prefatory frames of Tokutomi's and Ōgai's histories suggest that the solution in middle Meiji was to construct a structure of causality that leads to and produces the moment of knowledge invoked by the frame. Their histories thus represent the moment of national self-consciousness as the moment of transparent historical objectivity.

<sup>12</sup> Tokutomi, *Shōrai no Nihon*, 140.

evident in this pre-historic era, Tokutomi says, and thereby was a "suspension" (*shadan*) of the *taisei*.<sup>13</sup> Tokutomi stresses that the spread of samurai customs for succession to "every corner" of society during the Tokugawa period left it divided by lines of inheritance and blood.<sup>14</sup> He states flatly, "In feudal society, there was *no single people* [*ikko no jinmin*]...instead of a society established for the people, there was a people that was established for society, or rather for the lords and their samurai retainers."<sup>15</sup>

It is in this situation, with the Japanese people divided against itself and despite itself, that the pent-up *taisei* of history washes across Japan in the deluge of events leading to 1868. Tokutomi's representation of the Restoration is markedly unclear in identifying the agents of change, in contrast to his representation of the Tokugawa period, in which the daimyo and their retainers are the undisputed and villainous agents of history. Ultimately, the only agent is the *taisei* itself. Tokutomi writes:

The world environment of production and the *taisei* of democracy spurred on our *bakufu*, spurred on our Minister Ii [Naosuke], spurred on our late lord of Mito [Tokugawa Nariaki] and Fujita Tōko, spurred on our Sakuma [Shōzan] and Yoshida [Shōin] alike, spurred on our Yanagawa Seigan, spurred on our Yokoi Shōnan, spurred on [the *han* of] Aizu and Kuwana, spurred on the lord of Echizen, spurred on the two *han* of Satsuma and Chōshū, spurred on Saigō [Takamori], Kido [Takayoshi] and Ōkubo [Toshimichi] alike. Neither considering whether they were loyal to the *bakufu* or to the emperor, nor asking whether they would expel the barbarians or open the ports, and regardless of whether they were partisans of reckless adventurism or of well-thought administration, it [the *taisei*] melded and compressed, without cause and effect and without relation, these individual, disparate, self-interested, and contradictory acts within a larger pattern, and leaving no trace of these brilliant and heroic, awe-inspiring elements, brought forth the crystalline form [*kokettai*] of a single new Japan. This new Japan is the very Japan of our present day.<sup>16</sup>

This shift from specific agents to the agency of the *taisei* is a telling one. So that I am not misunderstood, let me say plainly that my

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 161, 162.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 163. Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 170.

point is *not* that “proper” historical writing should clearly delineate the “agents” behind events, but rather that the twists of Tokutomi’s prose here are signs of an aporia in the structure of his narrative. The Restoration seems to be fundamentally *unrepresentable* for Tokutomi.<sup>17</sup> The result is that the unity of the new Japan is formed in a blank spot in his history, an irruptive break in its otherwise causal narrative. This “break” marks the beginning of the present, of “genkin no Nihon,” as Tokutomi phrases it. Moreover, because the narrative now has arrived at the narrative present of the frame, the realization of the people’s nature as *national* also marks the beginning of historical knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

The structure of Ōgai’s narrative parallels Tokutomi’s closely enough to suggest that during the mid-Meiji period, discourses of individual nationality—national subjectivity—also functioned through a narrative of self-presence marked by a “break” that initiates the individual as national. In the case of *Maihime*, personal history becomes the history of nationality. Maturity becomes a double initiation: *of* the national present, and *into* the people. Ōta begins his history by writing that he excelled at his studies from an early age, and that upon joining a government ministry, he enjoyed the special regard of his department chief.<sup>19</sup> Yet the inspiration to achieve came from others. From the time that he worked to please his mother, to the time that he worked to please his

<sup>17</sup> The tortured construction of the latter part of this passage suggests the difficulty that Tokutomi had reconciling the events leading up to 1868 to his scheme of historical change. The first and second sentences in English above are a single sentence in the original, but one which breaks naturally as I have translated it. Yet it appears that the difficulty is greater than that of naming the principle actors and stating their relationships to each other. The first half of this passage is a list of agents, while the second is in a series of denials that the list could cohere. If the first is a statement of linear advance, the second is an admission of a lateral dispersion that is averted only by invoking the *taisei* as the true agent of events.

<sup>18</sup> In this national present, the two functions of Tokutomi’s pronoun *gojin*—to signify a historical “we” and to signify the “we” of the people—converge: the people becomes the possessor of historical knowledge.

<sup>19</sup> In the light of the gendered dimensions of his later break into maturity, it is noteworthy that Ōta stresses that he succeeded despite the early loss of his father (Ōgai, *Maihime*, 41). There are hints throughout the story that being raised by his mother left him “feminized” (as Ōgai constructs the categories of masculine and feminine), and that this is the reason he was unable to resist the pressures of his mother to become a “living dictionary” and his department chief to become a living encyclopedia of the law.

chief, he writes, “I was nothing but a passive, machine-like character who didn’t know himself.”<sup>20</sup>

As the story is framed, each of the inversions that Ōta performs on his character after he arrives in Berlin is a step toward his moment of trauma and self-awareness. Thus, the romanticism of his move from law and politics to history and literature appears as a precursor of the realism of his maturity. Likewise, the cosmopolitanism of his instruction of the dancing girl Elise in German language and literature appears as a precursor of the nationalism of his maturity.<sup>21</sup> When he impregnates Elise, the narrative’s movement toward crisis takes on a biological inevitability. Race and nation become entwined in the figure of the child, as is clear when a diplomat offers Ōta the chance to return to Japan and clear his name. Aizawa, the diplomat’s secretary, has assured his employer that Ōta has no dependents. Ōta writes:

I couldn’t say it wasn’t so. I was taken aback, but...the thought that if I didn’t grasp this hand I would lose my country [*honkoku*]...and might be buried in the sea of people in this vast European metropolis pierced me heart and soul. Lacking the least moral character, I answered, “I accept.”<sup>22</sup>

Following this decision, Ōta falls into a semiconscious fever for several weeks, and when he awakens, his passage back to Japan has been arranged. The pregnant Elise, learning that Ōta has abandoned her, loses her mind.<sup>23</sup> Ōta pays off her mother and leaves. When he concludes his history by writing, “Ah, it would be hard to make another friend as good as Aizawa Kenkichi again. But in my heart, there remains even today a bit of me that hates him,” Ōta nominally has written his way to the narrative present, the night in Saigon that frames his story.<sup>24</sup> Yet only twenty days

<sup>20</sup> Ōgai, *Maihime*, 43. Ōgai represents his passivity in turn as having exacerbated the feminine side of his character. When Ōta remarks, for example, that his “heart was like a virgin’s,” he attributes it to the fact that he had always followed the teachings of his superiors (44).

<sup>21</sup> The cosmopolitanism of the immature Ōta stands out as a swipe by Ōgai at the unreflective veneration of the West in early Meiji *bunmei kaika* thought, suggesting that he saw an unavoidable conflict between such veneration and the construction of an identity as Japanese for Meiji intellectuals. Homi Bhabha discusses such conflicts in “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (Spring 1984), 125-133.

<sup>22</sup> Ōgai, *Maihime*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> She becomes “like an infant in her feeble-mindedness.” In *ibid.*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

have passed since he left Europe. The anomalous phrase "even today," (*kyō made mo*) thus indicates that Ōta also has arrived at a broader present, the present of maturity.

As in Tokutomi's narrative, there is a fundamental unrepresentability about the wrenching process through which Ōta has emerged into maturity. The agents that have dominated the narrative and lent it causality—Ōta's mother, his department chief—disappear at the moment of his irruptive "break" into maturity, to be replaced by the figure of the sea, a striking figure for the disappearance of national and racial difference. It is telling, moreover, that Ōta reasserts this difference by abandoning the girl; it is only by tossing her aside for the diplomat that he is able to secure his identity and enter the maturity of a nationalized, raced, and gendered subjectivity.<sup>25</sup>

Ōta's assertion of difference marks his accession to the self-knowledge that he invokes in the frame of *Maihime*, as well as the beginning of his undivided service to the nation. Thus, in *Maihime*, the self-knowledge that has been a persistent theme in Japanese literature since the Meiji period is a fundamentally *national* knowledge gained by embracing one's identity as Japanese.

At this point it should be clear that the parallels between these texts' representations of the process of nation-formation—particularly in the idea of movement toward self-presence and in the connection that they draw between race and nation—far outweigh differences of tone or even of "genre."<sup>26</sup> Rather than insisting on the difference between the "literary" quality of *Maihime* and the "analytical" and "historical" quality of *Shōrai no Nihon*, we should recognize that the common narrative strategy of Ōgai's discourse of the self and Tokutomi's discourse of society not only played a

<sup>25</sup> It is telling that Ōgai represents maturity as a process of traumatization from which Ōta will emerge, as from his fever. Elise, on the other hand, remains "like an infant" in her madness, and "other" in her nationality, race, and gender.

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the close parallels are compelling evidence that Tokutomi's much discussed "turn" from liberalism to nationalism after the Sino-Japanese War was less a rejection of liberalism than a continuation of his already nationally inflected representation of the past. For examples of interpretations of Tokutomi's "turn" as a rejection of optimistic liberalism, see Matsuzawa Hiroaki, "Varieties of *Bunmei Ron* (Theories of Civilization)," in *Japan in Transition: Thought and Action in the Meiji Era, 1868-1912*, ed. Hilary Conroy, Sandra T. W. Davis, and Wayne Paterson (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 216, and Kenneth B. Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity, 1885-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 180-183.

fundamental role in the construction of national identity in the mid-Meiji period, but also in the construction of the system of "objective" knowledge from which the categories of literature and history derive. The common narrativity of these categories, not simply their representation of the nation as having history, but their embedding of the nation in the structure of their histories—and in this sense, their construction of the nation *as* history—suggests that the establishment of the nation as a form of political organization is intimately caught up with a narrativization, a temporalization, of thought.

This narrativization consists of a double operation on the contradiction between novelty and agedness within Meiji ideology. In one of these operations, these narratives disperse the synchronic structure of the social order of middle Meiji along a diachronic narrative of history that leads, teleologically, to the break of the people's emergence into self-presence. The result of this temporal dispersion, the transformation of synchrony into diachrony, is a transformation of the historicity of the mid-Meiji order into its necessity. Thus in Tokutomi, history begins with the people divided and necessarily moves toward its triumphant, self-present unity, while in Ōgai, history begins in naiveté and necessarily moves toward traumatized but likewise self-present maturity.

In the other operation, each of these narratives displaces the historicity of the present of middle Meiji to the break in history in which what I have called the "national present" of self-presence begins. Tokutomi's appeal to the *taisei* and Ōgai's figure of the sea attest to the fact that in both cases, the dimensions of this break remain largely unrepresentable: the unspeakable historicity of ideology remains as the unrepresentability of the break. The significance of this displacement therefore is not that it identifies the historical origins of the emerging mid-Meiji order, but that it locates these origins elsewhere, at a distance from the present of middle Meiji itself.

Teleology but also displacement: if we consider these operations together, it is clear that the doubled structure of mid-Meiji ideology does more than obscure the contradiction of the "novel antiquity" of the nation by representing history as a movement toward national self-presence. It also represents this movement as *completed*, as the beginning of a national present that marks the

end of the flux of history.<sup>27</sup> Although the break that institutes the nation remains unrepresentable, it is transformed from an object of political knowledge, and therefore of potential political action, to an object of historical knowledge. This assertion of closure is the most enduring product of mid-Meiji ideology. It successfully recasts the Meiji period as the origin of Japanese modernity, the moment when the present of the modern begins. I say "enduring" and "successfully" because there has been little scrutiny of this self-invention, whereby a wide range of social transformations were made into a narrative of "progress." If any aspect of Meiji can be considered truly novel, it is the durability of the self-representation produced during the mid-Meiji period.

As I observed earlier, the structure of knowledge that these texts erect is located in a present that coincides with the national present. In *Shōrai no Nihon* and *Maihime*, this structure appears at the same moment that the nation emerges into self-presence. This is true not simply of the way that the texts represent the past, but also of the way that they represent themselves as knowledge: their discourse of truth is also a discourse of the nation. If we accept a thesis currently gaining ground, that the significance of the nation-form and of nationalism lies in the integration of societies

<sup>27</sup> The link between the present and self-presence in national ideology recalls other familiar themes of the Meiji period, such as the immediate relation of subject to emperor in the family state (*kazoku kokka*), and the similarly immediate relationship of speech to writing in the *genbun itchi* vernacularization movement. For an incisive discussion of the relationship between phonocentrism and nationalism in the *genbun itchi* movement, see Karatani Kōjin, "*Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen saikō*," *Hihyō kūkan*, no. 1 (1991), 85-99, and "Nationalism and Écriture," trans. Indra Levy, unpublished manuscript. Such echoes suggest a close connection between national ideology and what Jacques Derrida has called a "metaphysics of presence": both are founded on a temporalized discourse of origins and the idea of accumulation of meaning over time. Derrida, for one, locates the understanding of the past as teleological, linear "history" firmly within such a metaphysics. His most often cited statement on this link is in the second interview in *positions*, where he says, "What we must be wary of...is the *metaphysical* concept of history. This is the concept of history as the history of meaning...the history of meaning developing itself, producing itself, fulfilling itself." He continues, "The metaphysical character of the concept of history is not only linked to linearity, but to an entire *system* of implications (teleology, eschatology, elevating and interiorizing accumulation of meaning, a certain type of traditionality, a certain concept of continuity, of truth, etc.)." Jacques Derrida, "*Positions*," in *positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 56-57. In the case of mid-Meiji Japan, this assertion is borne out by the dominance of the idea of self-presence in discourses of history, whether national or personal.

into the transnational nation-*system* rather than in the transformation of individual societies, then it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the structures of knowledge through which we as scholars conduct our inquiries, in this case inquiries into "new approaches" to the Meiji period, arise from and help to constitute this systemic integration.<sup>28</sup>

This close relationship poses two persistent and related problems for us. First, as I suggested at the beginning of this paper, when we return to the Meiji period as a period of innovation, we often resurrect Meiji's ideology of "novelty" and use its representation of history as a lens through which we create images of the past, not only of the Meiji period, but also of other periods in Japanese history, preceding as well as following. One largely neglected response is the determined choice to study issues that span the purported rupture of 1868. It might be possible to take such an approach within the Meiji "period" itself by overturning accepted chronologies and paying more attention to continuities.

But this done, a second problem arises: how to deal—once we address the problem of the Meiji period, chronologically speaking—with the categories of knowledge themselves that were established alongside the nation-system. The challenge in this case is not so much to set aside Meiji's self-representations and find out "what really happened," by going "straight to the documents," for example, as it is to address the degree to which even our ways of conceptualizing "history" are entwined with national ideology. The most persistent challenge that faces us, finally, is not one of topic or period, that is to say, one of "new approaches," but one of method at its most fundamental: how to confront the national structures of thought that are the foundations of our work.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, Balibar, "The Nation-Form," 88-89, and Duara, "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," 9.