

DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER OCCASIONAL PAPERS • 18

ON POLITICS AND LITERATURE
TWO LECTURES BY KENZABURÔ ÔE





**On Politics and Literature:
Two Lectures by Kenzaburô Ôe**

THE DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES was established at the University of California at Berkeley in 1987 in order to promote interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. Endowed by Doreen B. Townsend, the Center awards fellowships to advanced graduate students and untenured faculty on the Berkeley campus, and supports interdisciplinary working groups, lectures, and team-taught graduate seminars. It also sponsors symposia and conferences which strengthen research and teaching in the humanities, arts, and related social science fields. The Center is directed by Randolph Starn, Professor of History and Italian Studies. Christina M. Gillis has been Associate Director of the Townsend Center since 1988.

The eighteenth number of the Townsend Center Occasional Papers series includes two lectures by Japanese writer and Nobel laureate KENZABURŌ ŌE, who visited Berkeley in April 1999 to deliver the first in a series of lectures established at the Center for Japanese Studies to honor political theorist Masao Maruyama. In his Maruyama Lecture, “The Language of Masao Maruyama,” Kenzaburō Ōe focuses upon the problem of political responsibility in the modern world, taking Maruyama’s major work as his point of departure; in a second (unrelated) lecture, “From the Beginning to the Present, and Facing the End: The Case of One Japanese Writer,” Kenzaburō Ōe offers an account of his own development as a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. In a year dedicated to demonstrating the importance of international dimensions in the humanities, the Townsend Center was particularly honored and gratified to have the opportunity to work with Professor Andrew Barshay and the Center for Japanese Studies in welcoming Kenzaburō Ōe to Berkeley.

Funding for the *OCCASIONAL PAPERS* of the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities is provided by Dean Joseph Cerny of the Graduate Division, and by other donors. Begun in 1994-95, the series makes available in print and on-line some of the many lectures delivered in Townsend Center programs. The series is registered with the Library of Congress. For more information on the publication, please contact the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, 220 Stephens Hall, The University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-2340, <http://ls.berkeley.edu/dept/townsend>, (510) 643-9670.

Occasional Papers Series

Editor: Christina M. Gillis

Assistant Editor & Production: Jill Stauffer

Printed by Hunza Graphics, Berkeley, California

All texts © The Regents of the University of California and the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, 1999. No portion of this publication may be reproduced by any means without the express permission of the authors or of the Center.

ISBN 1-881865-18-5

Occasional Papers of the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, no. 18.

Contents

Two Lectures by
Kenzaburô Ôe

Preface Randolph Starn	v
Introduction Andrew E. Barshay	1
Two Lectures by Kenzaburô Ôe:	
“The Language of Masao Maruyama”	5
Audience Comments	24
“From the Beginning to the Present, and Facing the End: The Case of One Japanese Writer”	29
Audience Comments	46

The Dowen B. Townsend

Center for the Humanities

International Perspectives in the Humanities
6661-8661 Intern

Preface

Two years ago my colleague and friend Andrew Barshay and I began talking about inviting Kenzaburô Ôe to launch a lecture series in honor of the late Masao Maruyama. Besides our admiration for the work of the two men, we thought that it was vitally important to cross the cultural and institutional boundaries separating the humanities and area studies in the university. We could not imagine better guides: Masao Maruyama was a democratic political thinker who was also a prize-winning author with a keen understanding of the role of language in constructing the worlds we live in; Kenzaburô Ôe, the writer, has always sought out the connections between his life, literature, and democratic political commitments. The work of both never shies away from confronting the real or phantasmatic attractions and resentments that have attended and still attend relations between Japan and the West. As it happened, the Townsend Center was planning a series of programs on international perspectives in the humanities; Ôe had good memories of visiting Berkeley in 1983, welcomed the occasion to pay tribute to Maruyama, and generously accepted a joint invitation to give the first Maruyama lecture.

I had met Kenzaburô Ôe in 1983 at a gathering in the house of a mutual friend. While writing a book on exile in medieval and Renaissance Italy, I had come across the tautly beautiful poetry of Japanese and Chinese scholar-officials who had chosen or were forced into exile. Ôe was knowledgeable about the exile and poetry of Dante—much more knowledgeable than I was about Bashô—and we were soon talking across languages and cultures about the voices of exiles, their liminal identities,

their sense of loss and liberation, of anger and cosmopolitan calm. We wondered what, if anything, could be learned from them when the nation and the state demanded not only our obedience but also our loyalty.

At this point we were interrupted by a colleague with outspoken views on the differences between all things Japanese and Western. As the room and conversation heated up, Ôe and I argued the interrupter out the door. We did not meet again for sixteen years, but when we did, I learned that Ôe had been working in Berkeley on a study of his teacher, Kazuo Watanabe, who was a scholar of French Renaissance humanism and literature, a field close to my own interests in the Italian Renaissance. This was another of those uncanny confluences and sometimes collisions of literatures, histories, and experiences that figure throughout Ôe's work and happen all the time in his presence. It occurred to me that his fascination with untoward tales of children would be sparked by an Occasional Paper containing Maurice Sendak's talk about changeling children. The shock of recognition was immediate: this was, he said, the key to the new novel he was writing.

In the end Ôe's visit gave us all the boundary-crossing we hoped for, and then some. It launched what he called "a new tradition" of Maruyama lectures that, on his recommendation, will receive support in the future from the Konishi Foundation for International Exchange. His old and, by now, many new friends and admirers in Berkeley will remember the intertwining of seriousness and play, close observation and imaginative intensity, cosmopolitanism and preoccupation with Japan that he makes somehow possible and necessary. Thanks to his characteristic generosity, his Berkeley talks and some part of the discussion they elicited will cross more boundaries in this Occasional Paper.

—Randolph Starn, Director
Townsend Center for the Humanities
Marian E. Koshland Distinguished Professor in the Humanities

Introduction

Andrew E. Barshay

It is a pleasure for me to introduce the following two lectures by Kenzaburô Ôe, which were sponsored jointly by the Center for Japanese Studies and the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley. They were delivered on two successive days in April, 1999, to very large and very appreciative audiences—by a long stretch the largest I have spoken to in my role as chair of the Japan Center.

The first of Ôe's lectures, "The Language of Masao Maruyama," inaugurates a new series of annual lectures, the Maruyama Lecture on Political Responsibility in the Modern World. This joint project between Japanese Studies and the Townsend Center is meant to bring together the humanities with Japanese Studies and Area Studies more generally—communities that have too long been separated, to the detriment of both. Maruyama lecturers may not and need not be specialists on Masao Maruyama or indeed on Japan. There are two criteria of selection: one is a serious concern for the problem of political responsibility in the modern world; the other is a willingness to read Maruyama's writings in whatever language may be accessible—apart from their Japanese originals, there are translations into English, German, French, Italian, Chinese, and now Korean—and to take a substantive response to those works as a point of departure. By any measure, Kenzaburô Ôe met those two criteria, and in so doing helped establish what he called a "new tradition" at Berkeley.

Let me say a few words about the series' namesake, and about Kenzaburô Ôe. (In introducing Mr. Ôe to the first day's audience, I promised to speak for one-tenth of his time, and I propose to do the same here.)

One might say in introducing Masao Maruyama (1914-1996) that Isaiah Berlin was the Masao Maruyama of Britain. The two thinkers shared a basic perception: that modern social and political life was characterized not by shared values but by an inevitable conflict among "liberties" or values, and that individuals and groups as they struggled over values had to be protected from being dissolved into any single collectivity. To convey something of Maruyama's ideas and style, I offer three illustrative quotations.

It is always better, Maruyama believed, to go forward toward liberation than backward into subjection and conformism:

For me the world since the Renaissance and the Reformation is a story of the revolt of man against nature, of the revolt of the poor against privilege, of the revolt of the "undeveloped" against the "West," now one emerging, now the other, each evoking the other and forming in the modern world a composition of harmony and dissonance on the grandest scale. (*Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, preface to the English edition)

The second quotation concerns the task of people living in this essentially revolutionary world. Politics is a kind of creative institution-making which, in order to prevent the wholesale expropriation or destruction of individuals and groups, has to be rule-bound. In other words, political life is lived as a set of real, vital fictions:

Selection in the modern world is not between a "fictitious" environment and a "real" one; it is our fate to live in a world where there are only various fictions and various designs. Unless we realize that fact, we are bound to lose the ability to select the better from among those fictions. ("Politics and Man in the Contemporary World")

The third quotation has to do with Maruyama's attitude toward the institutions and practice of democracy in modern Japan. It came in response to what he called the new "postwar myth" that dismissed so-called "occupation democracy" as a sham, and it is one of Maruyama's most famous statements. Speaking of the responsibility of intellectuals in Japan to carry out what he termed their "postwar responsibility," Maruyama wrote that they could do that best by "exposing to public view as much as possible of their past"—especially wartime—expressions of opinion. That has been difficult for some to do.

But as for my own choice in the matter, rather than the "reality" of the empire of Japan, I'll put my money on the "sham" of postwar democracy. (*Thought and Behaviour*, 1966 [Japanese])

I turn now to Kenzaburô Ôe. In every decade since the 1950s, Ôe has won more than one literary prize; the Nobel came in 1994. Leaving aside other prizes given him outside Japan and those won while he was a student, we find: in 1958, the Akutagawa Prize for his story, "The Catch"; in 1964, the Shinchô Prize for *A Personal Matter*, the novel that made his international reputation; in 1967, the Tanizaki Prize; in 1973 the Noma Prize; in 1983 both the Yomiuri and Ôsaragi Jirô prizes. As both his Maruyama lecture and his discussion of his literary work make clear, Ôe belongs to a generation of Japanese writers who felt that their most important work was in some sense to represent the country, *their* country: not in sense of affirming whatever it did before the world, but by being its best critic, mobilizing language, thought, and imagination to perform that formidable work.

For Ôe, writing creates worlds—highly, ineffably personal and yet communicable. For Ôe, modern Japanese writers and intellectuals have had to live out, and create, worlds marked by a kind of heteroglossia; they deal with words and ideas and practices of diverse origins, in the context of a historical experience that has been traumatic collectively and individually for those who have gone through it. It has left all kinds of scars, not only on the victims of atomic bombing, but also—as Ôe is sharply aware—on the "body" of Asia as Japan pursued its bloody fantasy of cultural and political hegemony on the continent. For this reason, as his Nobel lecture made clear, Ôe finds it difficult to justify any talk of Japan the Beautiful, but instead speaks of Japan the Ambiguous.

As far as his own writing is concerned, the play of mixed voices is unmistakable. The voices are many, and do not blend but rather jar against one another. One critic, echoing the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin, has spoken of Ôe’s “grotesque realism.” This is apt—he sees the most sordid, violent situations with an innocent, unperjured eye. His work is full of the scars and wounds of history, and his task as writer has been to try to heal them, even as they continue to be produced. But what can salve such wounds? In one of his essays, Ôe describes himself as a man who has no faith. I am not sure whether that is true. I think he does: in words and music, in sound. It is not the silence of the beautiful, but the sound of the ambiguous that heals.

—Andrew E. Barshay
Chair, Center for Japanese Studies

Acknowledgement:

I wish to record special thanks to Randolph Starn and Christina Gillis of the Townsend Center for their superlative cooperation in launching the Maruyama Lectures, and to the staff members of our respective centers, particularly Genevieve Shiffar and Keiko Hjersman, for their invaluable help.

The Language of Masao Maruyama

Kenzaburô Ôe

1.

In 1983, I spent a semester at the University of California, Berkeley. For one who began life as a working novelist while still young, those days are inscribed in my memory as a time of liberation from a narrowly closed world. One weekend, about a month into my stay, a letter containing an invitation was delivered to my office: “I understand that you are interested in trees. The Berkeley campus is blessed with rich and varied flora. As one who esteems the delicate aesthetic sensibilities of the Japanese, I would be pleased to give you a tour of the campus. I won’t take you on a forced march, so you may wear a kimono if you wish. In fact, I would welcome it.”

Awaiting me that Sunday in front of the brush cherry hedge bordering the Women’s Faculty Club was a handsome young man. Because I was staying at the Women’s Faculty Club, and perhaps because it is difficult for a foreigner to distinguish male from female in Japanese names, our young man was led to thoughts of gallantry.

Others, too, besides this young man, were kind to me. The specialists in Japanese history in particular went out of their way to welcome me, a complete academic amateur, into their midst. It was from them that I learned that Masao

Maruyama, who had spent the previous semester in Berkeley as a visiting scholar, had left behind a message concerning me. “Please look after Mr. Ôe,” he directed. “He is the student of a dear friend of mine.”

I am honored to be called a disciple of Kazuo Watanabe, a scholar of French literature. I lost my esteemed teacher, who was a specialist on François Rabelais, a few years ago. One of the goals of my stay in Berkeley was to escape the stagnant literary environment of Japan—we refer to that world as the *bundan*—so that I could work unhindered on a book on Watanabe. That work, which stands out in my memory—*A Humanist in Contemporary Japan: Reading Kazuo Watanabe*—was in fact finished while I was here.

To be sure, Watanabe was a friend of Maruyama. But I myself was not personally close to this distinguished historian of political thought. And for that reason, Maruyama’s message that I be “looked after” came as something of a surprise. If anything, in fact, his use of such a quintessentially Japanese expression almost seemed inappropriate for a thinker of his stature.

Following Maruyama’s death, his personal notes from his later years—I imagine these were not intended to be made public—appeared in book form as *Dialogues with Myself*. In them I discovered, again much to my surprise, a passage referring to me.

The passage was written in 1969, after Maruyama had been hospitalized due to heart failure and hepatitis—these had been brought on by overwork during the student unrest at Tokyo University:

Of late, in connection with the protests at Tokyo University—no, at universities throughout the country—the tide of public pronouncements rejecting postwar democracy has hit a peak. Maybe it’s better to say that a peculiar phenomenon is occurring in which we find almost no attempt, from within critical circles, to speak directly in defense of postwar democracy. (This despite the fact that the freedom to reject it publicly is based on the acceptance of postwar democracy itself!) Kenzaburô Ôe and a few others are among the very rare exceptions here.

That Maruyama regarded me not just as the student of a dear friend but as a fellow “postwar democrat” is a matter of great joy to me. Urged on by this

sense of joy, I am pleased to help in inaugurating what is destined to become a new tradition by speaking as the first Maruyama Lecturer.

2.

Now, since I am a novelist, what I have to offer today is not an academic discussion or critique of Maruyama's field of specialization. While I was in Berkeley, the office next to mine at the Center for Japanese Studies belonged to Professor Robert N. Bellah. The story of how the wonderful friendship between Maruyama and Professor Bellah was formed is well known: Maruyama, his "attention provoked and fighting spirit stirred" by Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion*, wrote a splendid critique, to which Bellah then responded. Many others in this country also developed scholarly ties, and ties of friendship going beyond scholarship, with Maruyama. I do not imagine that they, or their successors, harbor any expectation that I would offer opinions concerning specialist matters. If I were to do so, they would no doubt share the surprised disappointment of the youth waiting, in the shade of the brush cherry by the Women's Faculty Club, for a girl of delicate aesthetic sensibility to appear before him.

What I propose to do is to speak about Maruyama's way of using words—as Saussure would put it, his *langage*, or employment of language. I will do this by taking as my main text Maruyama's last major work devoted to public enlightenment. This was his *Reading "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization"* (which presents a detailed and far-ranging commentary on Yukichi Fukuzawa's 1875 masterwork of that title). Speaking as a novelist whose central concern is the use of words, I will address this aspect of Maruyama's work. Rather than explaining my method, let me instead offer an illustration by actual example.

It comes from a work entitled *The World of Masao Maruyama*—this too appeared after his death—which contains an essay written by Maruyama, then nine years old, following the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923. In it we find this small masterpiece:

In the earthquake, the districts of Fukagawa and Honjo were hardest hit. On the day of the quake, the principal of Sarue Elementary School on Fukagawa, thinking that since his school was built with reinforced concrete it would be safe, gave shelter

to many people and their belongings, filling up the school gymnasium with people and baggage. Instead, the fire that broke out after the earthquake came bearing down ferociously upon them. So the principal, sensing disaster, determined to get the refugees out to safety along with the other teachers. He entrusted the Imperial Portrait to his vice-principal, and saw to it that he escaped to safety together with the others, but, realizing that he himself would not have time to get away, prepared himself to die. We understand that later he was found dead, sitting upright on the school athletic field, keys in hand and arms folded across his chest. Refusing to escape merely to save himself, he first assisted others, but unable to escape in time, suffered this cruel death. But what a beautiful story this is!

Where, holding what, and in what physical posture did the dead man meet his end? With its sharpness of description and sensibility in characterizing the man's death as a beautiful one, this passage displays the distinct features of Maruyama's prose, features that run through his entire life's work. What I propose to do is to "read out" this essence of Maruyama's use of words, already clearly present in this composition, as it presents itself in *Reading the "Outline of a Theory of Civilization."*

Now, as I've said, I will be offering my remarks from my perspective as a novelist, touching on my personal reminiscences as I proceed. At this juncture I'd like to introduce two texts: both are written in 1957, one by Kazuo Watanabe, whose name I mentioned a moment ago, and another by Maruyama, concerning the same person, the one containing quotations from the other. The essays in question are eulogies to E. Herbert Norman, the Canadian diplomat and historian of Japan. As it happens, there is an English translation of Maruyama's essay by Ronald Dore, so some of you may already be familiar with it.

The historians present here will know that Norman, who arrived in Tokyo along with American occupation forces, was provided with materials concerning Andô Shôeki's *The Way of Nature and Labor* by Masao Maruyama, then only recently returned to Tokyo University after being released from service at Army headquarters in Hiroshima. For his part, Watanabe, the eldest of the three

with Norman between them, was on intimate terms with Norman, who was deeply versed in classical European languages and culture.

In 1956, Norman had been named Canadian ambassador to Egypt, and had worked hard to prevent the expansion of the Suez crisis. However, learning that he had become a target of the red-baiting organized in a United States Senate committee by J. Robert Morris, Norman leapt to his death from the roof of a building in Cairo. Quoting from Maruyama's essay, Watanabe mourned his friend's death. I quote two passages:

It is because we knew him as a 'quiet optimist,' as someone determined never to overlook the brighter sides of human life or the forward-looking movements of history, that the thought of that thing which tortured his mind as he hovered on the cliff-edge of death makes one hide one's face in horror." Reading these sentences into which my friend Maruyama, who knew Norman so well, poured out his heart, I was literally choked with tears.

Here is the second passage:

Coming to the end of my own poor effort, I beg to be permitted to use as my own the words taken from the conclusion of Masao Maruyama's splendid eulogy: "And if Herbert Norman, who so loved the good in men, and who had such faith in the power of reason to persuade men, has ended his short life in the midst of fanaticism and prejudices and intolerance, what should we do—we who remain behind?"

I hope you can all recognize, if only from the English translation, that these passages, both that of Watanabe and that of Maruyama quoted by him, share some profound similarities. For ten years following Japan's defeat, Watanabe and Maruyama alike addressed much of what they wrote to students and young intellectuals. Watanabe especially argued for "tolerance," while Maruyama spoke about democracy. And these major themes of theirs were directly connected. Strongly aware of the wartime isolation and powerlessness of specialists in various fields, Maruyama strove consciously to create a prose that could unify intellectuals—who formed, as he memorably put it, a "community of contrition"—along horizontal lines as they set about rebuilding Japan.

Watanabe and Maruyama, the one a specialist in French humanism, the other a political thinker widely versed in the writings of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, and Carl Schmitt, were both masters of a prose that brought into Japanese the stylistic sensibilities of European languages, and in so doing created a new form of written Japanese.

Here I feel bound to recall one other painful event that bears commonly on the life experience of both Watanabe and Maruyama. I refer to the damage done to these two great intellectuals and educators by their experience of the university unrest of the late 1960s. I do not doubt that within certain limits the student struggles of that time played a positive role. But neither is there any doubt in my mind that Watanabe, at least, was deeply disappointed by his realization that, despite his years of effort, the spirit of tolerance had failed to take root among the younger generation of intellectuals.

In the notes from which I quoted earlier, Maruyama writes about his experience of the university protests. And though it doesn't appear directly in his notes, there is a word that I think Maruyama must have called to mind repeatedly during this bitter time: when the student joint-struggle council at Tokyo University laid siege to the Law Faculty where he taught, Maruyama remained in the Meiji Newspaper Archive, of which he was then director, in order to protect it, sleeping on a mattress in the stacks. It is believed that the deterioration of his health brought on by this episode was responsible for his retirement from the university. The word I refer to is *enbô*, which may be translated as "jealousy" or "envy." Let me call your attention to the following passage in Maruyama's work on Fukuzawa's *Outline*:

It is unclear from where Fukuzawa took this notion of "envy," or whether it stemmed from his own life experience. I don't think there is any word in European languages that quite corresponds to it. Provisionally we can translate it as *ressentiment*, but its meaning is broader than this. Simply put it refers to the "palace chambermaid" complex or mentality.... For Fukuzawa, every human quality was relative; he saw good and bad as reverse sides of the same coin. For him, frugality and greed, valor and rudeness, sagacity and frivolousness—all of these qualities, through

their workings in concrete situations, could become virtues or vices, you see? But there was one quality alone that was an absolute evil. And that was “envy.” A totally negative value, there was nothing in envy that could lead to anything productive.

I have no intention of arguing that the movement among Japanese students from the late 1960s to early 1970s to reconstruct the universities was motivated *only* by what Fukuzawa termed “envy.” I also believe that there was some merit in the criticisms leveled by students at Japan’s intellectuals during that period.

What I want to say is that the criticisms made of Maruyama at that time—and not only by students, but also by younger intellectuals who had by then gained the right to speak out in journalistic circles—were often intensified by “envy.” For that reason, I am grateful to the organizers of this occasion for being given the opportunity to speak about Maruyama in a setting far removed from this kind of “envy.”

3.

Ten years after his experience of the university conflict of 1968, twenty years after the demonstrations against the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty, and a full thirty years after the publication of his landmark essay, “The Philosophy of Yukichi Fukuzawa,” why did Maruyama again take up the work of lecturing on Fukuzawa—and to a limited audience of young people at that? I offer my own ideas here, which I ask you to take as the imaginings of a novelist.

In my view, the reason lies in Maruyama’s experience as a participant in the anti-Security Treaty Movement, (known in Japanese as “AMPO”). Through his experience of the 1960 protests, Maruyama watched as the idea of democracy, which he hoped had been given impetus by Japan’s defeat and for whose realization he had worked, was trampled underfoot by Japan’s government and parliament. He recognized, furthermore, that a crisis marked by the revival of the ideas that had sustained the old regime had now come about in actuality. Along with this, however, his experience as a participant in the citizens’ movement of 1960 confirmed his hope that Japanese were capable of continuing their pursuit of democracy as permanent revolution.

In the period of university unrest that ushered in the 1970s, Maruyama was forced to recognize not only that the crisis caused by the revival of the old regime's ideas had deepened, but that among students and young intellectuals, doubts were being entertained about democracy itself. Maruyama had a habit of "quoting" his own well worked-out thoughts in published conversations and interviews. Allow me to quote one such passage from his notes of that time:

Was it better for Japan to have lost the war? Or would it have been better not to be defeated? Those who do nothing but bewail postwar democracy as a "sham" have the responsibility of answering this question. Do they maintain that the prewar Japanese empire was no "sham," but actually "existed"? In that case, rather than the actuality of the Japanese empire, I choose the sham of Japanese democracy.

Ten years on, the crisis was firmly entrenched. In its midst, Maruyama conceived the idea of addressing himself to a small number of young people. Here he would speak—not about the university protests, or about the 1960 anti-treaty struggle. Instead, reaching far back beyond even the experience of defeat, Maruyama elected to carry out a scrupulous rereading of the writing of a single Japanese intellectual faced with a supreme crisis at the outset of modernization.

An interview with Maruyama from 1960, entitled "August 15 and June 19: The Historical Significance of Japanese Democracy," when read in this light, lends support to what I've just said about the importance of the 1960 for Maruyama. *August 15* is the day of Japan's defeat; *May 19* refers to the day that parliament forcibly adopted the revised Security Treaty with the United States. If on August 15 hopes were kindled that democracy might be achieved in Japan, May 19 represents the day that democracy was effectively crushed by state power.

Let me proceed by quoting two passages from this interview. They show that what Maruyama supposed had been overcome by Fukuzawa—or what, at least, he thought *should* not exist and that *could* be overcome—did in fact exist and was overwhelming Japan. And it was growing stronger. Twenty years after this interview, the crisis that Maruyama discerned was now about to enclose the reality of Japan within a leaden seal. Does one then give up? The answer is no. What Maruyama did was to accompany his young audience in a careful reading of

Fukuzawa's *Outline*. In this attitude of Maruyama's I see a tenacity that links him directly to Fukuzawa.

In the first—rather long—passage, Maruyama analyzes the AMPO struggle, juxtaposing that discussion to an article in a Japanese newspaper referring in turn to one that had appeared in the *New York Times*, not in 1960, but in 1945, that is, the year of Japan's defeat.

In the *Times* article, Japan's postwar reforms were characterized as a transition from "authoritarianism to democracy." In Maruyama's estimation, this was an accurate view of the prewar ruling system.

Fundamentally, the authoritarian principle of state rests, first of all, on the view that unless the people are "taken care of" by those in authority over them, they will be unreliable and dangerous; from this attitude emerges an instinctive fear and mistrust of autonomous, positive action on the part of the people. Second, the foundation for this "nurturing authority" is the premise that it represents something fair and selfless, transcending all partisan interest. The notion of *public*, which by its nature signifies the horizontal extension of society, is monopolized by the "authorities" in the name of the *ôyake* [a Japanese term usually translated as "public"]. The mode of obedience to this authority, rather than being one of obedience to power, is closer to a docile submission to its "nurturing" guidance. But in my view the character of this authoritarian state lies in the extraordinarily blatant, naked violence with which it treats those heretical elements who decline to submit to its guidance. And this classic mode of rule, without our realizing it, has come to be reproduced as is in the definition of democracy. When we consider matters in this light...we realize, I think, that unless the issue of placing parliamentary politics in a common arena is discussed in terms of the historical significance of Japan's postwar revival, we won't be able to grasp the problem in its essential contours.

What is expressed here is a critique of the fact that, in the face of direct democratic action by citizens opposed to the revision of the AMPO treaty, the

government resorted to the anti-democratic step of forcible adoption. What Maruyama was saying was that in order to deepen the arguments touched off by the particular events of 1960, such arguments must be tied back to the question of how the Japanese pursued their revival as a nation in 1945.

And this, for Maruyama, raised a fundamental problem reaching back, not only to Japan's modernization after the Meiji Restoration, but to the era preceding it. In his commentary on Fukuzawa's *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, Maruyama has the following to say; notice that he frames his discussion in terms of a contrast between the English term "public" and the Chinese *kô*, on the one hand, and the "purely Japanese" word *ôyake*.

Terms such as "assembly," and "public speaking," and so on, were coined and popularized by Fukuzawa. They are all associated with the notion of "public." Until that time, there was no such concept of "public" in Japan. From ancient times, the term translated as "public" (*kô*) generally referred to the monarch or government, that is, the authority of the upper classes. The "public" of "public park" is a concept imported from the West. This seems natural enough, but in fact it raises a problem of the first order...

Why was there no such idea of "public"? This is related to the fact that Fukuzawa had had to coin such terms as "debate" (*tôron*) and "failure" (as of legislation). In the passage just cited, the word "public road" appears: and the fact that the roadways are poor and that sewage is undeveloped has remained as a problem in Japan to this day and actually stems from the same cause. [What Fukuzawa referred to as] the "interactions among the people"—*jinmin no kôsai*—can emerge only on the premise of "horizontal," and not a "vertical" notion of public. From such a notion, and only from it, do we conceive the idea of public roadways and parks, libraries, museums, and so on.

This term, "interactions among the people" appears elsewhere in Fukuzawa's text. It is used in two ways, meaning on the one hand specific or individual forms of interaction, and on the other something more abstract and general, as a translation of

“society.” What Guizot in his writings had termed *société*—in English, society—Fukuzawa had translated as “interactions among the people,” or “human interactions.” The concept of “society” is intimately tied to the notion of public seen in terms of horizontal relations. In Japan people still think nothing of combining “state” with “society” in phrases such as “In Service to the State and Society” (—in Japanese, *kokka shakai no tame ni*). And this precisely is the problem. It is one thing to speak of the relations among residents of same village, but what about the mutual relations of total strangers? These are the “human interactions” that Fukuzawa meant, and it’s from these that the notion of public emerges.

In this way, Maruyama gives us a detailed explication of Fukuzawa’s idea of public as “horizontal relations”; he offers a discussion of terms: the Chinese word *kô*, the Japanese *ôyake*; and then the English “public” and the related terms, “society” and *société* respectively. Maruyama sought to redefine “society” and “human interactions” in the Western sense for his own contemporaries, notions lacking among Japanese of Fukuzawa’s time and which Fukuzawa had attempted to import into Japan. It was his observation that these ideas had yet to be properly assimilated among Japanese and that their meaning remained ambiguous.

Considering Maruyama’s observation from the standpoint of Japan at the close of the twentieth century, I feel bound to say that the ambiguity he identified remains unchanged, indeed it is intensifying aggressively. You are no doubt aware that a reappraisal of the Pacific War on the basis of a new nationalism is daily gaining strength in Japan. Among the members of this camp, a certain person expressing his views on contemporary affairs in cartoon form is gaining a popular following. This individual is fond using the Japanese term *ôyake*, which is otherwise not much heard in daily life nowadays. The meaning of this lexical choice is clear: in place of the horizontal extension of “society,” it consciously evokes the verticality of “public” rule.

With the trampling over of democracy by the vertical structure of public rule made clear by the events of May 19, 1960, Maruyama vested his hopes in resistance carried out by *citizens* through their horizontal ties—this again was a translated term used first by Fukuzawa. But did Japanese intellectuals continue to

devote their energy to this and achieve concrete results along lines that would realize Maruyama's hopes? No, they did not.

With this situation in mind, and out of profound concern for its further development, Masao Maruyama, I believe, turned to the writing of his final fully realized work, *Reading "The Outline of a Theory of Civilization."*

4.

I quote once more from the 1960 interview with Maruyama. Asked whether the notion of a "constitutional state" (*hōchi kokka*)—as in the often-heard phrase, "insofar as Japan is a constitutional state"—was an aspect of authoritarianism, Maruyama replied: "that is the very essence of authoritarianism." Then there is the following passage:

But in prewar Japan, there was the odd notion of "the national polity"—*kokutai*. At one level, *kokutai* referred to the state system with the emperor at its apex, but at another it was supported by an emotive impetus that could not be dissolved into organizations or legal systems. Rather, the state system rested atop these irrational emotions felt by imperial subjects. Yet although the "national polity" as a total structure dissolved into thin air, the ruling strata made no attempt whatsoever to implant a democratic ethos as an emotive impetus that would replace *kokutai* from below. Rather it seems to me that what they are trying to do is, in effect, to rest democracy as a legal system on the expectation that the people's consciousness as docile imperial subjects would continue. As a result, ideas about democracy are prone to a frightfully formalistic legalism. At the time the new constitution was framed, there was hope in ruling circles that "national-polity" sentiments would remain deeply rooted among the people.... It would be catastrophic for them—the ruling circles—if imperial subject-consciousness should wane and a democratic consciousness somehow became rooted. It would mean that now the people's ethos, the emotive impetus behind what had formerly been represented under the sign of the national polity, could no longer be counted on.

With the effects of the AMPO struggle still at work in Japanese society, it was essential for Maruyama to give high praise to the waning or dilution of national polity sentiment. Maruyama's 1946 essay "Theory and Psychology of Ultrationalism," which signaled his debut on the postwar journalistic scene, ends with the following words:

August 15, 1945, the day that put a period to Japanese imperialism, was also the day when the "national polity," which had been the foundation of the entire ultrationalist structure, lost its absolute quality. Now for the first time the Japanese people, who until then had been mere objects, became free subjects and the destiny of this "national polity" was committed to their hands.

In terms of experiential knowledge of prewar and wartime ultrationalism, there is a truly enormous gap between Maruyama, who suffered through the era of ultrationalism as a critical intellectual, and myself, who met the day of defeat on August 15 as a ten-year old boy. Even so, my point of departure as a novelist was to write about the scars left by national-polity sentiment on a young boy in the countryside. As one youthful participant in the AMPO struggle, I published opinions at this time on the direction of Japanese democracy as revealed in this manifestation of national will, opinions that were, if anything, rather optimistic.

And from that time until the present, I have continued to feel that I failed to gain a realistic grasp of the strength of national-polity sentiment in Japan. In my opinion, Japanese ruling circles today *do not understand* that they can no longer rely on the emotive impetus formerly given expression in the notion of the national polity. This doesn't mean, however, that we are bound to draw the pessimistic conclusion that democratic consciousness has at all events failed to take root.

There is no reason to expect Masao Maruyama to have been optimistic concerning *kokutai*-sentiment following AMPO, or concerning the democratic consciousness among the Japanese. My feeling is that his experiences and perceptions in the twenty years following AMPO combined to force him to recognize the necessity of producing the lectures that make up his *Reading "The Outline of a Theory of Civilization."*

In conducting the seminar, Maruyama begins by having participants read aloud from Fukuzawa's text. You will note that in book form as well, Maruyama directs his readers to read out each corresponding passage from Fukuzawa's original as it appears in the lectures:

Had military power been held by the Imperial House during the seven hundred years of military government, or had the shogunal forces, in turn, possessed the prestige of the Imperial House, with the most sacrosanct and the most powerful thus united and lodging simultaneously in the minds of the Japanese people, there would be no Japan as we know it today. But if today, as some imperial scholars would have it, the people were to be set under a ruler who united in himself both political and religious functions, the future of Japan would be very different. We are fortunate that things have turned out the way they have.

Following this text of Fukuzawa, Maruyama adds: "The reality of Japan up until defeat took precisely the course Fukuzawa set forth hypothetically—one in which there would "be no Japan." Reading this passage, among others, during the war was exceedingly painful for me."

As Maruyama goes on to explain, despite the fact that Japan had been modernized, the "rupture of the national polity" that Fukuzawa felt free to discuss did not occur within the minds the Japanese as he had expected it would. And it remains as a problem that we must now bear.

Language and religion may continue, but if a nation loses its sovereignty and falls under foreign domination, then its national polity is said to have been ruptured.

Fukuzawa's definition is unambiguous. Maruyama continues:

This definition holds that as long as Japanese retain control over Japanese territory, the national polity continues; if it comes under the control of another people, the national polity is ruptured. By this definition, through its defeat in the last war, Japan's national polity was temporarily ruptured. When the sovereign emperor accepted the Potsdam Declaration and submitted himself to the authority of MacArthur's GHQ, the national polity was extinguished. Under these circumstances,

even though the monarch may exist, it can't be said that the national polity continues unbroken.

Few words in modern Japan have wielded such astonishing magical power, only to pass quickly out of use following the end of the war, as did *kokutai*. What threw the Imperial Conferences into such confusion over the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration until the end was the issue as to whether doing so would bring about a change in the “national polity.” Right up until the very last, even the ruling circles themselves were unable to agree on a definition of the term.... All the Declaration says is that “the future form of state in Japan shall be decided by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people”... Interpretations were split over whether by accepting the Declaration, the national polity would or would not be maintained. Ultimately, the decision to end the war came only after the emperor’s “sacred decision,” rendering his interpretation that the national polity would, after all, continue. As the Imperial Conference, unable to make a decision over the interpretation of the Declaration, fell into discord, the atomic bomb was dropped: so this [continuity of the *kokutai*] came, we must say, at a very high price indeed.

I would also like to give some thought to what sort of reverberations sounded in his mind when Maruyama, who was in Hiroshima at the time of the atomic bombing, spoke out on that issue. Related to that question is another incident that occurred in Hiroshima this past February, about which I wish to add a few words.

As the passage I just quoted from Maruyama testifies, in the process of revival that began at the time of defeat, one of the key issues facing the Japanese has been the most serious reflection on wartime *national-polity sentiment*. The task of creating a democratic ethos to take its place set the direction for postwar democracy.

Clearly, it is just this democratic consciousness that prevented ruling circles since the end of the occupation from institutionalizing the raising of the “*Hinomaru*” as Japan’s national flag and the singing of “*Kimigayo*” as the national anthem. However, it is also the case that no new flag or anthem was

produced by the citizenry to stand in their place. In the first half of these observations, we can say that the expectations of ruling strata were not met, while in the second half, they were.

By 1989, the Ministry of Education had, for all intents and purpose, made flag-raising and anthem-singing compulsory at matriculation and graduation ceremonies for all public schools. This year for the first time the board of education in Hiroshima Prefecture, where the actual ratio of compliance has been among the lowest nationwide, issued an administrative directive to prefectural school principals requiring total compliance with Ministry policy. The teachers rose in opposition. One high school principal, caught in the middle, committed suicide prior to his school's graduation ceremony.

In making “flag-and-anthem” compulsory, the Ministry has explained that its purpose is to “foster the self-awareness of Japanese as they take an active role in international society.”

Immediately following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, strongly aware of the real crisis facing Japan, which stood to lose its independence and be colonized, Yukichi Fukuzawa set forth his views as to how “relations with foreign countries” ought to be handled and how the Japanese people could join actively in the process. For Japanese of today to forget the role played by “flag-and-anthem” over the century of glory and misery that is Japan's modernization, and to rely once again on the national-polity sentiment that they believe to be expressed by these, is nothing less than a double betrayal of Fukuzawa's vision of Japan's future.

I have already noted the understanding of “public” that, instead of horizontal ties among citizens, views it as a vertical structure supported by national-polity sentiment, and that a revival of this view of “public” is underway in Japanese society today. One expression of this “public” is being institutionalized as we speak. Seeking to provide beforehand a means of critical resistance to this sort of movement in Japanese society, Maruyama offered his lectures on Fukuzawa's *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. We can only pay tribute to his prescience.

5.

Now, I hardly need to repeat—but I will—that I am not a specialist in the history of political thought. My point of departure, as a novelist, was an interest in the

uniqueness of Masao Maruyama's prose style. And that same interest brings me also to my conclusion.

From the fragments of Maruyama's texts quoted thus far, I hope you have all been able to discern some of the special qualities of Maruyama's style. There is, first, the fact that Maruyama sought to reproduce in a vivid Japanese prose the stylistic qualities of the various European languages that he read with such attentiveness and vigor. His was an effort to create a completely new style of written Japanese.

From the level of diction to structure, and consistently through to the way of thinking itself, to which expression was given, this effort of Maruyama's was a conscious attempt to produce a new Japanese prose. I also believe that in this linguistic effort, Maruyama regarded Yukichi Fukuzawa as his predecessor. In Fukuzawa's case, beginning with neologisms, summary retellings of foreign works and full translations transformed his prose into something new. To turn European writing into Japanese, he said, is to make what is horizontal into something vertical—*yoko no mono o tate ni suru*. Concerning this Japanese way of putting the matter, Maruyama comments:

I'd like you all to realize, however, that "turning what is horizontal into something vertical" is actually a task of enormous difficulty. And this is of the greatest importance in understanding Fukuzawa. Fukuzawa was indeed a pioneering thinker who struggled mightily to "turn what is horizontal into something vertical."

Maruyama makes a further point: "for Fukuzawa the problems of the task facing Japan came first, and in seeking to address them he made the fullest possible use of European ideas."

Along with "making the horizontal vertical," Maruyama also uses the expression "making the vertical vertical." For centuries, Japanese had made a practice of rendering classical Chinese texts into Japanese mixed with Chinese characters. Or, to say it another way, they "re-lated" the classical language by means of a style that mixed characters in among Japanese words. Particularly throughout the Edo period—roughly, 1600 to the mid-nineteenth century—much Chinese thought was "Japanized" by this means. It was in order to "re-read"

thought as written in these foreign texts that Fukuzawa made this effort to “make the vertical vertical.”

In this regard, Fukuzawa was a truly a lexical virtuoso; but he speaks by drawing close alongside his most superb accompanist, the text of Maruyama’s commentary on the *Outline*. This was Maruyama’s achievement. And the ingenuity with which Maruyama worked out his own way of speaking for the purpose of “accompanying” Fukuzawa became in turn an occasion for Maruyama’s own Japanese to produce original definitions of words and logical structure.

Maruyama himself, rather than boasting of his own great achievement, would probably have said that he was only “performing” his role of speaking along with Fukuzawa for a new generation. But in this performance itself, we find a splendid model for understanding how the linguistic activity of “making the horizontal vertical” and “making the vertical again vertical” can crystallize as a new form of human expression.

We have seen, then, how European words, Chinese words—including those originally Chinese, others coined during the Edo period, and those invented by Fukuzawa—and words of “pure” Japanese, how these many and varied words are combined in lucid paragraphs to give shape to a spectacular world of expression. Here, I wish to say, lies the special quality of Maruyama’s use of language.

At the conclusion of his essay, “The Philosophy of Yukichi Fukuzawa,” published in 1947, Maruyama makes note of a word that, in the aftermath of the war, and particularly in a work of social science, must have seemed quite eccentric: the word is “play”—in Japanese, *yūgi*.

We have just seen that in Fukuzawa, each of his major themes reflects a situational awareness; each is to be understood, as it were, “in brackets.” And we saw that the distinctiveness of this feature of his thinking lay in its ability to keep his perspective ceaselessly mobile. In this sense, it can be said that Fukuzawa’s theme that “human life is play” represents the greatest of the “brackets” that he attached to his thought. Now “play,” as Simmel also tells us, is in the purest sense of the word a fiction that is produced when all that is substantial has been abstracted from

human activity and it becomes form as such. Fiction is indeed a purely human product, owing nothing whatever to god or nature. By enframing human life as a whole within the “brackets” of “as if,” and likening it to fiction, Fukuzawa, whether or not he was aware of it, pushed the logic of humanism to its very limits.

Maruyama’s notions of a ceaseless mobility of perspective and “play,” if expressed by Hayashi Tatsuo, another original thinker of postwar Japan, would make the world a theater and all human acts a performance. Would not these lines of Shakespeare “made vertical” have given Masao Maruyama a feeling of satisfaction?

The passage from Maruyama I quoted above was an analysis of Fukuzawa; but the world of words he creates while following Fukuzawa’s text, by freely incorporating various European words, Chinese words in their respective layers, and those of Japanese origin into the language of today, strikes me very much as that of the theater. The excitement provoked in me by his use of words, I even feel, comes from the sense of having experienced a world-theater of historical depth.

When we take it as a line spoken on stage, the meaning of Maruyama’s widely reported remark that he “would put his money on the ‘sham’ of postwar democracy”—among his public statements, perhaps the one that evoked both the most sympathy and the most intense ridicule—appears with unmistakable clarity.

Still, if I may add a commentary so as to forestall any intentional distortions, the aspect of “play” that Maruyama pointed out in Fukuzawa overlaps precisely with what he repeatedly speaks of as Fukuzawa’s *astonishingly mature political awareness*.

Stirred by Masao Maruyama’s lines upon the stage that he would “put his money on the sham of postwar democracy,” one of the young Japanese who resolved, as he sat in a dark corner of the audience, to make that his own role in life, is the novelist who has spoken to you here today. Over the long course of this play, one in which I myself became a performer, I have never experienced a moment of boredom.

Audience Comments

Audience Comment What do you think about the current political situation in Japan, or in Tokyo in particular?

Ôe: It is easy to answer this question about Ishihara because I have been a friend of his for 40 years. [laughter] The most important thing is how I can combine Ishihara's [mayor of Tokyo] notion with Fukuzawa's [dominant figure of Meiji Enlightenment] notion, or how I can compare Ishihara to Maruyama, because I haven't come here only to speak about Ishihara.

I am currently in correspondence with Susan Sontag, and in my first letter to her I constructed a very vague atmosphere of fascism's arrival in Japan. That is what I am very anxious to think about. I think now everyday in the newspaper you can read people speaking very meaningless words. Susan Sontag says that, in Japan and in the USA and Europe, when the nation becomes weak, the community becomes weak, the family becomes weak, and then fascism can be realized. I cannot say what kind of fascism we are waiting for now, but Fukuzawa is a reminder that there is a possibility that this kind of atmosphere leads to such things. Politically speaking, Ishihara is nothing, but that the Japanese intellectual has not spoken against Ishihara, I believe, is very meaningful.

Audience Comment: What does the current Japanese audience think about Maruyama?

Ôe: I have been writing of late about Maruyama in the Japanese newspaper. I am not a typical intellectual of Japan. I am a novelist. But I think other people like me must begin to speak about the legacy of Maruyama. Recently, before the election of that mayor of Tokyo, the newspaper, *Asahi*, quoted Maruyama on his notion of democracy, and Maruyama is a very difficult thinker. Now his collected works are published in Japan. They have been edited, and some of these edited lines were quoted in *Asahi*. My wife said that they were very easy to understand—which puzzles me. His thinking is based on very concrete and very strong logic, but it is not easy to read and understand him based on his logic alone. I must hope that readers of Maruyama will make the effort to understand him.

Audience Comment: Given Japan's experience with democracy, do you think American foreign policy which tries to impose democracy on many other countries in the world is the right way to go?

Ôe: I quoted one line from Maruyama in my talk, that permanent revolution is important. When Maruyama speaks through this word, he says that democracy is a permanent revolution. Marxism is not. Maoism is not. This is my opinion. I myself think that the Cultural Revolution was programmed for the revival of China. The Cultural Revolution succeeded, but we cannot call it permanent revolution. Maruyama says we must always try to realize democracy; it is the only revolution which deserves the name "permanent." Many people say that is a very ambiguous statement, but I believe it to be true.

I also think that in Japan people must continue to think about how to maintain permanent revolution. In your country, in the USA, you have the problem as well when you speak about your democracy. I believe that permanent revolution is part of American democracy even today, so if I say something against NATO bombings, it is because I believe in the democracy of your country. Because I believe in it, I criticize it. I think that criticism must be useless if we do not believe in what it criticizes. So we Japanese intellectuals are always thinking

about our permanent revolution and we hope as well that your country will create new ways to realize your democracy in foreign policy. That is my answer.

Audience Comment: It is one thing for an intellectual like Maruyama to make a decent argument about democracy but that is not necessarily sufficient for creating it in the “real” world. In some sense democracy needs its heroes and the Americans have theirs, whereas the Japanese history of samurais and imperialism poses some problems in this area. Do you think it is possible, given Japanese historical and cultural thought, to instantiate lasting democracy?

Ôe: I want to ask you: Do you need a hero for democracy? Is it true?

Audience Comment: I guess it’s debatable. But my guess is “yes.”

Ôe: Then I think you had better define the new hero for the future age of democracy. One thing I can say clearly is that Fukuzawa is a kind of hero, and he is a very democratic hero; he didn’t kill anyone, as would a samurai, but he was a completely new man for his age. He created a very original way of thinking, of behavior, in every aspect of his age. From the publication of Fukuzawa’s book to the end of our war [World War II] only seventy years passed. So he created a very revolutionary new perspective on the cultural scene. In his imagination there must have been a very typical hero of new Japan. I hope I don’t need any hero in my future. The past is enough. I want to die while there is no hero, in the next ten years or so. [laughter]

Audience Comment: I also find Maruyama’s language very moving, very beautiful, but it is an illusion after all, and if we are to believe in the “sham of democracy,” don’t you think that shows a tendency to romanticize or idealize democracy, and don’t you think that’s a problem?

Ôe: If it sounded as if I over-romanticize Maruyama’s theory of democracy, I apologize; it is my fault. It is because I am a novelist—I have a tendency to be romantic. [laughter] But why not? My literary origin came from romanticism

in Europe, from Coleridge, William Blake and others. Romanticism is a way of thinking; through romanticism we can combine something above our heads, something mystic, and ourselves. An ordinary mystic combines something in heaven with our very personal inner selves, but a romantic in the 19th century mediated this combination for society. Coleridge mediated heaven and the individual via the sense of society. I have been educated by Coleridge so that I myself must not become mystical without this link to society. That made my stance what it is. Romanticism is not a bad thing.

But having too much idealism is also a very important problem. I don't want to idealize Maruyama. If I made him sound a little idealized, it is because I am an amateur in these studies. If you need the more realistic notion about Maruyama, you can invite Dr. Bellah and he can speak very realistically. [laughter]

Audience Comment: Can you talk a bit about future themes you will concentrate on in your writing?

Ôe: If you talk with a novelist, don't talk about future themes. [laughter] That is not because the novelist hasn't anything to say, but sometimes he has so much to say that time will not allow it. So I won't speak about my future themes, but I will speak about my novel that was just finished last week. I gave up writing novels for six years, wrote for the newspaper, read Spinoza. Then I wrote a new novel, which is about young groups who create their own church or religion. The leader created a rather big structure, 2000 believers, all of them highly educated, young intellectuals. They specialized in physics, everything. So they had the knowledge to do everything without society. Ten years go by and the leader declares that his church is nonsense, he did it for fun. Ten years later he returns to the scene and wants to create a new church, and there are many struggles between the new believers and the old believers and the political sect that wants to cooperate. So here comes a new tragedy. I publish it next month, and I hope young people will read it. But my publisher says, "don't say that." [laughter]

Audience Comment: I am curious about your calling democracy a permanent revolution, and calling Marxism and Maoism non-permanent. It seems that a

democratic hero has to be a capitalist hero, and I wonder how you envision that working in your scheme of permanent revolution, especially in the age of a globalized economy?

Ôe: I am not the person to give you the answer about the future relationship of democracy and capitalism. But, as a mature novelist, I want to ask you whether the younger generation in the USA can create a new theory, beyond that of Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama's opinion is rather boring in my view, so we must create something more. If you don't create some next stage, I think the theory itself is nonsense. I think, with regard to capitalism and democracy, that their fate is with us. We must create a new theory of their relationship without reference to Marxism or Maoism—and in a new future.... What do you say now? is my answer. Because I have no power to answer you, but you have that question, and you can create your answer by yourselves.

When I came here from Japan, I wanted to speak about Japanese intellectuals to an American university audience, because we are so little talked about. I wanted to speak to an audience of about twelve people. And I see so many more here. [laughter] I am deeply encouraged by your interest in my talk. I think it is not your interest in a Japanese novelist that brings you here, but an interest in Japanese thinking in this age of globalism. I thank you for that. I have so much to say in answer to all these questions. So the people who asked questions today, please don't come tomorrow.... [laughter and applause]

From the Beginning to the Present, and Facing the End: The Case of One Japanese Writer

Kenzaburô Ôe

1.

I was at Berkeley in 1983. And during my stay here, I wrote a few short stories. As I reread them now, I am impressed with the accuracy of the details with which I depicted the trees on the campus. I was given an office at the Center for Japanese Studies, then in the old building, and from my window I could see a tall, beautiful tree. It had leaves like those of a camellia, brush-like flowers, and very red berries. Many trees at Berkeley are of Australian origin, and the tree outside my window was also from Australia. Its Japanese name is *Osutoraria futomomo*. Hedges of this tree are commonly seen at Berkeley, but the tree by my window was massive. The common English name for it, I believe, is brush cherry, and its botanical name is *Eugenia myrtifolia*.

I mention this because, at the Center for Japanese Studies, there was an able and amiable secretary whose name was Eugenie. And I wanted to tell her that her name was the same as the tree's botanical name, but I didn't, because I knew my tongue would be tied the minute she asked me: "Why are you telling me such a thing?" If any among you here are studying classical Japanese literature, I am sure you are familiar with the *choji*-dyed kimono in *The Tale of Genji*. The dye *choji* happens to come from the *Eugenia aromatica*, a tree that belongs to the same family as the brush cherry.

The hedge around the Women's Faculty Club, where I lived, was also of brush cherry. A young lady came on weekends to clean the guest rooms. She always looked depressed, but one day she said to me, "I used to be a champion, a yo-yo champion, and I was hired to be in a Coca-Cola campaign, and I even went to Japan." I had never in my life seen a more reserved or despondent champion. And I portrayed her briefly, and the tree as well, in the short stories I wrote here at Berkeley.

In my longstanding career as a writer, I have often written and spoken about how I came in contact with literature. I clearly remember that among the first literary works I encountered was a translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Reading it later, in the original, led me to the world of American short stories. And later still, while reflecting on the authors and stories I had read, I remembered something. The recollection became even clearer as I reread Hemingway in preparation for speaking at a centennial commemoration of his work. And I would like to begin my talk with this now very vivid memory.

2.

We start from infancy and go on through childhood and adolescence, to arrive at an understanding of the world we live in, but the real life curriculum that teaches this to us is usually a very confused one. Nevertheless, the fundamental reason I put faith in humankind is because I know that children possess an independent sense of balance, a capacity for integration, or—to put it in yet another way—the power of imagination, with which to ride out the confusion.

Literature gives children the personal support they need to confront confusion. At times, however, it can add dangerous momentum to a child's already confused world, as was the case with me. The ponderous reality of "death" was brought home to me, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by the dead man whom Huck and Jim saw in the dark of the frame house that came floating by the island where they lived. It was Jim's power of expression that caused me to discover a sense of reality even more deeply hued than reality. These were his words:

"De man ain't asleep—he's dead. You hold still—I'll go en see."
He went and bent down and looked, and says: "It's a dead man.
Yes, indeedy; naked, too. He's been shot in de back. I reck'n he's

ben dead two er three days. Come in, Huck, but doan' look at his face—it's too gashly."

My grandmother and father passed away the year I read this book in translation. Yet the man who just lay motionless in the dark, whose face, together with Huck, I did not see, held more reality for me than my two dead kin. And I struggled to restore order to the world that had fallen into confusion, while repeatedly sorting the two "deaths" in my family in with this man's "death."

This was part of my experience as a boy in a small archipelago on the other side of the Pacific during the Second World War. After Japan's defeat, the Occupation Forces opened American Culture Centers in various cities and towns. And at one such center, the open-shelf library, which I had never used before, became a truly memorable place. There I was to encounter another "death." For the young man who had read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the original, guided by what I don't know, now read Hemingway's *In Our Time*. I knew nothing then of the deep linguistic relationship between the writers of English. Yet that young man sensed, in the death portrayed in one of the stories of *In Our Time*—namely the death witnessed by Nick—a distinct similarity to the death experienced by Huck. And I felt the similarity went beyond the ways the boys encountered death on their respective dark waters, Huck paddling his canoe, Nick oaring his boat. These two deaths—the one Huck did not actually see and the one Nick saw—were one and the same to me. Everyone assembled here today probably remembers the very original style used to portray what Nick saw, but please allow me to read those lines.

[The doctor] pulled back the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away wet. He mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in. The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm. The open razor lay, edge up, in the blankets.

Ten years later, I was a young writer myself who believed that he, in his own way, had already come to an understanding of the world, however confused it was, that he understood the world to be what it was—with all its confusions intact. Then came the news of Hemingway's death. And the deep, basic fear and

loathing I had felt as a young boy towards everything in this world—all came back to me with a vengeance, and permeated my whole being. I was struck down, by the thought that if someone like Hemingway had taken his own life at the threshold of old age, despite his dear and deep awareness of “death” since his youth, then for me, too, there would be no way to escape.

3.

As the end of the millennium draws near, newspapers and magazines all over the world are engaged in a project to ask writers to submit a short story they would like passed on to the next era, and I too received such a request. While feeling that I was not capable of carrying out so great a feat—and I even went so far as to write a letter of apology to the editor—I agreed to do my share, and for a while I entertained, and suffered through, a spell of fantasizing.

I thought of writing a narrative about a man who very intensely experiences how people live, then die, in the nuclear age. But of course I could not write this in the form of a short story. So I fantasized about a short story in which a man who knows he has to write, and knows well what he must write, before he dies, merely reminisces about the many stories will never be able to write. The title was to be “The Snows of a Nuclear Highland.” And what came to mind as I contemplated the techniques of a short story expressing the model case of a human being of this millennium were the short stories of Hemingway, which undoubtedly rank among this century’s most prestigious literary works.

Rereading Hemingway in this light, I noticed anew, in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, a latent power that invites a fundamental reflection as we, at this century’s end, contemplate the nature of the novel. The question itself is a simple one, but to answer it, a novelist has to keep working throughout his or her life. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* puts the question in a straightforward manner.

Is a novelist someone who writes about what he or she knows? Or not? I feel that novelists of the latter half of the twentieth century, at least, have believed, or expended a lot of energy believing, or trying to believe, that a novelist is someone who, aided by the power of words and structures of imagination, writes about something he or she does not personally know. However, the character Hemingway describes as lying in front of a tent set up on a highland in Africa as he watches his feet rot away reiterates that this isn’t so.

Even after he falls victim to an incurable disease, the man insists that, as long as he has the strength to do so, he wishes to observe the flight of the large birds that are closing in on a dying man. Even when his condition worsens, the following thoughts enter his mind.

Now he would never write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them well. Well, he would not have to fail at trying to write them either. Maybe you could never write them, and that was why you put them off and delayed the starting. Well, he would never know, now.

He had never written any of that because, at first, he never wanted to hurt any one and then it seemed as though there was enough to write without it. But he had always thought that he would write it finally. There was so much to write. He had seen the world change, not just the events; although he had seen many of them and had watched the people, but he had seen the subtler changes and he could remember how the people were at different times. He had been in it and he had watched it and it was his duty to write of it; but now he never would.

The man goes on to say that he knows about many things so well he could write about each of them, but that he has not written about them, and that he will not do so in the future. As the overtones of the man's words remind us, we recall that in Hemingway's many novels and short stories a voice has been raised of a character who has the confidence to say that he knew something well enough to write about it. So strong is the man's conviction that we have to recognize that it is impossible to write about something we do not know well, that the purpose of life is to know something to the extent that we can write about it. The writer of all these novels believed this.

Moreover, as the hero of *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* draws infinitesimally closer to death, not only does he realize that he does not know some things well enough to be able to write about them, but for the first time he comes to know something he knew absolutely nothing about. And dreaming of approaching this something he brings to an end a life in which he truly knew many things. As Hemingway put it:

Ahead, all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro.

And then he knew that there was where he was going.

The youth who knew very well how to write about “death,” as evidenced in the short story *In Our Time*, wrote for the next ten years only about what he knew well. He lived those very years in order to learn; so that he could write, about what he learned—which was the principle he lived by—and then he wrote *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. This process reveals the complexity of the answer to the simple question I asked before. Is a novelist someone who writes about what he or she knows? Or someone who, using the power of words and structures of imagination, tries to write about something that not only does the writer not personally know, but something that even humankind—despite the myriad things it has come to know over the past two thousand years—still does not know?

4.

This simple question must have remained with the author of *The Old Man and the Sea* fifteen years later when he had become one of the most accomplished writers of the century. Needless to say, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a work about the dangers an old Cuban fisherman faces at sea and how he overcomes them. It is a work written by a writer who knows to the gills what a fisherman experiences, and who writes only about what he knows.

Diverse and thorough studies have been conducted this century to evaluate a writer’s maturity by examining how his or her works express “time.” *The Old Man and the Sea*, which deserves a special place for its achievements, easily meets the criteria and does so in very orthodox manner. It is the labor of a writer who knows precisely what “time” means as a concrete human experience, and has confidence that he knows how best to express this.

The old fisherman, about whom the writer knows everything, does exactly what the writer knows he will do. The writer even creates a scene where he makes the old man stand naked, alone, before something humankind can never quite know about.

I can quote from various places in the story to illustrate my point, but here I want to read the scene where the old man enters into his second night in his

struggle with the big fish, which is still pulling him and his boat with unmitigated force. As Hemingway writes:

It was dark now as it becomes dark quickly after the sun sets in September. He lay against the worn wood of the bow and rested all that he could. The first stars were out. He did not know the name of Rigel but he saw it and knew soon they would all be out and he would have all his distant friends.

“The fish is my friend, too,” he said aloud. “I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars.”

Imagine if each day a man must try to kill the moon, he thought. The moon runs away. But imagine if a man each day should have to try to kill the sun? We were born lucky, he thought.

What we humans have done on our planet, from the first millennium through the second, that is, from the time our spirits were most philosophical and when our souls were most poetic, raising our eyes to the expanse of the universe—and what the old man does on his boat while drifting through the dark ocean—are hardly any different. Almost all writers today repeatedly go through the experience of lying naked at the bottom of cosmic space and gazing at the stars. Though not as happily as the fisherman....

The Old Man and the Sea may direct its readers towards something not very cheerful, but I have always found it to be a source of encouragement—from the time of my youth until now, when I am on the threshold of my twilight years. What encourages me every time I read this novel is the image of the young boy whom the old man repeatedly thinks of and addresses: “I wish the boy was here...”, “I wish I had the boy...”, “I wish the boy were here...”

Among from the various techniques used to create this perfect novel, I feel that this repetition occasions the most danger.

I have spent more than two thirds of my career writing about my mentally handicapped son. I have written about the things I know very well about him and about what I will never know: the unfathomable dark that lies and spreads in him like the expansive universe. And as I reflect upon it, I realize that those repeated callings out which Hemingway penned have been echoing in my mind all along, like a *basso ostinato*.

5.

Will literature, specifically the novel, hold its ground for the next hundred years until writers of the future, in other words those born this year, have their centennial commemorated? At times I think it will, with a feeling that is not altogether optimistic. And at times I think it won't, with a feeling that is not overly pessimistic. Frankly, though, while vacillating between these polar premonitions, I'm imagining only the first quarter of the next hundred years. Humankind has acquired much knowledge during this century. We can perhaps say that we have learned almost all there is to know about science, ideologies, international relations, the environment and countless other fields. During the next hundred years, people will write about each and every one of these subjects. But will pondering such things bring joy to our hearts?

Also, during the next hundred years, human beings will write novels applying the power of words and structures of imagination to give expression to things we in fact do not know. Again, however, contemplating these things is not likely to offer us much encouragement.

Yet it would be discourtesy to the people who will live the next century if we, who have lived this one, continue in our state of having lost courage. We must strive to revive our vitality by taking cues from a concrete person who has lived through the same period we have.

I am thinking of one of the finest models of a novelist in this century. I am thinking of a writer who wrote *In Our Time* in his youth, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* in the prime of his life, and *The Old Man and the Sea* at the too early start of his later years. This model of a novelist remains to us a constant source of encouragement, even when we think of his death of his own choosing—if not because of it.

For certain, the twenty-first century will continue to remember Ernest Hemingway. "Please remember, this is how I lived." These are words left by the best writer of the century in my country.

6.

The writer I just cited as Japan's best twentieth-century writer, of modern and contemporary literature, is Natsume Sôseki. I recently learned that Kobo Abe once said to a close friend that, although he believed Sôseki to be a great writer, he thought he was born a little too early. I'm very intrigued by the thought of what

Abe and Sôseki would have talked about as contemporary writers had Sôseki been born later. It is particularly interesting for me because I knew Abe to be a person who rarely had anything nice to say about anybody.

I also think about Yukio Mishima, and imagine that he would have objected strongly to naming Sôseki as the greatest writer of the twentieth century. Style-wise, Mishima is about the farthest as any twentieth century Japanese writer can get from Hemingway. Not once in his life did he step foot on a battlefield, nor did he ever hunt in Africa or fish in Cuba. Nevertheless, I recall him being keenly conscious of Hemingway vis-a-vis his constant awareness of himself as a nation's representative writer of the age.

Mishima was the first among Japan's literati to want to behave "macho" in both his actual life and literature. He took to body-building, and had many pictures of his pumped-up body taken and circulated. Later he committed a self-staged, self-produced suicide aimed at shaking Japanese society, creating waves that would reach to foreign shores.

Among the various reactions to Hemingway's suicide, which he committed in a secluded place and in a manner that suggested an accident, I was most impressed with what, I believe, John Updike said: "I feel that all Americans have been insulted...."

I do not think that Mishima intended to insult all his compatriots, such as myself, and neither do I believe that this was the inadvertent result of his act. Mishima was not the writer of all Japanese people in the way that Hemingway was the writer of all Americans. Yet I think that Mishima carefully chose the place and method of his suicide with the desire to accomplish an act that would cause Japanese people to feel shock on a national scale. *That* he actually succeeded in doing. Staking his death on the outcome, Mishima called out to members of the Self-Defense Forces to rise up in a *coup d'etat*, but the soldiers who heard the final speech of his life laughed and jeered at him. Mishima even scolded them and repeatedly told them to listen quietly, but to no avail. This, to me, was the most pitiful part of his death performance.

I do not believe that Mishima was seriously calling for a *coup d'etat*. He was able to qualify for the bureaucracy, which supposedly attracts the brainiest and most superior people in Japan. And so if he had been serious, he would not have made such a hollow, ill-prepared call for a *coup d'etat*. So in my view, what Mishima

did was stage a very theatrical suicide, in line with his aesthetic. Attaching ultra-nationalistic meanings to his performance is secondary.

I have a hunch that Mishima, who probably died feeling that his final performance was a success, harbored one feeling he must have kept to himself, a feeling of envy he could never overcome no matter how hard he tried. And I think I can support this conjecture. I am quite sure Mishima knew that he was not expressing an era of Japan and the Japanese people in the way that another suicide did.

Mishima had shown deep interest in the suicide note of a Self-Defense Forces member who killed himself two years before his own death. The man's name was Kokichi Tsuburaya, and he first appeared before the Japanese people at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. It was hardly a dramatic debut when compared to that of the Ethiopian marathoner Abebe, who, in the 1960 Olympics in Rome, ran barefoot and won the race with a new world record. Tsuburaya trailed Abebe into the very last stretch but couldn't catch up with him, and just before the finish line he was passed by a British runner and finished third. Four years later, Private Third Class Kokichi Tsuburaya, age 27, of the Ground Self-Defense Force, killed himself by slashing his right carotid artery with a razor blade, in the dormitory of the Physical Education Academy of the Self-Defense Forces in Nerima.

Tsuburaya's suicide note makes mention of Japanese foods and drinks that you may not be familiar with, but I would like to read it in its entirety. Where he addresses his brothers' wives, the translation is "sister." "Kun" and "chan" are suffixes denoting endearment, "kun" for boys, "chan" for girls. This is his note:

My dear Father, my dear Mother: I thank you for the three-day-pickled yam. It was delicious. Thank you for the dried persimmons. And the rice cakes. They were delicious, too. My dear Brother Toshio, and my dear Sister: I thank you for the sushi. It was delicious. My dear Brother Katsumi, and my dear Sister: The wine and apples were delicious. I thank you. My dear Brother Iwao, and my dear Sister: I thank you. The basil-flavored rice, and the Nanban pickles were delicious. My dear Brother Kikuzo, and my dear Sister: The grape juice and Yomeishu were delicious. I thank you. And thank you, my dear Sister, for the laundry you always did for me. My dear Brother Kozo and my

dear Sister: I thank you for the rides you gave me in your car, to and fro. The *mongo*-cuttlefish was delicious. I thank you. My dear Brother Masao, and my dear sister: I am very sorry for all the worries I caused you. Yukio-kun, Hideo-kun, Mikio-kun, Toshiko-chan, Hideko-chan, Ryosuke-kun, Takahisa-kun, Miyoko-chan, Yukie-chan, Mitsue-chan, Akira-kun, Yoshiyuki-kun, Keiko-chan, Koei-kun, Yu-chan, Kii-chan, Shoji-kun: May you grow up to be fine people. My dear Father and my dear Mother, Kokichi is too tired to run anymore. I beg you to forgive me. Your hearts must never have rested worrying and caring for me. My dear Father and Mother, Kokichi would have liked to live by your side.

We know from this note that Kokichi Tsuburaya was from a big family. The many names he mentions probably do not evoke any particular feeling in a non-Japanese, but to a person like myself—especially to one who belongs to an older generation of Japanese—these names reveal a naming ideology of a family in which authority centers around the paternal head-of-household. This family-ism extends to the relatives. There is probably no large family in Japan today where children are named so thoroughly in line with traditional ethical sentiments. Tsuburaya's suicide note immediately shows the changes in the "feelings" of the families of Japanese these past thirty years.

The many foods and drinks he refers to also tell of the times. Twenty years had passed since Japan's defeat, and it was not a society of food shortages. But neither was it the age of satiation and Epicurean feasting that began ten years later. The year Tsuburaya died was the year that Nikkeiren, the Japan Federation of Employers' Association, tried to counter the spring offensives—the annual demand by labor unions for wage hikes and improved working conditions—by arguing that the sharp increase in prawn imports was evidence of a sufficient rise in the standard of living. More consumers were eating imported frozen prawns. Business administrators keep an eye on such trends. And I think that honestly expresses the eating habits of Japanese people at this time.

Early in the year 1968, President Johnson sent a special envoy to Japan to request Japan's cooperation in protecting the dollar. Japanese people knew that the United States was being driven into a corner by the Vietnam War. We read in

the papers about the Tet offensive, and about Saigon coming under fierce attack by the National Liberation Front. But ordinary citizens never dreamed that the Japanese economy would soon amass enough strength to dominate the world. And probably no one imagined that later Japan's economy would fall into a deep abyss.

Domestically, 1968 saw the rage of student rebellions, most noted among which were the struggles at Tokyo University and Nihon University. Outside of Japan, there was the May Revolution in Paris, and the invasion of Soviet troops into Prague. In retrospect, we clearly see that the world was full of premonitions of great change.

Against this backdrop, a long distance runner of the Self-Defense Forces— itself a typical phenomenon of the state of postwar Japan's twisted polysemous society—turned his back on the currents of such a society, alone prepared to die, and wrote this suicide note. In the note, the young man refers to specific foods and drinks, he encourages his nephews and nieces to grow up to be fine people; he is overwhelmed by the thought of his parents' loving concern for him and writes that he knows their hearts must never have rested in their worry and care for him. He apologizes to them because, having kept running even after the Olympics with the aim of shouldering national prestige, he became totally exhausted and could no longer run. He closed his note with the words: "My dear Father and Mother, Kokichi would have liked to live by your side."

With the passing of a quarter of a century, the style in which the note was written, its content, and the human relationships and social conditions that gave birth to it, are no more. In this regard, Tsuburaya's suicide note is clearly a monumental expression of the times.

A change in international relations would not itself affect the style of the national language. However, the inflow of a world subculture does change the language of young Japanese. And this in turn affects the language of the older generations. Kokichi Tsuburaya, twenty-seven-years-old in 1968, may be the last to write in the style of his note. For his breed has all but disappeared from the Japanese language world.

One can see, in the archives of the newspaper companies, a picture of this long-distance runner, with the competitor from Great Britain closing in on him before a standing-room-only, capacity crowd at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo.

He is a handsome young man with clear-cut Japanese features. His running form, too, is beautiful, but his face shows his naked anxiety as he continues to run. Using only the elements of this photograph and Tsuburaya's suicide note, I believe that one could write a short story that would represent Japan and its people of the 1960s.

Two years after Tsuburaya took his own life, Yukio Mishima committed suicide in a truly dramatic performance at another Self-Defense Forces facility, but he was unable to make his own death an expression of a serious period of history. I imagine that had Mishima, as he died, recalled Tsuburaya's suicide, he would have envied him as an expression of an age and its people.

I have elsewhere commented on Mishima's death but mainly in a political light. But while preparing to talk before a non-Japanese audience on how I began as a writer, how I have lived, and where I am now headed, I discovered something new about his death. Namely, the transition in the circumstances of Japanese literature since his death to the present can only be described as a decline—and his death fully prophesized this.

Mishima died as a political person in a manner suggesting a display of fireworks over the Japanese archipelago. Just prior to his death, however, he completed an epic novel, the longest he had ever written. He had also carefully prepared for the novel to be translated for an international readership. And so some people say that literature was Mishima's greatest concern until the very end of his life.

But this shows only how painfully conscious he was of the glory of his literature. "Regarding my life and literature, I would display its end in this manner," he said with his suicide. "And," he would have continued, "in Japan, at least, there is no great literature. My death announces this fact." Mishima died carrying out this pronouncement to Japan's readers of literature.

I have lived as a writer of Japanese for thirty years after Mishima's death. And I must confess that my literary career has been painful. The prophecy Mishima staked with his death has come true in terms of a resurgence and enlargement of nationalism. And I very acutely feel that he was also on the mark about the decline of literature. This is what I think, having lived these past thirty years as an intellectual in Japan and a writer of Japanese.

7.

Now I would like to talk about the novel I have just written, and what I am doing to prepare for my final days in a milieu where literature continues to decline. I was given an opportunity to give another lecture here at Berkeley, and I talked about Masao Maruyama, a scholar on the history of political thought, well-known not only in Japan but also in the United States, Great Britain, and France. The lecture was also a criticism against the rising tide of neo-nationalism in today's Japan and the trend to deny democracy—which, in Japan, is sometimes exceptionalized by calling it “postwar democracy.” It is criticized as such, albeit there is no doubt that it is the first actualization of democracy in Japan.

Certainly, momentum is gathering to embrace a neo-nationalism and to disclaim postwar democracy, but then what about literature and the circumstances surrounding it? Some people may say I am only venting my personal, subjective opinion when I speak of the decline of Japanese literature.

Objectively speaking, however, it is a fact that the readership of *junbungaku* or “pure literature”—which largely overlaps with what in the United States is called “serious fiction”—is dwindling. I am certain there is no publisher of a literary magazine—the conventional medium for publishing *junbungaku*—that is not operating in the red. Sales of works once published in such literary magazines, and later as a book, are at an all-time low.

But should we broaden the criteria for deciding what is and isn't *junbungaku*? That is to say, if we look at all that is produced in Japanese, there are in fact, every year, works that win readerships larger than imaginable in the past. The problem is whether to view this phenomenon itself as a decline in literature.

I am a writer who cannot expect a large readership, but allow me now to talk about the novel that I have just completed. You will then understand how one Japanese writer, who feels the decline of literature, is striving, though personally, to break through that predicament.

Before coming to Berkeley, I passed to the printers a novel entitled *Chugaeri* or “Somersault.” It is the longest novel I have ever written. And I would like to add that I consider it the most important work of my career.

The four years I portray in this novel fall in the period of the crisis-ridden recession, following the “bubble economy” that ended the high growth of Japan's economy. The story begins with the “turning” of the leader of a new religious

organization which, during this period, had many young Japanese believers. Even when the organization was at the height of the group's prosperity, its religious leader's thinking was criticized as being syncretic. His thinking is both Buddhist and Christian, which makes it unacceptable to any orthodox Christian church, Catholic or Protestant. Moreover, it is founded on a religious tenet that would not have taken root without the influence of Christianity, which has had its place in the modernization of Japan over the past hundred years. At the same time, the religion is connected with local Japanese mystical thinking. And although it also incorporates Buddhist and Shintoistic elements, it has no place in either of these religions.

It is also very clear that the organization's doctrine on the end of time and of the world has much in common with other fundamentalist sects. Its young members desire something that stresses the uniqueness of their faith and movement, and this desire clearly surfaces as the movement of their faith gradually becomes something more society-oriented and politically radical.

The novel is a narrative of what happens after the group's religious activities experience great conflict, from the aspect of its beliefs, and the aspect of its efforts to reach out to society. Ten years before the novel begins, the group, for a time, disbands. The disbandment was dramatically carried out amidst much tele-vision and other media hoopla. The founder and his sympathizers declared then, on television, that all of what they had created—their doctrine and all their religious activities—had been an elaborate joke—that their aim was to create a mammoth structure of comedy, and to delight in its slapstick delirium.

The radical members, at this time, had deployed themselves throughout the country and had been preparing for action. Their agenda was to perpetrate terrorism on political leaders, high-ranking bureaucrats, and leading financiers, and to attack nuclear power plants. At this point, the leaders of the organization are pressed with the need to demonstrate that the organization had no basis for action.

With assistance from the police and the National Public Safety Agency, the leaders succeed in aborting the acts of terrorism. The organization is disbanded and the leaders, who have “turned,” disappear from the surface of society. The turning of the leaders is remembered by society as a “somersault.”

The novel begins when, ten years later, the leaders who had gone into hiding begin new activities. Their goal is to establish an entirely new church. Obviously, things do not proceed as planned, since the believers they abandoned through their “somersault” have already formed various groups on their own, and have continued to practice their faith. The radicals have embraced stronger political beliefs, while a group of female believers have strengthened their faith in the mystical. The leaders need to respond to their demands. But how, having once entirely abandoned their doctrine and group, will the leaders establish a new church with their former believers? This is the problem that forms the framework of the novel.

The idea of a messiah-like leader of a religious group suddenly making a complete turnabout came to me as I read, for many years, Gershom Scholem’s *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*. Isn’t it strange that a false messiah, who converted from Judaism to Islam in seventeenth century Turkey, captured the fancy of a Japanese novelist?

I happened to find a copy of Scholem’s voluminous book at Berkeley’s ASUC bookstore. Since then a translation of the original work has appeared in the Bollingen series and ten years have passed. And I have been reading it over and over ever since. At first, Nathan of Gaza, Sabbatai Sevi’s sympathizer, fascinated me. Later my attention turned to Rabbi Sasportas, his unrelenting disapprover.

However, what I found most intriguing were the believers in Sevi after his apostasy—namely, those who remained at various places in Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa, with faith in their turnabout leader. If a messiah figure were to appear in Japan today, and one day he abandoned his faith, what would be the fate of his believers? A novel formed in my mind as I contemplated this question, in connection with the Aum Shinrikyo incident.

8.

Time keeps me from talking further about the novel. However, I want to add that, towards the end, the leader, who has rebuilt his church after once abandoning his faith—although he has lost, to the terrorism of former radicals, a man who for him plays the role of the prophet Nathan of Gaza—upon coming across the words “new man” in the New Testament, in Letters to the Ephesians, adopts this concept and makes it the center of his activities.

I belong to the “children’s generation” of the intellectuals who, after defeat in the Pacific War, hoped and struggled to create a new culture of Japanese people and thereby resuscitate Japan. I have hoped to carry on their legacy, in terms of both the system of postwar democracy that they conceived, and the postwar literature with which they reformed the style and themes of Japanese literature.

And now I have reached the age of the old fisherman who fought a big fish on the dark sea of Cuba. I have told you of how the old man’s calling out to the little boy has attracted me. The expectations I have of the “new man” I wrote about in my novel, which may be my last, stem from the same wish as that of the old man. It is my personal feeling that, for Japanese society and literature—with its 130 years of experience after the Meiji Restoration, and 50 years of postwar experience—to resist the resurrection of its negative inheritance and preserve its positive legacies, however few, we have but to place our hopes on the new generation. What I am now thinking is not just due to a personal feeling. Rather it comes from a more general awareness of crisis.

Audience Comments

Audience Comment: What is your view on the future of the novel? How does it relate to the talk you have given today?

Ôe: I have a double structure, which makes it very difficult to answer in English. A friend translated my talk from Japanese, so I haven't had time to think about it. [laughter] I believe the novel in general is losing power in the latter half of the twentieth century, so we are creating a new medium for language in the novel. Since I myself wanted to create this kind of form, over the past six years I didn't write any novels, and tried to make a new form of expression. Then I returned to the novel. My mission or habit as a writer gives me the most useful method to express myself to society—that is, for me, the novel—but I expect that in the young generation we will find a new method that is not the novel, and not the poem, but an amalgam of many styles of language. That is what I hope.

Audience Comment: You speak of the negative legacy of ultranationalism and its effect on young men. What about young women?

Ôe: There is a legacy of ultranationalism, a negative legacy, now in Japan, especially for the young man who doesn't know the truth that the age of Japanese

ultranationalism was very short—50 years only. Japanese society emphasizes continuity, and this can be misleading. Maruyama needed to talk about this, and I wanted to speak of him in this way, his debt to young men. About the positive legacy I did not speak, because very personally, very secretly, Japanese women in their thirties and forties are, I believe, a completely new generation. They are independent, democratic and so on.

Conservative politics tend to win in elections, however, and that is so because there is a peculiar inertia in Japan today. People don't fight against the negative legacy so strongly. Ten years ago this atmosphere did not exist, and now I feel it is there. That is the most important reason that I speak of the crisis I feel in Japan today.

Audience Comment: In regard to the decline in contemporary literature, why is this occurring when we also see so many exciting elements in contemporary literature?

Ôe: If you know the so-called postwar literature in Japan, I think that just after the war, thirty or forty year-old Japanese intellectuals who experienced the age of ultra-nationalism and wartime created postwar Japanese literature. And I believe that those authors are the first truly social novelists in Japan. So when I speak about these last fifty years, I think that this postwar literature must continue its effort for new literature in Japan, for social programs and responsibility, for asking what is the meaning of being “Japanese”? But almost all postwar writers, including friends of mine, have gradually declined: our books are not selling very well, and young writers and readers do not know about us. When I won a prize in Stockholm the sons of my neighbor came to my house, five young men, and they said, “you are a writer?” [laughter] So my books are not very well known in Japan now—they sell 3000 to 5000 copies.

A better known, younger writer sells 2 million copies, and we have the same publisher. I feel like a small tree in a typhoon. [laughter] This is the decline of literature. [laughter]

We cannot speak of the decline of literature so clearly, though, if we think of the age of Yeats—was that the age of the prosperity of poetry or of decline?

Now we can say that it was a very prosperous age in English poetry, but at the time there was much criticism that it was an age of decline. In Japan also, I say that decline is occurring for two reasons. One is that many authors do not write about the most important or essential problems in Japan today. Second, young readers are losing interest in serious literature. I am very afraid of how it will be in ten or twenty years.

Audience Comment: You mentioned Sôseki earlier. Sôseki was very Western in his thinking and not at all nationalist. How has that Western influence now influenced the postwar literature?

Ôe: I agree with you about those Western influences. Our modern literature is formed, created, through diverse influences from European and Russian literature, and American literature. During the war American literature could not be translated in Japan—it was forbidden. After the war, so much of it came to Japan. The authors I call postwar writers were influenced by Dostoyevsky very strongly, and the next generation also were very strongly influenced by Camus and other European writers. There is this kind of outside influence in the literature of every country. But the problem today is that young men are reading a kind of “subculture” literature all over the world. They don’t read Faulkner or Proust. They read popular novels. It seems that all of the subculture in the world is the same, influenced by the same. That is most dangerous for the future of our literature.

Audience Comment: It interested me to hear that you were inspired by *Huckleberry Finn*, as a story about children and families, since you are known to write about your own life, and I wondered if you could share some of your current stories about your family and how they are doing?

Ôe: In my literature the family is very important. My personal experience is also very important. But I want to write about my personal experience while creating a universal literature, so I sometimes think, when I emphasize the personal aspect of my family—my world is very narrow—that I must change my style to be more brilliant. [laughter] I recently finished my new work, which I mentioned,

called *Somersault*. I created a novel independent from my personal experience. But now, due to circumstance, I will return to the personal to write the story of my family or my son, and then the new future will be created for me.

Recently the Townsend Center’s director gave me a small booklet, and I read it, and I am fascinated by it—the one by Maurice Sendak in discussion with scholars of Shakespeare and Jung or Freud. The booklet is called *Changelings*—it is fascinating. It mentions a story called “Outside Over There,” about a baby kidnapped by goblins. A sister goes to find her brother and by the power of a magical horn, she finds her true brother. At first she cannot tell him apart from the goblins, but when she plays the horn, all the goblins cannot stop dancing, and she finds the baby—who doesn’t dance. Reading it, I found it to be the story of my family. Because I wanted to write about a story about my wife’s brother Itame who committed suicide. And I have a handicapped son who created music. When he was born he was—I say honestly—a very ugly baby. A changeling. And when he was in the hospital after being born, my wife asked me whether he looked like her brother. Her brother, when he was young, was a very good brother, a very good son, but suddenly he changed lifestyle. He became very negative, began acting in strange movies. Suddenly he created a movie and became a very good director, but before he did this my wife was always thinking about how her brilliant and beautiful brother was kidnapped by goblins. So she wanted to find him again. But she couldn’t. And when the baby came, she thought the baby must be a changeling—the brother returned. Then we found out my son was brain-damaged, and the new life of my family began, and I continued to write about my sons. When I read this booklet called *Changelings*, I found that my wife lost a baby in my son. But when my son began to create his music, she found him again. He became a composer and gave her hope. So I am now trying to construct a first draft of stories of my family and my brother Itami in the guise of the changeling. I had believed that I had given up writing my personal life when I completed the novel I finished two weeks ago, but I had only two weeks of liberty. [laughter]

I talked about this story because I write about my personal life, but I always want to make the stories universal. The aim to make literature universal is very important. So now I am guided by Maurice Sendak, and am going to write my last novels about my family. [applause]

Born in rural Shikoku, Japan, in 1935, KENZABURÔ ÔE began to publish while an undergraduate at Tokyo University, developing an original prose style that disturbed the complacency of contemporary Japanese writing. Ôe found his political voice through tragedy. In 1963, his son Hikari was born brain-damaged; soon afterward Ôe began a series of interviews with A-bomb survivors that were published as *Hiroshima Notes*. Two novels, *Aghwee the Sky Monster* and *A Personal Matter* (both 1964), dealt with a father who must decide whether to keep a brain-damaged baby; mirror-like, the essays spoke a politics of heroic survival, while the fictions inscribed that struggle in imaginary form. In *Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness* (1969), *The Waters Are Come into My Soul* (1973), and *The Pinch-Runner Memorandum* (1983), the child appears as a trickster, a sacrificial lamb, an image of unsullied nature, and a conduit to the worlds of the imagination and the spirit, and of ethics and human struggle.

A prolific writer, Ôe has remained a political voice, from his early critique of the right-wing politics of Yukio Mishima (whose art he respected), to his refusal to accept the government's Order of Culture in protest against Japan's imperialistic past, to his defense of freedom for writers in China. Addressed originally to his own generation in a language only they could read, Ôe's work on the "periphery" has acquired a universal voice. Ôe received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1994.