

N A O K I S A K A I

Translation and

Subjectivity

*On "Japan" and
Cultural Nationalism*

Foreword by Meaghan Morris



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Introduction: Writing for Multiple Audiences and the Heterolingual Address

The essays in this volume were written over about a decade with the earliest being "Death and Poetic Language in Postwar Japan" in 1985 and the latest "The Problem of 'Japanese Thought'" in 1993, and each of them addresses either the problems of translation or of subjectivity, or of both translation and subjectivity. Some were first delivered orally at conferences. Others were prepared for publication in journals and anthologies. All have been translated either from English into Japanese or from Japanese into English at one stage or another, so that they have all been presented to both English- and Japanese-speaking audiences; which is to say, none of these essays was prepared with a view to the completion of its writing-reading circulation within the interior of one language, within the putative homogeneity of one linguistic community. Translation is not only the subject matter I undertook to discuss as the theme in the essays, but it was also a necessary condition for the emergence of these essays. From the outset they were marked or, if one prefers, stigmatized by their heterolinguality of addressing themselves to the *other* language speakers as well. Initially I did not have a keen awareness of what writing simultaneously for these two different audiences might entail, but by the time the translation of chapter 3, "Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurô's Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity," appeared in Japan in 1990,

there was no doubt in my mind that the practice of writing for two different audiences could not be dissociated from the problematic of translation that I had pursued in my previous study of eighteenth-century Japanese discourse.

What the practice of the heterolingual address evoked in me was not the sense of the peculiarity of writing for two linguistically different readerships; rather, it made me aware of other social and even political issues involved in translation, and it illuminated what I had long suspected about the assumptions of the nonheterolingual address, namely, the homolingual address. In this respect, the practice of writing these essays confirmed what I had expected when I analyzed the conceptions and regimes of translation in eighteenth-century discourse in what is referred to as Japan today. Strictly speaking, it is not because two different language unities are given that we have to translate (or interpret) one text into another; it is because translation *articulates* languages so that we may postulate the two unities of the translating and the translated languages as if they were autonomous and closed entities through *a certain representation of translation*. In my previous book, I claimed that the schema of what Roman Jakobson called "interlingual translation" became possible as a consequence of a new discursive transformation in the eighteenth century, and that an introduction of a certain regime of translation, perhaps for the first time, gave rise to the possibility of conceiving of a spoken ordinary language, of people living in some vague area designated by the name Japan, as distinguished from and contrasted to the language(s) of the Middle Kingdom, that is, China.¹ But, of course, as the country was divided into many domains and social groups with vast dialectical and stylistic variety, nowhere could the Japanese language as universally spoken by the "Japanese people" be found in the eighteenth century. The Japanese language could only be conceived of as a lost and dead language whose restoration was earnestly called for. I argued that the Japanese language and the Japanese ethnos were *stillborn*, then, as the phonocentric notion of language became dominant in certain discourses. Thus the emergence of Japanese language and Japanese ethnicity was irreparably associated with the problematic of translation.

It is nearly a century since the stillborn language and ethnos were resurrected, although their revival, or restoration, did not take place in one stroke but in temporal and spatial dispersion. And these unities have regulated the ways in which social and cultural formations associated with people in Japan have been represented. Today, whether in Japan or elsewhere, there are not many who do not take the unities of the Japanese and their language for granted. The status change of these unities from that of the

"stillborn" to that of the "positively present," or the resurrection of the Japanese language and the Japanese ethnos/nation, is, of course, indicative of the emergence of the modern Japanese nation-state. Needless to say, it is extremely difficult to comprehend what we perform in translation outside the discourse of the modern nation-state, and this difficulty only teaches us how massively we are confined within the discourse regulated by the idea of the national language and what I called the schema of configuration.

Writing for two different audiences, however, provided me with an opportunity to glimpse a possibility of comprehending translation without relying on the discourse of the nation-state and the schema of configuration, and to further develop a set of tropes that allow me to understand what I perform in translation without resorting to the schema of interlingual translation. As I endeavor to articulate translation differently, in due course I will have to be even more attentive to the ambiguity of some of the expressions without which it would be almost impossible to talk about translation. Can the multiplicity of languages without which translation seems unnecessary be measured numerically, so that one can assume that languages are countable? What constitutes the unitary unit of a language that is not implicated in another language or other languages? Under what conditions can we regard English or Japanese, for example, as a language, and not as languages? And what does one expect in referring to a family of languages, as in the denomination "European languages" or even "Western languages"? I will return to these questions. What must first of all be responded to seems to be the question of how translation structures the situation in which it is performed: what sort of social relation is translation in the first place?

To write for two different audiences is nothing new. A great many writers have done it. Yet, its ethicopolitical significance has been noted by very few, such as Walter Benjamin. I believe this is because the problematization of the stance characterized as "writing for two different audiences" could require an overall reconsideration of the basic terms in which we represent to ourselves how our translational enunciation is a practice of erecting or modifying social relations. Unless the terms in which we represent to ourselves what we do in translation are fundamentally reorganized, we will continue to figure it as a somewhat tritely heroic and exceptional act of some arbitrator bridging two separate communities, instead of drawing attention to the aspects of translation in which translation is an essentially hybridizing instance.

What must be evaded in writing for different audiences is what I want to call homolingual address, that is, a regime of someone relating herself

or himself to others in enunciation whereby the addresser adopts the position representative of a putatively homogeneous language society and relates to the general addressees, who are also representative of an equally homogeneous language community. Let me note that by the homolingual address I do not imply the social condition of conversation in which both the addresser and the addressee supposedly belong to the same language community; they believe themselves to belong to different languages yet could still address themselves homolingually. Accordingly, I had to be attentive to my uses of the pronominal "we" and other markers of collective invocation, and had to try to nominate my possible audience by designating a linguistically heterogeneous ensemble. In other words, I tried to speak and listen, write and read among the "us" for whom neither reciprocal apprehension nor transparent communication was guaranteed. The putative collectivity of the "we" that I wished to invoke by addressing myself to them did not have to coincide with a linguistic community whose commonness is built around the assumed assurance of immediate and reciprocal apprehension in conversation. Among "us," on the contrary, "we" ought constantly to encounter not only misunderstanding and misapprehension but also lack of comprehension. Thus, "we" comprise an essentially mixed audience among whom the addresser's relation to the addressee could hardly be imagined to be one of unruffled empathetic transference, and to address myself to such an audience by saying "we" was to reach out to the addressees without either an assurance of immediate apprehension or an expectation of uniform response from them. "We" are rather a nonaggregate community;² for the addressees would respond to my delivery with varying degrees of comprehension, including cases of the zero degree at which they would miss its signification completely. I want to call this manner of relating the addresser to the addressees the heterolingual *address*.

The two verbal designations "to address" and "to communicate" can be distinguished from one another precisely because the former precludes the description of what it accomplishes, as a performative, whereas the latter anticipates its accomplishment, just as "aiming" and "striking" can be distinguished in the contrasting phrases "aiming at a target" and "striking a target." In order to "strike a target" one first has to "aim at it." Unless one aims first, one cannot even "fail to strike it." In this sense, just as "aiming" is prior to "striking," so "addressing" is anterior to "communicating." And "addressing" is distinguished from "communicating" because an addressing does not guarantee the message's arrival at the destination.³ Thus, "we" as a pronominal invocation in *address* designates a relation, which is performative in nature, independent of whether or not "we" actually communicate

the same information. And the relation thus designated appears to be what Jean-Luc Nancy would refer to as a nonrelational relation,"⁴ a relation that probably becomes most intelligible at the demise of all the "communication theories." Or, to put it more rigorously, "we" as a case of the vocative designation cannot be confused with a group of those who are capable of communicating the same information with each other, for such a group can be posited only imaginarily and *in representation*. Furthermore, translation is required in order to determine the sameness of the information: what remains the same in information cannot be identified unless it is translated. What is translated and transferred can be recognized as such only after translation. The translatable and the untranslatable are both posterior to translation as *repetition*. Untranslatability does not exist before translation: translation is the a priori of the untranslatable.

In the heterolingual address, the disparity between addressing and communicating is most conspicuously perceived, while the regime of homolingual address serves to repress the awareness of this disparity between the invocation of "we" and its representation and thereby reinforces the assumption of immediate and reciprocal apprehension. As Benjamin clearly saw it, the end of translation is not the communication of information, since translation is an instance where communication of and as an inscription ineluctably ensues.⁵

In most cases of homolingual address in publication, the writer's language is also the reader's so that the writer and the readers are both presumably embraced within the putatively unitary community of a single language. This kind of regime of address entails the insider dialogue of a member of an English- or Japanese-speaking society addressing other members of the same society. But this is not the only type of homolingual address: there are, if not many, cases in which the writer's language is distinctively not the readers'. The writer as representative of one language community could address herself to readers whose language is definitively not hers. And, in this situation, translation should be absolutely essential because the writer would either have to speak the language of the addressee or have to deliver a message in her own language that is subsequently translated into that of the addressee. So, can we say that this type of address is not definitively homolingual because the speaker addresses herself to a linguistically heterogeneous group of readers?

Here consideration of the position occupied by the translator is crucial. As long as the position of the translator is set aside and viewed to be secondary, this type of address is still homolingual in the sense that two different language communities are posited as separate from one another

in the *representation of translation*, and that translation is understood to be a transfer of a message from one clearly circumscribed language community into another distinctively enclosed language community. It goes without saying that the image of translator as a somewhat heroic prestigious agent derives from these assumptions of the homolingual address. And all the assumptions that I have so far problematized would disavowedly persist as if they had never been called into question.

What is kept out of this regime of homolingual address is the mingling and cohabitation of plural language heritage in the audience, and subsequent to this address, speech addressed by or to a foreign language speaker is put aside as secondary to the authentic form of delivery or as an exceptional case outside normalcy. The scene where one speaks without assuming that everybody among the addressees will understand what is delivered by the speaker is premeditatedly excluded. In other words, the fact that one must first "address" is confused with the assumption that supposedly "we" should be able to "communicate" among ourselves if "we" are a linguistic community. In other words, communication is not associated with writing, inscription, or even "exscription" but with communion in the homolingual address.⁶ The regime of homolingual address unwittingly postulates even more assumptions: since speech by or to a foreigner is secondary, the normal delivery must accomplish itself within the same medium, and translation, insofar as it requires the postulation of differing media, cannot be either primordial or originary. Under this regime, an utterance must be delivered first; it is translated secondarily. It postulates a sphere of linguistic homogeneity where "communication" is guaranteed and taken to be anterior to "address." This is done by establishing a certain economy of failure in communication.

This is to say that, in the homolingual address, the experience of not comprehending an other's enunciation or of the other miscomprehending your verbal delivery is grasped immediately as *an experience of understanding the experience of not comprehending*. For instance, when you were spoken to by an unknown man and could not figure out what he tried to convey, you describe this incident in the following manner: "A man spoke to me in Russian, so I could not understand him" (provided, of course, that you do not speak Russian). In the first place, it is very dubious as to whether an experience of noncomprehension can be called an experience at all. Furthermore, this manner of conceptualizing the failure of communication by the representation of an experience that contains the explanation of its own putative cause should necessarily entail an implicit tautology that merges its description and the putative explanation of it indistinguishably. Conse-

quently, it is assumed that the experience of noncomprehension comes simultaneously equipped with an explanation as to why you fail to comprehend. It is assumed, in other words, that you necessarily experience an incident of discommunication while knowing why you happen to fail in communication. Here, we may as well draw attention to the mundane insight that communication fails all the time, not necessarily because of the gap between linguistic communities, but also because of the fact that communication takes place only as "exscription":⁷ to try to communicate is to expose oneself to exteriority, to a certain exteriority that cannot be reduced to the externality of a referent to a signification. When we fail to communicate, we cannot attribute the failure to its possible cause—whether it is excessive noise in the medium or the addressee's refusal to respond—precisely because we fail to communicate. In our case, failure in communication means that each of us stands exposed to, but *distant* from, the other without grasping the cause for "our" separation.⁸ It is only retrospectively, and, in the final analysis, subsequent to the representation of translation, that we begin to figure out an experience of noncomprehension of an other's utterance according to the international schematism.

As Jacques Rancière argues in regard to the tenets of *equality*, what gathers us together is not commonness among us but a will to communicate despite an acute awareness of how difficult it is. "All words, written or spoken, are a translation that only takes on meaning in the counter-translation, in the invention of the possible causes of the sound heard or of the written trace: the will to figure out that applies itself to all indices, in order to know what one reasonable animal has to say to what it considers the soul of another reasonable animal."⁹ Only where it is impossible to assume that one should automatically be able to say what one oneself means and an other able to incept what one wants to say—that is, only where an enunciation and its inception are, respectively, a translation and a countertranslation—can we claim to participate in a nonaggregate community where what I want to call the heterolingual address is the rule, where it is imperative to evade the homolingual address.

In a nonaggregate community, therefore, we are together and can address ourselves as "we" because we are distant from one another and because our togetherness is not grounded on any common homogeneity.

In my deliberate efforts to avoid the regime of homolingual address and to articulate a relation of a nonaggregate community with the readers, I had to learn how to never designate the collective alliance of the narrator and the readers by either the "we" of national affiliation or the "we" of cultural or civilizational communality. Yet, to evade the regime of homolingual

address is also to give up a clear hierarchical marking of initial enunciation and subsequent translation. (Without annulling the intelligibility of the word "translation," it should be possible to detect the *oscillation or indeterminacy of personality* with regard to the situation of translation/interpretation in which a translator speaks as she translates. This is one of the reasons why the place for the translator cannot be indicated in the "communication model." I will come back to this problem.) I wrote these essays in search of an address that establishes the "we" of a community without taking national, ethnic, or linguistic affiliation for granted. Therefore, it is perhaps misleading to say that the essays were first enunciated and, then and separately, translated. Not only because of my delayed acquisition of the English language but also because of the essays' heterolingual address to the readers, they may as well be said to be translated as they were written, and written as they were translated. As I became aware that I had ineluctably come to occupy the position of the translator as I was writing within a so-called bilingual address, the writing of an essay could no longer be comprehended without regard to translation. It seemed that, particularly in my case, translation and enunciation could not manageably be distinguished from one another unless vigilant efforts were undertaken to prepare a conceptual sensitivity so as to detect the particular traits of translation and isolate the act of translation from the other forms of enunciative performatives.

A tentative distinction between heterolingual and homolingual addresses is thus called for in order to mark a difference in the attitude of the addresser to the addressee, which in fact derives from two conflicting modes of alterity. The homolingual address assumes the normalcy of reciprocal and transparent communication in a homogeneous medium so that the idea of translation does not make sense unless a positively heterogeneous medium is involved. In contrast, the heterolingual address does not abide by the normalcy of reciprocal and transparent communication, but instead assumes that every utterance can fail to communicate because heterogeneity is inherent in any medium, linguistic or otherwise. Every translation calls for a countertranslation, and in this sort of address it is clearly evident that within the framework of communication, translation must be endless. Thus, in the heterolingual address, the addressee must translate any delivery, whether in speech or writing, in order for that delivery to actually be received. Also in the heterolingual address, addressing in enunciation is not supposed to coincide with eventual communication, so that it is demanded of the addressee to *act* to incept or receive what is offered by the addresser. This is to say, what is addressed to the addressee is not automatically delivered precisely because of the disparity between addressing and

communicating, of a disparity that also expresses the essential *distance* not only of the addressee from the addresser but also of the addressee or addresser from himself or herself. In the heterolingual address, therefore, the act of inception or reception occurs as the act of translation, and translation takes place at every listening or reading. Whereas translation is necessary only between the interior of a homogeneous medium and its outside in the case of the homolingual address, it is upheld in the heterolingual address that, in principle, translation occurs whenever the addressee accepts a delivery from the addresser.

Thus differentiated, the two addresses respectively suggest the two alternative attitudes with regard to the otherness of the addressee. Although you would presume that the addressee who is incapable of comprehending your delivery should appear marked and anticipated as such to you when you adopt the attitude of the homolingual address, such a precaution or anterior knowledge is not guaranteed in the attitude of the heterolingual address. In the latter attitude, you would probably have to address yourself to the addressee, no matter whether the addressee is singular or plural, without assuming that the addressee would necessarily and automatically comprehend what you were about to say: you would, of course, wish the addressee to comprehend what you say—for, without this wish, the act of addressing would not constitute itself—but you would not take it for granted. In this respect, you are always confronted, so to speak, with foreigners in your enunciation when your attitude is that of the heterolingual address. Precisely because you wish to communicate with her, him, or them, so the first, and perhaps most fundamental, determination of your addressee is that of the one who might not comprehend your language, that is, of the foreigner. The idea of a nonaggregate community of foreigners is unintelligible unless we are able to conceive of a community where we relate to ourselves through the attitude of the heterolingual address.

Precisely because of her positionality, the translator has to enunciate for an essentially mixed and linguistically heterogeneous audience. In order to function as a translator, she must listen, read, speak, or write in the multiplicity of languages, so that the representation of translation as a transfer from one language to another is possible only as long as the translator acts as a heterolingual agent and addresses herself from a position of linguistic multiplicity: she necessarily occupies a position in which multiple languages are implicated within one another.¹⁰ The translator who is present to both the writer and the readers regulates communicative transactions, but her mediation must be erased in the representation of translation ac-

cording to which the message issued by the writer in one language is transferred into an equivalent message in another language, which is then received by the readers. In these cases as well, the writer addresses the readers with the presumption of a homolingual communion. The assumption that one can make oneself understood without perceptible hindrance, as long as one belongs in the same linguistic community, survives intact here. Translation is believed to be necessary because incommensurability exists not necessarily between the addresser and the addressee but essentially between one linguistic community and another.

It is well known that Roman Jakobson classified translation into three classes: "1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. 2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. 3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems."¹¹

I do not think that the propriety of Jakobson's "translation proper" can be maintained outside the attitude of the homolingual address. And we would have to call into question the supposed discernibility of interlingual from intralingual translation, of translation between separate languages from rewording within the same language unity, as soon as we adopt the attitude of the heterolingual address. In other words, viewed from the position of the translator, neither the unitary unity of a language nor the plurality of language unities can be taken for granted. Moreover, not only the professionally assigned translator, but the rest of us as well, would have to be responsible for the task of the translator. At the same time, we would be obliged to call into question other discursive positivities similar to the unity of a particular ethnic or national language, such as the unities of ethnic and national cultures, when we take the attitude of the heterolingual address. So far I have talked as if those unities, English, Japanese, and other language unities, and the name "translator" itself were self-evident, but as soon as we are in the heterolingual address, we will find that these putative unities and names have to be put in brackets.

In addition, how could we possibly define what Jakobson calls intersemiotic transmutation, when we cannot easily separate verbal signs from nonverbal signs in such texts as the *calligraphic* one. Is a calligraphic text verbal or nonverbal? Is it a text to see or a text to read? Is it possible to translate a calligraphic text? If it is, in what sense is it so? What are the conditions under which the verbal is immediately equated to the linguistic? A series of questions like these will gradually suggest to us that there could be discursive formations in which the propriety of "translation proper"

can hardly be taken for granted. Today, no matter whether you reside around the Pacific Basin or along the Atlantic, the idea of translation is almost always self-evident and very few would insist otherwise. However, by imposing on ourselves the attitude of the heterolingual address, we are able to call into question that self-evidence, and thereby explore those ethicopolitical assumptions and habituated regimes that serve to sustain this position.

Let me point to two sites where the problematic of translation seems to manifest itself most intensely, so as to delimit that self-evidence and mark its historicity. The first concerns itself with subjectivity, and the second with schematism in translation.

The Subject of Translation/the Subject in Transit

Can the translator make a promise in translation? Can she then be responsible for what she says while translating? The answer must always be double as long as the name "translator" signifies neither a professional specialty nor a social status but instead designates an agent or a human being who is engaged in the act of translation. Yes, the translator can make a promise, but always on behalf of somebody else. In that respect, no, she "herself" cannot really make a promise. Likewise, the translator must be responsible for her translation, for every word of it, but she cannot be held responsible for what is pledged in what she says. For she is not allowed to say what she means in what she says in translation; she is supposed to say what she says without meaning. At the same time that the translator must be absolutely responsible for what she says, her task begins with her pledge to say what the original addresser means to say. Her responsibility consists in her commitment to withdraw her wish to express herself from what she says even though she has to seek and interpret what the addresser means in the first place. Therefore the translator is also the interpreter.

A cursory reflection like this on the relations between the original addresser and his translator, or the translator and her addressee, amply illustrates the extremely ambiguous and unstable positionality the translator has to occupy with regard to the original addresser and the addressee. The translator listens to or reads what the original addresser enunciates. In this respect, there is no doubt that she is an addressee. But it is not supposed that the addresser speaks or writes to her. The addressee for the enunciation of the addresser must not be located at the site where the translator is, so that the addressee is always located elsewhere in translation. The translator is both an addressee and not an addressee at the same time. This is to

say that, even though the translator is spoken or written to, she cannot be addressed as "you" by the addresser. Or, if she can be addressed as "you," then the putative audience for whom the translator interprets cannot be the direct addressee in the enunciation of the addresser; that audience will be redesignated as a third party, as "them." A similar disjunction can be observed in the translational enunciation of the translator. The translator speaks or writes to the audience, so in this respect she is undoubtedly an addresser. But, supposedly it is not the translator who in translation is speaking or writing for the addressee. "I" uttered by the translator does not designate the translator herself but the original addresser as the subject of the original enunciation. And if by "I" the translator indicates the subject of the secondary and translational enunciation, she will then have to designate the original addresser as "he" or "she."

Let me reformulate this pronominal disjunction slightly differently. It is always possible for what is translated to be conveyed as a quotation, either in direct or indirect mode. Suppose the original addresser says "Kyô wa ii tenki da." Then a translation of what the original addresser says can, for example, be accommodated as a subordinate clause in the statement of either "He/she (= the original addresser) said, 'It is fine today,'" or "He/she said that it was fine that day." Yet, when explicitly formatted as a subordinate clause, a translational utterance as a whole is rendered as the translator's—that is, the utterance would present itself as being addressed to the audience not by the original addresser but by the translator. In order to avoid the dislocation of the original addresser, the translator chooses to drop the phrase indicating the subject of the enunciation, and just say: "It is fine today." In translational utterance, however, we cannot assume that the translator can immediately make manifest her rapport to the subject of the enunciation by restating this utterance in the following manner: "I say 'It is fine today'" or "I say that it is fine today." Rather, it must be restated as follows: "I say 'he said 'It is fine today''" or "I say that he said that it was fine that day." In translational enunciation, every utterance must be able to be accompanied by the designation through a double framing "I say, 'the addresser says, ". . . .'" In this respect, the translator must speak in a forked tongue, and her enunciation must necessarily be one of mimicry. Furthermore, the translator renders conspicuous the operation of framing in the process of the constitution of subjectivity in enunciation.¹²

In the enunciation of translation, the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciated are not expected to coincide with one another. The translator's desire must be at least displaced, if not entirely dissipated, in translational enunciation. Thus, the translator cannot be designated ei-

ther as "I" or as "you" straightforwardly: she disrupts the attempt to appropriate the relation of the addresser and the addressee into the *personal* relation of first person vis-à-vis second person. To follow the determination of a "person" as espoused by Émile Benveniste—that is, that only those directly addressing and addressed in what he calls "discourse" as distinct from "story" or "history" can be called persons, and that those who are referred to or talked about in the capacity of "he," "she," or "they" in "story" or "history" cannot be "persons"¹³—the addresser, the translator, and the addressee cannot be persons simultaneously; the translator cannot be either the first or second or even third "person" undisruptively. Although the translator can be so in Foucauldian "discourse"—whose formulation I understand to be explicitly antipersonalist—she can only have a transitory and temporary position in the personalist notion of "discourse" such as Benveniste's. Thanks to this formulation of "discourse" in which every enunciative position is depersonalized from the outset, we dispense with the hermeneutic problematics of the horizon of understanding. Ineluctably, translation introduces a disjunctive instability into the putatively *personal* relations among the agents of speech, writing, listening, and reading. In respect to personal relationality as well as to the addresser/addressee structure, the translator must be internally split and multiple, and devoid of a stable positionality. At best, she can be a *subject in transit*, first because the translator cannot be an "individual" in the sense of *individuum* in order to perform translation, and second because she is a *singular* that marks an elusive point of discontinuity in the social, whereas translation is the practice of creating continuity at that singular point of discontinuity. Translation is an instance of *continuity in discontinuity*¹⁴ and a poietic social practice that institutes a relation at the site of incommensurability. This is why the aspect of discontinuity inherent in translation would be completely repressed if we were to determine translation to be a form of communication. And this is what I have referred to as the *oscillation or indeterminacy of personality in translation*.

Thus, by considering the position of the translator, we are introduced into the problematic of subjectivity in an illuminating manner. The internal split within the translator, which reflects in a certain way the split between the addresser—or the addressee, and furthermore the split within the addresser and the addressee themselves¹⁵—and the translator demonstrates the way in which the subject constitutes itself. In a sense, this internal split within the translator is homologous to what is referred to as the fractured I, the temporality of "I speak," which necessarily introduces an irreparable distance between the speaking I and the I that is signified, between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciated.

Yet, in the case of translation, the oscillation or indeterminacy of the personality of the translator marks the instability of the we as the subject rather than the I. Particularly in the regime of homolingual address, the translator is supposed to assume the role of the arbitrator not only between the addresser and the addressee but also between the linguistic communities of the addresser and the addressee. Thus, translation ceases to be a *repetition* and is rendered representable. And, in the regime of homolingual address, translation as repetition is often exhaustibly replaced by the representation of translation.

Let me elaborate on the process in which translation is displaced by its representation, and the constitution of collective subjectivity such as national and ethnic subjectivity in the representation of translation. Through the labor of the translator, the incommensurability as difference that calls for the service of the translator in the first place is negotiated and worked on. In other words, the work of translation is a practice by which the initial discontinuity between the addresser and the addressee is made continuous and recognizable. In this respect, translation is just like other social practices that render the points of discontinuity in social formation continuous.¹⁶ Only retrospectively and after translation, therefore, can we recognize the initial incommensurability as a gap, crevice, or border between fully constituted entities, spheres, or domains.¹⁷ But, when represented as a gap, crevice or border, it is no longer incommensurate. As I discuss in chapter 4, incommensurability or difference is more like "feeling" that is prior to the explanation of how incommensurability is given rise to and cannot be determined as a represented difference (or species difference in the arborescent schemata of the species and the genus) between two subjects or entities.¹⁸ What makes it possible to represent the initial difference as an already determined difference between one language unity and another is the work of translation itself. This is why we always have to remind ourselves that the untranslatable, or what can never be appropriated by the economy of translational communication, cannot exist prior to the enunciation of translation. It is translation that gives birth to the untranslatable. Thus, the untranslatable is as much a testimony to the sociality of the translator, whose figure exposes the presence of a nonaggregate community between the addresser and the addressee, as to the translatable itself. However, the essential sociality of the untranslatable is ignored in the homolingual address, and with the repression of this insight, the homolingual address ends up equating translation to communication.

By erasing the temporality of translation with which the *oscillation or indeterminacy of personality in translation* is closely associated and which can be

thought in an analogy to the aporetic temporality of "I think," we displace translation with the representation of translation. Only in the representation of translation can we construe the process of translation as a transfer of some message from "this" side to "that" side, as a dialogue between one person and another, between one group and another, as if dialogue should necessarily take place according to the model of communication. Thus the representation of translation also enables the representation of ethnic or national subjects, and, in spite of the presence of the translator who is always in between, translation, no longer as difference or repetition but as representation, is made to discriminatorily posit one language unity against another (and one "cultural" unity against another). In this sense, the representation of translation transforms *difference in repetition* into *species difference* (diaphora) between two specific identities, and helps constitute the putative unities of national languages, and thereby reinscribes the initial difference and incommensurability as a specific, that is, commensurate and conceptual, difference between two particular languages within the continuity of the generality of Language.¹⁹ As a result of this displacement, translation is represented as a form of communication between two fully formed, different but *comparable*, language communities.

Following Kantian schematism, I have called the discursive apparatus that makes it possible to represent translation "the schema of configuration." As the practice of translation remains radically heterogeneous to the representation of translation, translation need not be represented as a communication between two clearly delineated linguistic communities. There should be many different ways to apprehend translation in which the subjectivity of a community does not necessarily constitute itself in terms of language unity or the homogeneous sphere of ethnic or national culture. The particular representation of translation in which translation is understood to be communication between two particular languages is, no doubt, a historical construct. And it is this particular representation of translation that gave rise to the possibility of figuring out the unity of ethnic or national language together with another language unity. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for which I have claimed that the Japanese language was born, or stillborn, in the eighteenth century among a very small portion of literary people, when the schema of configuration came into being. This is to say that the schema of configuration is a means by which a national community represents itself to itself, thereby constituting itself as a subject. But it seemed to me that this autoconstitution of the national subject would not proceed unitarily; on the contrary, it would constitute itself only by making visible the figure of an other with which it engages in a

translational relationship. Hence, the figure of the Japanese language was given rise to configurally, only when some Japanese intellectuals began to determine the predominant inscriptive styles of the times as pertaining to the figure of the specifically Chinese, or as being contaminated by the Chinese language. It is important to note that, through the representation of translation, the two unities are represented as two equivalents resembling one another. Precisely because they are represented in equivalence and resemblance, however, it is possible to determine them as conceptually different. The relationship of the two terms in equivalence and resemblance gives rise to a possibility of extracting an infinite number of distinctions between the two. Just as in the configuration of "the West and the Rest" in which the West represents itself, thereby constituting itself configurally by representing the exemplary figure of the Rest, conceptual difference allows for the evaluative determination of the one term as superior over the other. This is how the desire for "Japanese language" was invoked through the schema of configuration in the regime of translation.

Finally, I must deal with one formative principle without which the national subject would fail to gather together a wide variety of conceptual differences around the unitary figure of an *ethnos* or nation; for, even processed through the schema of configuration, the regime of translation could multiply conceptual differences in many disparate registers. In particular there is no guarantee that Jakobson's intralingual translations can be organized with the interlingual translation or *translation proper* as the overall guiding rule of translation. Conceptual differences can be posited between one style and another—*Kanbun* or literary Chinese and *Sôrôbun* or a distinct epistolary style mixing the syntax of literary Chinese and *Kana* characters, for example, in the case of Tokugawa Japan—one regional dialect and another, so-called ideographic and phonetic inscriptive systems, and so on. These differences can be marked between genres, but what characterizes the emergence of the national language is that generic differences that can be represented configurally in the regime of translation are all subsumed under the generality of the national language; these genres have to be perceived as the species within the genus of the Japanese language. This time, although our terminology may be confusing since the term "genre" itself derives from the genus, the generic difference must be allocated at the level of the species while the unity of national language transcends the species and is conceived of as an overarching genus. What Jakobson implies by the differentiation between intralingual and interlingual translations is nothing but the hierarchization of these translational registers. It goes without saying that this differentiation itself is a historical construct. I be-

lieve that, in historical contexts prior to the eighteenth century in the geographic regions designated as Japan today, we cannot assume such a generic taxonomy, and that the lack of historicity would only sanction the continuous regimes of National History and National Literature. At the same time, we now can understand why the regime of translation with the schema of configuration plays such an important role in the formation of the Japanese as a national subject.

By now it should be evident that, given my analysis of the regime of translation and the homolingual address, culturalism in which Japanese culture and nation are obstinately reified and essentialized is, as a matter of fact, not particular to Japanese journalism and academia at all. Culturalism that endorses nationalism in terms of national language and ethnic culture is as persistently endemic in Japanese Studies in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere as in Japan today. For, as I will show in some of the following chapters, behind Westerners' as well as Japanese insistence on Japanese cultural uniqueness looms an equally obstinate essentialization of the West.

East Asian names throughout this book, except those of Asians who are resident outside East Asia, are written in the East Asian order—surname first—after the style Asian Studies specialists have adopted in their studies in English.

Notes

FOREWORD

- 1 Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 104–5.
- 2 I am adapting here from Ann Curthoys and Stephen Muecke, “Australia, for Example,” in Wayne Hudson and David Carter, eds., *The Republicanism Debate* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1993), pp. 177–200, adapting in turn from Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 9–11.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 327–50.
- 4 Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 101.
- 5 For example, David Harvey writes in this way of opacity throughout *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
- 6 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 100.
- 7 Robert Hughes, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 9 *Voices of the Past*, p. 106.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991). All Japanese names appear with the surname followed by the first name.
- 2 In his brilliant work on Joesph Jacotot (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. Kristin Ross [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991]), an exiled schoolteacher who taught in French to Flemish students who knew no French during the age to which

nowadays we often ascribe the emergence of the nation-states, Jacques Rancière argues that what brings people together is not aggregation. On the contrary, "One can say, if one likes, that truth brings together. But what brings *people* together, what unites them, is nonaggregation. Let's rid ourselves of the representation of the social cement that hardened the thinking minds of the postrevolutionary age. People are united because they are people, that is to say, *distant* beings. Language does not unite them. On the contrary, it is the arbitrariness of language that makes them try to communicate by forcing them to translate—but also puts them in a community of intelligence" (p. 58; emphasis in the original).

- 3 See Jacques Derrida's argument in his well-known article on psychoanalysis and Poe's *The Purloined Letter*: "The remaining structure of the letter is that—contrary to what the Seminar says in its last words ('what the "purloined letter," that is, the not delivered letter means is that a letter always arrives at its destination.')—a letter can always not arrive at its destination. Its 'materiality' and 'topology' are due to its divisibility, its always possible partition" ("Le Facteur de la Vérité," in *The Post Card*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], pp. 443–44). It is because the message can always *not arrive* that addressing is possible.
- 4 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 4.
- 5 "To grasp the genuine relationship between an original and a translation requires an investigation analogous to the argumentation by which a critique of cognition would have to prove the impossibility of an image theory. There it is a matter of showing that in cognition there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if it dealt with images of reality; here it can be demonstrated that no translation would be possible if in the ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken Books, 1969], p. 73).
- 6 For an elucidation of the disparity between the two radically differing registers of "community" and "communication," see the following: "It is a community in that Bataille immediately communicates to me the pain and the pleasure that result from the impossibility of communicating anything at all without touching the limit where all meaning [*sens*] spills out of itself, like a simple ink stain on a word, on the word 'meaning.'

"This spilling and this ink are the ruin of theories of 'communication,' of the conventional chatter that attempts to promote reasonable exchange and serves only to obscure violence, betrayal, and lies, leaving no possibility of measuring oneself against powerful follies. But the reality of community, where nothing is shared without also being removed from this kind of 'communication,' has already, always, revealed the vanity of such discourses. They communicate only the postulation of the communication of a 'meaning,' and of the meaning of 'communication.' Bataille, beyond and sometimes apart from what he says, communicates community itself—that is, naked existence, naked writing, and the silent, haunting referral of the one to the other, which makes us share meaning's nakedness: neither gods nor thoughts, but the *us* that is imperceptibly and insuperably *exscribed*" (Jean-Luc Nancy, "Exscription," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al. [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993], pp. 319–20; emphasis in the original).

- 7 "To write, and to read, is to be exposed, to expose oneself, to this not-having (to this non-knowledge) and thus to 'exscription.' The exscribed is exscribed from the very first word, not as an 'inexpressible' or as an 'uninscribable' but, on the contrary, as writing's opening, within itself, to itself, to its own inscription as the infinite discharge of meaning—in all the senses in which we must understand the expression" (ibid., p. 338).
- 8 In order to fail, we must work. When we do not address, we cannot even fail to communicate. Only in the work, therefore, can we fail. Thus, says Jean-Luc Nancy, "What is exposed in the work, or through the works, begins and ends infinitely within and beyond the work—within and beyond the operative concentration of the work: there where what we have called up to now men, gods, and animals are themselves exposed to one another through an exposition that lies at the heart of the work and that gives us the work at the same time as it dissolves its concentration, and through which the work is offered up to the infinite communication of community" ("Literary Communism," in *The Inoperative Community*, p. 73).
- 9 Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, p. 64.
- 10 With regard to the limits of the theories of translation, Jacques Derrida poses the following questions: "Let us note one of the limits of the theories of translation. They treat passages from one language to another too much and do not adequately consider the possibility for languages to be implicated into more than two [*à plus de deux*] in one text. How do you translate a text written in plural languages at the same time? How do you 'render' the effect of plurality? And if we translate by plural languages at the same time, will we call it translation?" ("Des tours de Babel," in *Psyché* [Paris: Calilée, 1987], pp. 207–8; emphasis in the original).
- 11 Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2 (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971), p. 261. As I have argued, there is no reason why translation must be understood to be interlingual translation (Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, pp. 211–39). To use Jakobson's terminology, the distinction between intralingual and interlingual translations cannot be sustained unless the economy of transmutation is captured in a specific regime of intersemiotic (or intertextual) correlation, that is, in a regime I call phonocentrism. Where there is no phonocentrism, intralingual and interlingual translations can hardly be distinguished.
- 12 For discussion of framing and subjectivity, see Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, pp. 113–207.
- 13 Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Florida Press, 1971), p. 224.
- 14 This phrase with an apparent resonance with modern mathematics is from Nishida Kitarô (1870–1945). In conceptualizing social praxis and self-awareness (*jikaku*), Nishida appealed to the mathematical formulation of discontinuity. Following the tradition of modern philosophy since Leibniz and Kant, he conceived of the formation of the practical subject after the model of differential calculus but at the singular point of discontinuity. Therefore, for Nishida, as his later formulation clearly shows, the constitution of the subject in ethical action is also the poiesis or making of the social formation. "Hirenzoku no renzoku" (or continuity of discontinuity) thus suggests the possibility of conceptualizing the constitution of the subject at the site of the incommensurate in the social. See "Genjitsu no sekai no ronri-teki kôzô" or "the logical structure of the real world" (1934), in *Nishida Kitarô Zenshû*, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965) pp. 217–304, and "Sekai no jiko dôitsu to renzoku" or "the self-identity of the world and continuity" (1935), in ibid., vol. 8, pp. 7–106.

- 15 The split cannot be contained only in the cases of translation, for, as Briankle Chang suggests, the putative unities of the addresser and the addressee can hardly be sustained because the addresser himself is split and multiple, as is figuratively illustrated by the Plato-Socrates doublet in Derrida's "Envoi" in *The Post Card* (pp. 1–256). With regard to communication in general, Chang argues, "Because both delivery and signing are haunted by the same structural threat of the message's nonarrival or adestation, the paradox of the signature also invades communication. Communication occurs only insofar as the delivery of the message *may* fail; that is, communication takes place only to the extent that there is a separation between the sender and receiver, and this separation, this distance, this *spacing*, creates the possibility for the message *not* to arrive" (Briankle G. Chang, *Deconstructing Communication* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996], p. 216).
- 16 Putting forth a different conception of continuity in discontinuity, Tanabe Hajime, who like his mentor Nishida based his argument on insights from modern mathematics, insisted that social formation in general is infinitely divisible and that a society cannot be conceived of as a homogeneous and harmonious unity. On the contrary, a society always contains an infinite number of societies, and every society consists of discontinuities and conflicts. What unites a society into one is not naturally given. Even an ethnic society, he argued, is not a given unity. Whether racial, ethnic, or national, no identity is naturally given and every identity has to be socially constructed through the dialectic process of negativity. See "*Shakai sonzai no ronri*" or "the logic of social beings," in *Tanabe Hajime Zenshû*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1963), pp. 51–168, and "*Shu no ronri to sekai zushiki*" or "the logic of the species and the schema 'world,'" in *ibid.*, pp. 299–397.

It is important to keep in mind that Nishida and Tanabe both offered philosophical formulas by which to undermine the validity of ethnic nationalism and to legitimate the unity of the Japanese Empire against the implicit threat of anti-colonial ethnic separatism. I am most critical of the philosophical discourses of Nishida Kitarô and Tanabe Hajime, two champions of what is usually referred to as the Kyoto School of Philosophy. But my critique of their philosophical formation is not premised on an assumption that their philosophy was primarily concerned with the justification of Japanese ethnic and cultural nationalism. On the contrary, I characterize theirs primarily as a universalistic philosophy of an imperial nationalism, and only secondarily as an ethnic nationalism in the sense that every universalism that does not denounce imperialism is inherently ethnocentric.
- 17 For example, Willard V. O. Quine's hypothesis of the radical translation, from which all the help of the interpreter is excluded, suffers from this retrospectivism. If there is no help of the interpreter, is it possible to recognize "a language of a hitherto untouched people"? See Willard V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 26–80.
- 18 For a more detailed discussion about "feeling" and difference, see chapter 4, note 7. And for the poetic aspect of "feeling," see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 291ff.
- 19 Here let me draw attention to the notions of representation, concept, difference without concept, and conceptual difference, according to Gilles Deleuze. "The relation of a concept to its object under this double aspect, in the form that it assumes in this memory and this self-consciousness, is called representation" (*ibid.*, p. 11).

"... every determination is conceptual in the last instance, or actually belongs to the comprehension of a concept" (ibid., p. 12). "In so far as it serves as a determination, a predicate must remain fixed in the concept while becoming something else in the thing (animal becomes something other in man and in horse; humanity something other in Peter and in Paul). This is why the comprehension of the concept is infinite; having become other in the thing, the predicate is like the object of another predicate in the concept. But this is also why each determination remains general or defines a resemblance, to the extent that it remains fixed in the concept and applicable by right to an infinity of things" (ibid.). "Thus, the principle of difference understood as difference in the concept does not oppose but, on the contrary, allows the greatest space possible for the apprehension of resemblances. Even from the point of view of conundrums, the question "What difference is there?" may always be transformed into: "What resemblance is there?" But above all, in classification, the determination of species implies and supposes a continual evaluation of resemblances" (ibid.). "Repetition thus appears as difference without a concept, repetition which escapes indefinitely continued conceptual difference" (ibid., p. 13).

CHAPTER 1: DISTINGUISHING LITERATURE AND THE WORK OF TRANSLATION: THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA'S *DICTÉE* AND REPETITION WITHOUT RETURN

- 1 Originally delivered on August 26, 1996, at the thirteenth congress of the International Comparative Literature Association in Tokyo. This article was translated into Japanese by Onoda Toshiya and Matsui Miho and published in *Shisô*, no. 859 (January 1996): 250–78.
- 2 Perhaps, one of the best representations of the International World can be found in the idea of the pluralistic "World History" (*tagenteki sekaishi*) put forth by Japanese philosophers during the 1930s. Literature as a discipline is in complicity with the International World, as James Snead succinctly demonstrated: "We are familiar enough with the practice whereby literary history or literary canons stand in for a notion of national spirit or character. . . . This tendency would valorize particular national authors not just to the extent that they speak for themselves or for their 'race', but also to the extent that that they speak for 'mankind'. Authors such as Homer, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Goethe are often seen as 'consummate geniuses' of a given national spirit, or 'founding fathers' of their respective national literatures, yet ultimately attract even greater interest because they seem in some way to have embodied 'universal truths'" ("European Pedigrees/African Contagions," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha [London and New York: Routledge, 1990], p. 233). In a similar vein, I discuss the codependency of the particular (the national) and the universal (the international or imperialist) in reference to the pluralistic World History in chapter 5 of this volume.
- 3 Leonard Forster, *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People* (London: William Heinemann, 1966).
- 4 Although I have translated this term into "topos" in the past, I have decided to translate the term *basho*, coined by Nishida Kitarô (1870–1945), into "khoraic place." Borrowing from Plato's "khora" and Aristotelian "hypokeimenon," Nishida attempted to introduce this term *basho* to explicate the construction of subjectivity in judg-