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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>By Way of a Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xvii
Introduction	1
PART I. JAPANESE MODERN TIMES	
Japanese Modern within Modernity	13
<i>Placing the Consumer-Subject within Mass Culture</i>	20
<i>Erotic Grotesque Nonsense as Montage</i>	28
<i>Japanese Modern Culture as Politics</i>	35
<i>The Documentary Impulse</i>	38
PART II. JAPANESE MODERN SITES	
1. The Modern Girl as Militant (Movement on the Streets)	51
<i>Identifying the Modern Girl</i>	52
<i>What Did She Do?</i>	65
<i>What Made the Modern Girl Do What She Did?</i>	69
2. The Café Waitress Sang the Blues	73
<i>Eroticizing the Modern Japanese Café Waitress</i>	75
<i>Documenting the Café Waitress</i>	90
<i>"A New Study of the Everyday Life of the Café Waitress"</i>	91
<i>"A Close Look at Ginza"</i>	98
<i>"Tale of Wandering"</i>	102
<i>How the Japanese Café Waitress Sang the Blues</i>	105

3.	Friends of the Movies (From <i>Ero</i> to Empire)	108
	<i>Ero</i>	109
	<i>Ero at the Movies</i>	117
	<i>Toward Empire</i>	122
4.	The Household Becomes Modern Life	143
	<i>The Family-State of “Shufu no Tomo”</i>	145
	<i>Wives and Husbands (the Shufu in Fūfu)</i>	147
	<i>The Fūfu in Discord/Household in Discord</i>	151
	<i>Women at Work</i>	154
	<i>Modern Times for the Housewife</i>	162

PART III. ASAKUSA – HONKY-TONK TEMPO

1.	Asakusa Eroticism	177
	<i>Gonda Yasunoke’s Asakusa (an Official View)</i>	179
	<i>Soeda Azenbō’s Asakusa</i>	183
	<i>Kawabata Yasunari’s Asakusa</i>	188
	<i>Hollywood as Fantasy</i>	195
	<i>Ozaki Midori (Love for a Cane and a Hat)</i>	200
2.	Down-and-Out Grotesquerie	203
	<i>Beggar Culture</i>	206
	<i>Vagrant Culture</i>	209
	<i>Juvenile Delinquents</i>	217
	<i>The Hawkers</i>	223
	<i>Foreigners as Freaks</i>	227
3.	Modern Nonsense	231
	<i>The Irony of Parody</i>	232
	<i>The “Casino Folies” Affirms the False</i>	235
	<i>Letting Go of the Modern—Charlie Left Behind</i>	253
	<i>Freeze Frames (An Epilogue in Montage)</i>	259
	<i>Tempo (1931)</i>	259
	<i>Gestures (1932)</i>	259
	<i>Code Switch (1936)</i>	260
	<i>The Parody of Comedy (1940)</i>	262
	<i>Asakusa Memories (the 1970s and 1980s)</i>	265
	<i>The Return of the Modern Girl (the 1990s)</i>	267
	<i>Giving the Modern Girl Her Due</i>	268
	<i>The End</i>	268

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	271
<i>Notes</i>	273
<i>Bibliography</i>	327
<i>Index</i>	345

Japanese Modern within Modernity

I place the years of “erotic grotesque nonsense” within the global modern culture of the 1920s and 1930s, and I position the Japanese modern culture of those decades within a Japanese modernity stretching from the state-sponsored modernization policies of the Meiji era into the late twentieth century. In distinguishing between *modern* and *postmodern*, and among *modernism*, *modernization*, and *modernity*, I agree in part with John Frow’s distinctions. For Frow, *modernism* refers to “a bundle of cultural practices, some of them adversarial”; *modernization* is “an economic process with social and cultural implications”; and *modernity*, overlapping with the modernization process, is “a philosophical category designating the temporality of the post-traditional world.” Frow’s definition of *modernism* corresponds to *seikatsu*, the all-pervasive Japanese term of the 1920s and 1930s, since both were concerned with the everyday. (*Seikatsu* originally meant “life” or “livelihood,” but as will be seen, by the 1930s it would be associated with the everyday necessities and luxuries of clothing, food, and domicile.) His *modernization*, emphasizing the economic process, had its counterpart in such processes as the rationalization encouraged by the introduction of Taylorism into Japan during the 1920s and 1930s, which in the 1940s merged with a Nazi-inspired rationalization policy.¹ Third, the Japanese word *kindai* implies the presentist temporality emphasized in Frow’s *modernity*. To these terms I add a fourth, the Japanese word *modan* (written as *modern* from hereon or as “*modan*” when emphasizing pronunciation), which, like Frow’s modernization, presumes a post-traditional world not bound by national boundaries or timeless customs but informed by the open-endedness and dynamism of capitalism.²

In Japan, Minami Hiroshi and his associates have been most active in writing the history of what Minami terms *modanizumu*. Although I eschew the term, my focus is roughly equivalent to one aspect of Minami’s

"modernism." This pioneer in modern Japanese cultural history sees different types of Japanese "modernism" and has also broken it into two aspects: its rationalist, technocratic side, and the side characterized by the "liberation by mores" brought in by Western, particularly American, movies. It is the latter definition that I see informing Japanese modern culture. Minami's work is more historicist than the other works on Japanese modernism, such as the lavishly illustrated *Nagoya no Modanizumu* (The modernism of Nagoya). Although this picture book, which features images of art deco furniture and of such household items as "noritake art deco," does capture one aspect of the material culture of the era, what most often characterized the writings on the modern in Japan during the era of erotic grotesque nonsense was the emphasis on the mores shaping material culture—mores that encompassed a culture of play. There was of course some discussion of technology, rationalization and industry, but in no way could it compete with the discussions of food, cafés, parks, and boulevards.³

Although *kindai* was often used interchangeably with *modern* (*modan*) by the 1930s, *modern* was more closely associated with the new, urban practices that are the subject of this book. Moreover, the term *kindai* has its own history. For example, Arahata Kanson and Ōsugi Sakae, the editors of the anarchosocialist journal *Kindai Shisō* (Modern thought), which appeared from 1912 to 1916, were not explicit in defining the implications of this title. Arahata's recollection of their decision to break out of the embattled position of the Japanese left, following the sensationalized trial and execution of the anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui (convicted, along with eleven colleagues, of plotting to kill the emperor), gives a sense of why he and Ōsugi were interested in the here and now. Rather than "waiting for the moment" when they could reactivate the social movement, the two young men had determined that they would "make that moment." Each issue of *Kindai Shisō* would thus have the same woodblock print image of a bare-chested worker, arms stretched wide, breaking loose from his chains, with the words "Modern Thought" printed below it. The image and title always appeared above a brief inspirational piece. For example, the cover for the February 1913 issue, titled "The Creation of Morals," offered an agenda for making the modern present: those who deemed "dangerous" would create new morals and therefore push history forward.⁴

If the *kindai* of *Kindai Shisō* implied morals and liberation of the mind, the "modern" of the magazine *Kindai Seikatsu* (Modern life) connoted modern mores enacted within a material culture. Here the operative term was *seikatsu*, whose materialist connotations were well in place before the 1920s. As early as March 1914, an article in the journal *Seikatsu* had called

for the “renovation” of clothing, food, and living quarters in order to counter the “fossilization of contemporary daily life,” thus associating this trilogy with *seikatsu* in a way that would repeat itself in the 1920s and 1930s. But the everyday could also be linked with play. The association of *seikatsu* both with capitalist production and with leisure-time consumption is evident in the special (Tokyo Taishō) “Exposition Issue” of *Seikatsu* that appeared the following month. The exhibition was mapped out building by building and product by product, the products associated with their sites of origin. Osaka contributed celluloid materials, for example, while Nagoya showcased watches and violins. And it was not merely the production of things but their mass production that was to be celebrated. The appended guide to “New Tokyo” dedicated a great deal of space to Tokyo’s “pleasures,” outlining, for example, the varied forms of theater and gustatory experiences available to the consumer, while warning that the livelier the eatery and the greater the number of clogs lined up in the entranceway, the worse the food. And thus when “modern life” was discussed in the first issue of the magazine *Kindai Seikatsu* in 1929, the phenomenon was associated mostly with urban pleasures, and the sensation of speed was added to the enjoyment of women, movies, and food. All that remained was the displacement of the term *kindai* by the loanword *modan*.⁵

By the late 1920s, innumerable discussions sought to associate the word “*modan*” with material culture. In a 1928 roundtable discussion labeled “A Chat about Modern Life,” a group of women and men gathered to discuss the new mood in daily life (*seikatsu kibun*) after the devastating earthquake of September 1, 1923. These left-wing critics agreed that the source of the *modan* was America, and that Americanization was taking place in both Europe and in Japan. Although they agreed that the absence of a national tradition in the United States had led to the superficial, ephemeral quality of modern life, they could not answer Murayama Tomoyoshi’s query: “If the cause of the *modern* was in America, what was the source of the modern in America?” Ōya Sōichi’s essay indicting Japanese modern life (*modan raifu*) as superficial—lacking content and history, emotion, morals, and ideals, and artificially superimposed on a Japanese “real culture”—still remains largely unquestioned today. This book challenges this premise, as did Murayama Tomoyoshi when he answered his own question: “The source is in America because America is the world’s largest capitalist country.” Murayama also made a historical distinction between capitalist Japan and capitalist America. Japanese society, he said, had until recently been defined by an ephemeral quality, but now there was a sense that things were being constructed. The new, modern material culture did not disappear so quickly.⁶

The two decades of the *modan* years—framed by the devastating Tokyo earthquake of 1923 and the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor—emerged from within a modern project of Japanese state-building that had been buoyed by Enlightenment ideology and European technology since the end of the nineteenth century. But it is important to maintain distinctions specific to Japan. For example, this modernity corresponds only in part to Matei Calinescu's notion of two conflicting modernities. The modernity of the Meiji state was indeed a product of scientific and technological progress, of an industrial revolution, and of "sweeping economic and social changes" brought about by capitalism. In this sense Japanese modernity corresponds to Calinescu's first, "bourgeois" modernity. But because the capitalist order in Japan was imposed largely from above and without, Calinescu's second, "cultural" modernity, a modernity defined by "radical antibourgeois attitudes," is much less relevant in Japan than in Europe. When cultural radicals from within the Japanese Proletarian Arts Movement indicted a Japanese bourgeois order, it was economic oppression based on class differences, rather than a Japanese bourgeois sensibility, that was usually the object of attack. The sensibility of the newly rich Japanese bourgeoisie, open to new modes of living, stands in contrast to that of the European bourgeoisie, whose highly ritualized, privatized domestic sphere was rejected by avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and other rebels.⁷

The discourse on the modern bears resemblance to David Harvey's eloquent synthetic interpretation of modernity and modernism, but again there are differences. His explication of the contrast between modernity in Europe and in America helps in refining my definition of Japanese modern. For example, his recognition of the absence in the United States of "traditionalist (feudal and aristocrat) resistance, and the parallel popular acceptance," resulting in an avant-garde possessing much less political force than its European counterpart, may indeed apply to Japan also. However, it does not explain why the American version of modernity, often termed "Americanism" in the Japanese press, gained currency; after all, the American individualist, liberal ideology that welcomed and incorporated change was very different from the family ideology, buttressed by laws, codes, and, if need be, brute violence, that constituted the cultural politics of the Japanese imperial system.⁸

Most of the "material practices" that Harvey identifies as "catalysts" for modernity—the machines, new transport and communications systems, buildings, and bridges—were evident in Japan by the 1920s. So was the instability that accompanied innovation and social change. Consider, for example, the implications of the demographic shift during the modern years.

Working from census figures, Minami Hiroshi reports how by 1930 one out of every four Japanese subjects was an urban resident and how the population in the major cities of Tokyo had increased by more than one third. Rural areas saw only a 6 percent increase in population within a decade. Minami's conclusion that there was a "preservation of rural practices, everyday lifestyle, and modes of thought" follows from his emphasis on the fact that the overwhelming majority of the populace was employed as either peasant or service worker in small family style industrial and commercial enterprises still in their premodern form. While Minami's historical narrative of "major fluctuation from country to city and from farmer to urban laborer" should not be disputed, I am not ready to conclude that the similarity in scale and kinship (or fictive kinship) practices presumes a continuity in modes of thought and practice. I would like to challenge this supposition for two reasons. First, workers moved constantly from rural to urban cultural spaces and back again during the modern years. Workers who joined the small-scale enterprises mentioned by Minami would return to the countryside to maintain family ties, to choose marriage partners, and, when the urban economy failed them (as it failed so many during the depression), to gain a modicum of financial security. This does not mean that the relationships of the workers within their family units in the country were identical to the family ties within the family-seized urban enterprises. This is not the place to construct a history of shifting consciousness and practices of the peasant turned worker. Moreover, what follows is not a social history which could catalogue the belongings of women and men who traveled from urban areas back to rural communities. I do believe however that the movement of belongings such as magazines and the latest fashions was one way whereby the modern was brought into the countryside. Therefore, I ask the reader to imagine the likelihood that these new urbanites did indeed transport these objects along with the fantasies that were associated with this material culture from city to countryside, thereby transporting modern culture.⁹

My second reason for challenging what I see as the overemphasis of the impact of rural community on urban culture lies in the national aspect of mass culture in Japan during that era, especially the culture celebrated in the mass magazines. While Minami has emphasized the end of the monopoly of Tokyo culture on the nation after the earthquake of 1923, and Jeffrey Hanes has discussed the segmented, class-differentiated market of mass culture in Osaka, my emphasis is on the crossing of class and regional boundaries implied by the marketing and movement of magazines and movies (even if some audiences saw the latter only in the form of movie stills presented in the pages of magazines). The magazine *Ie no Hikari* (Light of the household),

a mouthpiece for the agrarian cooperative movement, was found in rural homes from 1925 onward. But the fact that its publishers issued a separate version for urban audiences indicates that urban culture was more than a transfer of rural practices into the cities. Moreover, the version of the magazine aimed at the countryside contained articles revealing the intense draw of modern culture among rural youth. (Proscriptive literature, after all, can indirectly be descriptive.) And it is too simple to presume that magazines aimed at the new urban middle class were consumed only by the white-collar worker and his family. As Tsurumi Shunsuke, citing Katō Shūichi, informs us, during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, “the president of a company and the janitor would both read the magazine *Kingū* (King), which sold a million copies.” Café waitresses identified with modern culture, including the Hollywood movies featured so prominently in *Shufu no Tomo* (Friend of the housewife). As for the café waitresses, while their customers might be nouveau riche, they were most certainly working-class girls. And these working-class girls bought the same mass magazines from vendors who came into the café. These working-class girls tended to have provincial or rural origins, and we must presume that when they went home to visit or to relocate they took their magazines and their presumptions about Hollywood with them. This is not to say that different classes all read modern culture in the same way; nor can I here compare its reception by workers and by middle-class women and men. To do so would work against my acknowledgment of social instability. I am pointing to the continuity and the ubiquity of the discourse on the modern, both of which destabilized official ideology.¹⁰

In modern Japan there was also the more abstract but widely shared emphasis on “the fleeting” that Harvey borrows from Baudelaire. The earthquake of 1923 signified a break with the past and with traditions, including those created by the modern state. Officially, time might be measured in terms of imperial reigns, but numerous documents attest that people divided their lives into pre- and post-earthquake segments. I do not, however, see in Japanese modern culture the other Baudelairean concept discussed by Harvey: an eternal notion of humankind. Of course, official ideology, encapsulated in the “Imperial Rescript on Education” that yoked the Japanese subject to empire through family and ancestry, was premised on the idea of a timeless, seamless filial piety. The state’s modernization project was modeled in part on the notion of an eternal order expressed in Confucian family relationships. But in the Japanese mass media, the “fascination with speed and motion” was ubiquitous—the word *tempo* beat a constant, contrapuntal rhythm to the cadences of official documents. Like the Euro-American counterparts Harvey discusses, Japanese modern culture was in-

ternational and often propagandist in its socialist allegiance. A Japanese constructivism emerged alongside socialist realism. The image of modernism put forth by Raymond Williams is also apposite: he places it among the “greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production.” The media he lists, “photography, cinema, radio, and television,” also made their mark on Japanese culture in the modern years. In Japan this was most definitely the dawn of the era of mechanical reproduction.¹¹

Despite these comparisons with European culture, when I refer to Japanese modern (which is how I retranslate the word *modan*, to mark it as a distinctly Japanese phenomenon), Western aesthetic (or cultural) modernism falls out of the picture. This is not because the avant-garde movements listed by Williams were not present in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, futurism, surrealism, and dadaism all found expression alongside constructivism in journals produced by Japanese intellectuals who either had personal contact with the “antibourgeois” artists in Europe or were emotional kin to the artists Williams called “émigrés.” Moreover, the popular press adopted the fractured aesthetic of modernism exemplified by the montage. I fully recognize that the modernist poetry of the 1920s and the illustrated articles about modern family life in the Japanese illustrated press emerged from within the same political, cultural, and intellectual moment and can be said to have partaken of the same discourse about new practices and unprecedented social relationships. Here, however, I am curious to know what *modern* meant in the mass culture of the era, a mass culture that concerned itself with material culture. My goal is to gain insight into the politics of a cultural autonomy and of its relationship to political mobilization from the 1920s into the 1940s in Japan.¹²

The avant-garde artist and playwright Murayama Tomoyoshi, who introduced constructivism into Japan, offered a commentary on the modern that illustrates the importance of the domestic everyday realm. His treatise on Constructivism reveals a crucial point of overlap between the modernist avant-garde and the consumer of the modern: a concern for *seikatsu*, a daily life made up of both repeated practice and popular innovations. Murayama contended that *seikatsu* was the primary problem for the present and that the “priests of art” were preventing the creation of a new everyday. This constructivist saw art in the quotidian arrangement of objects in a room: “When you try to put a *typewriter* or a sewing *machine* in a room, the housewife comes over and says, ‘Please do not place such a thing there. That will destroy the harmony of my room.’ She says that postcards, stamps, pipes, tickets, chamber pot, umbrella, *towels*, chairs, bedding, *handkerchiefs*, *neckties*—no matter how trifling the object—are all unartistic.”¹³

Murayama's equation of the housewife—whom I see as an agent of everyday modern culture—with an obstructionist “priest of art” is questionable. But his desire for a newly created daily life was consistent with my view of Japanese modern culture. The point for Murayama and others was that the new mores were post-earthquake and therefore post-traditional. The present and the future were open-ended: they were there for the making.

The most compelling of unprecedented *fūzoku* (the much-used word for mores) were new bodily gestures. The gestures, including new ways of encoding and decoding language, were unquestionably linked to the movies—mostly American movies, as Minami has pointed out. It was not uncommon for the media to note that the Japanese were less animated than their Western contemporaries. What interests me, however, is not a literal reading of that statement but rather the fact that such comparisons were being made. There is evidence that new movements and expressions were coming into use. The gestures articulated in cinema, and the references to the need for gestures, contributed to what I term the “documentary impulse” of the Japanese modern years. As late as 1942, even after the state cooptation of the film industry through such propaganda as the “culture movie,” the power of film gesture was still acknowledged in a work entitled *Eiga Hyōgen Keishiki* (Film, expression, formation). More than anything, film was a human means of expression, as “language, sounds, and molding were a human means of expression.” Murayama had been even more direct. In 1936, he had commented on new gestures made apparent by the technology of film. Using the term *zesuchaa* (gesture), he lauded the speed of speech in the talkie. (“Tempo,” along with newness—being in the “vanguard”—was one of the most lauded traits of the modern years.) Dialogue and gestures could be placed in counterpoint, and an expressiveness in both gesture and language, hitherto lacking in Japanese actors because of the absence of such emotion in everyday life, was to be aspired to. While Murayama did not talk explicitly about the Japanese movie audience, let us turn to these women, men, and children who were living the modern life.¹⁴

PLACING THE CONSUMER-SUBJECT WITHIN MASS CULTURE

The Japanese New Year's game of *sugoroku*, a board game resembling Parcheesi, was an appropriate giveaway in the mass-marketing wars of pre-war Japan, for the boldly colored mazes well expressed the experience of the urban consumer-subject from the eve of World War I into the era of Japan's advance into China two decades later. The fortunes of the players lurched

forward and pulled back as did the Japanese economy after the unprecedented boom during World War I. Commentators called the war a "gift from heaven," and indeed the urbanization and industrialization of the economy, as Japan moved into the armaments markets vacated by the European powers, were so intense that more secular assessments seemed inadequate. Between 1914 and 1919, the number of workers in factories employing five or more workers rose from 948,000 to over 1.7 million, and by 1920, 18.1 percent of the populace was living in urban areas. (This figure was to rise to 24.1 percent by 1930.) As a result of the expansion of heavy industry, especially the shipbuilding and steel industries, the expansion of the textile industry (by the end of the war, Japan was second only to England in the production of cotton), and the new trade relationships with Europe, the United States, and Asian nations, Japan was also transformed from a debtor into a creditor nation. The first downturn ending the postwar boom, which resulted from the extension of credit by banking institutions, came in 1920. The economy recovered by 1922 but was again decimated by the earthquake of 1923. A reconstruction boom that began in 1924 was brought to an end by the financial crisis of 1927, compounded by the worldwide depression two years later. This downturn was attended by the drop in silk and rice prices that devastated the rural sector by 1931, exacerbating a depression that would last until 1934. Between 1934 and 1936, as a result of military spending accompanied by a reflationary policy, there was another upswing, and by 1937 there was virtually full employment.¹⁵

The white-collar, *nouveau riche* class of salaried workers, bureaucrats, and teachers, which first emerged during the Russo-Japanese War and which constituted 7 to 8 percent of the population by 1920, was hard hit by the 1923 earthquake. However, the rise in the cost of living during the early 1920s was offset by the reconstruction boom of 1924, and the white-collar salaryman generally had a good life during the 1920s. A college graduate who received the average salary of eighty yen per month, supplemented by a bonus worth four months of pay, could easily afford new accessible consumer items such as ready-made clothing, radios, phonographs, cameras, and electric irons: a made-to-wear suit jacket cost ten yen, and rent amounted to twenty yen per month. With one yen he could go to the movies and enjoy a dinner of grilled eel along with a bottle of sake before taking the train home to his suburban "culture house." His fortunes were not totally secure, however. Salaries and raises were fixed during the 1920s, and by the end of the decade many of the new urban consumers were casualties of "enterprise rationalization" who faced unemployment. The popularity of the Ozu movie of 1929, *Daigaku wa Deta keredo* (I graduated from

college, but . . .) and the 1928 *Kaishain Seikatsu* (Life of an office worker), featuring a salaryman who is fired on the day he receives his bonus, attest to the precariousness of the new good life.¹⁶

What is important about this history is that this consumer culture was not restricted to the middle class. Small shopkeepers and factory workers were also consumers, as Ishikawa Hiroyoshi has shown. He sets forth three socially distinct geographic spheres: the *shitamachi* (usually translated as “downtown”) region of self-employed craftsmen and tenement slums; the *yamanote*, the upper- and middle-class neighborhood of bureaucrats, military employees, teachers, and office workers; and “the other side of the [Sumida] River,” where workers in small-scale factories joined rickshaw drivers, cart-pullers, rag-pickers, and day laborers in the lower reaches of urban society. There was a leap in the standard of living between 1919 and 1922: real wages rose, and the level of consumption increased 160 percent. (Housing expenditures rose from 10.3 percent to 16.3 percent, and clothing expenditures rose from 9.7 percent to 15.5 percent.) After 1922, desires were refocused from housing and food to what Ishikawa terms “social, cultural desires.” Using surveys from the 1920s and 1930s, Ishikawa documents the new recreations of the skilled laborer, who enjoyed such forms of leisure as sports, travel, and reading from the early 1920s onward.¹⁷

The extensive research by Minami Hiroshi and his associates yields a series of links within mass culture that create a dual meaning for the term *taishū* (mass). In these writings, *mass* refers both to the techniques of mass production, distribution, and consumption and to the producers and consumers thereof. More important, these sources reveal (possibly unintentionally) how the use of the term served to gloss over the relationship of class to mass culture. A close reading of that history also reveals links between the state (embodied in the emperor) and cultural production. It is clear that the mass-produced material culture of housing and clothing, newspapers, books, magazines, movies, records, and spectacles (including nightlife), state ideology, and policy presumed and produced a consumer-subject; all were intricately interconnected.

After World War I, both consumption and production were rationalized, as department stores offered household goods, clothing, and “mass cafeterias” that became sites of new family leisure activity. By 1919, the major emporiums of Shirokiya, Matsuya, Takashimaya, and Sogō were catering to urban customers and provincial gawkers; they were followed by Marubutsu and Daimaru in 1920 and Isetan in 1922. By April 1923, a nationwide consumer organization had been started, and the following year Mitsukoshi customers were asked to vote on whether the pre-earthquake practice of re-

moving shoes at the entrance should be abandoned. Shopping by monthly installments, most mass-produced clothing and the new forms of housing were undoubtedly accessible only to white-collar consumers, who constituted less than 10 percent of the populace. Moreover, hotel toll roads encouraging tourism, the private railway lines linking passengers to amusement parks, the all-girl Takarazuka theater and music review, and the department stores placed conveniently at railway terminal points provided a nationwide network of consumer activities for the more prosperous on set incomes. There was also the no less obvious network of highly commodified print and broadcasting media, including the movies, that reached beyond the new nuclear family of the new white collar-worker, the "salary-man." Even if consumer objects were not attainable, all consumer-subjects had access to department stores and cinema spectacles. Even more significant must have been the immediate accessibility of the pictures of commodities in the ubiquitous print media. In other words, the consumption of images of objects rather than the objects themselves was central to Japanese modern culture.¹⁸

By the 1920s, print culture was almost universally available: readers were notified of new publications by advertisements in newspapers, magazines, and one-yen books. The school system had provided a broad literate readership by the end of the nineteenth century, and the fanfare surrounding both the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars had primed the population's desire for news. Yet there was a double edge to the power of the press, for, just as it advertised for the state, it could also spread news of unrest, as during the rice riots of 1918, when news of the "North Coast Women's Uprising" pushed many into the streets. Newspaper circulation, which had been 1,630,000 in 1905, soared to 6,250,000 by 1924 (reaching one household out of six), and by 1931 the population of 65 million purchased 10 million copies because of the marketing ploys offering new forms of entertainment. Advice columns written by noted women authors, along with religion and agriculture columns, sold newspapers. Comic-strip heroes such as Maggie and Jiggs (in Japanese) sold news magazines. The adventures of Lazy Daddy, a character who first entertained working-class readers of the *Hōchi Shimbun* in November 1923, testify to the links among media. For years, this well-meaning, bespectacled, rotund figure, respectably clad in kimono and kimono jacket, would confront such modern innovations as radio broadcasting and the unemployment line. Lazy Daddy's popularity ran to thirty-three volumes of cartoons and a theatrical production.¹⁹

By the early 1900s magazines had become part of the mass media, and over 180 magazines were produced for such carefully segmented audiences

as elementary-school boys and bourgeois housewives. By the late 1920s, these specialized publications vied for market space with the “all-round” magazines (*sōgō zasshi*), featuring fiction and roundtable discussions by professional journalists and critics. *Kingu*, modeled after the *Saturday Evening Post*, sold 740,000 copies on its first printing in 1925, after an unprecedented ad campaign. The premier issue included a free *sugoroku* game. Within a year, sales reached one million copies. Between 1918 and 1932, the number of periodicals registered with the state more than tripled, from 3,123 to 11,118. And during the *enpon* (one-yen book) wars, publishers, taking their cue from the Harvard Classics, packaged multivolume editions of literature and other types of books. This system obligated the consumer to buy the entire set, and the authors amassed overnight fortunes that were immediately spent on fancy villas or trips abroad.

Advertising for material culture had begun as early as 1907, when the Mitsukoshi department store invited leading artists and writers to form a “Group on Trends” to advertise variations on clothing fads. By World War I, the advertising industry had become institutionalized by such groups as the Advertising Study Group at Waseda University (organized in 1916), and by trade publications such as *Jitsugyō Sekai* (Business world), which introduced Scott’s *Psychology of Advertising*, *Kōkoku Zasshi* (Advertising magazine), and *Kōkoku Kenkyū Zasshi* (Advertising studies magazine) in 1916 and 1917.²⁰

Movies were a potent medium for marketing. Encouraged by the popularity of documentary films of Russo-Japanese War heroism, an indigenous film industry had been established around 1907. By 1926, there were 1,056 movie theaters showing Japanese and Western films—one theater for every sixty thousand viewers, including militant factory workers who on more than one occasion experienced employer lockouts on returning from group outings to the movies. Kikuchi Kan’s novel *Tōkyō Kōshinkyoku* (Tokyo march), originally serialized in *Kingu* from June 1928 through October 1929, was made into a film by the Nikkatsu film studio. The film was then advertised with photographic ads in major magazines and with the hit song “Tokyo March.” Another crossover was the popularization, through both plays and movies, of the new genre of popular songs (*ryūkōka*), beginning with “The Song of Kachūsha,” the theme song sung by Matsui Sumako for the 1914 Imperial Theater production of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*. These songs challenged the ideology of Confucian family cohesion and Japanese behavior celebrated in official texts, with such lyrics as “My wife has a moustache” and a tirade against “my old lady” who cooks only *korokke* (a new Japanese variation on the Western croquette).²¹

These popular songs also advertised the urban cafés where the new music could be heard. Cafés are mentioned in virtually all accounts of the mass culture of this period. By 1933, when forty thousand cafés were operating nationwide, state regulations were instituted to control these drinking places. This did not curb their popularity.

Another link in the media network was provided by radio broadcasting. From the outset, in March 1925, it was controlled through NHK, a state monopoly, but it was nevertheless connected to mass culture, for newspapers spread the new notion of *rajio kibun* (radio frame of mind). The radio broadcast of folk ballads was a version of the reworked folk traditions found in mass magazines, samurai epics, and the movies of the cult idol Matsunosuke, whose swashbuckling antics glamorized the premodern era. The radio audience, which numbered 3,500 homes in 1922 and 24,500 the following year, also listened to Western music and to such programs as *Oto de Kaita Manga* (Cartoons drawn with sounds). The “cartoons” went by such titles as “Spring at the Department Store” and featured representations of cultural shift, as in the account of the Japanese couple visiting Hollywood who meet Charlie Chaplin, suffer at the hands of a pickpocket, and are kept awake by a dance troupe rehearsing in the adjacent hotel room.

One mass medium would often promote another. For example, department stores featured art and photography exhibits; magazines like *Fujin no Tomo* (Woman’s friend) sponsored concerts and exhibits. By the early 1930s, photographers had organized into working groups to produce such magazines as *Fuoto Taimusu* (Photo times) and *Kōga* (an avant-garde journal featuring montage). Photographers were also responsible for organizing such events as a traveling photo exhibition from Germany in 1931, which featured 870 prints, including works by László Moholy-Nagy. The separation between state and consumer culture was not always delineated in these spectacles. For example, as early as 1907, items in an art exhibit sponsored by the Ministry of Education provided the motifs for Mitsukoshi’s annual ad campaign.²²

A peculiarity of the culture presented to the consumer-subject, and one of the reasons I have determined that these consumers may not merely be called *consumers*, but must be identified as imperial subjects at the same time, is that all these forms of mass culture, at the same time as they were vying for profit in the marketplace, were censored. Japanese consumers were always simultaneously imperial subjects (needless to say, consumers are never only consumers—the term always masks differences).

The press was the most autonomous of the mass media, as revealed both by the ambiguities in the control system and by successful attempts to re-

sist censorship. Home Ministry bureaucrats could suspend the publication of journals, ban the circulation of specific editions, and mandate the deletion of passages from books and magazines prior to publication. Journal editors circumvented these controls through such ploys as distributing a journal before submitting it for censorship, submitting self-censored copies to state officials and then rewriting the contents before printing, using pseudonyms, and using Xs and Os or blank type in place of words or passages that would undoubtedly be flagged by the censors. Newspapers were also subject to an unpredictable system of prepublication warnings that was ignored by the leading publishers, who either circulated banned editions before receiving official warning or ignored the warnings altogether. Most spectacular of spectacles, and those that best illustrated the ambiguity of the relationship of the subject to consumption and the tension between state and mass-produced consumer culture, were the expositions that were organized in the name of industry and nationhood. The well-advertised and highly organized Tokyo Taishō Exposition of 1914 featured booths staffed by geisha (solicited from throughout the city), the nation's first escalator, such new commodities as the gas-heated bathtub, heater, and range (presented by the Tokyo gas company), and exhibits of the colonized territories of Taiwan and Korea. Eight years later, the Tokyo Peace Exposition introduced an airplane on pontoons and celebrated the empire by adding a "Hall of the South Pacific" to the tableaux of the other colonial holdings in the Taiwan and Korea halls. A third exposition was Tokyo's municipal celebration to commemorate the end of post-earthquake reconstruction in 1930.²³

Radio censorship was imposed through station officials who telephoned summaries of programs to state officials prior to broadcast, by written instructions sent to the radio stations regarding permissible content, and by NHK inspectors, who activated circuit breakers to cut off broadcasts when commercial advertising was illegally inserted or, less often, when political misstatements were made. There were relatively few muzzlings for overtly political reasons, undoubtedly because political discussion was banned from the airwaves. State sensitivity to form as well as content is reflected in regulations stipulating the broadcaster's tone of voice ("coldly neutral") and the supposed prohibition of the terms "extremely" and "absolutely" with regard to any topic whatsoever. Such songs as the notorious "Wasurecha Iyayo" (I don't want you to forget me now), from 1936, were banned because of the erotic style of singing. However, as a genre of songs with similar plaintive refrains caused the period to be dubbed the "era of 'please, please' [*ne ne*] songs," such controls apparently had only limited effect.²⁴

Movies were censored earlier and more thoroughly than songs through

the Home Ministry's regulations, which mandated state inspection of all movies before screening. Films undermining public peace, manners and morals, or health could be banned, cut, returned for revision, recommended for withdrawal, or restricted to limited viewing. Films were not allowed to express any criticism of the political system, including any form of anti-militarist sentiment, or any reference to class or other group conflict (including gang warfare). They were also forbidden to threaten the belief in the Japanese people as a nation, "damage goodwill in foreign affairs," or show how to commit or conceal a crime. Movies such as the Keystone Kops films were banned because they undermined respect for the police. Under the morals category, cruelty and ugliness (including the depiction of bloody battle scenes and physical deformity) were banned, as were scenes depicting extramarital sex, "kissing, dancing, embracing, nudity, flirting, sexual innuendo, pleasure-seeking," and "other." Also to be cut were "items related to the ruin of work," scenes hindering education (for example, by challenging the authority of teachers), and those directly challenging the family-state ideology. Anything that ran "counter to the customs of a virtuous home" was forbidden, as were allusions or references to the imperial family. Makers of feature films could not show the imperial regalia or any member of the imperial household, including past emperors; nor could they film any images suggesting the imperial chrysanthemum, including samurai crests: thus flower crests of twelve to twenty-five petals could be filmed only if they were clearly distinct from the imperial emblem. Documentary footage of the emperor was also subject to close scrutiny. The imperial household was to be presented accurately, with the stylized manner of speech of its members intact, but no shots of the exhaust from the cars of imperial bodyguards could be shown.²⁵

By the 1910s, nonetheless, the imperial institution was inserted into the marketplace of mass culture. This development was in sharp contrast to the cultural terms of the preceding Meiji era, when, as Carol Gluck has so fully documented, popular culture was mobilized in order to familiarize newly naturalized subjects with the emperor, and, as Takashi Fujitani has illustrated, new cultural traditions inserted the emperor and the nation into popular memory. One example of how commodity culture appeared to take charge came with the enthronement of the second modern emperor in November 1915. This event was commemorated by the highly advertised marketing of items imprinted with chrysanthemum and paulownia patterns by the Mitsukoshi department store and numerous ads for other commodities "to commemorate the enthronement." The ceremonies surrounding this ritual were used both to familiarize the male populace with Western cloth-

ing and to sell domestic silk products in the latest colors, which represented the vivid shades of imperial pageantry. (The following year, the discerning consumer was urged to buy earth tones. The rhetoric of fashion, encouraging the ever-shifting desires of consumers, had been established.) The media campaign to promote the future Shōwa emperor as “the young prince” was instituted in March 1921, when he was sent on an extensively photographed six-month world tour in preparation for his regency, which was to commence in November of that year. The photos in newspapers and magazines inserted the new emperor into mass culture as a glamorous male to appeal to female readers.²⁶

To what extent was the dashing crown prince being commodified to peddle commodities? Or alternatively, to what extent was the media a medium for the state? Did it serve to illustrate the ideologically freighted “Imperial Rescript on Education,” which was recited by every schoolchild? This text opened with the injunction, “Know ye, our subjects,” and celebrated the ancestry of the imperial throne as the basis for filial behavior, respect for the constitution, observance of the law, and “courageous” service to the state in order to “guard and maintain the prosperity of our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.” Close reading of texts from the era can begin to offer answers. For example, mass magazines from the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Shufu no Tomo* (Friend of the housewife), beloved by both working- and middle-class women, and the more bourgeois *Shūkan Asahi* (Weekly Asahi), reveal a shift toward the consumer side of the consumer-subject formulation, emphasizing a modern subject’s agency by offering articles on new mores and items to be consumed. Here, then, is an example of Carol Gluck’s discussion of the disjunction between *ideology* and *experience*, although, for the modern years, I would rephrase this cultural and historical phenomenon as the disjunction between ideology and practice.²⁷

The montage form is also central to my approach, just as I think the montage was central to the mass media and to the consumer-subject consciousness of the modern years.

EROTIC GROTESQUE NONSENSE AS MONTAGE

The words *ero guro nansensu* were and are still used to characterize the first few years of the 1930s in Japan, especially the year 1930. The term has been associated with a kaleidoscope of sites and motions, as encapsulated by Kawabata Yasunari in 1930: “*Eroticism*, and *Nonsense*, and *Speed*, and *Humor* like social commentary cartoons, and *Jazz Songs* and *Women’s*

legs."²⁸ I have taken the liberty of extending the term to cover the mid 1920s into the early 1940s.

The political theorist of Japanese modernity Maruyama Masao recognized the significance of related transformations in Tokyo following the 1923 earthquake. These were "the beginning of radio-broadcasting (1925); the proliferation of *baa* (bars), *kafuee* (cafés), *kissaten* (tearooms); the rapid growth of street buses and suburban railways; the beginning of the subway system (1927); the growth of department stores and modern business offices" that emerged to take hold of, to recreate, and to create anew cultural practices of the everyday order. To this list of elements of the growth of what he termed "mass society" Maruyama added mass literature, mass-produced journalism (including advertising), the culture houses "with red roofs and small gardens in which white-collar workers dreamed of enjoying 'my happy, though cramped, home,'" and Modern Girls (*moga*), along with Modern Boys (*mobo*). According to Maruyama, within this setting, well-to-do parents of college students feared two temptations for youth of the era. They could either indulge in "eroticism, grotesqueness, and absurdities" as *moga* and *mobo* aimlessly strolling down Ginza, or they could become serious versions of "Marx Boys" and "Engels Girls" making leftist revolution. For Maruyama the two options were diametrically opposed. Youth, especially bourgeois youth, could become "pink"—indulgent in sexual pleasures (the preferred choice of their parents)—or they could be "red"—adherents of "dangerous thought."²⁹

I agree with Maruyama that this was the moment of the emergence of modern Japanese mass society. In fact, "mass" (*taishō*) was a key word of the era, used both by those who deemed to attach to it a Marxist connotation celebrating proletarian praxis and by those who profited from a consumer culture that could offer images, if not objects, to the masses. However, my treatment of the media catchphrase *ero guro nansensu* differs from that of Maruyama, because it is my conclusion that the connotation of lasciviousness does not suffice. Granted, the term *ero* was ubiquitous in the popular media of the era, and was often attached to discussions of sexual promiscuity and to the configuration of the female (and sometimes the male) body. This does at one level appear to be an instance of an injunction to speak incessantly about difference and desire.³⁰ However, *ero* could and can be used in a much broader sense, alluding to a variety of sensual gratifications, physical expressiveness, and the affirmation of social intimacy. I examine *ero* in both these meanings. The other two constitutive terms must be treated with equal respect, although the meanings and significance of the terms *guro* and *nansensu* were rarely given in the mass media. While *guro*, short for

grotesque, was associated with the malformed or obscenely criminal, my interpretation of Japanese modern culture treats the grotesque in a different light, associating it with the social inequities and ensuing social practices of those living within a consumer culture defined by the economic hardships of the depression.

My treatment of *nansensu* is even more revisionist, for rather than simply treating it as a reflection of the appeal of slapstick comedy, as did the few sources that bothered to define the term at the time, I associate it with a political, ironic humor that took on such themes as the transformations wrought by a modernity dominated by Euro-American mores. In sum, the erotic, the grotesque, and the nonsensical must be treated separately and in conjunction, especially for any interpretation of the “high modern” moment of the late 1920s and early 1930s. To aid in this interpretation I turn to the form that was used to document culture in motion in modern Japan: the montage. My appropriation of the term code-switching, in conjunction with the aid of the montage, connotes agency and movement.³¹

Both intellectuals and consumer-subjects in the different social strata saw a society being made from below, from within, and from without. In the archives from the modern years, the metaphor of construction emerges not only in the visual arts, but also in such terms as *fabrication* and *building*. (The related term *seikatsu* connoted the fabricated nature of everyday life, but the montage best expressed the concept of constructing new times.)

Sergei Eisenstein, the Soviet filmmaker whose work is most closely associated with montage, once termed montage “the operation of juxtaposing two signifying elements.” He juxtaposed the “archaism” of kabuki, which he termed the product of “feudal thinking” that had survived political change, with the “montage thinking” of the late 1920s, which reflected the differentiations in political economy and consciousness wrought by capitalism. In his essay “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram,” he argued that “the principle of montage can be identified as the basic element of Japanese representational culture,” by separating out the identifiable units of a series of Chinese characters and by viewing the process of their combination as “cinematographic exposition.” He went on to describe poetry as “hieroglyphics transposed into phrases.” I do not adhere to his outdated notion that Japanese behavior by the late 1920s had its basis in “feudal remnants.” Nor does Eisenstein’s romanticization of written culture interest me. Rather, it is the new print culture that I see as the main site of montage, although similar juxtapositions are also evident in other media, including film and popular theater. Thus, like Eisenstein, although for different reasons, I have adopted montage as a heuristic means of under-

standing the Japanese culture of that era. Moreover, like Eisenstein, I view the spectator—or consumer-subject—as the producer of meaning. (The montage, in other words, was also a heuristic device for the Japanese consumer of culture.) To quote Eisenstein: “It is precisely the *montage* principle, as distinguished from that of *representation*, which obliges spectators themselves to *create*, and the montage principle, by this means, achieves that great power of inner creative excitement in the *spectator* which distinguishes an emotionally exciting work from one that stops without going further than giving information or recording events.”³²

I presuppose that montage in print culture and on the street generated an energy among the Japanese consumer-subjects of the modern years. My use of the term, which was listed in a leading Japanese dictionary in 1934 as *montaaju*—where it was associated with the terms *assemble* and *combine*—is formal, theoretical, and political. I am consciously using *montage* in the following sense, as defined in *Webster's New World Dictionary*: “The art or process of making a composite picture by bringing together into a single composition a number of different pictures or parts of pictures and arranging these, as by superimposing one on another, so that they form a blended whole while remaining distinct.” I am, in other words, concerned with the tension between the “blended whole” and the superimposed images which remain “distinct,” rather than with blatant incongruity.³³

The photomontage was a self-consciously modern aesthetic form employed by avant-garde artists, documentary photographers, and the producers of advertisements in Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and Japan from the 1920s into the 1940s, and montage reception theories since the 1930s have emphasized the principle of rupture implied by the form. According to Harvey, the montage was about simultaneity and the tension between the ephemeral and the acknowledged “potency” of current conditions. Walter Benjamin had made the same point about the dialectics of montage: because “the image’s ideational elements remain[ed] unreconciled,” they interrupted “the context” into which they were inserted. Ernst Bloch, the theorist of the nonsynchronous, valorized disjuncture and fragmentation in montage, relating montage to “anticipatory consciousness.”³⁴

The Japanese photography critics featured in the avant-garde journal *Kōga* in 1932 and 1933 were historians and critics in their own right, not mimics of the works of Hannah Hoch, John Heartfield, and other European artists. But their agenda was to discuss what Horino Masao, writing in *Kōga*, called the “social nature of photomontage” and of photography as a documentary medium that could be a “record of the era and a report of daily life.” Horino noted that the sensibility of photomontage was marked by a mod-

ern “tempo” and termed it the most progressive work open to photographers because it could give active results to individual photographs. Another critic, Hara Hiroma, attributed the popularity of newspaper photographs and news magazines to modern limitations on daily life: readers had neither the time nor the physical wherewithal to read at a more leisurely pace.³⁵

More recently, historians of the montage have referred to a practice of “combination, repetition, and overlap” evoking a sense of “narrative breakdown” and the acceleration of the “unfolding of time” experienced by modern citizens well aware of historic rupture, radical realignments of power, and the way in which the viewer of the montage is compelled to rethink the relations between objects in order to reestablish a hierarchy of meaning. According to Maud Lavin, who offers a two-part typology, montage should be, first, an individual work composed of the juxtaposition of fragments; and second, an organized system dependent on the juxtaposition of parts. This definition allows us to see the magazine or the newspaper as montage. Two illustrated magazines of the Japanese modern years, *Shūkan Asahi*, a middlebrow source of entertainment, and *Asahi Gurafu* (Asahi graph) both illustrated three forms of montage: actual photomontages on a page, made up of juxtaposed fragments, organized around a theme; the juxtaposition of multiple photomontages within an issue; and the juxtaposition of one issue with other issues of the magazine and with the leading newspaper produced by the same company. For an illustration of the first two forms, see the pair of photomontages picturing the intensity of modern desire in *Asahi Gurafu* in June 1928: “Daydream of a Modern Girl” and “Daydream of a Salaryman” (figures 2 and 3).³⁶

The idea of “montage in motion” expresses the choices and interpretations made by Japanese consumers of film, fashion, food, and other consumer items that could be coded as Western but were decoded and re-encoded as *modern*. In other words, this culture of montage in motion entailed a transcoding process that enabled the consumer to maintain a sense of indigenous identity while both moving within and creating a montage of foreign gestures, objects, and words. I use the word *transcoding* in the sense provided by Tzvetan Todorov, who has concluded that “the intercultural is constitutive of the cultural” and that a “culture is constituted by a constant effort of translation” or “transcoding” by social subgroups within a society, defined by criteria such as age, sex, and place of origin. Although I agree with Todorov that cultures are not organic unities but assemblages or “composites of fragments of diverse origins,” I have also adopted the linguistic concept of “code-switching,” which refers to such transcoding as

shifting between languages and inserting words from one language into a discourse in another.³⁷

Although my primary interests here are not specifically linguistic, the metaphor of code-switching is helpful because it emphasizes agency and flexibility while challenging the idea of cultural “borrowing” and replacing it with the idea of cultural strategizing. In other words, like Eisenstein’s spectators, who make meaning, the individuals discussed by contemporary linguists “create their own language from the options around them.” As they switch between languages, inserted words from one language become embedded in another. In the words of one linguist, “Every loan starts off life as a code-switch.” The speaker creates context using code-switching along with intonation, rhythm, gesture, and posture. As with the montage, which is always multivalent, code-switching involves ambiguity, an ambiguity that can be used strategically by a speaker who wants to maintain more than one social identity.³⁸

In “Code-Switching and the Politics of Language,” Monica Heller talks about agency in terms of the way “language practices are bound up in the creation, exercise, maintenance or change of relations of power.” Citing Pierre Bourdieu, she says that code-switching is political because it is a form of “symbolic capital” that gives individuals access to additional symbolic and material resources. By borrowing Heller’s argument, I conclude that the Japanese speaker, writer, artist, and consumer-subject made use of a “socially agreed upon matrix of contextualization cues and conventions used by speakers to alert addressees, in the course of ongoing interaction, to the social and situational context of the conversation.” And, just as important, the audience or recipient of the shifting cues was capable of interpreting them. I am not considering here the relationship of two discrete semiotic systems; it is not a matter, for example, of an American culture being inserted into a Japanese culture. Rather, I focus on the complex, constant movement of words, items, and narratives appropriated by different groups in Japan. There was not one system constituting Japanese modern language or culture; there were many, including the rules of the ever-changing grammar of fashion, cooking, and other aspects of everyday life to which commentators on the moment were acutely attuned. Thus, according to my use of *code-switching*, the insertion of an English-language word into a sentence of Japanese words was a strategy as relevant as the juxtaposition of contemporary costume with clothing marked as premodern, or the placement in a woman’s magazine of a recipe of European origin next to a New Year’s ritual unquestionably identified as Japanese. In fact, this strategy was

so prevalent that I have chosen to italicize all uses of English language words, as is explained in my introduction above.³⁹

Discussion of transcoding and code-switching gives me a way to talk about the movement of culture, but it does not allow me to fully characterize the culture itself. And this task is of immediate concern, for the notion of a culture organized around borrowing from the West, the view prevalent in the cultural histories of the era, does not allow for the significance of agency informed by indigenous history. I leave the reader with one caveat to Todorov's notion of a "complex" culture premised on the process of integration by a dominant culture and resulting in the discovery of multiplicity: a capitalist mass culture both propagated and challenged by the dominant ideology of the state. There was multiplicity within the culture in addition to that brought in from outside. I am most concerned with movement within and between those cultural formations.

Because I believe the political to be inseparable from the cultural, I attempt to foreground relationships of power and to keep in mind direct and indirect challenges to structures of domination, including ideological structures. All too often the study of mass culture is seen as frivolous. However, culture, especially under censorship, is not to be taken lightly, as the Marxist philosopher Tosaka Jun explained to his Japanese readership in 1936. In an article explaining why the policing of mores was equivalent to the policing of thought, Tosaka argued that the tightening control over films, cafés, dance halls, and musical revues passed as paternalistic protection of public morals but was in fact a cover for the suppression of freedom of thought. If the commingling of men with women were really threatening, for example, pleasure quarters would not be protected by the state. The discourse over improving public morals was tantamount to a mother-in-law's pretense of goodwill toward a bride she wished to control. Nor should concern over a *gesture* or clothing be taken simply as concern for public morals. Tosaka illustrated the politics of everyday mores by noting how the obligatory short haircut for middle-school students might have been intended to monitor their everyday life, but when the same regulation was applied to students at vocational schools and universities, it served a different purpose. Rather than preventing juvenile delinquency, it now constituted control over students' thought. In closing, Tosaka was scathing in his indictment of the fascist attention to the everyday. The "*fascists* of the world," he said (making no distinction between Japan and the outside world), were "dealers in manners." These "dealers in public morals" even wanted to "make clothing into strange uniforms." By the same token, it was simple for them to "put thought in strange uniforms." Tosaka summed up his position as follows:

"Thought appears as mores and mores symbolize thought." Tosaka also explained why mores were the target of state control. His reasoning was but one illustration of my finding that a sense of discontinuity was important to Japanese *modern* culture. It was the very newness of such mores as going to *dance halls*, he explained, and not the dancing or any ensuing interactions, that was so threatening.⁴⁰

JAPANESE MODERN CULTURE AS POLITICS

My focus on the cultural as political in some ways complements Andrew Gordon's discussion of the Japanese "dispute culture" of the 1920s, although Gordon makes clear that he has focused on the overtly political aspect of this culture. By cultural, I mean that this book, in contrast, focuses on the political meanings of language, symbols, images, and gestures as historical practices generally not seen as political. In this sense, there is also some overlap with Sheldon Garon's concern for the "daily life improvement campaigns" and other official Japanese attempts at rationalizing everyday life. However, unlike Garon, I am not concerned with the repressive nature of what he terms the state's "moral suasion." While I recognize the escalating presence of such state programs from the 1920s into the 1940s, my position is that reference to new forms of everyday practice could be liberatory as well as controlling: that the media and other modern play spaces introduced options to consumer-subjects, and they give us a record of those options. For example, although Garon rightfully points to the influence of *Ie no Hikari*, as a source circulating tips on household management sanctioned by the state to one million households, a close reading of the magazine of the rural cooperative movement reveals another side to its treatment of modernity. The 1934 montage from *Ie no Hikari* that Garon uses to illustrate the rationalization policies of the state, featuring a communal clock, communal cooking, and a kitchen designed to be highly functional, along with the new, efficient clothing for farm women in the name of the "renovation of everyday life," does bespeak a controlling organization. But articles in *Ie no Hikari* also directly and indirectly point to the draw of modern culture in the countryside. As late as 1939, an article advocating spiritual mobilization in the countryside revealed the continued attraction of neon signs and cafés by expressing an editorial antipathy to these modern institutions. By the same token, the references to the tragic fate of young women who went to the big cities to work as café waitresses tell us that not all rural women were accepting the state-sanctioned version of modern life as the ideal existence.⁴¹

As I have indicated above, I place the politics of the modern years within the confines of an “emperor system.” I thereby part ways with some American historians who have criticized this term (coined by Japanese historians) as outmoded, while agreeing with them on other aspects of their political analysis. Like Gordon, I acknowledge the significance of an emperor-centered constitution and I see continuity in adherence to emperor and empire from the early twentieth century into the 1940s. And I am also interested in the politics of protest, but protest most clearly expressed in irony, parody, and the documentation of new everyday practices within mass culture. My study therefore encompasses the middle and working classes, whose members were the consumer-subjects of this culture. Garon, more than Gordon, has been critical of the emperor system as an analytical rubric. I agree that a study of allegiance to the emperor, or of attempts to inculcate such a connection, does not suffice in illuminating the politics of the era—indeed, this book is an attempt to show a very alternative view. But if Garon is against a systemic view of the emperor’s place, he has also provided a succinct summary of the institutions mediating that power: “The national school system, the military, a network of State Shinto shrines, and numerous hierarchically organized associations.”⁴²

Kamishima Jirō’s definition is to the point: “The Emperor system (*tennōsei*) refers to a political system centered on the Emperor as *symbol*.” In other words, I agree that ultimately almost all activity was constrained by the power of the emperor, although modern culture was never totally suppressed. As documented in these pages, and by Carol Gluck in her study of Meiji ideology, there was a range of ideological positions in Japan. However, the power of the family-state ideology established during the Meiji era persisted through the Pacific War (and in modified form afterward), and it must be taken into account to understand the modern years and their end. By the 1920s, the imperial national monuments had been put in place and the ceremonial style made familiar. As Takashi Fujitani eloquently argues, the Meiji project of disciplining was complete, and by the modern years there was a new “viewers’ code of behavior” dictated by the mass media. Fujitani and others make clear that the emperor system was consistently about gender and about family, and, because this gender ideology coincided with the modern years, we must relate the official ideology to the mass-based ideas about masculinity, femininity, and family without imposing a simplistic binary opposition between state and an opposing mass society. Other examinations of the layering of gender ideology are provided by Japanese women in the anthology of autobiographical essays edited by Kano Mikiyo, *Josei to Tennōsei* (Women and the emperor system). The book contains such quo-

tidian detail as one woman's reminiscence that for her the entire emperor system was embodied in the power held by her father.⁴³

Of course there are other primary sources for investigating the ideology of the emperor system during the modern years. One morals textbook from 1928, aimed at higher school boys in 1928, taught that all were born unequal, yet that humankind was related not only materially but also spiritually. A similar textbook for girls, on which I draw in the pages to follow, set forth categories and precepts absent from the book for boys and equally absent from the discourse on the modern. The girls were taught not only their wifely place but also the importance of a *minzokuteki bunka* (culture of the people), the unity of the emperor and his subjects, and the existence of the imperial household and the state as one big family. Here is a popularized version of the ambiguous term *minzoku*, which, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki has pointed out, was premised on the identity of nation-state and ethnos but interpreted in various ways. Although she is referring to more recent times, her words hold true for the Japanese *modern* culture of the 1920s and 1930s: "Dimensions of identity, besides, do not stack neatly inside one another like Russian matrioshka dolls, but (even in the most integrated societies) overlap and jostle against one another, so that the sense of self is created and recreated out of a constant struggle to draw the many dimensions of identity together in actions of everyday life." She concludes that, as a result, culture "is an always incomplete effort to pull together the edges of conflicting definitions of identity." In an era when the montage was a dominant way of looking at the world, there may have been less of an effort "to pull the edges together." Thus what concerns me is the disjuncture between the state ideology on ethnic, gender, and family identity and the messages disseminated by the mass media during the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁴

Late in the 1930s, even as celebrations of indigenous, expansionist culture increased in the illustrated press, the same press was sending forth ideological messages that could not be reconciled with Fujita Shōzō's eloquent analysis of society under the emperor system. According to Fujita, there were no boundaries, or *kejime*: "The principle of the Japanese Emperor system is that in human society the natural world and the public world are not in opposition, the state is not in public opposition to the family, the village, or the provincial organization, public allegiance is not in opposition to private sentiment, and the total and the singular are not placed in public opposition. Without such boundaries, the distinction between origins and results is not clarified, and somehow the whole is stuck together."⁴⁵ That such organicism was the ideal but not always the reality is expressed graphically by the following graffiti found by authorities in 1940: "The Japanese revere

this guy called the Emperor, but why do they? Such an Emperor should be beaten to death, roasted, and eaten dipped in soy sauce." Even if we accept the carnivorous sentiment as a mere expression of strong feelings, the sanity of the author is called into question by his pledge to put such a plan into action with the aid of one thousand followers. Nonetheless, the documentation of this and similar diatribes illustrates how the ideology of the emperor system was not fully hegemonic. It is difficult to imagine the Japanese consumer-subject imagining the emperor as god when we read the words from graffiti found in 1939 which stated that there was no difference between a vagrant and the emperor or the declaration of the 45-year-old man arrested the following year: the culprit had declared that the emperor was only doing what he did because of his annual income of three million yen. These words are consistent with "Kill the dumb Emperor," and "Her Majesty the Empress is a lecher." (Statements of *lèse-majesté* culled from Thought Police documentation by John Dower.)⁴⁶

By the same token, at the very moment when the image of the imperial family was being invoked in the mass media, discourse within the media was articulating protest against the system if not active resistance. Invocations of imperial grandeur and challenges to imperial authority often appeared in the same media. By the early 1940s the emperor system, although not necessarily its ideological component, won out with readers and with film, cabaret, and theater spectators and audiences mentioned and implied herein. My conclusions come from the voluminous documentation provided within the mass culture of the Japanese modern years.

THE DOCUMENTARY IMPULSE

During the Japanese modern years, the media made use of essays, cartoons, surveys, and fiction. Moreover, photojournalism opened up a new vision of how Japanese women and men—from the slums and working class and up through the extended imperial family—synthesized the relationship between a Japan differentiated via history, region, gender, and culture and a West "out there." Through the media, we are enabled to move outside of the common approach which examines borrowing from the West or speaks of a double life allowing Japanese consumer-subjects to switch back and forth between white collar and kimono. The Japanese intellectuals of the time, whose work is herein studied in the context of five modern sites, were sensitive to the processes of the adaptation and creation of shared symbols, affects, attitudes, and gestures. Their acute awareness of code-switching liberates the reader from easy binary suppositions (and oppositions) related to

a dynamic West meeting a passively active East. These social and cultural critics working in journalism participated in and encouraged the documentary impulse of the Japanese modern years: they made the new familiar.

The documents I refer to as the product of “the documentary impulse” include both official documentation of so-called facts and the “human” dimension of documentation discussed by William Stott. Stott saw a human document as “thoroughly personal,” aiming to move its audience but at the same time providing information regarding “public events and social customs.” Stott considered what he called the “documentary movement” of the United States a product of the Great Depression. The Japanese documents constituting modern culture were in part a product of similar economic hard times, but they also spoke of a new luxury in everyday life, as documented in such illustrated media as the weekly *Shūkan Asahi* and in much of *Shufu no Tomo*. Therein, photographs documented the “facts” of new customs but also blurred fictional and factual representation in stories and advertisements. Popular reportage resulting from the documentary impulse code-switched among bounded images and between the contrasting fonts of primary sources such as flyers and letters; it encompassed such proletarian literature as Tokunaga Sunao’s novel *City without Sun*, documenting the Kyōdō printers’ strike of 1926. Film critics told stories about Hollywood, blending documentary and fantasy. Even reports by the bureaucrat Kusama Yasoo, who reported on the down-and-out homeless during the depression years in Japan, used vernacular. Such are the documents I make most use of in my interpretation of reportage after the fact.⁴⁷

When Murayama Tomoyoshi talked about construction, he was articulating the consciousness of many who documented the era: they worked from the idea not of rebuilding but of building anew. This was the approach that also informed the ideology of the Soviet artists of the 1920s with whom Murayama identified. In his argument that mass culture was the suppressed otherness of modernism and that there was a dialectical relationship between the European avant-garde and mass culture, Andreas Huyssen has called for an examination of how mass culture reworked the changing relationship between the human body and the object world. This was also a project in Japan. As inhabitants of an intellectual world dominated by Marxist conceptions of society, Japanese authors documented the fetishization of commodities under capitalism, but they also made place for practice in the form of constructed gestures, self-ornamentation, decoration of domestic space, and movement through urban play spaces in their critique of Japanese commodity culture as the site where the human body engaged with the object world. The Japanese intellectuals documenting modernity

recognized that within contemporary consumer culture a struggle over meaning, symbols, and images was taking place. Their writing reveals to us the choices open to Japanese consumer-subjects in the construction of modern culture, and the overlap between John Frow's definition of modernism—"a bundle of cultural practices, some of them adversarial"—and the Japanese neologism *modan*.⁴⁸

The names of two Japanese intellectuals who worked to document the finest of detail in their concern for social change recur in the following pages. Both Kon Wajirō (1888–1973) and Gonda Yasunosuke (1887–1951) substituted an emphasis on consumption for the productivist ethos of the Meiji state. Moreover, their sensitivity to differences in class, culture, and gender and their rejection of the idea of seamless cultural traditions express the Japanese modern sensitivity to such distinctions. Like the prescriptive approach of mass magazines, their work recording historic shifts such as changes in language, body language, and self-fashioning through clothing and material surroundings offers a way of accessing codes of behavior.⁴⁹

After the earthquake, Kon walked through Tokyo, sensing that there were new artifacts and unprecedented processes that he must watch closely. His first response to the devastation of September 1, 1923, that killed over 100,000, injured more than 500,000, destroyed almost 700,000 dwellings, and led to the hunting down, torture, and execution of over six thousand Koreans residing in Japan, was to examine the barracks (*barakku*) or temporary structures that had sprung up and to organize the "Society for Barrack Decoration."⁵⁰

Kon had to have known about the "Korean Hunt," yet he did not acknowledge the colonial, racist underside to the modern when he praised opportunities for cultural innovation. He could not have been ignorant of the carnage, for the post-earthquake fires had been equally cruel to the working-class inhabitants of the neighborhoods he studied. Thousands of prostitutes and laborers who lived in densely built, conjoined, wood tenement houses had met their deaths. The vigilante groups had set up checkpoints where suspected "incendiary Koreans" had their cultural and linguistic skills tested. By September 2, no Korean in the Tokyo area was safe from the vigilantes or from police officials, who were recording and disseminating the totally unfounded rumors that Koreans were throwing bombs and poisoning wells. Reports that the rumors had been false did not stop the carnage when police were given the right to round up and "protect" Koreans while guiding vigilante groups. It has been documented that the vigilantes were armed with swords, clubs, bamboo spears, fire axes, long-bladed hoes, bush hammers, scythes, and saws, and that they engaged in brutal acts of torture that will not

be elaborated here. Moreover, rather than receiving asylum from this violence, Koreans were forcibly marched into internment centers, where they were trapped and killed by police. Kon may not have known that the internment centers were not safe, but he should have figured out, through a reading of the mass media, that as late as mid-September the state ordered that rumors of violence by Koreans continue to circulate through the press, while documentation of Japanese involvement in the violence was banned.⁵¹

Kon did not relate colonial connections and popular racism to the post-earthquake violence. However, he did address the plight of the working class when, in 1924, he was engaged to draw up plans for the Tokyo Imperial University Settlement House in Honjo. He also published a report on the Korean farmhouse under the auspices of the colonial government. In other words, his modern, colonial scientific skills were taken to Korea (the modern in the colonial), but Korean mores in Japan (the colonial in the modern) were not at issue. Instead, by the spring of 1925, Kon had begun his collaboration with the designer Yoshida Kenkichi on the series of investigations of urban life that would come to be known under the rubric of modernology. Kon distinguished modemology from anthropology and from folklore studies because he was not concerned with primitive people. The object of his study was the everyday practice (*seikatsu*) of the cultured people of the present, and therefore he labeled it "cultural modernology," as opposed to "primitive anthropology."⁵²

Kon aimed to relate traditions to fads and to newly constructed practices through the study of objects related to human actions, housing, and clothing. None of these phenomena could be seen in isolation; all were to be studied in motion. For example, Kon wanted to study human actions in terms of a series of such constructs (*kōsei*) as the various speeds of walking in the city, the motions of the construction worker, the positions of farmer and fisherman at work and at rest, and the motions of crowds at festivals and at the corner of a café. One of his many illustrative sketches was a comparative statistical breakdown of the percentage of Western versus indigenous clothing worn by males and females on Ginza in the early summer of 1925. Kon pointed to the interaction of coded differences but the pages of drawings and analyses worked against a simple dichotomy between East and West. It was not merely that the bowler hat, or the cloche, or the high heels, or the overcoat denoted difference. The differences on each side of the divide separating Occident from Orient were too numerous—there were too many variations of the wearing of neckties or topcoats and too many variations on the Japanese woman's hairstyle accompanying her kimono.⁵³

Kon's focus on the options open to the consumer-subject in terms of choice of place, space, object, and motion is evident in his survey of the practices of people picnicking—the term is *pikunikku*—in suburban Inokashira Park during the cherry-blossom viewing season. A series of tableaux is documented tersely. For example, three children “stare at a cluster of three soldiers”: eight boy scouts are “seen with leftovers from a cookout,” and “someone reads a *Bible*.” But in his brief summation of the scenarios, Kon noted a cultural switch: although most of the picnic foods consumed were customary, *doughnuts* had appeared recently. He also marked a more significant difference: because the picnickers had all come out for the shared purpose of cherry-blossom viewing, people of different classes were mingling in the park.⁵⁴

The working-class landscape of Honjo-Fukagawa was as meaningful to the modernologist as the middle-class-oriented Ginza: “The houses are small, the clothes-drying poles many and high, and these rise by each house in counterpoint to the factory chimneys.” Kon's concern with working-class culture was most evident in a companion piece to his study of Ginza, “Collection of Information in a Slum Neighborhood.” Therein, he emphasized that the neighborhood had expanded to cover the entire region east of the Sumida River. He also conjectured that this expansion might date back to the earthquake. Kon warned his readers to be careful in viewing and assessing “the mores of the contemporary poor,” which were so different from those of “the contemporary cultured person.” For example, large, fancy shops might line the street, but as soon as one entered an alleyway “the nests of the *seikatsu* of the poor extend before one.” The modernologist was blunt: “Differences in mores emerge as historical traditions from differences in the natural environment,” but these differences were also the result of “the difference between rich and poor.” One outcome of this premise was a detailed graphing of gender-differentiated items desired by women and by men in Honjō-Fukagawa, that were priced and displayed in the local stores. Kon made clear that distinctions must be made when studying the slum neighborhoods of industrial regions: he pointed to differences among the mores of construction workers, cart coolies, factory hands, and peddlers. He made sure to distinguish between the flophouses catering to the homeless day laborers and the households of the workers who commuted to nearby factories while their wives took in work at home. One finding that in fact denied difference was Kon's conclusion that laborers made no distinction between Japanese and Western clothing; utility was all that mattered. In conclusion, Kon said, that he wanted further study of differences: how were buttons buttoned? In what places were clothes torn? Clothing was

to be shown on site, moving freely, as an expression of the human body in one class, in one place.⁵⁵

Kon also related objects to class, to place, and to practice in his survey of behavior in the department store. By observing the interactions at the counters offering high-class wares to those who could afford to pay, the modernologist could be privy to the behavior of the upper-class customer that was ordinarily exhibited in the privacy of his or her home. At another counter, it was as though the lid had been removed from a middle-class household, as consumer-subjects anxiously compared samples of silk patterns. Showcase wares were presumably to be treated with the respect owed ancient artifacts in a museum. But although the department store was supposed to be a place where items were freely bought and sold, the middle-class customers were anxious, pushing—striving, Kon explained, to imitate the upper class. In the bargain basement, the struggle was intense.⁵⁶

In “Survey of Things in a New Household,” Kon captured objects in their class context from another angle when he asked what happens to things in differing regions and classes when they are actually used, and under what conditions are they used after the initial pleasure of buying or making an item. Kon claimed that his stance was different from that of an architect. He worked through the home room by room, documenting every item, like an archaeologist surveying the partitions of a tomb. He expressed respect as well as a somewhat concealed contempt for the commodities he had studied on site. If one continued to buy one thing after another, whatever one wanted, he asked, what happened to all of these objects when they were no longer found to be of use? His discussions accompanying his sketches and survey data can be read as a critique of capitalism informed by a knowledge of Marxism. For example, his contention that he wanted to leave a record of things, and the uses they were put to at the site of their consumption, and not as a place where they were exchanged, was a gloss on Marx’s distinction between exchange and use value.⁵⁷

Like Michel de Certeau, Kon was most concerned with an urban text written by walkers in the city, and like de Certeau (who applauded Charlie Chaplin because he “multiplies the possibilities of his cane: he does other things with the same thing”) he viewed the multiplicity of practices, even in suicide, as resulting from a series of choices. However, such choices were not placed within an analysis of the emperor system, or of any other system.⁵⁸

Like Kon, Gonda Yasunosuke, the bureaucratic expert on leisure activities, had his perceptions profoundly altered by the earthquake. Through the study of “living social facts,” he believed, one could gain an understanding

of the “construction” of play. To that end, his study of popular play, begun before the earthquake and continuing into the 1930s, encompassed movie-going, leisure activities in the provinces, and the subcultures of traveling entertainers as expressions of practice generated from below.⁵⁹

Even before the earthquake Gonda had written that “popular play” or “people’s recreation” (*minshū goraku*) was an integral part of modern life. It had entered the language in such declarations as “Honey, I’m going out for a little popular play” (*oi kimi, boku wa chotto, minshū goraku ni itte kuru karane*). When Kon used the term *minshū*, or people, he was not referring to undifferentiated masses but primarily to a proletariat wanting for both money and free time and desiring their own pleasures. After the earthquake, Gonda tracked the appearance of objects placed throughout the city by men and women creating new lives as they drank their first cups of sake sold near their barracks lodgings. According to Gonda, there had been a week of “absence of play” immediately after the earthquake, followed by two weeks of “shrinking from play” and two weeks of a “fervent longing.” Play was then meted out by the authorities, as though it were rice, for the next four weeks, until the people finally reached a stage of “pleasurable play” based on their own autonomous, self-motivated actions.⁶⁰

Gonda had no delusions about the manipulative dimensions of a technologically advanced capitalist consumer culture. Fads, he contended, went beyond the cosmetics and other items carried around by women: even the intellectual world was being commodified in a “race toward thought.” Gonda decried that the meaning of things was determined not by the fulfillment of a genuine desire (for there could be no genuine satisfaction from things) but rather from the ability to purchase an object: the process of buying made life meaningful. To satisfy such created desire among consumer-subjects, imitations upon imitations were being constructed. In words sounding very much like a gloss on Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, Gonda proclaimed that people do not determine things. In his words, “there are things,” and then people appear. He angrily proclaimed, “Hats are not made for people’s heads; heads are stuffed into hats.”⁶¹

Like Kon, Gonda saw the present as “modern,” and in his scathing attack on the *modan* he indicted the “modern practices” of the street. These he identified with modern European practices by equating the European bourgeois way of life with the *seikatsu* of both the *boulevard* and the *Strasse*. Cafés, bars, restaurants, movie theaters, and dance halls were merely extensions of this street life, which could not flourish in the “house” or the “household.” Not only was this new form of culture alienated from the domestic realm. Gonda further concluded that these practices of the street

were “constructed in their purest form by a type of people who had no relationship to everyday practice of labor or of production.” Proletarian play was to be admired; bourgeois play was not.⁶²

There was a utopian aspect to his close reading of mass culture as working-class culture. In an essay privileging the importance of a historicized everyday practice over an unchanging “national character,” Gonda pointed out how quotidian items—sushi and sake, for example—were transformed into objects for consumption by the mere appendage of the honorific prefix *o*. In other words, although *sushi* was food, *osushi* was not merely a polite way of signifying the same thing, as was usually presumed. Rather, *osushi* signified a different item, a different practice within the realm of play. It was the new “proletarianization” of play via the massification of play within the city that was Gonda’s concern. Even *benshi* (stars in their own right who explicated the dialogue and actions for eager moviegoers) and workers on their fifteen-minute breaks were organizing baseball teams. Gonda’s “On Workers’ Play” documented how play for the worker was not a matter of killing time but an expression of everyday practice as choice. Gonda charted what workers chose to read and whether they went to cafés on Sunday; he determined that more working women than men chose to go to the movies, and he concluded that men and women workers considered the consumption of cigarettes and sweets as forms of play. He contended that class differences were crucial, but national differences in terms of a dichotomy between East and West were not as important.⁶³

Gonda’s refusal to categorize play into non-Japanese and Japanese components is illustrated by his approach to the movies. He stated that while popular play would not ultimately come from the West, the construction of an indigenous popular play had to be premised upon an understanding of the Western music accompanying Mack Sennett and D. W. Griffith productions. His brief narrative of the history of cinema in Japan looked at what had drawn Japanese audiences to the movies. His conclusion: Japanese audiences had grown used to Western ways, but Chaplin and Fatty had had their day by 1923. The Western heroes Charlie Chaplin and Fatty Arbuckle had been displaced by dramatic features (*ninjō mono*), a newer fad that could be either Japanese or Western. In other words, Western faces had become but faces in a process of transcoding or code-switching between Japanese and non-Japanese movies. In fact even a child who did not know the name of the prime minister could easily identify both Charlie Chaplin and the sword-wielding idol Matsunosuke. Gonda reported interviewing girls and boys who could reel off dozens of names of both Japanese and Western movie idols.⁶⁴

Gonda's views on modern culture could not easily accommodate the ethnocentric ideology propounded by the state. Even as late as 1935, in a corporatist treatise called "The Destruction of Popular Play and the Preparation of National Play," he did not subscribe to an essentialist ideology of "Japanese-ness." Instead, adhering to a principle of transcoding then very evident in the popular press, he called for a new Japanese rural culture based on movies, Western music, and dancing. It is his acceptance of Western music that is of significance here. For even as he was reformulating his earlier premises, Gonda did not turn to a dichotomy eliminating the West from the Japanese cultural experience. He retained his belief that culture was constructed from newly reformulated indigenous traditions of play and could be revitalized through the introduction of select aspects of Western (and now Japanese urban) culture, such as movies and *dancing* into rural play. Gonda's concern to link urban and rural culture further illustrates that modern culture (or more often, the desire for a modern culture) was not confined to the cities.⁶⁵

Gonda's call for a hybrid modern culture gradually gave way to a vision of a seamless society. By 1935 the category of class had been displaced by the "general masses." And by 1941, he turned away from "popular play" to focus on state-organized "national play" (*kokumin goraku*). Gonda's subjects, who had been "the people," were now "the people of the nation." He had become, without question, an advocate of a massive *tenkō*, or a cultural turn to the celebration of indigenous tradition, a trend which by this time was firmly entrenched in the mass press. By the 1940s, he was deferring to Nazi policy by expounding on such topics as "The Nazi Society for Strength through Joy" and "The Nazi Characteristics of the National Welfare Movement." Within a decade, his numerous books and essays had shifted from a language marking differences between social classes to one dominated by such words as *kokumin seikatsu*, "a nationalized people's everyday."⁶⁶

One might say Gonda's turn was emblematic of the turn of Japanese culture away from what I shall call Japanese modern times. This was a moment celebrating universal yet differentiated emerging practices, but Gonda, like so many others, turned to the forced representation of a unitary national culture outside of time. Nonetheless, the places and practices of Japanese modern life had been put on record, and we can now return to the modern encoded in the references to the erotic and to the grotesque and to the culture that passed as nonsense. Do not be deceived by my use of Chaplin's title. This is not a history of derivative borrowings. In the commentary on and of the modern in Japan discussed in the first part of this book I have found a history of enormous creativity, fantasy, and political energy. In

order to slow down the tempo sufficiently to differentiate the new from what passed as traditional, and in the hope that the reader will gain some sense of the tone, the humor, and the willed transgressions of the time, the second and third parts of my discussion of the modern in Japan stop at five sites of Japanese modern times, including Asakusa Park, the place where the erotic, the grotesque, and the nonsensical were in closest alliance.