

# **A Leap toward Universality: Structure of Discourse in Japan, a Backward Capitalist Country, and its Changes in the Early 21st Century**

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**COLUMN: Hybrid Expressions in the Anime "true tears"**

---Here, however, Apollo aroused suspicion through the marvelous sweetness of his singing and, being recognized by a learned monk as one of the ancient magic-working heathen gods, he was delivered over to the ecclesiastical courts. On the rack he confessed that he was the god Apollo. Before his execution he begged that he might be permitted for the last time to play the zither and sing to its accompaniment. But he played so touchingly and sang so enchantingly, and was so handsome in face and form, that all the women wept; and many of them indeed afterwards sickened.

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("Gods in Exile" Heinrich Heine)

---Modern Europe, with its anthropocentric views, is losing its transcendence and is on the verge of slipping into self-denial. However, humanity must be protected from annihilation. Humanity must be allowed to live on. This contradiction can only be possible by virtue of the *principle of nothingness*.

(Masaaki Kosaka)

## 1. Memoirs on the Shanghai EXPO

I was given the chance to serve as the manager of an exhibition for the Shanghai EXPO (May 1 to October 31, 2010). Toyama Prefecture hosted "Toyama Day" in the Japan Pavilion event stage over two days from May 8 to 9; back then, I was temporarily assigned by the Ministry of Finance to the Toyama Prefectural Government. On the days of the event, we showcased the appealing aspects of Toyama Prefecture, using visual images, performances, displays, etc. that offered visitors the opportunity to fully experience the rich and beautiful scenery, diverse history and culture, industries, and food of the prefecture. A total of approximately 14,000 people visited the venue over the two-day period, which means that over four percent of all EXPO visitors during those two days (numbering approximately 348,500) came to see our exhibition. At the sight of the long queue that had formed at the entrance to the venue, I finally let out a sigh of relief.

What I focused on while planning the exhibition was to deliver, above all else, the prefecture's "mongrelistic" appeal. During my service for the prefecture, there was a period when I headed tourism policy, and I remember that, in our effort to attract domestic tourists, we often put the greatest emphasis on attractions like the scenic landscapes, such as the Tateyama Mountain Range, and traditional performing arts, with Owara and Mugiya being the foremost examples. However, when addressing the opportunity to present the charm of Toyama Prefecture to overseas audiences, I felt that its mongrelistic appeal should be promoted by combining—rather than focusing only on—the scenery and traditional performing arts with pop culture, including manga (comics) and anime (Japanese animation) related to the prefecture, and industrial initiatives featuring state-of-the-art technology. Toyama Prefecture is the home prefecture of Fujiko F. Fujio of "Doraemon" and Fujiko Fujio (A) of "Ninja Hattori-kun." A TV anime entitled "true tears," a production by a local company that was reverse-imported after becoming a nationwide hit, became celebrated locally, so much so that the Prefectural Governor even declared in the Assembly that he had watched the program. Not only being made in Toyama in terms of geography, "true tears" is also an attractive mixture of various cultural elements in terms of its manner of presentation (see the COLUMN article). In addition to those pop culture icons associated with Toyama, state-of-the-art technology and industrial achievements—for example, "PARO," a robot in the form of a seal equipped with artificial intelligence that

increasingly finds use in care facilities worldwide and sophisticated fasteners from YKK, a company that has its roots in Toyama—also contributed to presenting the prefecture's appeal through the blending of a massive screen showing the changing faces of the Tateyama Mountain Range throughout the four seasons with the live performance of traditional performing arts on the stage (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 Mugiya (Mugiha in "ture tears")



Figure 2 Photo with Doraemon

The audience appeared to be enjoying the mongrelistic bustle of our exhibition. A crowd of people formed in front of the stage to watch Owara and Mugiya, there was an endless stream of children and their parents having pictures taken with Doraemon and other anime characters, and people were watching, with fascination, the adorable movements that Paro was making. What did people from China and other emerging countries presently being pulled by the tide of modernization see in us, who embody what is left in the wake of 150 years of modernization: a beacon for hope or the image of a fallen, ancient god? The author does not know. In any case, what this EXPO exhibition experience brought home to me once again was a profound feeling that Japan relies on being a mongrel, right down to its very existence. The linkage between being a mongrel and Japan's existence is actually a familiar view that has been observed time and again in the history of our country. At the same time, however, I also developed a sense that unlike in the past, this mongrelism, which used to be haunted by something dark and heavy, has transformed to something light and bright that may well be described as a "hybrid." Indeed, we saw that cultural objects with various historical trails, while vying with each other, were in joyous harmony in one small venue.

In the main building of the Japan Pavilion that was located beside the venue for the "Toyama Day", a near-future vision of Japan was put out on display: a society that harnesses advanced technology to face the challenges of an aging population and environmental problems. In the exhibition presented by Toyota Motor Corporation, a partner robot, developed for assistance in care giving and household chores, demonstrated its amazing violin-playing skills, and I also saw "i-REAL," a single-seat mobility vehicle, deliver a smart mobility solution for humans. Under the catchphrase of "Cool Japan," Japanese pop culture is being promoted with state-level support in every corner of the world. For Japan, a country facing difficult issues while on a seemingly increasing decline, advanced technology and pop culture represent the latest

endeavor to inscribe its *raison d'être* in the universal forum of global history. The first and foremost objective of this paper is to extract a single pattern of thought—a structure of discourse—that has been witnessed over and over again in the course of Japan's 150 years of modernization. I will then move on to my second objective, which is to unearth situations in which mongrelism is being accepted as "hybridism"—in other words, to bring to light the transformation that is now dawning in that discourse structure as we stand at the beginning of the 21st century.

## **2. Deviation and Challenges in Backward Capitalist Countries**

### **(1) "Deviation" or "Mongrelization"**

Alexander Gerschenkron<sup>2</sup>, an American economist (1904-1978), made a general observation of industrialization, starting with the U.K.—the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution—followed by France and then backward countries, including Germany and Russia, and argued that industrialization in backward countries would involve a "deviation" from the English paradigm as it would have to be pursued under immature conditions and in the face of pressures from advanced countries. Specifically, he pointed out that (1) the more "backward" a country is, the greater the role played by a special regime designed with a mandate to supply capital to industry and provide guidance to companies, and the more backward it becomes, the more forceful and comprehensive such a regime becomes. Table 1 illustrates that in backward regions, industrialization—something that had been achieved spontaneously in advanced regions—had to be implemented under the guidance of banks, such as *Crédit Mobilier* (in France), and of even the states themselves. Gerschenkron also contended that (2) the more backward a country is, the smaller the role played by agriculture in the process of industrialization, as a result of which it becomes impossible to provide industry with a sufficient domestic market. A frail domestic market base causes companies to turn to overseas markets. Gerschenkron can find a powerful cohort in Japan's circle of historians. The Western European historiography<sup>3</sup> that Hisao Otsuka (1907-1996) established depicts how capitalism was burgeoning spontaneously in the U.K. after being prefaced by the formation of "local market areas" led by small manufacturers, and in contrast to this, after touching also on privileged manufacturers connected to France's absolute monarchy and their collapse as a result of the great revolution, it uncovers how backward capitalist countries gradually "deviated" from the English paradigm and transformed into mongrels with apparent deformities in a series of developments, including, in the example of Germany, the tepid bourgeois revolution and feudal land ownership by Junkers, the creation of a market through a customs union, and the start of heavy industrialization by privileged companies.

Such a "deviation" was portrayed as something that came with pain. The U.K.'s shift to

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<sup>2</sup> See "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essay"(1962), "Continuity in History and Other Essays"(1968).

<sup>3</sup> See "History of Western Economy" (1977).

capitalism was described in cheery tones as a benefactor of the improved social status of some farmers, or the leading players in rural industry. On the other hand, France was forced to go through a fiercer revolution than what the U.K. experienced, and in the case of Germany and Russia, a forceful capital accumulation had to be pursued, which was done by taking advantage of their old political and economic regimes, in order to achieve industrialization in the face of lateral pressures from advanced countries. That pain also spread to their cultures and mindsets. An attempt in backward countries to break free from stagnation required stimulants and fervor for industrialization, which had not been necessary in the U.K., and what served the role of those drugs, argues Gerschenkron, was Saint-Simonism in France and List's theory of industrialization in Germany. A mania-like pursuit for industrialization destroys the old way of life and alters culture into something jumbled and crooked. Originally, German Romanticism was not conscious of pressures towards industrialization. The movement was initiated in rivalry with France's political and cultural dominance, but as its motifs of the vanishing natural harmony and a reversion to Germanic mythology deepened further, it became a cradle of nationalism and increasingly assumed a hue as a bastion of naturalism and mysticism defying industrialization.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1 : Leading Sectors of Industrialization in Nation's Development Stages**

stages	advanced regions	backward regions	extremely backward regions
I	factory	bank	state
II		factory	bank
III			factory

(from Gerschenkron)

## (2) A "Challenge" or "Leap toward Universality"

Even though "deviation" came with pain, it gave backward countries the opportunity to take on challenges precisely because it came with pain. Owing to the transfer of technology from overseas, backward countries were able to skip several stages required for development. Germany took on a momentum strong enough to overtake the U.K. in terms of pace of heavy industrialization by concentrating its scarce capital on privileged companies. As "have-not" nations, backward capitalist countries embarked on their challenge against a 19th century system that was revolving around the gold standard and free trade led by the U.K.

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<sup>4</sup> The nature of German Romanticism is complicated because it includes admiration for Greek classical period (see the quotation from Heine in the preface). Romanticism is the adoration for something those are not existent and its political stance can be both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. German Romanticism adored both classical Greece and German mythology. Hölderlin wrote "Hyperion", in which a young Greek man is a hero, and his roommate, Hegel, worshiped Greece in his young days, however the praise of the classic grew weak and the attachment to Germanic elements, nature and community, which began to be lost in the industrialization of Germany.

The challenge was picked up in cultural and thought areas as well. In "On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany" (1834), Heine argued that in Germany, a political revolution was indeed yet to be realized but philosophy was perfected following the religious reformation (Luther). The perfection of philosophy proceeded in the hands of Kant and Fichte and was eventually consummated through the philosophy of nature by Schelling and other philosophers. What was found particularly contentious was this last corner, the philosophy of nature, which, as a result of philosophy becoming intertwined with politics, invited the following state of affairs:

The Philosopher of Nature will be terrible in this, that he has allied himself with the primitive powers of nature, that he can conjure up the demoniac forces of old German pantheism... Christianity - and this is its fairest merit - subdued to a certain extent the brutal warrior ardour of the Germans, but it could not entirely quench it; and when the cross, that restraining talisman, falls to pieces, then will break forth again the ferocity of the old combatants, the frantic Berserker rage whereof Northern poets have said and sung so much... Thor with his giant hammer will arise again, and he will shatter the Gothic cathedrals. ("Religion and Philosophy in Germany")

It is this passage that would be reputed in the subsequent century to have predicted the two great wars. There is one structure of discourse that emerges from it: a backward country, which is in the midst of rapid modernization and a shift to capitalism, engages in the all-out mongrelization of its own self that cuts across its economy and society all the way down to culture and thought, and internalizes its fragility while taking on a challenge precisely because of that fragility. This crooked and deformed being, which has "deviated" and turned into a mongrel, strives to connect, in that very state, to universal status in global history. It trumpets its intention to overcome inconsistencies that modernity is faced with and tries to rise to stardom at a stretch. As if to leap in the dark, paying no attention to the disapproval from those around it, the mongrel takes a leap toward universality.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. A Leap toward Universality in Japan (1) – Economy and Society**

#### **(1) Japanese Capitalism as Seen by the Koza-ha (Lectures Faction)**

In the following section, the structure of discourse leading to a leap toward universality will be extracted out of the context of modern Japanese history. The Japanese capitalism debate refers to a debate within the Japanese Marxist camp from the late 1920s to the 1930s, whereby heated words were exchanged as to the positioning of the Meiji Restoration in history and the characteristic of Japanese capitalism. The debate

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<sup>5</sup> "The sceptical argument, then, remains unanswered. There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word. Each new application we make is a leap in the dark; any present intention could be interpreted so as to accord with anything we may choose to do." (Saul A. Kripke)

was closely entangled with strategy theories of the camp: a fight between champions of the one-stage revolution theory, which defines the Meiji Restoration as a bourgeois revolution and argues that a socialist revolution should be pursued in a sweep (Rono-ha (Worker-Farmer Faction), and the two-stage revolution theory, which sees the Restoration to be an incomplete revolution and places the present focus on the fight against feudal remains (Koza-ha).

The interest of this paper does not reside in the evaluation of any strategy. It is rather in how Japan was comprehended by the Koza-ha, which attained its own depth in the understanding of Japanese capitalism and had a major influence on later generations.<sup>6</sup> In his explanation of why the Restoration ended as an incomplete bourgeois revolution, Eitaro Noro (1900-34)<sup>7</sup>, a polemicist of the Koza-ha, points to the fact that the government's protectionist policy was needed due to its nature as a rapid industrial revolution, as well as the fact that a compromise was reached between landlords and commercial and industrial capitalists to address the "shift in global capitalism from liberalism to imperialism" and the rise of the proletarian class on the domestic front. As, in any case, the feudal mode of production was not sublated sufficiently as a result, farmers were subjected "to the double exploitation by capitalism and by the semi-feudal land system," which brought them to poverty. As a consequence, Japan's domestic market remained narrow and Japanese capitalism assumed a penchant for overseas incursions from an abnormally early stage. Likewise, Moritaro Yamada (1897 - 1980)<sup>8</sup> argued that the mutually regulating relationship between "incomparably high, semi-feudal land rent and sub-India, semi-servile wages in Japan" was an absolute requirement for the growth of Japanese capitalism. In his view, high land rent made labor with low wages inevitable, and labor with low wages rendered tillage with high land rent unobjectionable, making possible an intense level of exploitation of tenant farmers and laborers.

While Japanese capitalism thus formed as a mongrel between feudal and capitalist regimes, built upon layers and layers of overstretched conditions, Japan still remained, overall, a backward agricultural country, as shown in Figure 3. Yamada declared that, in terms of light industry and heavy industry alike, "the gap between developed countries and Japan speaks for itself." In citing a press report stating that because of low wages "there is the desire to use a self-invented automatic reeling machine, but Japan's silk industry is more than 50 years behind as an industry," Yamada brought to light the state of its silk industry, which was stood paralyzed at the prospect of improved productivity through full-fledged mechanization. In the case of heavy industry, efforts to create industries were carried out on the basis of political needs, more markedly so in comparison to light industry, since it was closely associated with weapons production (Table 2). Yamada was blunt to point out, however, that although there had been some achievements with single large-scale industrial projects such as

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<sup>6</sup> e.g. Hisao Otsuka.

<sup>7</sup> "History of Development of Japanese Capitalism" (1930)

<sup>8</sup> "Analysis of Japanese Capitalism" (1934)

the construction of the "then world's largest battleship Satsuma," "despite its ascent, the narrow scale of Japan's steel industry" was obvious (Table 3). The ineptitude of its heavy industry also resulted in delays in military mechanization. Yamada's argument that "the (military's) practice of a serried approach with importance placed on nighttime operations, though also based on considerations about potential targets, is a natural result of its low-level mechanization" sounds premonitory to us, who know the result of their offensive against the U.S. that followed.

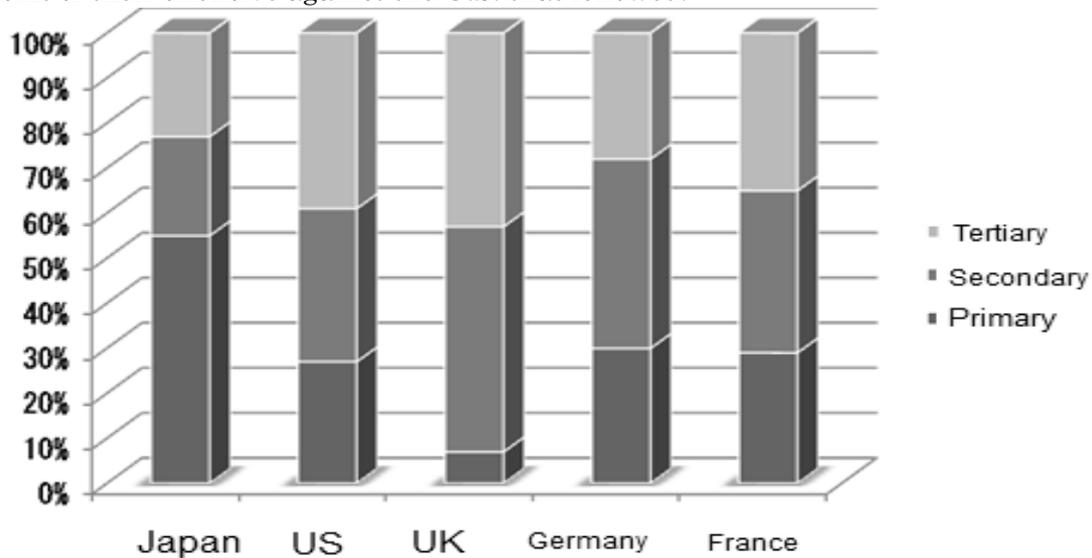


Figure 3 Industrial Structure (1920)

Table 2 : Increasing Production in Arsenals  
(from Moritaro Yamada "Analysis of Japanese Capitalism")

	1893 (Pre-First Sino-Japanese War)	1906 (Pre-Russo-Japanese War)	growth rate
workers in private factories	285,478	612,117	114%
workers in weapon arsenals	9,584	89,286	831%
workers in army arsenals	3,832	38,629	908%
motive power of weapon arsenals (hp)	2,084	80,728	3,773%
motive power of army arsenals (hp)	954	48,072	4,938%

Yamada uses this table to show the superiority of military over private sector. The weight of arsenals increased during the period. However, note that the private sector remained dominant even in 1906.

Table 3 : Steel Industry in Major Countries

		Japan	US	UK	Germany	France
Crude steel production (million t)	1912/13	0.4	31.8	7.3	18.1	4.6
	1927/28	3.6	49.0	8.9	15.3	8.9
	1937/38	6.1	40.0	11.9	21.2	7.1

(from Ryoichi Miwa "Economic History of Japan" (1989))

Japanese steel industry remained small among major industrial powers even in late 1920s. In late 30s, Japan was largely behind US, however it came closer to UK and France.

## **(2) A Leap toward Death, a Leap into a Bubble**

For Koza-ha theorists, no matter how fragile a foundation Japanese capitalism was built on and how lacking in perspective it was, it was a favorable state of affairs for the purpose of the socialist revolution that they were aspiring to achieve. Noro called Japanese capitalism "the weakest link in the capitalistic global institution," of which deformities and mongrelism (the coexistence of capitalism and feudal land ownership) should have served as an intermediary toward universal status in a global historical context as it would develop into a revolution as a precursor following suit after Russia.

However, for the many non-Marxists, a different path to universality was required. The Great Depression that began in 1929 caused trade to shrink, resulting in the world becoming divided into several blocs. While this turn of events prompted actions aimed at expanding Continental interests, it boosted the drive to work on a more effective allocation of the now scarcer resources. Nowadays, it appears to be widely recognized that a series of attributes that came to be called a Japanese-style economic system in the post-WWII days were formed out of its wartime regime. What emerged out of the process of having scarce resources concentrate on heavy industry—a necessity for the purpose of continuing the war—included controls in the hands of administrative organizations, indirect financing, and employee-centered corporate management and management-labor cooperation. While such controls followed a global trend, it was a natural outcome that even stronger controls were pursued in a country lacking in resources. In any case, Japanese capitalism, which had from the beginning an apparent deformity in the form of controls by the state and social powers, struggled to survive by enhancing its singularities even further.

This new breed of capitalism in Japan took two leaps: the first leap toward death and the second leap into a bubble. The leap toward death refers to the defeat in the war against the U.S. This assessment may be somewhat too harsh, however. The Koza-ha, as observed in Yamada's argument, took a dim view of the prospect of heavy industrialization in Japan, but a shift to heavy industry moved ahead through controls by, among other things, the National Mobilization Act (1938) (Figure 4). Its steel production, though still no match to that of the U.S., surpassed the level of the 1920s (Table 3). It was also during that period when the automobile and electric industries, which were to be driving forces behind the post-war economy, were formed. At the very least, Japanese capitalism broke the limits asserted by the Koza-ha and even survived the reforms implemented by the commanders of the occupation forces in the wake of the war.

If one considers that the first leap ended in an "unfinished project," the second leap—the leap into a bubble attempted in the 1980s—and its failure dealt a blow on an ideological level that was greater than that of the first one, given that it came at a time when the positive performance of the Japanese economy was viewed to be a herald of the coming of a whole new paradigm in the history of civilization. Yasusuke Murakami

(1931-93), the leading ideologue from the bubble years, strove, in his writings of "Ie Society as a Pattern of Civilization" (co-authored; 1979) and "The Age of New Middle Mass Politics" (1984), to establish a "universal model of analysis that adequately subsumes uniquely Japanese attributes" while standing by his critical awareness that "the uniquely Japanese attributes that have long been regarded as an indication of backwardness should be reevaluated." He explored the possibility of stability and dynamism that Japanese-style management, which was contrived as a result of the syncretism of industrialization from abroad and the domestic ie (family-like) society, could bring to society. However, the subject that Murakami chose for "An Anticlassical Political-Economic Analysis" (1992), his last work, was the more sophisticated formulation of "developmentalism" based on the economics of decreasing cost. What used to have the apparent earmarks of a new paradigm was reduced to just another episode of backward countries as observed by Gerschenkron. This came about precisely when the burst of the economic bubble brought to light the fact that the creativity for paving a new way for growth had been lacking in Japan, which could now no longer expect to gain any advantage from backwardness.<sup>9</sup>

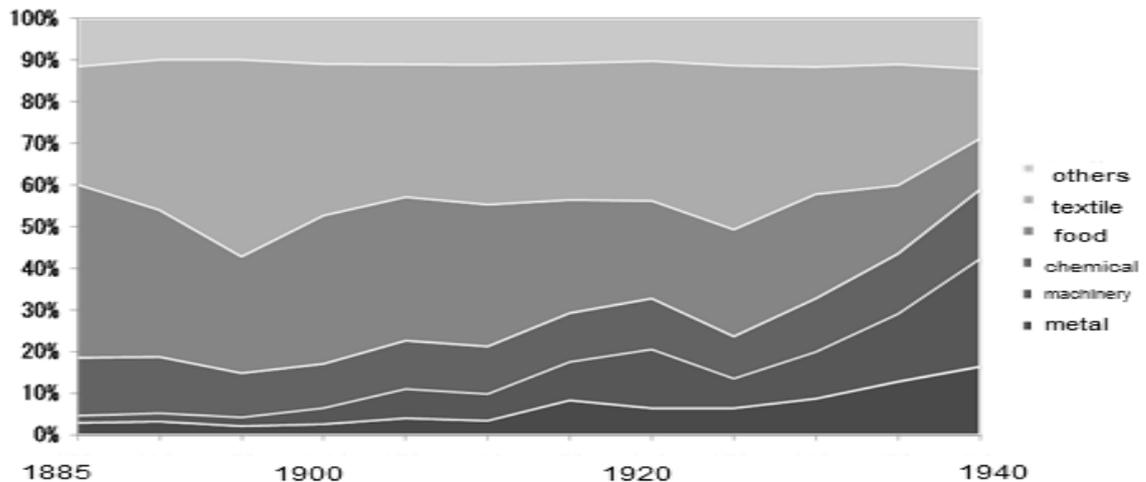


Figure 4 : Heavy Industrialization in Japan (1885-1940)  
Heavy industrialization rapidly progressed from 1930s.

#### 4. A Leap toward Universality in Japan (2): Culture and Thought

##### (1) Thinking and Creating Literature in Japanese

Today, we engage in thinking and creating literature in Japanese as if they were commonplace. When Japan embarked on modernization, however, thinking and creating literature in Japanese was not a self-explanatory practice. In order to

<sup>9</sup> Murakami had concern about the lack of creativity in Japanese system (Ie Society) from earlier stage of his carrier. In "Ie Society as a Pattern of Civilization" he presented two possible scenarios of Japan; (a) "adaptive separation" (superiority of domestic system as seen in recasting Chinese *ritsuryo* system in a form suitable for Japan), (b) "dissolutive internationalization". He pointed out, as a drawback of "adaptive separation", that Japanese companies could take a passive and defensive stance in the loss of corporate objectives.

introduce modern scholarship, foreigners were employed at a high salary by both central and local public agencies and schools. The actual total number of foreigners employed by the Meiji government reached in the vicinity of 3,000. At schools, figures like Naumann (geology), Bälz (medicine), Morse (zoology), Fenollosa (philosophy), and Hearn (English literature) served as teachers, who, as a matter of course, taught in Western languages, not in Japanese. It is quite impressive how much investment the students of the Meiji era made in foreign languages. In the novel "Sanshiro" by Soseki (1908), the object that Sanshiro picks up on the train from Kumamoto to Tokyo is a collection of essays by Francis Bacon, and the words of a riddle that Mineko, one of the characters, poses to Sanshiro are also in a foreign language ("stray sheep"). If there exists a woman out there now who poses riddles to others in a foreign language, I would definitely like to meet her. What was essential in converting the language environment in such a way was the reconstruction of the Japanese language. Words like *gainen* (concept), *tetsugaku* (philosophy), *keijijogaku* (metaphysics), and *jinmin* (people) were forcibly crafted in the process of translating Western scholarship into Japanese (*wasei kango* (Japanese-created Chinese compounds)), and it was the labored concoction of such words that made it possible to engage in thinking in Japanese. It was Soseki who succeeded Hearn as the professor of English literature at Tokyo Imperial University, and his work "Theory of Literature" (1906) was published as a compilation of his lectures. What Soseki tried to do was an ambitious endeavor: lecturing on the universal structure of literature to Japanese students using the Japanese language. "Theory of Literature" begins abruptly as follows:

*As a rule, the formula of what constitutes literary content must be (F+f). "F" indicates a focal impression or notion and "f" indicates an emotion attached to it... Impressions and notions that we experience on a daily basis can be roughly divided into three types: (1) F is present, but not f, i.e. an intellectual element is present but any emotional element is lacking, like the notion of a triangle we possess; ... (2) f is brought about as an accompaniment of F, as in the notion of a flower, star, and the like; and (3) only f is present and an F that corresponds to it cannot be discerned, such as the "fear of everything and fear of nothing." Of the three types described above, the one that can constitute literary content is (2), i.e. something that possesses the (F+f) formula. (Italics by the author)*

Subsequently, this leads to the narrative of a highly abstract literary theory by reference to the interrelationship between F and f, or cognitive elements and emotional elements.

Likewise, creating literature in Japanese was also not a matter of course, but was instead the product of a bitter struggle. The establishment of modern literature necessitated the creation of a style of writing that would suit it, which was brought about through the *genbun'itchi* or vernacularization movement. Vernacularization here refers to an attempt to match spoken language (*gen*) to written language (*bun*). It is said that spoken and written language used to be relatively matched in Japan as

well, but with the passage of generations, the divergence between spoken language and the static written language became more and more pronounced. Just as Shoyo Tsubouchi wrote, "Gen is soul, bun is form. In colloquial language, all of the strongest emotions can come out without the slightest trace of cosmetics; in bun, however, emotions come out through the application of cosmetics, losing their essence more or less" ("Shosetsu Shinzui (The Essence of the Novel)" (1885-86)), the need for a highly transparent style of writing void of embellishments was being felt. The movement produced fruit with Futabatei's "Ukigumo" (1887-89), an antihero novel that used the colloquial *da* suffix at the end of sentences. Over time, colloquial writing gained ground outside of the literary world as well. By the Taisho Era, newspaper articles were almost entirely in colloquial language, marking the completion of the so-called "Vernacular Revolution."

Thus, a mongrel culture was born—one that deals with full-scale scholarship and produces modern literature in a non-Western language. This is a very rare feat in the non-Western world. On a worldwide scale, there are only limited examples of places where high-level higher education can be pursued in the native language; in many of the former colonies, higher education above a certain level is conducted in a Western language. On the literary front, there are only a small number of cases in which literature in the native language is thriving with the aim of attaining a high level. Although the focus on Nobel prizes in literature is now increasingly shifting toward minorities, most laureates from minority backgrounds are those who write in a Western language, such as Naipaul (2001 recipient; English writer of Indian descent who is originally from Trinidad). Given those circumstances, one could say that Japanese-language literature, which has produced two laureates, has indeed fared quite well.

## **(2) "Overcoming Modernity"**

Those achievements were earned in an effort by Japan to mongrelize itself by reconstructing even the language—the core of culture and thought—as it took the path of modernization and shifted toward capitalism. However, the literary theory of Soseki, who avouched, "As a general rule, the formula of what constitutes literary content must be (F+f)," was not understood by Japanese students. While reform in the areas of culture and thought was carried out by not relinquishing the core of its identity in language completely while not clinging to it either, that process came with an awkwardness that can be described as "looking back and worshipping ancestors *as if* their spirits were there while walking the path of morality *as if* one were so obligated and moving forward to the light that is visible ahead" (Ogai Mori, 1911).

This awkwardness forces people to face the idea of wanting to amalgamate the mongrelism within them with something universal that is a level higher. Tenshin Okakura, who received tutelage under hired foreigner Fenollosa, stated in "The Ideals of the East" (1902), "the proud self-reliance of an unconquered race, and the insular

isolation which protected ancestral ideas and instincts at the cost of expansion, made Japan the real repository of the trust of Asiatic thought and culture." Then, Tenshin went further to suggest that Japan has now grown to be something more than a repository, saying, "the singular genius of the race leads it to dwell on all phases of the ideals of the past, in that spirit of living Advaitism which welcomes the new without losing the old," thus raising Japan's status from that of a repository to that of a higher-level entity in the context of world culture.

"Ideals of the East" was a work written in English for overseas audiences, but it subsequently became the archetype for types of discourse that were gradually gaining momentum up until the middle of WWII. "Overcoming Modernity," a historically famous round-table symposium (1942), was organized to serve as a grand summary of these discourses. The symposium was held by assembling three factions, namely, the Bungakukai group, the Kyoto School, and the Japan Romantic School. There was no common awareness among the participants on modernity, and it is therefore generally dismissed as a failure; however, that matter shall be left for others to evaluate. Here, I would like to focus on two figures who did not participate in the symposium: Kitaro Nishida, a leading figure of the Kyoto School (1870 – 1945), and Yojuro Yasuda, the leader of the Japan Romantic School (1910-1981).

While the Kyoto School actively delivered topical statements, including those in another symposium held in the same period, "The World Historical Position and Japan," it remained ambiguous, endorsing the war as a "war of thought" while suggesting that everything could be solved through "Oriental Nothingness." Although Nishida did admonish hegemony, it must be pointed out that a motive similar to that of his disciples also lurked in Nishida's own thoughts.

Positioned as a remote island in the eastern ocean for thousands of years, Japan has developed as a vertical world. ... It has developed in a fashion whereby the subject became a world not through a number of environmental negations but by means of self-negation. ... It can be considered to be standing as a contradictory, opposite pole to the European world, which was shaped environmentally—moving from environment to the subject. However, a world becomes one entity in the midst of things, moving from something that was created into something that creates in, in every respect, a *contradictory self-identical* manner between the subject and the environment... Today, the problem of Japanese culture must become maintaining the features of a vertical world hitherto fostered while expanding into a horizontal world. ... [The problem] *must be the envelopment of other subjects as a world.* (Italics by the author) ("The Problem of Japanese Culture," Kitaro Nishida (1940))

Here, "contradictory self-identity" is applied like an incantation as the intermediary period in which Japan extends beyond being a mongrelistic "repository" and leaps toward universality.

Yojuro Yasuda, meanwhile, had an attitude towards modernity and Japan that appears

to be slightly more complex and twisted. Yasuda stated, "What has become the foundation for the Japan Romantic School is the chaotic and formless state of Japan's new spirit and the irony of a Japan free to simultaneously ensure destruction and construction, furthered by the realism felt for Japan as the irony." These words are the reverse side of the awareness that modernization was causing Japanese tradition to be destroyed to the point where it could no longer be recovered. Yasuda toyed with rhetoric that praises tradition, albeit knowing that there was no longer any tradition to return to. Yasuda's writings have the appeal of a hidden pathos. While his thoughts contain a folkish, indigenous nature that criticizes the bureaucratic-led cultural enlightenment as the cultural colonization and have been reevaluated in the post-WWII era because of such an aspect<sup>10</sup>, the purpose of this paper might be better served by quoting the beginning of "Japanese Bridges" (1938):

I once saw a small stone bridge from the window of a train running near Tagonoura on the Tokaido line. ... It was the kind of bridge that always comes to mind whenever one thinks of a bridge—a *pitiful bridge* that could honestly be found anywhere in Japan. (Italics by the author)

In Yasuda's opinion, compared to the magnificent, artificial-looking bridges in Rome, bridges in Japan seem pitiful, but it is precisely because of this pitiful nature that they have character. Cynically speaking, the pitiful appearance of bridges in Japan is likely related to the fact that Japan was lagging behind and lacked a sufficient accumulation of capital. That being said, an attempt to make a realistic (bureaucratic) point of this sort can only serve to add an ironical gravitas to Yasuda's attitude. As the course of the war became more and more dire, his sentiments toward the Japan that was lagging behind and still impoverished would grow until they met with an aesthetic dead end (or the aesthetics of a dead end): the "aesthetics of death."

## **5. Changes in the Discourse Structure in Japan in the Early 21st Century**

### **(1) Summary of Arguments Thus Far**

Here I would like to give a summary of arguments that have been made thus far. Having taken a bird's-eye view of the past 150 years, the existence of a discourse structure has become clear: the awareness of backwardness, deviation, and mongrelism leading straight to an attempt to leap toward universal status in a global historical context. As summed up in Table 4, discourses of this type have been repeated across different domains, carrying with them a resonating sadness as if the very existence of Japan were at stake. A leap toward universality has been pursued as a comprehensive undertaking, a development that took place precisely because modernization and the shift to capitalism were issues that impacted the entire country.

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<sup>10</sup> Yoshimi Takeuchi is a leading example. His comparison of Japanese and Chinese modernization, which was inspired by John Dewey, deserves reconsideration, in facing apparently successful take-off of Chinese modernization.

In an era of the sunset of religious ways of thinking, a nation state was the last bastion that guaranteed meaning in the lives of individuals who are at the mercy of chance; thus was born the illusion that the painful leap being taken by the now-mongrel nation state was putting even the very existence of individuals at stake.<sup>11</sup> This leap indeed astonished the world but, as is evident in the "Overcoming Modernity" theory and bubble-era theories on the Japanese economy, both of which may well be considered to be its culmination, it is hard to say that the route leading to a universal value was given an adequate logical basis. Judging by reference to Carl Schmitt's argument, "Romantic productivity consciously rejects every connection to a causa, and thus also every activity that intervenes in the real connections of the visible world. And yet...it can be absolutely creative...by producing fancy, by 'literaturizing.'"<sup>12</sup> it is my opinion that what has dominated the conventional discourse structure is not the power of logic but the faculty of literary imagination, and that Japan has fared under a Romantic mindset throughout a long period of 150 years.

The origins of my sentiment that I developed through my involvement with the Shanghai Expo— (1) even the very existence of Japan is at stake—must already be clear. So then how did I develop the other sense that I felt at the same time—(2) the mongrel nature that used to have dark and heavy associations like singularity and deformity is transforming into something light and bright that may well be called a "hybrid"? This second issue will be explained below in a discussion on advanced technology and pop culture, both of which represent Japan's attempt to leap toward universality at the dawn of the 21st century.

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<sup>11</sup> The bearers of the discourse structure are such male singles coming to Tokyo from villages as Sanshiro from Kumamoto. Jiro Kamishima explicated the relationship between "second villages" (domain and school clique), driven by anxieties and nostalgia of those coming up to Tokyo, and Japanese fascism ("Mentality of Modern Japanese" (1961)). The discourse structure elucidated in this paper also belongs to these Sanshiros.

<sup>12</sup> "Political Romanticism" (1919, 1925)

**Table 4: Structure of Discourse**

	a backward and deviated mongrel	takes a leap toward universality
Economy & Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ the understanding of Japanese capitalism by the Koza-ha (Eitaro Noro, Moritaro Yamada)</li> <li>- Meiji Restoration as an incomplete bourgeois revolution, a mongrel between feudal and capitalist regimes</li> <li>- fragility in single large-scale industrial projects (battleship Satsuma)</li> <li>+ controls by the state (e.g. the National Mobilization Act (1938))</li> <li>- army, new bureaucrat (<i>Shin-kanryo</i>, <i>Kakushin-kanryo</i>), Kono new regime</li> <li>+ "the uniquely Japanese attributes that have long been regarded as an indication of backwardness" (Yasusuke Murakami)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ a socialist revolution as a precursor following suit after Russia</li> <li>-- demise by the oppression</li> <li>+ heavy industrialization and strengthening military power (Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere)</li> <li>-- defeat in WWII</li> <li>+ Japanese-style management, Ie Society as a Pattern of Civilization</li> <li>-- economic bubble, theoretical dead end (developmentalism)</li> </ul>
Culture & Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ reconstruction of Japanese language (adaptive mongrelization of Japanese language)</li> <li><i>wasei kango</i> (Japanese-created Chinese compounds), construction of Japanese as a scholarship language, foreigners employed by the Meiji government</li> <li>creation of Japanese Modern literature through <i>genbun itchi</i> or vernacularization movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ establishment of universal scholarship in Japanese language (science, engineering, philosophy, law and economics)</li> <li>- "Theory of Literature" Kinnosuke Natsume (Soseki) (literature theory of F+f)</li> <li>+ creation of Japanese modern literature</li> <li>- "Ukigumo" Futabatei, "Sanshiro" Soseki, two Nobel prizes in literature</li> <li>-- agony of modern man, "Kanoyouni (as if)" Ogai</li> <li>+ Overcoming Modernity</li> <li>- Tenshin Okakura (raising Japan's status from that of a repository to that of higher-level entity in the context of world culture)</li> <li>- Kitaro Nishida (the envelopment of other subjects as a world through "contradictory self-identity")</li> <li>- Yojuro Yasuda, "Japan as the irony"</li> <li>-- defeat in WWII, theoretical or aesthetic dead end</li> </ul>
21 st century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ technologies accumulated in Japanese companies (compounds with traditional artisanship)</li> <li>+ subculture</li> <li>a mongrel between Japanese backward popular culture and American pop culture such as Disney</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ New Growth Strategy" (Cabinet Decision on June 18 2010)</li> <li>+ Cool Japan</li> </ul>

possibility of a new discourse structure ?  
 Japan now personify modernity itself  
 --sales of goods and services based on advanced technologies, solution of the environmental problems by technologies  
 --transnational solidarity between pop culture lovers, multitude ?

## **(2) "New Growth Strategy" and "Technology-Oriented Nation"**

In its "New Growth Strategy" (Cabinet Decision on June 18, 2010), the Japanese government set forth its strategy aimed at bringing about a "strong economy." The measures are divided into 21 national strategic projects under seven pillars (Table 5). While a wide range of ideas have been incorporated in the "New Growth Strategy," it is no doubt that one emphasis is being placed on the development and utilization of technology. Specifically, (16) "Promoting Utilization of Information and Communications Technology" and (17) "Enhancing Research and Development Investment" go without saying, while (2) "'Future City' Initiative" envisions intensive development of a smart grid, renewable energy, etc. and (4) "Medical Institution Selection System to Promote Practical Application of New Medical Care" aims for the exportation and commercialization of domestically developed pharmaceutical products and medical equipment. In addition, (6) "Infrastructure-related System Export" is for supporting overseas expansion initiatives in the areas in which Japan is considered to have technological advantages, such as high-speed railways and water.

Such a heavily technology-oriented stance is also consistent with the national identity of a "technology-oriented nation" championed at the Shanghai EXPO, particularly by the Japan Pavilion. It is the answer to the homework long overdue since the burst of the economic bubble—a transition from a backward country to a pioneer—and also carries the quality of a measure addressing the pressure felt from emerging countries trying to catch up to Japan. As is proven indirectly by the history of the folk art movement and the repeated praises of artisanship, the idea of connecting to universal status in global history as an assemblage of sharp engineers who have successfully united tradition and advanced technology in a mongrelized fashion now appears to form the national consensus in the post-bubble era. What is conceptualized in the "technology-oriented nation" theory is no longer a comprehensive system with the sort of cultural backing of a conventional Japanese-style management. It is about selling technology as an element, and being a commercial product, it is out of the question to force it on others on the grounds of cultural superiority. While the connection to universal status in global history still remains a desired target, as exemplified by technology-based solutions to global environmental issues, such a connection is something that will be realized through the supply of useful goods and services.

**Table 5: New Growth Strategy (21 NATIONAL STRATEGIC PROJECTS FOR REVIVAL OF JAPAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY)**

<p><b><i>I. National Strategic Projects Related to “green innovation”</i></b>  (1). Rapidly Increase Renewable Energy by Introducing a Feed-in Tariff System  (2). “Future City” Initiative  (3). Forest and Forestry Revitalization Plan  <b><i>II. National Strategic Projects Related to “life innovation”</i></b>  (4). Medical Institution Selection System to Promote Practical Application of New Medical Care  (5). Medical Interaction (Acceptance of Foreign Patients)  <b><i>III. National Strategic Projects Related to Extension to Asia</i></b>  (6). Infrastructure-related System Export  (7). Reducing the Effective Corporate Tax Rate and Promotion of Japan as an Asian Industrial Center  (8). Fostering Global Talents and Increasing Acceptance of Highly-Skilled Personnel, etc.  (9). Strategies for Intellectual Property and Standardization and Exporting Cool Japan  (10). Economic Partnership Strategy through the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)  <b><i>IV. National Strategic Projects Related to Tourism and Local Revitalization</i></b>  (11). Introducing a “Comprehensive Special Zone System” and Promoting Full Open Skies, etc.  (12). “Program to Boost the Annual Foreign Visitor Number to 30 Million” and Promotion of Staggered Holidays  (13). Doubling the Size of Existing Housing and Remodeling Markets, etc.  (14). Opening Public Facilities to the Private Sector and Promoting Projects Using Private Sector Funds  <b><i>V. National Strategic Projects Related to Science-and-Technology and IT-oriented Nation</i></b>  (15). “Leading Graduate School” and Other Schemes to Enhance International Competitiveness and Foster Human Resources  (16). Promoting Utilization of Information and Communications Technology  (17). Enhancing Research and Development Investment  <b><i>VI. National Strategic Projects Related to Employment and Human Resources</i></b>  (18). Integration of Kindergartens and Nursery Schools, etc.  (19). Introduction of “Career Grading” System and “Personal Support” System  (20). New Concept of Public Service  <b><i>VII. National Strategic Projects Related to the Financial Sector</i></b>  (21). Establishment of an Integrated Exchange Handling Securities, Financing and Commodities</p>
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### **(3) Pop Culture**

What about pop culture, then, which represents another example? Together with the development and utilization of technology, the "New Growth Strategy" includes overseas operations surrounding “Cool Japan.” This movement, which began with frank astonishment at how Japanese pop culture has been embraced overseas, has now grown to the point of being part of the "New Growth Strategy," the government's highest-level strategy. The intention behind this involvement by the national

government can be summed in two points: (i) real economic benefits such as promoting the content business and (ii) strengthening Japan's soft power. However, the reason why the Cool Japan phenomenon is drawing public attention is neither economic interest nor, least of all, interest in diplomatic prowess. Rather, it has to do with the simple desire to be recognized, which carries more significance in terms of the context of this paper. As is suggested by the term "subculture," it is a creation of a mongrel nature that came into being under the influence of American pop culture, and though it has become firmly entrenched in the life of the Japanese general public, it was something that remained no more than an inconspicuous presence. The surprise and joy of being informed out of the blue that this cultural product appeals to global audiences are in all likelihood the average form of the Cool Japan phenomenon on the domestic front. This is precisely a perception that is in line with the observation that the leap from a mongrel culture to a global universality has materialized most unexpectedly.

While there are myriads of arguments as to why Japanese pop culture has been accepted overseas, one thing that ought to be pointed out is the fact that pop culture is void of any singularity, or any odor, that is uniquely Japanese. Let me cite two examples. In "A Wild Haruki Chase" ("Bungakukai," June 2006 Issue), an international symposium held to discuss the acceptance of Haruki Murakami overseas, moderator Inuhiko Yomota raises the following issue:

That is the "*cultural odorlessness*" that Haruki Murakami features. ... In his works, figures like the Beach Boys, Jean-Luc Godard, and Steven King make appearances, that is, a variety of non-Japanese cultural elements make their way in abundance in his pieces and they appear to be juxtaposed *in an equal fashion* with things Japanese. ... Meaning, we have a case in which his "*odorlessness*" has appealed greatly to people around the world against the backdrop of today's globalism.

(Italics by the author)

Here, we should take note of the expression "equal" together with "odorlessness." During the discussion that followed, some made a point questioning the "odorlessness/equal" argument on the ground of his intense interest in history, particularly the history of Japan-China relations. It struck me, though, that Murakami's works leave a strong impression that history is used more as the material for his works and is not significant enough to reverse the impression of odorlessness that one gets from the style of his works.

By way of another example, this statement should be worth citing, which popped out of a genre in the proximity of the world of so-called otaku:

"Why has Japanese pop culture become this popular"? There is only one reason: it has the function of disassociating any disparities in reality from oneself... As a matter of course, as long as a certain context is there, a so-called Japanese-type

subculture could be created again and again in countries like Germany, the U.S., France, and South Korea in the future. (Shinji Miyadai, "Transformation of Semantics in the History of Japanese Subcultures since 1992," published in "The Future of Japanese Creative Power: The Possibility of Cool Japanology" (2010))

As long as pop culture is a culture directed at the masses of the world, Japan no longer has a presence in it. When one looks at the world from such a perspective, even the possibility of transnational solidarity between pop culture lovers comes into the picture as well. While a subtle continuity with the "Overcoming Modernity" theory can be discerned in the suggestion of the possibility of Japan connecting to universal status in global history by paradoxically turning itself to nothingness, the state of affairs seems to have advanced more than what Yojuro Yasuda, who upheld "Japan as irony," not to mention the Kyoto School, had envisioned in terms of the level of nothingness assumed by Japan. The Cool Japan phenomenon appears to be making headway in a sphere that runs across a fine line between a "leap toward universality" and the "demise of Japanese culture."

#### **(4) Possibility of a New Discourse Structure**

Such a transition that is in the process of occurring in the discourse structure reflects the fact that the era in which Japan's modernization and shift to capitalism impacted the entire country is becoming a thing of the past. The particular distortion that any country experiences as a backward country as it comes close to achieving modernization and the shift to capitalism is attenuating. The trend for mongrelism to be interpreted as backwardness or a deformity has receded, and a variety of items, from traditional to state-of-the-art, are each stably find their own footing in the now-modernized society. For our exhibition at the Shanghai EXPO, we adopted the approach of presenting a wide range of items in an equal fashion in the same venue, but those items, though they might rival each other, would no longer generate any inconsistency or friction. Just as the Beach Boys and Godard exist together in Haruki Murakami's novels, they portrayed the world-view of Japan (Toyama) unified on a flat stage.

This does not mean that Japan will no longer be subject to the influence of further deepening of capitalism and any changes in the competitive conditions in the playing field of the world economy. It is true that the anticipated globalization and changes in the landscape of world powers are indeed extremely major issues, but Japan will not be under their influence as a backward capitalist country. It will face them as a member of the group of advanced capitalist nations and move ahead to find answer to current issues.

Of course, we are still in the grip of the discourse structure from the last century and the prowess of imagination of the Romantics. In the face of the argument that "cultural odorlessness" resides in the bedrock of the overseas acceptance of pop culture, the

perception of the ordinary people of Japan is presumably characterized by a feeling of joy that Japan's cultural products are being acknowledged. The "odorlessness" can paradoxically transform into the nation's pride in itself as the creator of an odorless culture. Given that the influence from globalization is gaining strength day by day, there is even a quite conceivable scenario that the pressed need for reform across all areas of the economy, society, culture, and thought might work to enhance, once again, the discourse structure that implies a leap full of pathos from mongrelism to universality. For instance, in recent years, attention has increasingly been paid to cases of companies that designate English as their official language. It has long been the case that using Japanese as a business language poses a hindrance, and in academia there is likewise a long-running, widespread situation not only in science but also in the arts in which top results cannot be achieved in Japanese. Such a state of affairs will likely diminish the ability to think and create literature in Japanese, a prospect that leaves the author with mixed feelings. One half of our body is still that of a Romanticist. This and other circumstances will in all probability lead to a scenario in which, for the time being, the old and new discourse structures vie with each other, congregating at times to the point of becoming barely distinguishable.

Nevertheless, if the road toward universality is not backed by adequate rationale, a theoretical or esthetic dead end awaits with open jaws. In addition, we are also faced with increasingly serious issues that cannot be interpreted properly by the old discourse structure, including a population that is declining rapidly as if to turn back the clock of modernity, the fiscal and social security issues that the population decline entails, and environmental issues on a global scale. During the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium, Hideo Kobayashi made the following remarks:

Anyone that is a *first-class* novelist is without fail someone that has won a battle with the times that he lived in or the conventional wisdom in society... It seems to me to be certain that in any given era, *first-class* figures of the times have all discovered their purpose in life in an attempt to overcome their own times. (Italics by the author)

We now personify modernity itself, and what is at issue is whether we ourselves are first-class or not. Is it too much to think that we have finally arrived at a time that holds the "potential" for us to tackle head-on the challenges of the very times that we live in and overcome the times as we transform ourselves into something different? Naturally, it is difficult to fathom in advance where the "leap" is going to take us in its turn.

### **[Supplementary Essay] The Lisbon Earthquake and "Optimism"**

Noticeably, there has been a trend pointing to the Lisbon earthquake (in 1755) as the disaster that determined the fall of Portugal. The Lisbon earthquake had a

tremendous impact on enlightenment thinkers; particularly for Voltaire (1694-1778), it is significant in that it set a direction for his skepticism toward "optimism." "Optimism" is a theory of belief that in a world in which God exists, the best of all possible worlds should have presented itself, and Voltaire concluded that an extraordinary calamity like the Lisbon earthquake was clearly an occurrence at odds with optimism. However, even without Portugal, Europe in fact developed considerably thereafter and obtained world hegemony. A merciless historian or theologian might be audacious enough to even give this comment about the Lisbon earthquake as well: "It is demonstrable that things cannot be otherwise than as they are; for all being created for an end, all is necessarily for the best end" (Pangloss: a character created by Voltaire).

The Great East Japan Earthquake is something that, in an extremely heady manner, posed the question of whether or not Japan is a first-class modern nation. That said, proof that we are first-class would never be offered by somebody elsewhere, and even if we failed to prove that we are first-class, a majority of the world might not consider "optimism" to have been marred.

## **COLUMN**

### **Hybrid Expressions in the Anime "true tears"**

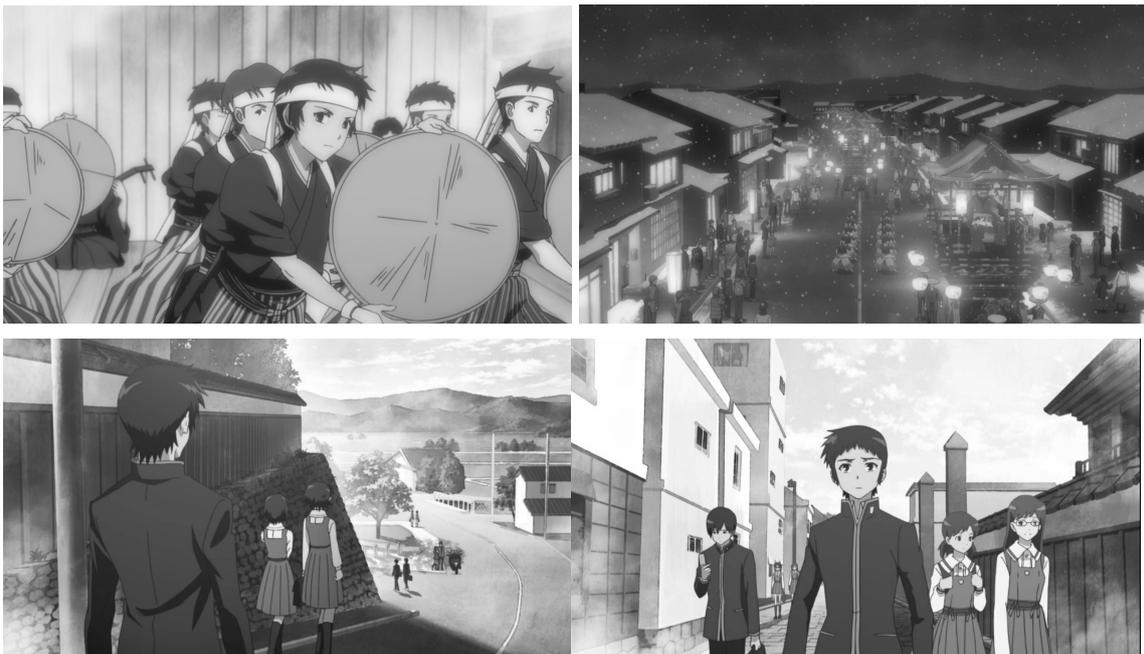
In the main text, reference was made to "true tears," a TV anime program produced by a production company in Toyama Prefecture called P.A. Works. It was broadcast from January to March 2008, but Toyama Prefecture was not originally among the areas of its broadcasting coverage. The show began being broadcast in the prefecture as a result of reverse importation after receiving positive reviews nationwide. The pattern in which praise from outside the prefecture boosts recognition on a local level is parallel to the development of how the praise of Japanese pop culture overseas resulted in increased recognition back in Japan.

The main character, a high school boy who aspires to become a picture book writer, wavers between two female students - that is the gist of the story. One of the heroines is the main character's classmate who lives in his home as a foster child, and the other is a girl from another class. The turn of events leading up until he ultimately chooses one of them is overlapped with the storyline of the main character and the two heroines growing up. Although it takes on a narrative structure typical of a romantic comedy (or, as far as its production roots go, a PC-based role-playing game (RPG)), the unique aura of the heroine who does not get chosen, coupled with a three-dimensional feel of the story emanating from the multiple (pseudo) brother-sister relationships, makes it an enjoyable (and moving) piece of work.

What adds to the particular appeal of this production is the hybrid combination of the

romantic comedy and the local cultural environment of a particular region in Toyama Prefecture. The story element in which the main character and one of the heroines live together under one roof comes to life on a stage set in an old house in the countryside of Toyama. The house, which belongs to a sake brewing family, is one of the forces that bring the local community together, and as it has tension with the vector of the main character to launch out into a broader world, it gives a sense of stability to the story as a whole. The fact that this romantic comedy unfolds in an old town causes a sort of defamiliarization effect, but what is more impressive is the sure-handedness of setting side by side, in an equal fashion, a wide variety of cultural items on flat anime imagery without creating a scattered appearance. Other good details are the inclusion of, in addition to the old town, a city nearby that has an American-style mall, and the fact that a supporting female character runs an imagawayaki shop in a place that one cannot be quite sure whether it is old or new. An assemblage of such things as a whole successfully presents a single vision of the world.

The stage of this story is modeled on what was formerly Johana Town (now Nanto City) in Toyama Prefecture. Johana is a region where old culture is preserved more than most other regions in the prefecture, while it boasts a high standard of living for such a region and is also located close to the cities of Takaoka and Kanazawa. Presumably, the story unfolding on a hybrid screen on which a wide range of items resonate together made it possible for nationwide audiences to sense paradoxically the reality in the story. The same observation might hold true for the appeal that Japanese manga and anime have with overseas audiences. Overseas audiences may in all likelihood be drawn by the unified world view that those productions—which are hybrids and have now ceased to remind one of Japan—deliver paradoxically on the screen. This production evokes such a perception.



**Figure 5 - 8 : Scenes from “true tears” (©true tears Production Partnership)**

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