

Introduction

In the opening years of the twentieth century, Japanese intellectuals were faced with a pressing, seemingly unsolvable question. How could Japan modernize without losing its sense of identity, rooted in hundreds of years of aesthetic tradition? In the rapidly changing environment of the Meiji period (1868–1912), was modernization just another word for Westernization? How could Japan achieve an indigenous kind of modernity? By 1900, Japan already had overcome many of the initial, practical problems involved with rapid industrialization and the institution of a new government. The colonization of Taiwan, following victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, heralded a new age of territorial expansion, to be cemented with victory over Russia in 1905 and the addition of Korea as a protectorate in the same year. The Japanese were no longer on the receiving end of Western imperialist pressure, but exploring the role of imperialist themselves. But what was the role of Japan to be on the world stage? How could Japan assert itself as a nation without becoming the clone of other modern nations? The idea of entering the modern world without sacrificing the Japanese identity seemed both impossible and crucial. Politicians, journalists, and novelists alike debated the “modern dilemma” verbally and in print. Vital to the discussion were a small number of people who brought a fresh perspective to the problem. Those who had traveled abroad and experienced the culture and power of modern nations firsthand were seen to have special insight into both the processes of modernization and the importance of indigenous culture.

One group of writers in particular was significant in the discussion. Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), and Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943) all traveled in Europe and saw the countries of the West with their own eyes. Of these writers, Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki in particular have been

regarded as great thinkers and critics of civilization. Their works grapple with the pressing question of Japan's changing identity in the modern world, as well as the authors' own personal positions as cultural ambassadors occupying a liminal space between the East and the West. Shimazaki Tōson most recently has been examined at length in terms of Meiji nationalism (Bourdagh, 2003), while his "pilgrimage" to France is one of the best-known journeys of that period (Rimer, 1988). Of all these authors, however, it was Nagai Kafū who created the most persuasive argument for the definition and preservation of Japanese identity. In Japan, the association of Kafū with Japanese identity is a strong one. In the growing nationalism of the 1930s, it was Kafū's work that inspired a closer focus on cultural authenticity. Although the words "authentic" and "genuine" do not point to any tangible reality, they were significant ideas in early twentieth-century discourse as intellectuals strove to articulate Japan's national cultural identity.¹ Kafū's strong argument for the importance of traditional Japanese culture in *Edo geijutsuron* (On the Arts of Edo, 1913–1914) formed the basis for Kuki Shūzō's *Iki no kōzō* (The Structure of Detachment, 1930), itself a major component of the so-called "Return to Japan" movement of the 1930s. If Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki are considered the foremost critics of the "Japanese Self" at the end of the Meiji period, then what made Nagai Kafū's work so central to this later discourse on national identity?

Nagai Kafū is singular among Meiji writers in that he spent more time abroad than any other writer of his generation, writing more than thirty stories about his five years of travel in America and France alone. Kafū's elevation of Paris into a timeless cultural entity is one of the clearest examples we have of a Meiji writer constructing a particular representation of the Western Other. On his return to Japan in 1908, Kafū delivered a scathing attack on what he saw as the Meiji government's superficial approach to modernization. For the next two years his novels outspokenly criticized Meiji Japan and its façade of modernity, often encountering censorship in doing so. From 1910, Kafū focused increasingly on the past, writing mainly about remnants of the old capital Edo and the importance of preserving what was left of "authentic" Japanese culture. In a controversial decision, Kafū resigned from his position teaching French literature at Keiō University and gave up editing *Mita bungaku* in 1916, isolating himself almost completely from wider society. His novels took as their main characters the geisha who lived in the ephemeral "floating world," celebrating their role as guardians of civilization. It is this focus on traditional Japanese culture and the concentration on defining an

authentic Japan that ensured Kafū's position as a forerunner to the Return to Japan movement.

The question of whether Kafū may be seen as a serious critic, however, is a subject of much debate. This book examines the development of Kafū's criticism of Meiji Japan, and seeks to resolve some of the ambiguities in conflicting representations of Kafū to date, by demonstrating that his works of 1903–1912 may be read as a reasoned and sustained critique of the Meiji approach to Japanese modernization. Kafū's works of the early twentieth century dealt primarily with the problem of defining the Japanese Self in relation to the world. By defining Japan through contrast with the West and then with an imaginary "Orient," Kafū constructed a system in which, finally, Japan could affirm its status as "Self" in contrast to these "Others." Kafū was thus acting in a very positive way in the construction of the Japanese image. Throughout this volume it will be my contention that Kafū's Meiji critique and his constructions of Self and Other form two sides of the same argument in his work, and that both critique and constructions may be best understood by reading them as Occidentalizer works in their own right.

There exists an enormous amount of research on Nagai Kafū to date, mostly in Japanese, but Kafū's place in the Japanese literary canon is somewhat ambiguous. He is described variously as an "epicurean" hedonist (Takada, 1984), a nostalgic admirer of Edo literature (Takahashi, 1983), a staunch "individualist" in modern Japan (Isoda, 1989), and a reclusive, "cantankerous" figure who died alone in self-imposed isolation (Earhart, 1994). One of the most problematic issues in regard to Kafū's classification has been how to balance his great popularity and aesthetic appeal with his stature as a serious critic of civilization. An enduring image of Kafū is that of the pleasure-seeking man about town, a *flâneur* whose works often focus on the demimonde—the underworld of prostitutes, café waitresses, and geisha, and the red-light districts of New York, Paris, and Tokyo. Kafū's aesthetics are bound up in his use of the erotic element, which provides a link between many of his interests—the naturalism and decadence of French *fin-de-siècle* literature, the tradition of *eros* in Tokugawa fiction, and the ephemeral nature of the floating world. The image of Kafū as an irresponsible hedonist, however, is balanced by the view that French naturalist polemics and Modernist narrative technique gave Kafū an introduction to the serious study and depiction of the erotic.² This image of Kafū as a scholar and thinker holds considerable weight in Japan, where he is classed as one of the great figures of Meiji literature, presented with the Imperial Cultural

Decoration in 1952 for his contributions to Japanese literature and culture. Less often is he described as a critic, particularly in the West, and yet some academics in Japan, including Satō Shizuo (1995) and Shiozaki Fumio (1992) see Kafū as a serious critic on par with Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki in his grasp of issues of national identity and modernization.

It is without a doubt that much of Kafū's writing is erotically charged, and that the women who appear in his pages are striking and powerful in their sexuality. The blonde divorcée who opens the door in New York, the gypsy snake charmer on the outskirts of Lyon, the drunken dark-skinned nude in the painting at the Worlds' Fair—even from his early travel stories, Kafū had a remarkable ability to create women with instant and lasting appeal. But Kafū's narrators also provide detailed observations and thoughtful commentary on the societies in which these women lived; on the gender dynamics operating between men and women; and on the distinctions of class, race, age, and marital status that made relations between men and women exciting, daring, or taboo. Kafū thus managed to combine erotic allure with astute critical commentary, right through to his later works featuring geisha and café waitresses in Taishō and early Shōwa. It is the critical side of Kafū's work that will be foregrounded here, to provide an English-language analysis of his *bunmei hihyō* (critique of civilization) that has been minimized in the Western literature to date.

Another factor complicating the classification of Kafū's literature has been his status as a "pioneer of naturalism."³ Kafū certainly had a great affinity for the French naturalistic style. His works of 1901–1903 are strongly influenced by Zola's concepts of heredity and environment, and Kafū's summary-translation of Zola's *Nana*, published as *Joyū Nana* (The Actress Nana, 1903) has been hailed as one of his finest early works (Isoda, 1989, p. 34). But Kafū's European style of naturalism did not fit well with the contemporary Japanese literary establishment (or *bundan*). As Nakamura Mitsuo observes, Kafū was overseas when Japanese literature experienced its own naturalist movement, called *shizenshugi*. This style of writing tended toward self-absorbed confession, which was not a significant theme in Kafū's work at the time.⁴ As he did not see literature as a medium for opening one's true self to the world, Kafū's views set him apart from the popular *shizenshugi* writers, and so Kafū was classed as an "anti-naturalist" even though his style was much closer to so-called "pure" European naturalism.⁵ Of his contemporaries, Kikuchi Kan and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke held quite a low opinion of Kafū, although Mori Ōgai and Ueda Bin were impressed by his scholarship and

grasp of French literature.⁶ Later writers most sympathetic to Kafū were Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Satō Haruo, and Kuki Shūzō, all of whom were influenced by Kafū to some extent in their own works. Such a mixed reception by his peers and colleagues has naturally led to a mixed reception in the academic literature.

One reason for the varied nature of these representations of Kafū is his experimentation with many different literary styles through his career, as well as the wide range of subject matter and thematic focus in his texts. He was a somewhat erratic person, who wrote when the mood struck him, according to his interests at the time. This leads to an underlying element of chaos in Kafū's work, whether in subject matter, literary style, or creative process, which does not lend itself to easy categorization. The tension in the work between East and West, the tirades of abuse against Meiji on one hand contrasted with the beautiful lyricism of his aesthetic works on the other, the relative dearth of translation of Kafū's early works compared with the prolific translations of his later period, and the many suggested reasons for his withdrawal from society in 1916, all make Kafū a complex subject. A re-examination of Kafū's work is necessary in order to clarify these ambiguities of literary classification and categorization. Many of Kafū's interests are present in his work throughout his life: the role of the intellectual in society, the joys of connoisseurship (whether literary or erotic), and artistic resistance against an oppressive state. I hope to reconcile the various aspects of Kafū's work into a comprehensible whole, and to demonstrate that it is possible to read his literary output as a coherent and homogeneous body of work with a visible line of development. Kafū's argument for the definition of the Japanese Self, developed in his early period, may be seen reverberating through his mature work and indeed explains his focus on the disappearing traditions of Edo. While this study examines Kafū's early work in detail, it also provides a way of reading Kafū's later works in terms of continuity rather than disjunction.

One of the main reasons why many academics in the West have not read Kafū as a critic involves the enduring nature of Edward Seidensticker's 1965 book *Kafū the Scribbler*, the only English-language monograph available on Kafū until Stephen Snyder's *Fictions of Desire* appeared in 2000. Seidensticker represents Kafū as a cantankerous eccentric who used a love of the West and of the Japanese past to escape from modern Japanese reality, and whose criticisms of Meiji modernization never amounted to more than complaints. Kafū's eccentricity cannot be denied, but Seidensticker does not explain Kafū's great stature as a novelist and social critic in his own country. His

portrayal of Kafū primarily as a writer of fiction about the lives of the geisha played a part in the process of what Edward Fowler has called the postwar “re-Orientalization” of Japan, where academics and translators made efforts to portray a nonthreatening, exotic Japan in order to promote peaceful relations after World War II. By bringing out those critical works of Kafū that Seidensticker underplayed in order to present a nonthreatening, “Orientalized” Japan, this book seeks not only to present a fuller picture of Kafū’s text, but also to balance these postwar Orientalist readings of Japanese literature.⁷

Balance will also be found by bringing forward the Japanese scholarship on Kafū in recent years, including the unprecedented “Kafū boom” of 1996–1999. Suzuki Fumitaka (1995), Kanno Akimasa (1996), and Sakagami Hiroichi (1997) turn particularly to Kafū’s early life and works of 1903–1908 to comprehend the reasons for his violent reaction against Japan on his return there in 1908, and his withdrawal from society after 1916. Suenobu Yoshiharu (1997) contextualizes Kafū’s American experience in terms of American–Japanese relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while others examine colonial structures in Kafū’s early work. Komori Yōichi (1997) analyses Kafū through what he calls the geopolitical (*chiseiteki*) aspect of his works—a keen awareness of place and history underlying all of Kafū’s writing. Kōno Kensuke (1997) also examines Kafū’s construction of America in terms of America’s colonization by Europeans, especially in the intersections of race and place so visible in New York. Minami Asuka (2007) is the latest critic to re-read Kafū in light of postcolonial theory. Komori, Kōno, and Minami apply the theoretical framework of Orientalism to Kafū’s work in terms of the European colonization of America, and Kafū’s comprehension of America as an Orientalized and colonized space. I build on this work by examining Kafū’s complex relationship with the West and the “Orient” of European literature in terms of Occidentalism.

Because Kafū’s criticism heavily depends on contrast with the West, and deals with problems raised by the Westernization of Meiji Japan, the theoretical framework of Occidentalism is very useful in examining Kafū’s critique. The term *Occidentalism* has been defined in many different ways, all of which share a fundamental idea—that Occidentalism is the practice of writing or otherwise constructing and representing the West. Ning Wang points out that Occidentalism is still “indeterminate and problematic” as a discipline, in contrast to the now well-established body of work dealing with representations of the Orient. Wang situates the Occidentalist discourse in contemporary terms, to signify the construction of a particular kind of West for

political reasons. This contemporary Occidentalism may be seen in Islamic anti-Western feeling and activity; as a decolonizing strategy against Western hegemony in India; and in Japan's "own unique manifestation" of Occidentalism in its recognition of cultural colonization since the American Occupation (Wang, 1997, pp. 62–63). In this view, Occidentalism has had the effect of intensifying opposition between East and West rather than encouraging cultural dialogue, and is seen as a negative reactive force against Western hegemony in the anti-colonialist discourses of the third world. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit also have used Occidentalism in this way to talk about "the West in the eyes of its enemies," starting with Japan's views of the West in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and concluding with contemporary views of America among fundamental Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda (2004). In particular reference to Japan, some have used the term *Occidentalism* to refer to Japan's wartime discourse on Western arrogance, materialism, and selfish individualism, or to the portrayal of the West as a social model to be avoided.⁸ In contrast to this rather negative usage, James G. Carrier (1992, 1995) and Couze Venn (1993, 2000) use "Occidentalism" in a much wider sense, comparable to Edward Said's use of "Orientalism," to refer to an ontological and discursive system of perception and representation. Xiaomei Chen (1995) has perhaps the clearest working definition of Occidentalism, as "a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others" (pp. 4–5). This definition has three parts—construction of the Western Other, the use of that construction for a political purpose (whether for or against the prevailing political discourse), and construction of some kind of "self." It is this definition that I use as the basis for my analysis of Kafū's representations of the Western Other and definition of the Japanese Self.

In this book, I examine how Kafū constructed a particular vision of the West, and how he used this representation of the West as a contrast, by which he could criticize Japan's modernization in comparison to the genuine article overseas. "Nagai Kafū's Occidentalism" thus points to a number of ways in which Kafū used the West as a springboard for criticism of his own country, and the chapters of this book correspond to the different ways in which Kafū used his idea of the West. First, Kafū constructed a specific image of the American Other as a defining contrast to Japan, an idealized vision of liberty contrasted against a restrictive Meiji society. Second, Kafū envisioned Paris as a timeless, unchanging city of art and civilization, a construct that would inspire

his later argument for an authentic civilization that could attain modernity without sacrificing its cultural heritage. Third, in the process of exploring the idea of what it meant to be a Japanese writer overseas, Kafū drew heavily on the rhetoric of Western literature to construct his own vision of the Other. In particular, Kafū's work came to reflect the ideas and thought structures of Western Orientalist discourse, as his vision of the Middle East, Colombo, and Singapore closely resembled the Orient of Pierre Loti and Rudyard Kipling. Fourth, on his return to Japan, Kafū used his construct of the Western Other for a specific purpose, to criticize the Meiji government's superficial and misguided efforts at modernization. Kafū questioned the validity of reform in Japan, and asked how to reconcile the idea of an authentic Japanese culture with modernization. Based on his understanding of the importance of cultural heritage in countries like France, Kafū's argument engendered a search for true Japanese identity and culture. Finally, Kafū found his solution in a "return to Edo" and oppositional *gesaku* stance, here re-examined in regard to his later works. Over the course of this volume, I argue that Kafū's varied uses of the West are fundamental to his critique of Meiji, ultimately providing his solution to the modern dilemma.

Before examining Kafū's texts in detail, it is useful to outline some of the problems involved with applying the frameworks of Orientalism and Occidentalism to Japanese literature of the Meiji period. In the Japanese academy, Edward Said's book *Orientalism* has been extremely influential, although the mode of application has been limited. The term *Orientalism* is most often invoked in the Japanese scholarship to describe how Japanese intellectuals represented China and Korea, rather than how Japan was represented by the West, so Japan emerges as the subject, not the object, of Orientalist discourse (Oguma, 2002, pp. 352–353; Pinnington, 2006, p. 75). While this approach would cast Kafū's description of the Middle East simply as Orientalism, I argue that such a usage would be inappropriate, ignoring the complex dynamics of power operating between Western Orientalist discourse and Japanese literature. I aim rather to draw out the complexities of Kafū's view of the Orient—not the least interesting aspect of which was Kafū's clear admiration for Pierre Loti, whose Orient provided perhaps the most influential and long-lasting template for "exotic Japan" in Western culture.⁹

In Western scholarship on Japanese literature, the paradigms of *Orientalism* have enjoyed a revival in recent works (Slaymaker, 2006; Williams, 2006), although the text itself continues to receive ample criticism. Many of the problems of *Orientalism* stem from

Said's representation of the West and its discourse of Orientalism as a homogeneous, monolithic, ageless whole, a totalizing system. Many critics have argued that the discourse of Orientalism was neither monolithic nor homogeneous, but pluralistic and complex.¹⁰ My own reservations about using Said center on his denial of agency and the possibilities of writing from the margins of a discourse. Although Said's denial of agency within a dominant discourse depends on a closed binary system, the existence of writers from within the so-called Orient such as Nagai Kafū, who took the Orient as object for his own writing, demonstrates that such a closed system cannot be upheld. This book thus joins a number of critiques of Said that challenge his work on the issues of monolithic structures as well as the idea of the free agent writing from within a discourse.¹¹ For although Said is a useful starting point and one of the greatest influences on postcolonial and cultural studies, he has based his theory on Michel Foucault while ignoring one of Foucault's fundamental ideas—the possibility of counter-discourse, from the margins of even the most seemingly "monolithic" discursive structures. This criticism forms the basis for Xiaomei Chen's work *Occidentalism*, which puts the Foucauldian possibilities of counter-discourse back into the theories of Orientalism and Occidentalism. Chen (1995, pp. 8–9) argues that in his denial of the possibilities of counter-discourse and resistance, Said is missing the main point of Foucault's extensive work on the center and margin in structures of power and knowledge.

In my reading of Chen's work on post-Mao thought in China, I was struck by the ways in which her arguments on Occidentalism in China could be applied to Meiji Japan. The theories of civilization abounding in early Meiji, when the state was under pressure from the West and from economic and political theorists to modernize and attain *fukoku-kyōhei* (rich country, strong army) and *bunmei-kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), were full of images of a culturally and technologically superior West. These images were used by the state and the Meiji ideologues to exhort the nation to catch up to the West.¹² This model is very close indeed to what Chen calls "official Occidentalism," a construction of the Western Other by a government, not for the purpose of dominating the West, but for purely domestic political purposes. In the same way, Chen defines "anti-official Occidentalism" as that constructed by the opponents of the establishment, especially the disaffected intelligentsia, as a local or peripheral discourse to be used against the status quo. I argue that Kafū's appropriation and use of Western Orientalist discourse to his own ends, to protest against the façade of Western culture without

substance that was dominating Meiji thought and the face of Tokyo itself, constitutes a critique and counter-discourse to the Meiji state.¹³ In this way, my work follows Xiaomei Chen's, both in the terms that I have chosen to use, and in the reinsertion of Foucauldian counter-discourse into Said's methodology. It is in Kafū's depiction of the Orient that Said's work becomes most useful, as Kafū's references to Orientalist writers like Pierre Loti and Rudyard Kipling act to place him in a certain position vis-à-vis the body of Orientalist discourse. To make sense of the power dynamics operating in the text through these referential connections in particular, I employ Said's "methodology of the text," and discuss this approach in detail in Chapter 3.

The idea of the Orient in Kafū's work was certainly complex, informed by various overlapping and contradictory images of the East held by both Japanese intellectuals and European artists. At the same time that the West (*seiyō*) was occupying such an important place in Meiji intellectual discourse, Asia and the East (*tōyō*) were equally terms under discussion. Closely connected to the question of the modern dilemma was the question of where Japan stood in relation to Asia. Japan had inherited much of its culture, language, religion, and social structures from China, once the undisputed Middle Kingdom of the region. But China's primacy had slipped as a result of British imperialism in the Opium Wars of 1842 and 1860, and Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 seemed to prove that Japan had finally superseded the old power. As China had once been first in the region, that position now passed to Japan. But was the position of first in Asia enough? It was a small but crucial step from being first in Asia to being better than Asia—a step that would separate Japan from the rest of the region. The question of whether Japan was or was not part of Asia occupied the minds of the same people struggling with the modern dilemma, and indeed the two problems were closely related. If Japan were to act on the world stage as a modern yet authentic nation, it would need to retain its cultural heritage in some way, necessitating acceptance of cultural ties to China and the mainland. However, if Japan was too closely aligned with a backwards and old-fashioned Asia, how could it claim to be modern?

Kafū himself struggled with the Asia problem in his early work. Confronted with the British colony of Singapore in *Furansu monogatari* (Tales of France, 1909), the next year saw him pondering the problem in *Reishō* (Sneers, 1909–1910), resulting in his well-known "Tōyō shisō" or "Theory of the Orient." Kafū's analysis of Japan's cultural debt to China stands out as a thoughtful contribution to the debate at the close of the Meiji period. Complicating Kafū's understanding of *tōyō*,

however, was his wide reading of works by French and British authors who had imagined an “East” of their own, the “Orient” of the Middle East and lands of the Bible. Kafū drew a distinction between these imaginary lands of the Orient and the real countries of Asia close by. We are fortunate that Kafū was able to travel through the Middle East and Asia on his way back to Japan from Europe in 1908. On his way through Port Said and the Red Sea he recorded his impressions of the Arab peoples and linked what he saw directly to Orientalist literature. Kafū thus acts as an important connection between Orientalist writers of the West and writers from the purported Orient, a relationship that hinges on the uncomfortable position of being in-between cultures and discursive systems. Kafū was well aware that French and other European writers saw Japan as an Orient, and he was caught in the double bind of identifying strongly with the French subject, while still remaining the object of that Orientalist gaze. Kafū was one of the first of many artists for whom Paris posed the question of personal versus national identity, as the problem of how to express oneself simultaneously as an artist and a Japanese person became central in their work—the artist Fujita Tsuguharu (1886–1968), poet Kaneko Mitsuharu (1895–1975), and writer Yokomitsu Riichi (1898–1947) being notable examples in this regard.¹⁴ Artists coming to Paris from the Orient depicted in French art and literature occupied a position that could be seen negatively, as a sort of limbo, or positively, as a site of infinite possibility for self-reinvention and for fluid movement between multiple individual choices. As I argue, Kafū employed a fluid and flexible method of positioning, for himself and his nation, to find a solution not only for the artists’ double bind, but also for Japan’s *tōyō* paradox and the modern dilemma.

Throughout his early work, Kafū used images of both West and Orient as defining Others for the Japanese Self.¹⁵ The idea of the defining Other is one of the most basic structures of phenomenology. Definition through opposition, using mutually defining diametrical opposites, has long afforded human beings simple models of understanding the universe and remarkably effective ways of defining objects and things: It is far easier to define something by what it is not, than to pin down what something actually is. By situating Japan in terms of its Others, Kafū was better able to theorize and think about what constituted Japan’s own identity. Indeed, the act of situating, or positioning, was to become the underpinning logic of his early work. The link between positioning and definition was pointed out in the 1960s by Kenneth Burke (1969), who wrote that “[t]o tell what a thing is, you place it in terms of something else. This idea of locating, or placing,

is implicit in our very word for definition itself" (p. 24). Throughout his works, Kafū was to use strategies of positioning both for himself as an individual person and for the nation of Japan as a whole. These strategies allowed him to come to a better understanding of his own identity as "Japanese" and what that meant in the context of Japan's place in the modern world. Kafū's use of positioning and binary structures was very fluid, depending on the point he wished to make. Thus, at any one time Kafū could be working with a simplistic and superficial Japan versus the West model in order to emphasize contrast, or he could be using a sophisticated array of interconnected spaces acknowledging subtle differences between cultures and cultural communities. For this reason I have chosen to call Kafū's literary strategy *flexible positioning*. By emphasizing the flexibility of Kafū's positioning, and showing how it developed over time, I hope to avoid casting his work as a static, totalizing system.

A focus on Kafū's positioning also serves to emphasize that Self and Other do not function as discrete and separate entities in his work, but in a relationship. Identity is always formed vis-à-vis the Other, or in relation to a number of posited Others. Two of the most prominent thinkers on this relationship have been Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan, both of whom recognized the importance of the human gaze in establishing relations between Self and Other. The face-to-face moment of Levinas leads naturally to a feeling of obligation to the Other—recognition and acknowledgment of the Other being key to the process (Levinas, 1999). Lacan similarly focuses on the relationship between Self and Other through a face-to-face meeting, yet with a crucial difference—Lacan's meeting takes place through a mirror, rendering the vision of the Other untouchable and unattainable, even while the process of recognition and acknowledgment remains the same. It is Lacan's gaze of Self upon the Other that seems to have attained dominance in literary analysis concerning Japan. Lacan's unfulfillable desire for the Other is popular in Western scholarship on modern Japanese literature, much of which draws on René Girard's concept of "triangular desire."¹⁶ If we take desire as just one of the many emotions and feelings that act to fill the gap between Self and Other—others of which may be prejudice, hatred, love, admiration, and so on—then this approach is useful as a way into exploring the Self-Other relationship (Hutchinson & Williams, 2006, pp. 6–7). However, desire has been privileged to such an extent in recent scholarship that the Other has been almost taken for granted as a distant, unattainable object of eternally unfulfilled desire. In this paradigm, Self and Other remain completely separate, and the focus of discussion turns to the

gap between them. Given the rhetorical focus on the West in Meiji discourse, the writer's desire to close the gap between Japan and the West is often seen to be a primary motivating factor in Meiji literature. I have called this model *gap theory* to draw attention to the common linkage of desire for the Other with an inferior–superior binary (Hutchinson, 2006, pp. 57–59). Such an approach may also be seen in terms of modernization theory, where “modernity implies a teleological historical movement, a single path of social development, and a relentless march toward the Western model” (Lamarre, 2005, p. 17). I wish to get away from such “West and the Rest” models and focus rather on the relationship between Self and Other, emphasizing the pluralities of Selves and Others in flexible binary systems, and the many possible positionings that a writer may take up in such systems. To this end, I do not focus on desire in Kafū's works, but on his positioning strategy vis-à-vis the Others he encounters. This is not to say that desire plays no part in Kafū's literature. Given the demimonde setting of his fiction, the panoply of prostitutes and geisha that fill his pages, such a claim would be insupportable. But I hope to make it clear that desire for an unobtainable, distant, superior Other is not the primary motivation for Kafū's work.

In focusing on Self and Other, Orient and Occident, and employing the theoretical frameworks of Orientalism and Occidentalism, it will be necessary to keep in mind one of the major problems associated with such terms: All depend on binary structures to understand systems of power. Binary oppositions have been extremely useful for critics in the twentieth century, seeking models with which to understand social structures as well as the relationships between literary texts and their historical contexts. Just as Foucault used binary oppositions to describe and analyze Western society, such as legal–criminal, normal–deviant, sane–insane and so on, Said's *Orientalism* set up East and West, or Orient and Occident, as mutually defining diametrical opposites, in order to better understand the relationship between imperialism and literature.¹⁷ The two related theoretical approaches of Orientalism and Occidentalism are thus predicated on a binary structure, and bring with them all the associated problems of binarism—essentialization, totalization, and the naturalization of an arbitrary hierarchical structure.¹⁸ The danger is that by speaking in terms of Orient and Occident, Japan and the West, and so on in my analysis of Kafū's work, I run the risk of perpetuating binary structures that do not really exist, and have never existed except as imaginary constructs by which people have sought to understand and configure their world. Similarly, because the word *Occidentalism* implies a whole array of

discourse and discursive practice—a whole structure of thinking, writing, and representing “the West”—involving intellectuals both in and out of government as well as poets and fiction writers, it seems we cannot examine Kafū as a single “Occidentalist” as if separate from this wider context. However, a project of this size cannot hope to undertake a mapping of the Meiji intellectual discourse on the West as Occidentalism, and indeed such a study would face serious theoretical difficulties in presenting Occidentalism as a totalizing discourse and ontological system similar to Said's Orientalism. Xiaomei Chen (1995) warns against using Occidentalism as a total theory to apply to all historical periods at will: “No theory can be globally inclusive,” she argues, and so “The critical discourse of Occidentalism should not become a new orthodoxy that could easily be applied to all countries and all historical periods” (p. 13). Chen suggests that concentration on the particular historical moment and particular case studies may help to avoid both the tendency toward totalization as well as the setting up of a closed binary system of Orientalism–Occidentalism.

Throughout this volume, I aim to avoid such totalizations by concentrating on the specific case of Kafū and his texts. The West and Orient presented here are the observations and constructions of the author Nagai Kafū, and are not meant to form a totalizing binary system. This kind of determinist system is indeed challenged and disrupted by Kafū's texts. The relationships between Japan and America, or between Singapore and colonialist Britain, are presented through Kafū's text by quotation as singular instances of observation of the historical moment in literature. I aim not to generalize about the relationships between nations in the early twentieth century, but to discover how Kafū saw these relationships, and what effect his observations of them had on his perception of Japanese modernization. By locating Kafū in his historical moment and discovering his specific point of view, I hope to avoid ascribing anachronistic value judgments and attitudes to Kafū and other writers of the Meiji period. Kafū and his contemporaries read avidly in French, British, and other literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and translated many of these works for the Japanese audience. Popular literature of the time happened to be Orientalist literature, steeped in colonialist attitudes and specific ways of viewing the world. Kafū breathed the literary air of Orientalism just as the European audience had done for years. He certainly would never have thought of Flaubert or Kipling as Orientalists the way that we do today, nor would he consider his own constructions of the West as Occidentalism. Therefore, I use the terms *Orientalism* and *Occidentalism* as part of the language of current research,

indicating ways in which we may read these discursive structures now, not how they would have been perceived in Kafū's time.

Focusing on the particular historical moment also necessitates some description of the historical and intellectual context, in order to understand Kafū's reactions against the modernizing policies of Meiji Japan. Throughout this volume, I do my best to explicate Kafū's references to contemporary events and issues of the day. The main issue for Kafū was undoubtedly modernization. The history of the early Meiji modernization process, and the push to modernize along Western lines, is well documented in English, as are the physical changes wrought upon the city of Tokyo.¹⁹ By Kafū's return to Japan in 1908, the major structural reforms (legal, political, educational, and social) were already in place. What received the brunt of Kafū's attack from 1908 onward was the superficial, shoddy, confused chaos of Tokyo, with new buildings, bridges, and streetcars giving a wholly cosmetic lift to the external face of Japan with no discernible change in the underlying thought. Kafū despaired that the Japanese had no deep appreciation of the Western culture they sought to emulate, nor any real understanding of what modernity might mean for Japan. Kafū's intellectual context, or the discourse of the Meiji period, was one of great concern with issues of modernization, meanings of modernity (*kindai*), Westernization, national identity, individualism, and the authenticity of culture. These themes appear again and again in the works of Meiji writers of Kafū's generation. Tomi Suzuki (1996) and Hisaaki Yamanouchi (1978) have recognized Kafū as an integral part of this discourse. Viewing Kafū in his particular historical moment means viewing him as part of a constellation of Meiji writers, all searching for a new definition of what it meant to be Japanese. Taken in context, I hope that this study sheds light on Meiji literature as a whole in its search for the Japanese Self.

Thinking of Nagai Kafū in terms of his relation to the wider intellectual discourse of the time, it is well to keep in mind that not everyone in Meiji Japan would have thought the way Kafū did about the West, Asia, and the Orient. Indeed, hardly anyone would have thought this way—Kafū was one of the very few writers of his generation to travel overseas, and even fewer people travelled to as many different places as Kafū. He was able to compare North America with Europe, the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean, and Egypt with Singapore. Kafū's vision of the West was informed by years of reading European literature, as well as an upbringing quite different to that of many writers of his generation. Kafū's father, Nagai Kyūchirō, was himself an interesting man caught between two worlds, well

known as a writer of Chinese-style poetry and at the same time an executive for the Yokohama Specie Bank, traveling all over the world on business. Kafū would later describe his father as smoking a pipe, reclining in an armchair, and wearing a Western-style suit. The Nagai house was filled with Western furniture and art, as well as Christian iconography belonging to Kafū's grandmother. Thus, while Kafū was part of the generation brought up in the uncomfortable double school system of Confucian and Western learning that Mori Ōgai likened to the feeling of wearing two different sandals on the one pair of feet (Katō, 1979, p. 113), Kafū's home life exposed him to a far higher degree of Western culture and material goods than that experienced by most of his contemporaries.

Nagai Kafū's vision of the West was therefore his own vision, even as it was part of a wider Meiji period discourse on the West, and it is his view which interests me here: how he utilized the West to formulate his views on Meiji Japan, and how he developed his own construction of the West in order to pursue his passion for Japan's future, in the hope of reconciling that future with Japan's past. Throughout Kafū's work, those spaces called Japan, the West, and Asia are defined in a specific and limited way, in order to achieve a particular purpose. They do not map directly onto our own understandings of Japan, the West, and Asia, because these terms are just as arbitrary today as they were in the early twentieth century—always under negotiation and subject to our own imaginations. The tension between binarism and complexity in Kafū's work is precisely what makes it so interesting, because we are still struggling with the same problems of binarism and complexity today. By analyzing Kafū's use of the West and seeing what he was trying to achieve through his particular representation of the Western Other, we not only can arrive at some new understanding of what was important to people in the Meiji period, but also come to a clearer understanding of how various Others are represented in our own time. While the immediate subject of this book is Nagai Kafū's attempt to define the Japanese Self, it is in the interplay of Self and Other in his work that we see our own definitions of national identity.