

Introduction

This book is about a variety of language reforms that occurred in Meiji Japan (1868–1912). It is certainly not at all comprehensive, but is rather an attempt to intervene in the vast scholarship of language reform that has defined the past two decades. In thinking about linguistic reforms, it is of course vital that we consider issues of nation formation, as many scholars have done in the past. Lee Yeounsuk, Komori Yōichi, Yasuda Toshiaki, and Osa Shizue all published works in the 1990s and beyond, and to this day their works define the field of language reform.¹ It is not a coincidence that with the proliferation of postcolonial and nationalization theories in the 1990s, scholarship began to adopt a new focus with regard to the production of national language and its ideological implications. Many works, engaging with Michel Foucault's theory of systems of power and governmentality, began to focus on the structure of violence constitutive of any nation within which the construction of language, especially national language, played an integral role.² These texts have produced fruitful analyses that rewrite the somewhat facile teleological narrative of modernization and vernacularization that shaped previous scholarship, as represented by the monumental works of Yamamoto Masahide from the 1960s.³

The trend of postcolonial and cultural studies, accompanied by various studies of imperialism and nationalism, is worthy of reflection, as it extends far beyond the scholarship of Meiji language reform. As early as 2000, scholars such as Harry Harootunian issued an apt warning regarding the link between postcolonialism and area studies. In his *History's Disquiet*, Harootunian discusses the trap of postcolonial theory as follows:

Postcolonial theory's promise to supply a critique of Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge and provide a forum for the hitherto excluded to speak in their own voice from the margins where domination and power had held them silent since the beginning of modernity—now reread as colonialism—stands as the true successor of area studies, which can be seen as their prehistory. Yet the search for the excluded

voice often leads to the futile pursuit of authenticity and restores the Eurocentric claims of the sovereign subject it wishes to eliminate.⁴

Elsewhere, he also states:

Rather this obsessive Foucauldianism has often found power everywhere, as well as an opportunity for resistance everywhere. Too often this has resulted in lavish declarations of resistance by the powerless and weak. . . . Sometimes, the mere enunciation of cultural difference and thus the claim of identity is made to appear as an important political act when it usually signals the disappearance of politics. The politics of identity based on the enunciation of cultural difference is not the same as political identity whose formation depends less on declarations of differences than on some recognition of equivalencies.⁵

What Harootunian incisively demonstrates here is that what began as a critical examination of the ideological nature of knowledge produced in area studies turned into something slightly but crucially different. Postcolonialism and cultural studies instead discovered a new space that worked to relieve the frustrations that many felt about the Eurocentric tendency of theoretical discourse. As a result, focus shifted to the recovery of the voices of those unjustly oppressed. This resulted in a scholarly surge toward identity politics, which, despite its historical importance, contains an intrinsic trap. The discourse of identity inherits the culturalism inscribed in area studies—one that postcolonial studies and cultural studies set out to criticize in the first place. In other words, scholars tend to seek out unique voices of the oppressed, and as such end up essentializing identity—whether this be the identity of the subaltern or the oppressed non-West. Furthermore, what is symptomatic of such trends is a naive opposition posed between the oppressor and the oppressed. The desire to give voice to the oppressed, however just and moral it may sound, tends to demonize the oppressors operating within the system of authority. I of course understand this sentiment, but demonizing these figures ultimately attributes an excess of power to them, reifying the very thing that it seeks to undermine. I am entirely sympathetic with such desires, but I also want to be vigilant against inadvertently strengthening the systems that we attempt to criticize.

I raise this issue in order to reflect on the ways in which the “nation,” a structure of modernity within which we live, has been approached by scholarship in the past two decades. It is not a coincidence that the nationalism studies that have shaped our scholarship since the 1990s grew alongside postcolonial and cultural studies that focused—rightly or wrongly—on systems of power, as embodied by the “nation.” A tremendous amount of work has been produced engaging with Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, coupled with Foucault’s many theorizations of systems of power as inscribed in the institutions of the modern nation.⁶ I of course believe that a nation is a system of violence, and it is imperative that we explore the ways in which such violence is implemented. We must, however, be mindful of the implications of this scholarly trend. The inextricable relationship

between such works and the rise of postcolonialism and cultural studies in our field is one that requires attention, for here too we find signs of Harootunian's warning. The systems of power that Foucault delineates are structural, and by no means offer a space outside of which subjects can exist. But here again the desire to give voice to the oppressed, in this case minorities who are excluded from the so-called "authentic citizens" of the nation—oppressed by such factors as class, ethnicity, and gender—leads to the excessive attribution of power to the very thing that it seeks to undermine. It is one thing to expose the ideological structure by which the nation sustains itself. But it is quite another to suggest that such awareness can open up a space in which oppressed voices can be redeemed and given their rightful, "equal" status.

National language scholarship of the 1990s was not free of this trap. This is apparent in the focus on Ueda Kazutoshi, the "founder" of *kokugo* (national language) and father of Japanese linguistics, who trained many of the scholars who went on to institute language reforms in Japan's colonies. Here Ueda is situated as an evil nationalist/imperialist whose project entailed the oppression of local dialects and colonized subjects—as for example Okinawans, Ainu, Koreans, and Taiwanese.⁷

I do not doubt that these minorities and their languages were oppressed in light of Ueda's *kokugo* reform, which sought to produce a standardized language shared by the occupants of "Japan" and its empire. And it is certainly important to study these "minority" languages that are too often disregarded. But what we must pay attention to is precisely what the scholarship that demonizes Ueda takes for granted, which ultimately contributes to the oppression of these minority voices. For example, binary thinking of oppressor and oppressed makes us lose sight of the fact that a nation, in order to sustain itself, *needs* minorities. That is to say, no one is inherently an "authentic citizen." Such a fictive group—in Japan's case, *yamato minzoku*—needs to be constantly fabricated, marking and remarking boundaries between self and other. *Yamato minzoku* does not exist. It is only through the constant reproduction of minorities that such "authentic citizens" can be sustained. Authentic citizens, in other words, can only be defined by the various minorities that make them "authentic." Structurally speaking, anyone can be designated a minority, as anyone is prone to markers of difference. Just as no one is inherently an "authentic citizen," no one is inherently a minority. In effect, the facile binary of oppressor and oppressed cannot sustain itself, as one is invariably defined and contaminated by the other. And to valorize minority identities without critically understanding this system can only reinforce the system that is the nation.

What I want to call attention to is that studies of identity politics, in having recourse to so-called "exteriorities" of Japan (Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, etc.), perhaps too hastily conceive of the notion of Japanese exteriority. Such research is absolutely crucial in relativizing Japan's claims of national sovereignty, and must be supported. At the same time, however, without first reflecting on what it means

to be “outside” Japan, one runs the risk of repeating the traditional conception of what belongs within and without the nation. This tendency, I believe, is of a piece with those traditional notions of nationalism that privilege national “interiority”—that is, *yamato minzoku*. In other words, unless one reflects on what it means to be outside Japan, one risks reifying the notion of Japanese interiority. In this sense, ironically, certain forms of identity politics may ultimately be seen as complicit with a very traditional notion of nationalism. I would like to problematize the very notion of national interiority and exteriority. In my view, a certain exteriority of Japan can be seen within “Japan” itself. This integral relationship between the majority and minority is a crucial one that I will develop further in the discussion of race later in this introduction.

In this book, I make interventions in these scholarly trends from two different angles, coinciding with the two parts of this volume. The first part, entitled “Pre-Nation: Linguistic Chaos,” examines the first two decades of the Meiji period prior to the emergence of Ueda Kazutoshi, with a specific focus on the chaotic nature of language reforms. What is symptomatic of the scholarship that focuses on Ueda is that the “nation” appears to preexist the nation. In the effort to condemn the nation and its creators, the nation is posited as a preexisting telos to which the leaders aspired, as it focuses on the production of an ideologically-charged “national language” (*kokugo*), which forcefully excludes or assimilates otherwise heterogeneous languages. The following passage by Yasuda Toshiaki captures the trend most clearly:

The construction of ‘language’ in the modern sense is a political process. When the nation-state is established and ‘linguistic modernity’ emerges together with the awareness of the role language plays within it, the vernacular language is molded as ‘*kokugo*,’ which is a process that is often considered a national development toward progress. ‘*Kokugo*’ is then deemed homogeneous; it begins to embody the institutions (such as law, education, military and media) that consolidate the *kokumin* (there are many efforts to organize such consolidation), exerting its power on ‘dialects’ and other non-national languages that were unable to attain the status of *kokugo*. It is possible to say that such a scheme appears in any nation when the modern nation-state is formed. (I have inserted scare quotes around concepts that are constructed).⁸

Yasuda appears conscientious when making his parenthetical remarks about key concepts such as “*kokugo*” and “dialects” being constructs. But in his and similar accounts, the process of said construction is predetermined by that of nationalization, which “appears in any nation when the modern nation-state is formed”: the “vernacular” becomes “*kokugo*,” consolidating the national community, which then begins to exert power on “dialects and other non-national languages.” In effect, he logically posits the nation as a preexisting entity. In large part, the scholarly trend of which Yasuda is an example reflects the notion of “imagined communities” put forth by Benedict Anderson, who theorized the ideological formation

of the nation-state in which the production of “national language” played a significant part. 1990s Japanese scholarship appropriated this theory, producing a teleological narrative that posits the “national language” of the imagined nation as the putative telos, often producing an inverted narrative that figures the nation as the entity that inspired the movement that created it. Of course, scholars are aware that the “nation” is created or imagined. But the movement toward the nation is not at all questioned. In such a paradigm, which can be seen in some works more than in others, the urge to nationalize is deemed the primary *cause* of change.⁹ The formulaic discussions that seemingly trace the nation-building process often end up self-fulfilling prophecies.

What is important is that the language reformers of the first few decades of the Meiji period did not yet know what the “nation” was. Given that the nation is assumed, however, the many reforms that preceded those of Ueda are situated in scholarship as a preparatory phase.¹⁰ At the core of Meiji discursive space is a very simple yet often forgotten linguistic condition: the Meiji literati did not have a shared notion of “the language we speak” that helped to constitute an imagined national community, nor a shared notion that “the language we speak” was indeed their goal. What I seek to highlight in this part of the book is precisely this *lack* of a goal. In so doing, I seek to liberate the discussion of linguistic reform from the “national” so as to analyze how the “national” itself became possible.

Such perspective is important for several reasons. The first is to reevaluate the role of *kan* in the production of linguistic modernity. Recent scholarly focus on the nation aligns with an urge to emphasize the de-Sinification of the “Japanese” language. More often than not, these scholars construe *kan*—be it *kanji*, *kanbun*, or *kangaku*—as a manifestation of “China,” for “Asia” to be left behind in Japan’s efforts at modernization.¹¹ As such, scholars treat *kan* as a negative reference point against which to posit a new “national” form of prose. Of course it is true that many Meiji intellectuals designated *kan* as the other to the modern, but that certainly does not mean that *kan* was not appropriated.

This is not to say that all forms of *kanbun* have been undervalued in recent scholarship. The importance of *kanbun kundokutai* (*kanbun* in “Japanese” or local syntax), for example, has been emphasized by many scholars, especially those who have focused on its role in the political arena, as well as its crucial role in translations of Western philosophy and materials.¹² Interestingly, however, some of the same critics who see the importance of *kanbun kundokutai* take up the Meiji intellectuals’ claims for de-Sinification and uncritically link these to colonialist/imperialist tendencies. These critics call such acts manifestations of the “colonial unconscious,” which refers to the act of seeking out “Asia” as the “more barbaric other” in the urge to “identify with the West.”¹³ The aim of this argument is to criticize Meiji intellectuals for their imperialist tendencies—an important aim, certainly—but such an argument tends to identify *kanbun* as “Asian,” thereby essentializing the process of de-Sinification. Such overemphasis on de-Sinification

conceals the critical role that *kan* indeed played in the production of a new language. Much work has been done recently by scholars, such as the literary critic Saitō Mareshi, to reassess the importance of *kan* in the Meiji period, and my study clearly follows this trend.¹⁴

In discussing the linguistic reform movements of the Meiji period, the use of the categories “Chinese” and “Japanese,” terms which in our vocabulary designate “national” languages, is quite problematic. Given that we are dealing with a time when the “national” had yet to take form, these categories appear anachronistic. This is especially true when we translate. *Kanji*, *kanbun*, and *kangaku* are often translated as “Chinese” characters, “Chinese” writing, and “Chinese” classics, but such regionally and culturally specific designations, in our post-national age, seem to indicate that *kanji*, *kanbun*, and *kangaku* all belong to this entity called “China” and are hence “foreign” (indicating that they are merely “borrowed”). The designation “Japanese” for such words as *kokubun* (“Japanese” writing), *kokugo* (the “Japanese” language), and *kundoku* (the reading of *kanbun* in “Japanese” syntax and with “Japanese” suffixes) must also be used with caution, as it, too, assumes an “untainted” realm of “Japanese,” a rhetoric that many Meiji intellectuals used when they suddenly discovered that their language was “tainted” by “Chinese.” As painful as this may be for readers, I will retain the original terms without translating them to avoid the anachronism, and will qualify every translation of “Chinese” and “Japanese” when I need to revert to them.

In Part I, I also seek to shed light on the epistemological shift that occurred in the understanding of language (*genko*), especially in its relationship to literature (*bungaku*), a shift that has yet to be addressed in any significant way. Scholars of national language have stressed that there was no unified sense of “the language we speak,” focusing instead on how such language came into being. What they fail to note is that the category of *genko*, the equivalent of what we now call “language,” had yet to be discovered in the early Meiji period. *Bungaku*, or what we translate as “literature” today, constituted “language”; it is thus not a coincidence that *kokugo* textbooks featured literary histories.¹⁵ In discussing *genko* and *bungaku*, contemporary scholars tend to impose current notions of “language” and “literature” onto their supposed Meiji equivalents, unable to challenge such categories.

Take, for example, the following passage where Lee Yeounsuk describes the efforts of scholars of *kokubungaku* (national literature):

In such efforts, [scholars] did not adhere to the ideals of *genbun'itchi*, according to which the written language was to be unified with the spoken language. This signifies that *kokugo* was still subjugated to *kokubun*. Even Sekine Masanao, who argued that ‘today’s commonly used language’ was the ‘core of *kokugo*,’ stated that the purpose of ‘*kokugo* study’ was to ‘standardize a *kokubun* of authentic elegance.’ This was because he, too, could not see the clear boundaries between *kokugo* and *kokubun*. For this hurdle to be overcome, we had to wait for Ueda Kazutoshi.¹⁶

I owe a great deal to Lee's work, and among the national language scholars of the 1990s, she is perhaps the most sensitive and insightful. However, Lee here resorts to a retrospective narrative and posits a division between *kokubun* and *kokugo* that had yet to exist at that time. She faults Sekine for not being able to see the boundaries between *kokugo* and *kokubun*, but such a view is contingent upon the production of *kokugo* as an independent entity from *kokubun*. Only when we recognize the existence of *kokugo* as an entity separate from *kokubun* can we say that it was subjugated to *kokubun*.

Lee then credits Ueda for going beyond *bungaku* = "language," the idea to which *kokubun* scholars were bound. She naturally assumes that Ueda, when he introduced the division between *kokugo* and *kokubun*, produced *gengo* as "language." This is a process that she traces back to his encounter with the theories of Bopp and Schlegel. Here Ueda claims, "Schlegel mixes *literature and history* in his study of *gengo*, but Bopp goes against such tendencies and studies *gengo itself*, offering a *dry but clear* explanation."¹⁷ In essence, at the core of Lee's understanding is the idea that *gengo* is *langue* (in the Saussurian sense); that *bungaku* is one manifestation of it; and that it was Ueda who was able to finally see this difference. As we shall see in detail in chapter 4, however, Ueda's use of *gengo* and *bungaku* does not coincide with Lee's understanding. For Ueda, *kokugo* was equivalent to the language of "voice," and *bungaku* or *kokubun* was equivalent to the language of *moji* (letters). In other words, for Ueda, *gengo* (*kokugo*) and *moji* (*kokubun*) constituted two separate modes of expression, one via voice and the other via letters.

Both *kokubun* and *kokugo*, and hence the understanding of "language" and "literature," constituted something entirely different from what they mean in our current interpretive scheme. This difference is too often glossed over in a narrative that focuses on the processes of nationalization, which posits *kokugo* as an entity that developmentally emerged from the *kokubun* movement (given the attention to the establishment of the shared sense of nation). An examination of the Meiji period language reform betrays the fact that our perception of "language" and "literature" is quite limiting. Inscribed in the many arguments for reform, especially those in the early Meiji period, are various "languages" that are incompatible with our own. I seek to underscore such paradigms while paying attention to the categories of "language" and "literature."

With such aims in mind, the first three chapters examine the linguistic terrain that historically preceded the Ueda-led *kokugo* reforms. My first chapter analyzes calls for a different orthography, such as the adoption of indigenous syllabic scripts (*kana*), the use of the Roman alphabet, the rejection of *kanji* characters, and the call to adopt the English language. This chapter seeks to highlight the competing "languages" inscribed in the claims for a different orthography that formed the discursive space of the 1870s. The second chapter looks at the early to mid 1880s, with a special focus on *kanbun kundokutai*, the main style of language of the intelligentsia at the time, a form that enjoyed the status of "common language"

(or *futsūbun*). I analyze the many arguments against *kanbun kundokutai* and the seemingly contradictory proliferation of the same style, and argue that it was precisely the proliferation of this style that opened up a space for *kokugo* to later claim. The third chapter examines the realm of *zoku* (often translated as the “vernacular”), with a specific focus on the intersection of prose and poetry. The late 1880s and early 1890s featured an increasing focus on *zoku* both by fiction writers and national literature scholars, a tendency that is often integrated in the teleological narrative of *kokugo*, given the appearance of *kokugo* as reflecting a “populist” choice. I show that *zoku* was in fact an aesthetic category for these groups of writers and that it was mobilized in ways that did not signify the vernacularization of language.

In Part II of the book, entitled “Race and Language Reform,” I address one major issue that has not been studied in the prior scholarship on language reform: race. Meiji was a race war. And it is crucial to inscribe race in our examination, since no analysis of imperialism or nationalism is possible without race.

When Japan entered the world order in the nineteenth century, the world was of course already racialized. Most importantly, this racialized world order was considered “scientific knowledge.” It is not a coincidence that Japanese intellectuals began to obsessively translate world maps early in the Meiji period to disseminate this form of “knowledge.” Fukuzawa Yukichi’s *Sekai kunizukushi* (*The Countries of the World*, 1869) and Uchida Masao’s *Yochi shiryaku* (*An Abridged Account of the World*, 1870) were two prominent texts that were used as school textbooks to teach world geography and disseminate the mode of categorization of the world inscribed within it. Relying heavily on Social Darwinian rhetoric, these texts designated Europe as the center of enlightenment and the most “civilized” geographical region, while portraying Africa and such Asian countries as India as full of ignorant “barbaric” people. Japan, in this framework, was designated as “half-civilized.”¹⁸

It was within such a worldview that Japan was forced to identify itself. In short, Japan’s relationship with the West and hence the modern is always already a racialized relationship, one that necessitated a process of self-colonization, which manifests itself as an urge to become the West. But this desire to become the West can only be frustrated, as the West is never fully accessible. How can this frustration be alleviated? Only through emulating the model that is the West and becoming a colonizer. Japan was one such example, and such actions are inscribed in Ueda Kazutoshi’s language reform. Introducing race in the second part of this book thus presents a critical foundation through which nationalism and imperialism operated. The choices Ueda made, for example, were integral to such structure. In this way I will further complicate the imperialist nationalist narrative that envelops the scholarship on language reform.

It is curious that scholars of nationalization do not touch upon race, as race scholars have repeatedly shown the slippery slope that exists between nationalism

and racism. At the same time, however, lack of references to race in Japan studies is not limited to the scholarship of language reform. Of course, race has been problematized in Japanese literary studies, but it is typically through the representation of “blackness” or “whiteness” in modern Japanese media such as literature, film, or visual culture. While such works have reinscribed race in an otherwise silent scholarly realm, they in many cases do not avoid the trap of biologism precisely because they typically take as their object the physical skin color of a character. When we think of modern Japanese literary studies, many scholars have discussed Japanese imperialism, colonialism, ethnocentrism, but it is very rare to discuss race. Of course there are definite exceptions—Naoki Sakai, for example, has consistently written on race. I would like to follow his lead and try to inscribe race in places that are not often discussed.

As Sakai has pointed out very succinctly in an essay entitled “Reishizumu sutadizu e no shiza” (“Perspectives on Racism Studies”), racialization needs to be understood as a system of social categorization by which a given individual’s physical traits, chosen selectively yet dogmatically, define his/her place in the community to which he/she belongs.¹⁹ Race, in other words, is fabricated—in the double sense of deception and construction. It is imagined or constructed and yet appears to be real, as if it existed somewhere. “Whiteness,” for example, only appears to exist and is in fact constructed as an object of desire, a vehicle for belonging to the most “civilized” community by which the modern order is defined. It is important to keep in mind that indexes of identity, such as the national community, national language, or race, must be constantly reconstructed. As with the notion of “authentic citizens” I discussed earlier, the boundaries that determine the indexes of identity are constantly in flux, and hence in need of repeated reinforcement. Furthermore, any index of identity is in itself insufficient; it needs to depend upon other indexes in order to be what it is. In effect, race is not something that can be separated from the categories of ethnicity or nationality. It is impossible to say that race is biological or physical, that ethnicity is cultural, and that nationality is political, despite the fact that many scholars have attempted to distinguish these categories.²⁰ These notions are all conflated, contaminated, and mutually invasive. The basic premise of this gesture to inscribe race in Japan studies is that racism is integral to our understanding of modernity, with all its slippages into ethnocentrism and nationalism. It is crucial to note that my primary interest is in the process of racialization, which occurs discursively in realms that on the surface appear to have nothing to do with race. As Balibar reminds us: “racism has nothing to do with the existence of objective biological ‘races.’”²¹

Furthermore, it is important to understand that civilization, hence race, involves at its core a teleology, a movement toward “whiteness.” “Whiteness,” constructed as a telos, is intimately related to privilege, including, but not limited to, the “West” in all its incarnations, wealth, social status, “cultivated taste,” and the “proper” use of language—such as pronunciation, grammar, and so forth. Frantz Fanon suggests

this in *Black Skin, White Masks* as he discusses the “Negro of Antilles” as being “proportionately whiter—that is, he will come close to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.”²² He continues:

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.²³

The many “cultural standards” of the civilized, including the proper use of language, are means to racialize and hierarchize people within the global order of modernity. Without conceptualizing race in this manner, we cannot begin to understand how racial categories have changed throughout history. We do not have to look too far back in American history to see when Italians and Jews, for example, were not considered “white.”

Such a view of race is vital to understanding the complexity of race that lies at the core of modernity. I suspect that part of the silence on race in Japan Studies (or, for that matter, in East Asian Studies in general) is based on biologism. Race is often disregarded, as discussions of Japanese imperialism and colonialism address Koreans, Chinese, and Taiwanese, for example, all of whom are currently categorized as the “yellow” race. But such an understanding essentializes the racial categories that are by definition fluid. If we do not consider race as “fictive” and inscribe race in areas that appear on the surface to be unrelated to race, we can only reify the categories themselves.

To highlight this importance of race, I specifically take up Ueda Kazutoshi and Natsume Sōseki in chapters 4 and 5, respectively. My analyses of these two figures are designed to complement each other. Ueda, as I have mentioned, has long been deemed the evil imperialist. In contrast, Sōseki has long been seen as a progressive, anti-imperialist figure whose genius was beyond his time. I address these figures in my discussion of race specifically to show that the overt demonization of one individual or the overt deification of another do not do justice to the structural nature of race. Such a tendency is extremely reductive, as it excessively empowers an individual—either as an aggressive imperialist or an ardent resister—and refuses to consider modernity in a structural sense. Imperialistic tendencies cannot be attributed to the monstrosity of an individual or group of individuals, nor can they be completely resisted by an individual or group of individuals. Such tendencies are inherent in modernity itself, and no one exists outside of this framework.

It may appear strange to include Sōseki in a book about language reform. The primary reason for this is that critics view Sōseki as a writer of fiction who experimented with literary prose, while they see advocates of language reform as concerned specifically with language for daily use. However, as I mentioned

previously, the categories of “literature” and “language” were then still in flux, and it can only be a retrospective projection on our part to separate them. Furthermore, it is vital in any study of language reform to examine various views of language, and Sōseki’s theoretical works, most notably *Bungakuron* (*Theory of Literature*, 1906) and *Bungaku hyōron* (*Literary Criticism*, 1907), provide a unique alternative to those of Ueda and the other advocates of reform. We shall see that the title *Bungakuron* is rather deceptive, as it appears to limit its scope to “literature.” The entire work, as well as the notes Sōseki meticulously took as he prepared his monumental work, in fact show that his conception went well beyond the narrow domain of literature. The titles of his notes, such as “The View of the World” and “Enlightenment and Civilization,” should give us a clue as to the scope of his thought.²⁴ Moreover, Ueda and Sōseki were the same age, as counterintuitive as that may seem, and thus invariably responded to the same discursive space.

This section thus attempts to restore these writers to the space in which they are situated, without succumbing to the desire to place them outside of the ideological structure of modernity. In chapter 4, I examine how Ueda, for example, mobilizes the fictive ethnicity that is *yamato minzoku* as the most “authentic” users of *kokugo*. Through an analysis of his writings, I highlight the manner in which he attempted to mark varying boundaries of *kokugo* by mobilizing the logic of equality and naturalization. Following previous scholarship, I further argue that *kokugo* had yet to exist. What I seek to show is that *kokugo* was an idea that was posited to embody “whiteness,” an object of desire. In addition, I continue to highlight the fluidity of the categories *gengo* and *bungaku* that shape Ueda’s theories. In chapter 5, I explore the fluidity of race in Sōseki’s works, such as “Mankan tokoro dokoro” (“Travels in Manchuria and Korea,” 1909) and *Sanshirō* (1908), in addition to his theoretical works. I show that his works oscillate between two poles, demonstrating various markers of vulgar racism as well as examining the ways in which he destabilizes racial biologism. I then explore how he attempted to define language at a universal level by consistently erasing the regionality of languages in his theoretical works. At the same time, however, I also illustrate the manner in which he occasionally falls back into racial hierarchies. Such a double move is necessary, I believe, since no text is ideologically monolithic.