



Constructing Subjectivities: Autobiographies in Modern Japan

Noboru Tomonari

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Constructing Subjectivities addresses the relationship between memory and modernity and its relevance to Japanese autobiographical texts. Tomonari construes autobiographies as embodying memory in modernity, and regards the conditions of modernity as having determined, in part, the shape of autobiographical texts. At the same time, however, he argues that Japanese autobiographies were not simply bound to the cultural and social norms of the time, but rather that the texts themselves were among the main agents of fostering Japanese modernity. The autobiographies he discusses served to initiate certain societal transitions and took part in the remaking of social norms and conventions.

According to *Constructing Subjectivities*, mnemonic texts were crucial to the construction of modern ideological discourses such as those on the self, the family, entrepreneurship, the roles of women, and the nation. The study of this discursive process enables us to understand how the Japanese themselves tried to control the form of modernity that materialized in Japan. Because autobiography constructed and embodied collective memory at this time, analyzing the discursive process is also crucial to understanding both contemporary Japan and the self-perception of the Japanese people.

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