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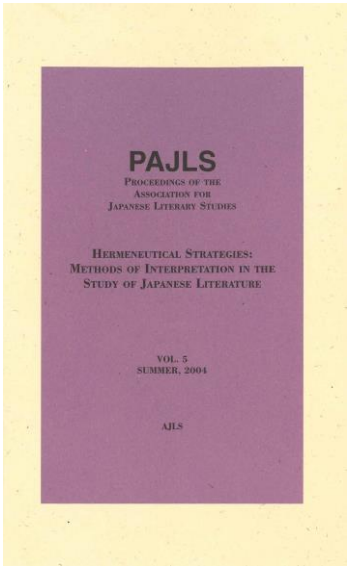

PAJLS 5:
Hermeneutical Strategies: Methods of Interpretation in the Study of Japanese Literature.
Ed. Michael F. Marra.

PAJLS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ASSOCIATION FOR
JAPANESE LITERARY STUDIES

HERMENEUTICAL STRATEGIES: METHODS OF INTERPRETATION IN THE STUDY OF JAPANESE LITERATURE

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Michael F. Marra, Editor

HERMENEUTICAL STRATEGIES: METHODS OF INTERPRETATION IN THE STUDY OF JAPANESE LITERATURE

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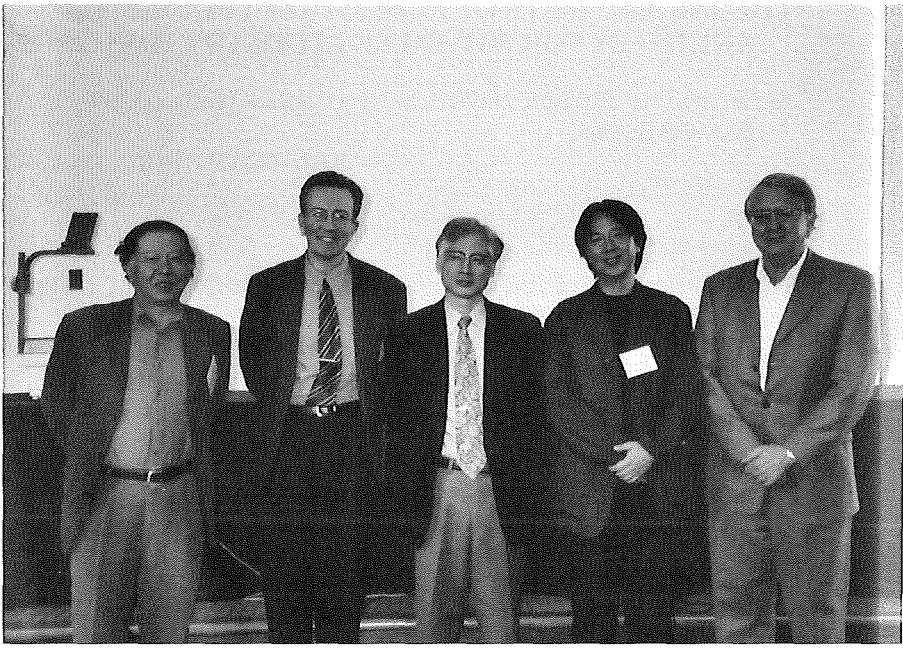

The organizer welcomes the keynote speakers. From the left: Matsumura Yūji, Michael F. Marra, Fujita Masakatsu, Muroi Hisashi, and William R. LaFleur.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

University of California, Los Angeles, November 21-23, 2003

Royce Hall 314

Friday, November 21, 2003

8:00-8:30
Registration/Coffee and Pastries

8:30-8:45
Welcoming Remarks by **Michael F. Marra**

8:45-10:20
Panel 1—Feminist Theories, 1

"The Maternal Body as the Site of Ideological Contest: A Feminist Reading of Hirabayashi Taiko," **Linda Flores**, University of California, Los Angeles.

"The Rhetoric of Misogyny: Women Who 'Hate' Women and Other Feminist Problems in the Literature of Takahashi Takako," **Julia Bullock**, Stanford University.

"Japanese Female Writers Watch a Boy Being Beaten by His Father: Female Fantasy of Male Homosexuality, Psychoanalysis, and Sexuality," **Kazumi Nagaike**, University of British Columbia.

Discussant: **Rebecca Copeland**, Washington University in St. Louis.

10:20-11:35
Panel 2—Feminist Theories, 2

"Hirabayashi Taiko and the Future of Feminism," **Marilyn Bolles**, Montana State University-Bozeman.

"Outing Miyamoto Yuriko: The Hermeneutics of Sexual Identity," **Sarah Pradt**, Macalester College.

"How Housewives Shatter a Narrative: Tawada Yoko's *The Bridegroom was a Dog*," **Robin Tierney**, University of Iowa.

11:35-12:50
Panel 3—Postcolonial Theories

"Issues of Postcolonial Theories in *Zainichi* Literature," **Yoshiko Matsuura**, Purdue University.

"*Zainichi* Literature Through a Lacanian Gaze: The Case of Yi Yang Ji's *Yuhi*," **Catherine Ryu**, Michigan State University.

"Debating War Responsibility in Postwar Japanese Film Discourse," **Michael Baskett**, University of Oregon.

12:50-2:00
Lunch

2:00-3:15
Panel 4—Voices from the "*Ikyo*" (Foreign Space)

"*Shōjo* and *Yamanba* in Mori Mari's Literature," **Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase**, Vassar College.

"A Female Modernist in Chaos (Gendered Place): Osaki Midori's *Dainana Kankai Hōkō* (Wandering Around the Seven Sensuous Worlds)," **Eguro Kiyomi**, Josai International University.

"Shinjuku as '*Ikyo*': Hideo Levy's *Seijōki no Kikoenai Heya* (The Room in which the Sound of American Flag Cannot Be Heard), **Satō Koji**, Josai International University.

3:15-4:50
Panel 5—Literary Interpretation and the Crises of Modernity: Cultural Criticism in Early Shōwa

"I Am A Revolutionary Cat: Proletarian Literature and Natsume Sōseki," **Michael Bourdaghs**, University of California, Los Angeles.

"The Fiction and Criticism of Sakaguchi Ango: The Rhetoric of Ambivalence," **Oshino Takeshi**, Hokkaidō University.

"'Irony' and Subjectivity in the Essays of Yasuda Yojūrō," **Nosaka Akio**, Oita Prefectural College of Arts & Culture.

Discussant: **Miriam Silverberg**, University of California, Los Angeles.

4:50-6:05
Panel 6—Cultural Criticism in Early Shōwa, 2

"*Shinseinen*, the Contract and Vernacular Modernism," **Kyoko Ōmori**, Hamilton College.

"Miyazawa Kenji and the Ethics of Scientific Realism," **Gregory Golley**, University of Chicago.

"The Problem of Aesthetics in Nishida Kitarō," **Matteo Cestari**, University of Turin.

6:05-6:35
Keynote Speaker
Fujita Masakatsu, University of Kyoto.
西田幾多郎の哲学と日本語 (Nishida Kitarō's Philosophy and Japanese Language)
(in Japanese)

7:00-9:00
Dinner

Saturday, November 22, 2003

8:00-8:30
Coffee and Pastries

8:30-9:45
Panel 7—The Author, Intertextuality, and Narratology

"What if the Author was Never God?: Some Thoughts on Kawabata, texts and Criticism," **Matthew Mizenko**, Ursinus College.

"The Author, the Reader, and Japanese Literary Texts: Returning Poststructuralist Intertextuality to its Dialogic Roots," **Timothy J. Van Compernolle**, College of William and Mary.

"Materializing Narratology: The Case of Kanai Mieko," **Atsuko Sakaki**, University of Toronto.

9:45-11:00
Panel 8—*Wa-kan* Dialectic and the Field of Poetics

"Prefaces as Sino-Japanese Interfaces: Towards an Intracultural Poetics of Early Japanese Literature," **Wiebke Denecke**, Harvard University.

"Pictured Landscapes: Heian Gardens and Poetic Imagination," **Ivo Smits**, Leiden University.

"Beyond *Wa-kan*: In Search of Sharper Tools for Narrating Reception," **Jason P. Webb**, Princeton University.

11:00-12:35
Panel 9—Re-Interpreting the Classics

"Beyond Our Grasp? Materiality, Meta-genre and Meaning in the Po(e)ttery of
Rengetsu-ni," **Sayumi Takahashi**, University of Pennsylvania.

"Heteronormativity and the Politics of the Writing Subject: Zeami and the Legitimation of Popular Literature," **Joe Parker**, Pitzer College.

"Staging the Spectacular: *Kabuki*, *Shunga*, and the Semiotics of Excess," **David Pollack**, University of Rochester.

"The Role of Heian Intertexts in the Recuperation of Lyrical Acuity in Tawara Machi's Late Capitalist *Tanka*," **Dean Brink**, Saint Martin's College.

12:35-1:45
Lunch

1:45-2:15
Keynote Speaker
Matsumura Yūji, Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan (National Institute of Japanese Literature).
本歌取りの位置—剽窃とオリジナリテイの間 (The Position of Allusive Variation: Between Plagiarism and Originality)
(in Japanese)

2:15-3:50
Panel 10—Strategies in Reading Tropes: The Hermeneutics of Medieval Language and Poetry

"Excluded Middles: Grammar vs. Rhetoric vs. Esthetic in the Medieval Hermeneutics of Canonical *Waka*," **Lewis Cook**, Queens College, CUNY.

"Whether Birds or Monkeys: Names, Reference and the Interpretation of *Waka*," **Gian Piero Persiani**, Columbia University.

"Dramatizing Figures: the Revitalization and Expansion of Metaphors in *Nō*," **Akiko Takeuchi**, Columbia University.

Discussant: **Haruo Shirane**, Columbia University.

3:50-5:25
Panel 11—Literature on Literature: Hermeneutical Subtexts in Anthologies and Fiction
"Compilation as Commentary: The Two Imperial Anthologies of Nijō Tameyo," **Stefania Burk**, University of Virginia.

"*Little Atsumori* and *The Tale of The Heike*: Fiction as Commentary, and the Significance of a Name," **R. Keller Kimbrough**, Colby College.

"Genji Goes to China: *The Tale of Hamamatsu* and Murasaki's Substitutes," **Charo D'Etcheverry**, University of Wisconsin.

Discussant: **H. Richard Okada**, Princeton University.

5:25-7:00
Panel 12—Constructing the Alternative Text: Commentaries in Late Medieval and Early Modern Japan.

"Accessorizing the Text: The Role of Commentary in the Creation of Readers," **Linda H. Chance**, University of Pennsylvania.

"The Context and Structure of Neo-Confucian Commentary: The Case of Minagawa Kien," **W. J. Boot**, Leiden University.

"In Search of the Absolute Origin: Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) or the Shadow of the Ancients," **Aiko Okamoto MacPhail**, Indiana University.

Discussant: **Mark Meli**, Kansai University.

7:00-7:30
Keynote Speaker
William R. LaFleur, University of Pennsylvania.
"Good Karma, Bad Karma, Words, and Deeds"

8:00-10:00
Dinner (hosted by **Fred G. Notehelfer**, Director, UCLA Center for Japanese Studies)

Sunday, November 23, 2003

8:00-8:30
Coffee and Pastries

8:30-10:05
Panel 13—How to Discuss Artistic Inspiration: New Methodologies on Studying Modern Japan

"The Uses and Abuses of History for *Butō*-writing: The Literary Activities of Hijikata Tatsumi," **Bruce Baird**, University of Pennsylvania.

"Japanese Detective Fiction and the Question of Authenticity: Discussing Intercultural Influences," **Sari Kawana**, University of Pennsylvania.

"Writing the Political not Just the Personal in Tamura's Shōwa Period Fiction," **Anne Sokolsky**, University of Southern California.

Discussant: **Alan Tansman**, University of California, Berkeley.

10:05-10:35
Keynote Speaker
Muroi Hisashi, Yokohama National University.
"Problems of Interpretation in the Age of Database"

10:35-11:30
Panel 14—The Ins and Outs of Publishing: Plumbing Archives for Japanese Literary Histories

"In Search of the Japanese Novel in Nineteenth-Century America: Book History and the New Literary Hermeneutics," **Jonathan Zwicker**, University of Michigan.

"Archiving the Forbidden: War Responsibilities and Censored Literature," **Jonathan Abel**, Princeton University.

11:30-12:45
Panel 15—Art and Psychoanalysis

"The Historical Horizons of *True* Art: Kafū and Okakura at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair," **Miya Lippit**, Getty Center.

"Psyche as Soma: Four Modern Japanese Texts," **Andra Alvis**, Indiana University.

"Konaka's Mirror Stage: Alice, Anime, and the End of Psychoanalysis," **Margherita Long**, University of California, Riverside.

12:45
Closing Remarks by **Michael F. Marra**

INTRODUCTION: THE HERMENEUTICAL CHALLENGE

Michael F. Marra

When, a few years ago, Professor Eiji Sekine asked me to organize the twelfth annual meeting of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies, I accepted with great enthusiasm and some trepidation. The enthusiasm came from the privilege of having to choose a topic for discussion at what has become the most distinguished meeting for Japanese literary studies in the country. The trepidation was the result of knowing that, by suggesting a topic close to my heart, hermeneutics, I would have had to ask speakers to talk more about themselves as producers of interpretative acts than about any literary text they might want to present. I know how polite and reticent scholars of Japanese literature tend to be, and how reserved they are about acts of self-disclosure. Therefore, in my call for papers, I send out a message that emphasized the historical dimension of personal confession: "Given the severe limitations of time, I would suggest that speakers concentrate discussing the main topic of the conference, 'scholarly methods used in the interpretation of literary texts,' leaving aside lengthy presentations of specific works. In other words, the method rather than the work is the object of discussion. The success of this conference will be measured by the degree of awareness generated by an understanding of hermeneutical practices in the reading of literary texts. The practices are the primary focus of interest; the texts are secondary, at least for the purpose of this conference."

The response to the call for papers was massive: forty-five papers were presented in fifteen panels, in addition to four keynote speeches and six comments by discussants, for a total of fifty-five presentations. Needless to say, UCLA witnessed two and a half truly intensive days from early morning on Friday, November 21 until noon on Sunday, November 23, 2003. The papers which are included in these proceedings are a sample of the topics discussed in the conference, and they are a testimony to the variety of interpretative strategies currently used in Japanese literary studies: postcolonial theories, feminist theories, cultural criticism, intertextuality, narratology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, aesthetics, and poetics. I feel, however, that the presence of an array of methodological approaches does not necessarily guarantee a direct confrontation with and challenge to the topic under discussion, i.e., hermeneutics. This

introduction gives me an opportunity to explain further why I believe that the notion of hermeneutics is central to the work of readers of Japanese literary texts, and of employees reporting to Deans of Humanities in Colleges of Letters and Sciences.

During the conference I often had the impression that the current resistance to the notion of hermeneutics derives from its association with the work of thinkers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)—a work very much related to the project of historicism (culture seen as an expression of an individuality or an era) against which most modern commentators have justly and strongly reacted. Both thinkers contributed to making hermeneutics into a method of interpretation modeled after scientific methodologies. However, when we look at the development of hermeneutics in the twentieth century, especially the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and his student Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), we see a strong opposition to the idea of reducing the human sciences to epistemological constructs that can be explained with the methodologies of the natural sciences. Undoubtedly, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer shared the strong belief that the truth of the humanities is not the same as the truth of the sciences. They all kept in place the notion of truth—a notion that has been quite vilified in the past fifty years. However, Heidegger and Gadamer had to overcome the aporia of explaining the alleged "truth" of the humanities with the tools that the natural sciences had developed in order to make sense of the notion of truth, at least since the age of René Descartes (1596-1650): objectivity, verifiability, mathematical proofs, etc. It is quite apparent that without a notion of truth—at least for the purpose of deconstructing it—the humanities would not exist, since they would lose the ground on which they justify themselves. The deep crisis that the humanities face today is certainly related to the fact that they cannot show the world the baby that they have discarded along with the bath water. It is interesting to notice that the Deriddean deconstructive practices that are taking the humanities apart (while, at the same time, in my opinion, showing a path towards reconstruction) would not exist without the Heideggerian project of *destruktion*, and that the fashionable feminist and post-colonial approaches have trickled down from the Marxist project of consciousness that is firmly rooted in the hermeneutical practices of the most humanistic of all humanist thinkers, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), even if he has been turned upside down. It goes without saying that Gadamer's project of reconstruction would be unthinkable without the deconstructions of his mentor Heidegger. No matter what kinds of reservations we might feel towards hermeneutics, we cannot deny the impact that hermeneutics has had on our conceptualizations of the

world, whether we consider hermeneutics in its technical sense (as a study of how meaning comes about), or in its present, more general sense (as a *koine*, or common language, spoken in an age of interpretation, independent from the specific methods employed in our daily interpretative actions).

How can deconstruction help us in the difficult path towards reconstruction? This is the basic question that Gadamer asked in his masterpiece of 1960, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Truth and Method), which I will use in order to elicit questions related to Japanese literature. *Truth and Method* begins with a contestation of aesthetic consciousness that, according to Gadamer, makes access to the truth of art almost impossible. For Gadamer, consciousness (*Bewusst**sein*** in German) is more being (***sein***) than consciousness. Aesthetic consciousness deprives the work of art of its being since it takes away from the work of art its moral and cognitive dimensions, leading to the autonomy of art which is a characteristic of modernism. Aesthetics has objectified the work of art by isolating it from any consideration that is not strictly aesthetic. Gadamer reminds us that aesthetic consciousness is the product of a methodological consciousness—and, therefore, it is a product of science. Dilthey's attempt to create a methodology of understanding for the human sciences (hermeneutics as *ars intepretandi*) has revealed that method does not allow us to grasp properly the meaning of the human sciences. For Gadamer, the work of art is participation in an experience of truth—an experience that the deadly alternative of method or aesthetics does not allow us to catch. If we interpret truth according to the norms of the natural sciences, i.e., strict objectivity, everything which is labeled human sciences ends up being relegated to the realm of aesthetics—a matter of simple taste with no scientific credibility. The creation of the human sciences, then, comes at the highest price, since they are robbed of the possibility of participation in the experience of truth. Don't we call the work of a writer, "fiction"—a matter of appearance and illusion, and don't we invoke the name of mythology when it comes to our great epics? The truth of art is, thus, trivialized, and the remarkable experience of reality in art is completely lost. Beginning with Schiller's *Letters on Man's Aesthetic Education*, our education ceases to be **through** art and begins to be **in** art.

Gadamer asks a crucial question: "Is it right to reserve the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge? Must we also not acknowledge that the work of art possesses truth?" In order to rescue the work of art from the abstractions of aestheticism, Gadamer insists on the ontological contribution of the work of art. Far from being an expression of lived experience (Dilthey's *Erlebnis* and Bergson's *élan vital*), art becomes an experience of reality, of being, and of truth. Gadamer calls this truth in art

seinszuwachs, "a surfeit—or excess—of being." In order to recognize that art possesses a claim to truth, the Kantian subjectivation of the work of art—(an obsession with the spiritual states of the observer)—must be overcome. The truth of art reminds us that we are not in control of aesthetic experience; instead, we are captured as if we were taken up by a game. It was not by accident that Gadamer put the following lines by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) at the beginning of *Truth and Method*:

> Until you take again the ball that your hand has thrown,
> It is nothing but skills and easy conquest—;
> Only if all of a sudden you must take
> The ball that an eternal playfellow
> Has thrown in the core of your body
> In a fair throw, in one of the arches
> Of the bridge made by the great architect, God:
> Only then to be able to catch it becomes virtue,—
> Not your virtue, but of a world.[1]

We do not need to take the initiative: a ball thrown to us brings us into the game. Far from being an act of subjectivity, the play is being played. Who the eternal playfellow might be is a difficult question to answer. The only thing we know is that the ball comes from a certain height, like the message (*aussage*) that reaches us as a work of art. Art, then, is a response to a throw, which unfolds not simply as enunciation (*diktat*), but as dialogue (*gespräch*). The message (the ball) acts on me and transforms me. Truth in the human sciences is the realization that to understand how to live in the world comes to us from somewhere else. As Heidegger reminds us, existence is an "exit"—a coming out from somewhere, a projection of our being into the world (*Geworfenheit*). Heidegger's metaphors turn up at every page of *Truth and Method*: art is an unfolding of truth, an ontological process, a surfeit of being, the opening of a world. Art is recognition in the sense of recollection (*anamnesis*): it opens to us the world for what it is.

Today we approach Japanese literature from a variety of view points. These proceedings provide a good sample of the objectivations of literary texts, based less on being than on consciousness. To use a few titles from the conference's program—a feminist reading of Hirabayashi Taiko re-situates the maternal body as the site of ideological contest; Japanese female writers watching a boy being beaten by his father recall female

[1] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Poesie II (1908-1926)* (Turin: Einaudi-Gallimard, 1995), p. 254.

fantasies of male homosexuality, psychoanalysis and sexuality; the Lacanian gaze looks over postcolonial theories in the literature of Koreans living in Japan; heternormativity and the politics of the writing subject inform a reading of Zeami's work; the semiotics of excess stage the spectacles of *kabuki* and *shunga*; writing the political, not just the personal, informs Tamura's Shōwa period fiction; the end of psychoanalysis explains anime and Konaka's mirror stage... and the list could go on forever. Instead, could something be said about the relationship of art and truth in Japanese literature? Did a discourse on truth develop in Japan and, if it did, how did such a discourse relate to the notion of writing? These questions are not completely idle. Otherwise, Saigyō (1118-1190) would not have composed the famous lines,

> *Utsutsu o mo/utsutsu to sara ni/oboeneba/yume o mo yume to/nanika omowan*
>
> Since the 'real word' seems/to be less than truly real,/why need I suppose/the world of dreams is nothing/other than a world of dreams?[2]

Is Saigyō's claim made on epistemological grounds? Is it made on aesthetic grounds? Is it simply the result of a rhetorical play? What is it? Or, even better, how does the relationship of truth and writing relate to the temporality of our reading which, Gadamer reminds us, is always the temporality of the present, the temporality of contemporaneity? One of Gadamer's hermeneutical lessons is that the work of art is realized only in its actualization: we must read Saigyō's poem in order for the poem to exist. The poem is a response to a series of interrogations—questions addressed to Saigyō at the time of the poem's composition, questions that we address to Saigyō as well as to ourselves when we actualize the poem in our mind. This is the reason why in the call for papers I emphasized the need to focus on the receiver of the message (ourselves), rather than on allegedly objective presences such as authors, texts, and the minutia of details that will keep scholars busy until the end of history. In this respect, we remain very much tied to the old hermeneutics of Dilthey and the historicist school, for which an illusion of distance makes us resist the idea of participatory communion in the work of art. There is a general hesitation among scholars to confront themselves during the reading of texts which are often kept at a spectacular distance. This attitude, however,

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[2] The English translation is by William R. LaFleur, *Awesome Nightfall: The Life, Times, and Poetry of Saigyō* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), p. 128.

breaks two rules of Gadamerian hermeneutics: the rules of application and of the fusion of horizons. We live in the shade of a post-romantic epistemology that rejects the application of a meaning to the present situation on the grounds that this act would be prejudicial to the objectivity of interpretation. Gadamer rehabilitates the notion of "application" by referring to the rhetorical effectiveness of the preacher's *subtilitas applicandi*—the skill of applying the meaning of the biblical text to the contemporary situation of the faithful. Readers should not be ashamed to admit that texts have something to say to them.

The second rule that the attitude of the alleged "scientific distance" breaks is the well-known notion of the "fusion of horizons," which implies the presence of our own world in the process of interpretation. The construction of the horizon of the past always operates on our present terms. The notion of the "fusion of horizons" gives individual subjects their proper place, without ever putting them in any privileged position. If existence is an exit from somewhere, existence cannot begin with any individual subject. The subject always comes from an elsewhere, and this elsewhere can only be a predicate, like a *Theos* (God) who is never a substance or a subject. If the Gods were a substance, human beings would be able to understand them. But this is never the case with the Gods. As Homer reminds us, the Gods are *kreittones* (the superiors). Therefore, we should not be afraid to locate ourselves in the interpretative process, as long as we avoid placing the subject in the seats of the Gods—a Kantian arrogance that needs to be resisted. Gadamer's "elsewhere" is a moment of foreignness that makes him argue that, "the soul of hermeneutics consists in recognizing that perhaps the other is right."[3] In this regard, a study of subject positions in ancient Japanese *monogatari*—as well as in their more modern *shōsetsu* versions—would be a marvelous example of "fusion of horizons," in which the voices of characters, narrators, places, times, and the voice of the actual readers (past and present) are made the subjects of narrations. The "weak subject," a major linguistic and epistemological characteristic of Japanese culture, has been the object of infinite studies informed by Buddhist philosophy, and masterfully articulated in the works of the philosophers of nothingness culminating in the Kyōto school of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), as Professor Fujita Masakatsu has pointed out in his keynote speech on Nishida's analysis of the predicative nature of the Japanese language. These issues are very much relevant to contemporary philosophical discussions on the subject, as the philosophy of "weak

[3] Quoted in Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*. Translated by Kathryn Plant (Chesham: Acumen, 2003), p. 100.

thought" advanced by one of Gadamer's most gifted students, Gianni Vattimo (b. 1936), attests.

The truth of the humanities, then, is the Socratic truth of knowing that we do not know—a realization of the limits of human facticity. In the human sciences, understanding refers to the ability of "being skilled at something"—a skill that implies that we are never totally capable of mastering it. The limit is this negative moment (human finitude), that Heidegger reminds us is part and parcel of the notion of "truth:" *a-letheia* (un-veiling), a lifting up of the veil behind which we always find a lack. The description of being as event can be found in the literature of the "connoisseurs" (*tsūjin*) immortalized in the "books of taste" (*sharebon*) of eighteenth-century Japan, whose knowledge depends on their skills of negotiating everyday reality in order for them to be able to survive in it. The anti-heroes of this world (the world of the pleasure quarters) are the boorish know-it-all (*hankatsū*), whose pedantry reveals their inability to adapt to the changes and the challenges of everyday life. The literal meaning of the word *tsūjin* is "a person who can relate to the world," a cultured person in the Gadamerian sense of the word—the result of a process of formation (*bildung*). Since the truth of the human sciences is the truth of formation, the connoisseur fits quite well Gadamer's paradigm of culture. Formation is not the accumulation of factual knowledge, which is the realm of the pedant. For Gadamer, cultivated people are those who position themselves at a distance from all the items of knowledge characterizing the pedant. Thus, knowledge becomes a "feel," a being, a sense. Here Gadamer relies on Aristotle's notion of "prudence" (*phronesis*)—the wisdom to adapt oneself to particular situations. Gadamer's experience of truth is not the result of an epistemology; it is, rather, an event that unfolds in our life, as in the case of Aeschylus' "learning through suffering" (*pathei mathos*). Formation, common sense, judgment, and taste—the basic ingredients of knowledge for the humanities—are all seen from the perspective of a practical wisdom.

Humanistic understanding does not derive from any epistemological construct; it can only come from what is nearest to us—i.e., the dialogical linguistic experience, the "uncannily near" (*so unheimlich nahe*) that Gadamer labels, "the most obscure" (*gehört zum Auerdunkestel*). The dialogical process of everydayness makes possible the coming-into-being of things that would otherwise escape our control. Therefore, attention to language is of primary importance. Language possesses a human logic that does not follow the model of logical demonstration. This is the logic of rhetoric that constitutes an alternative to the logic of the pronouncement, or of the proposition. If the statement contents itself with methodological exactness and with its "pure" sense, human language must confront the

infinity of what is not said and what is implied. Gadamer's commitment to language entrusts the field of rhetoric with the task of recovering the "there" of *Dasein* (being-there), the elsewhere from which we come and in which we are. Hermeneutics goes well beyond a strictly propositional conception of language. Its main attention is directed towards that elsewhere in which the unspoken is found. This explains Gadamer's statement that the world has no being for us except in the "there" of language. And this "there" can only be captured by paying attention to the tradition of rhetoric, in which truth becomes a matter of belief, integrity, and probability, and in which no ultimate foundation can be found. Rhetoric enacts hermeneutic understanding by, first of all, restoring to concepts their ontological meaning—a meaning that epistemology has concealed and distorted by forcing pejorative meanings onto them. Gadamer provides several examples of distortions.

The most conspicuous example is the notion of the circle of understanding, better known as the hermeneutical circle. The geometric interpretation of the circle points at the circularity of any argument that is modeled after it: the circle does not lead anywhere but towards itself, in a stultifying repetition of sameness. And yet, the humanities spring from the circularity of finitude, as Heidegger had already indicated in his positive assessment of the hermeneutical circle. No understanding exists without anticipation (the anticipation of death), and no interpretation takes place without a prior understanding. This ontological, rather than epistemological, interpretation of the circle of understanding leads to the realization that no question can be formulated without a prior knowledge of the answer—maybe a partial answer, but an answer nevertheless. *Dasein* is an object of care (*sorge*), and the priority of care constitutes the future of *Dasein.* In the urbanizing words of Gadamer, no statement can be formulated outside of the context of a dialogue. The statement is always already an answer to a question, even if no concrete presence seems to appear in the dialogue. Seen from an ontological perspective, the circle ceases to be a logical vice, a vicious circle. Rather than avoiding it, we should jump into it with resolution, since we are confronted every day with an existential reality, not a geometric one. The phenomenological understanding of the circle indicates that the paradox of the presupposition of what needs to be proved is not such a demented thing in real life, since all understanding comes from an anticipation of meaning. Nishida Kitarō had already emphasized the existential importance of the circle in 1911, when he ended the section on ethics of his first major work, *Zen no Kenkyū* (*An Inquiry into the Good*), with a reference to Giotto's circle as

an example of the realization of true selfhood that requires us "to kill our false self" in order to gain new life.[4]

The Heideggerian insight into the hermeneutical circle allowed Gadamer to rescue the idea of tradition from all negative shadows that the Enlighteners had cast upon it: the interpreter always belongs to the object of understanding; whether he likes or not, he is tradition. It goes without saying that the notion of anticipation rules over any reading of Japanese poetry, past and present. What would a poem be without a reference to a more ancient poem? Gadamer's concept of "contemporaneity"—that is very much akin to Nishida's notion of "the eternal present" —makes the voice of the twelfth century poet Saigyō audible to the contemporary reader in the poetry of the seventeenth century *haiku* master Bashō (1644-1694). The reader participates in Bashō's exchange with Saigyō and other famous poets of a canonized tradition. While traveling to the Northern provinces, Bashō passes through the rice fields near Ashino village of present-day Tochigi Prefecture, and discovers the willow under whose branches Saigyō had found shade four hundred years earlier. Bashō's *haiku* is the famous,

Ta ichimai/ uete tachisaru/yanagi kana

I waited them to sow the whole field, /then I got up and left/
—Oh, that famous willow![5]

In Bashō's verse we hear Saigyō's hesitation to leave the refreshing shade of the willow tree during a tiring excursion away from home during the sultry summer:

Michinobe ni/shimizu nagaruru/yanagikage/shibashi to te koso/tachitomaritsure

In this willow's shade, /where the refreshingly clear stream/flows on by the wayside,/ thinking, 'it will be only for a brief moment,'/ I stood rooted to it.[6]

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[4] Nishida Kitarō, *An Inquiry into the Good*, trans. by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 145.

[5] Toyama Susumu, ed., *Bashō Bunshū, SNKS* 17 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1978), p. 116. See also Donald Keene's translation ("They sowed a whole field, /And only then did I leave/Saigyō's willow tree"), in Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to Oku* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1996), p. 43.

[6] Kubota Jun, ed., *Shinkokinshū, Jō*, n. 262, *SNKS* 24 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1979), p. 102. See also Meredith McKinney's translation ("Here in this willow's

In Saigyō's poem, the attentive reader—and Bashō was undoubtedly a very attentive one—hears the voice of the tenth-century poet Sone Yoshisada (fl. ca. 985), who takes shelter from the heat under a willow tree, not in Tochigi Prefecture, but along the Tatsuta river of the Ikoma district in Nara Prefecture:

> *Natsugoromo/Tatsuta kawara no/yanagikage/suzumi ni kitsutsu/narasu koro kana*
>
> While getting used to these summer robes/I came to the cool side/of the willow's shade/on the Tatsuta riverbank.[7]

By reading Bashō's *haiku*, the contemporary reader is invited to visit Saigyō's willow—an invitation that railway companies have shrewdly exploited in recent times—and see whether it is still there, or whether it withered, as the fifteenth century Nō playwright Kanze Kojirō (1435-1516) indicated in the play *Yugyō Yanagi* (*The Priest and the Willow*):

> Water runs no more/between the river's banks, /and here by the dry bed/stands a withered willow, /so overgrown with ivy/and clinging creepers, /it hardly can be seen. /Green moss buries its branches; /its appearance truly bespeaks/its years of stars and frosts.[8]

The Gadamerian concepts of anticipation of meaning, adherence to a tradition, participation, and sharing, well describe our contemporary encounter with the poetic voices of the Japanese past. The circle of the "eternal present" is not vicious as long as it reminds us of the respect that we owe to our traditions, and of the gratitude that each of us must feel for the wonders of being—what the Japanese language has captured so masterfully in the word for "thanks" (*arigatō*, which literally means "difficult to be"). This appreciation for what has been handed down to us—an appreciation that does not exclude, but actually encourages, a desire for improvement—reminds us of the importance of shared

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shade,/where the pure stream/flows on by the wayside/briefly, I pause/and stand"), in *The Tale of Saigyō* (*Saigyō Monogatari*) (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1998), p. 22.

[7] Fujimoto Kazue, ed., *Goshūi Wakashū*, 1, n. 220, *KGB* 584-840 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), p. 325.

[8] The English translation is by Janine Beichman, in Donald Keene, trans., *Twenty Plays of the Nō Theatre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 225-226.

experiences. This realization led Gadamer to rescue concepts such as "common sense" (*sensus communis*) and "common places," which the Enlighteners had been attacking since the age of Descartes as abstract notions built on indistinct foundations. Gadamer's rehabilitation of "common places" goes back to Melanchton's (1497-1560) doctrine of *loci communes* in which the German reformer explained how a shared experience makes communication possible. As I indicated earlier, according to Gadamer, common sense is one of the four major ingredients of knowledge for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, together with formation (*bildung*), judgment, and taste. In Japan, the issue of "common sense" reached a peak in the philosophy of Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), for whom the stability of a society was based on a shared cultural experience that would elicit common emotional responses from like-minded people—what he called *mono no aware*, or the knowledge of being moved by external reality. Norinaga's theory of common sense derived from his profound knowledge of poetics—especially the theory of "common places" (*utamakura*), which entrust geographical locations with enormous poetic meaning. Poets must master all the skills of their trade in order to sing the being of these places. These common places are filled with memories of ancient events sung in the poetry of ancient poets, whose memory is kept alive by the very presence of the common places that modern poets continue to sing.

When Saigyō reached the Shirakawa Gate during one of his ascetic practices in the Northern provinces—what is known today as Fukushima Prefecture—his attraction to the moon was made particularly strong by the memory of a poet, Nōin (998-1050), who had visited the same place a hundred and thirty years earlier,[9] and left the following poem:

> *Miyako oba/kasumi to tomo ni/tachishikado/akikaze zo fuku/Shirakawa no seki*
>
> Though I set out/from the imperial city/with the rising of the springtime haze, /the wind of autumn now blows/at Shirakawa Gate.[10]

[9] Saigyō visited the Gate in 1155. Scholars believe that Nōin visited it in 1025.

[10] This is a slightly modified version of H. Mack Horton, *Song in an Age of Discord: The Journal of Sōchō and Poetic Life in Late Medieval Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 114. The original text appears in Fujimoto Kazue, ed., *Goshūi Wakashū*, 2, n. 518, *KGB* 585-1100 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), p. 365.

In the preface to the poem Saigyō acknowledges that his "ability to feel" (*aware*) derives from the "nature of the place" (*tokorogara*)—a "common place" that automatically brings to his mind the question, "when was the time that Nōin composed the poem on the 'blowing autumn wind'"? The expectation of a knowledge deriving from a shared experience excites Saigyō to create the following poem:

> *Shirakawa no/sekiya o tsuki no/moru kage wa/hito no kokoro o/tomuru narikeri*
>
> The light of the moon/slips through the gatehouse/at Shirakawa, /and one finds it giving rise/to emotions deep and arresting.[11]

During his trip to the Northern provinces Bashō was so overwhelmed with a poetic tradition of songs about the Shirakawa Gate that he was unable to add his voice to a "common place" which was too sacred to be further intruded upon. Instead, he recorded in his diary the poem composed by his travel companion Sora (1649-1710), who pays his respects to the tradition by concocting an image over six hundred years old—the custom of adorning one's head with flowers. In Sora's poem, the flower in question is the verbena (*unohana*) because of its white color—a reference to the literal meaning of the Gate, "white river" (Shirakawa). Sora's poem says,

> *Unohana o/kazashi ni seki no/haregi kana*
>
> My clothes I change at the gate—/sprigs of verbena/thrust in my cap.[12]

It took Bashō several days before he could regain his composure and recover from the excitement and, undoubtedly, the exhaustion of the travel. Only after an old acquaintance had asked him how he had felt crossing the Gate, Bashō came up with the following verses, in which the poet implies that the Gate is such a sacred moment for poetry that the rustic songs of

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[11] The English translation is by H. Mack Horton, *Song in an Age of Discord*, p. 114. The original text appears in Gotō Shigeo, ed., *Sankashū*, n. 1126, *SNKS* 49 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1982), p. 319.

[12] Toyama Susumu, ed., *Bashō Bunshū*, p. 117. See also Donald Keene's translation ("Sprigs of verbena/thrust in my cap—such will be/my fancy attire") in Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to Oku*, p. 47.

the region's rice planters can be considered to be the original source of *waka*:

> *Fūryū no/hajime ya oku no/taueuta*
>
> The beginning of poetic elegance—/the rice-planting songs/of the Interior.[13]

Common sense, or *bon sens*, and common places are at the root of the capacity for judgment, which in Gadamer is also related to the logic of anticipation. Judgments are made with a series of pre-judgments in mind, which Descartes and the Enlighteners cast in a disparaging light. Pre-judgments are nothing but prejudices—a notion that has come down to us with profoundly pejorative connotations. Gadamer is extremely critical of Descartes' most pronounced prejudice: the prejudice against prejudices. For Gadamer, prejudices are conditions of understanding, since all accords between understanding and the object to be understood are effectuated on the basis of prejudices. This does not mean that false prejudices cannot lead to misunderstandings. It only implies the need to keep the circle of understanding open in order to be able to modify whatever is found to be untenable. We need to engage in a debate with the presuppositions of traditions if we want to avoid falling into false prejudices.

During a presentation on the transmission of the *Kokinshū*—a practice known as "The Secret Teachings of Ancient and Modern Poems" (*Kokindenju*) —a speaker spent the twenty minutes allotted for his talk in deciphering two lines in Chinese written by the medieval poet Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) in which Teika denounced contemporary "prejudices" (*hekian* 僻案) in the interpretation of poems from the *Kokinshū* (*A Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*, 905). I raised the question of the ontological status of the notion of "prejudice" in Japan in medieval times—a question that I hoped would initiate a conversation on the history of this concept in light of the possible sources—not only from the field of poetics, but especially from more epistemologically-oriented Buddhist sources—from which Teika was taking the concept of prejudice. Unfortunately, the answer was tautological, "a prejudice is a prejudice." As a matter fact, a "pre-judgment" was made into a prejudice in modern times with the rise of science as the defining paradigm of Western culture.

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[13] Toyama Susumu, ed., *Bashō Bunshū*, p. 118. See also Haruo Shirane's translation ("Beginning of poetry--/the rice-planting songs/of the Interior") in *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 161.

Gadamer's emphasis on the subtleness of application also implies a total historicization of the concepts under discussion—especially when we are confronted with concepts from a different age and a different culture. The rule of application implies that we must start from the historicization of the meaning of the concepts which are part of our contemporary vocabulary. However, this is only the beginning of our search. The same process must be repeated with regard to the concepts that tradition—whether ours or not is beside the point—has handed down to us, and upon which we have forced our hermeneutical distortions. Gadamer is categorical on this point. Interpreters are asked to operate from a position of continuous vigilance necessary to wake up our own possibility of being. We cannot blindly accept a tradition as it has been handed down to us. We must interrogate it, and see whether we can live in it. Gadamer raised the same issue of distortion with regard to the notion of "taste"—another object of the Enlighteners' ridicule. Gadamer argues that in the so-called human sciences, judgment is a matter of taste in the moral sense of the word—a sense of what is fitting and what is fair. To be without taste, or without tact, is the result of faulty judgment. Therefore, taste can only have a profoundly positive meaning.

In the humanities judgment is an unfulfilled search for the *mot-juste*, the right word, since at the heart of hermeneutics is a wish to say the unutterable. The third part of *Truth and Method*, which is completely dedicated to the issue of language, is a powerful reminder of the need to ask more questions about the nature of the Japanese language. Was language seen as a simple conveyor of ideas, as in Plato's instrumental view of language—an order of signs that is always redundant, since things can be known in themselves as ideas before they are articulated in language? Or, is language an incarnate materiality of meaning that cannot be separated from the interiority of thought, as in the case of St. Augustine who—Gadamer reminds us—used the notion of Incarnation to explain the identity between the internal (pure act of thought) and the external (linguistic articulation) words? Gadamer clearly follows the latter hypothesis, since he believes that thought can never be deployed except in language, and that thought cannot think outside of language. It is not a question of an explanation **of** words; it is, rather, that explanations can only take place **in** words. This does not mean that the word is always perfect; far from it, since imperfection comes from the finitude of thought itself. Unlike the mind of God, the human mind is not pure presence to itself, pure *noesis noesos*. The Gods possess absolute transparency because they do not have a language. However, this is not the case with humans. We do possess a language. For Gadamer language is the only being which can be understood. In our struggle to make sense of the world we are

confronted with words which hide more than they reveal. When we think that they have finally revealed something, we realize that words open up a world of absences and deferrals. This explains why Gadamer, like his mentor Heidegger, privileged poetry as a revelatory moment of language.

If we turn to rhetorical techniques used in Japanese poetry to capture a meaning that constantly refuses to be tamed and contained in the limits of language, we will find an array of devices that poets have developed through the centuries in order to get closer to what Gadamer has conceptualized as the truth of the humanities. What is known as "overtones" (*yojō*), for example, has been thoroughly studied by thinkers such as Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990) and Kusanagi Masao (b. 1900).[14] This technique is a search for an expression that always exceeds the actualized possibilities of saying, a surplus of meaning, an excess of having-to-say. Once it is successfully achieved, *yojō* makes one realize not that something is there, but that there is a 'there,' and that this 'there' is revealed to the reader while remaining hidden from him. Another important technique used in Japan to make absences visible is known as *mitate* 見立て—a technique that the eleventh-century lady-in-waiting Sei Shōnagon perfected in the following entry from her diary, *Makura no Sōshi* (The Pillow Book):

> The snow piled up tall on the ground. It was an unusually early time of the year to have the lattices closed. We had gathered to serve the empress and were talking with each other, poking the embers in the brazier.
>
> "I wonder, Shōnagon, how the snow is piling up on Incense Burner Peak." After the empress had spoken I had one of the lattices raised and I rolled up the blind. The empress laughed.
>
> "I knew those words," the other ladies-in-waiting said, "and I used to sing them as poetry, but it never occurred to me to do what she just did. She appears to be quite fit to serve the empress." (*Makura no Sōshi*, step 280).[15]

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[14] See, for example, the essays by Nishitani and Kusanagi in Michele Marra, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

[15] Hagitani Boku, ed., *Makura no Sōshi*, Ge, *SNKS* 12 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1977), p. 231. See, also, Ivan Morris, trans., *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, Volume 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 243. Morris translates Po Chü-i's poem as follows: "The sun has risen in the sky, but still I idly lie in bed;/In my small tower-room the layers of quilts protect me from the cold;/Leaning on my pillow, I wait to hear I-ai's temple bell;/Pushing aside the

Mitate literally means "to make the sight stand, to bring something to stand, to bring something into a standing appearance." Something appears by "coming up" (*tatsu*), by "rising into view." *Mitate* brings into sight what is not apparent, what is not immediately in sight. In this short narrative, Sei Shōnagon brings into sight several absent objects. The main absence is the empress' desire to see the snow piling up on the ground outside her chambers. The room would be totally dark—the wooden lattices (*mikōshi*) have been lowered to avoid the cold coming from outside—were it not for the brazier (*subitsu*) around which the ladies-in-waiting gather to find some solace from the freezing weather. The empress does not simply issue the order, "Raise the lattices so that I can see the snow." Instead, she uses the image of the brazier to conjure up a poetic image centered around the snow of an absent mountain, a mountain far away in China, Mt. Hsiang-lu (literally, "Incense Burner Peak"). The reference is to an absent poem well known to everybody in the room—a poem in which the author Po Chü-i (772-846) hesitates to leave the warmth of his bed during a cold morning and pushes the blind aside in order to see the snow on Mt. Hsiang-lu while leaning on his pillow. The empress indicates her desire through a mimetic process: she shares with the Chinese poet a yearning for letting the snow come into view. Although every single lady-in-waiting in the room is familiar with this poem—they all have recited it countless times in their native tongue (*uta*)—they are unable to translate knowledge (a knowledge based on words present at hand) into practical vision. Only Shōnagon fully masters the technique of *mitate,* and brings into view the empress' desire for everybody to see: "she makes someone raise" (*agesasete*) the lattice door and she herself "rolls up" (*agetareba*) the blind (*misu*) which is the last obstacle to the disclosure of the external snow. Everybody "seems" (*sabekina**meri***) to have overcome the initial skepticism over Shōnagon's fitness to work at the court: Shōnagon has brought into full view her skills to bring light to a room full of darkness, and the empress seems quite pleased as she witnesses the event, "laughing" (*warawasetamō*) with Shōnagon at those who thought she would be unfit for service.

This episode is a good example of how a non-epistemological interpretation of language gives Sei Shōnagon the skills to survive in the hostile environment of the court. Her knowledge is based on formation, common sense, good judgment, and outstanding taste—all qualities that make her a master of the Gadamerian art of practical wisdom, the art of hermeneutics.

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blind, I gaze upon the snow of Hsiang-lu peak..." Ivan Morris, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, Volume 2, p. 180.

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