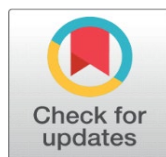


JAPANESE GUESTS AND EUROPEAN INQUIRERS: CULTURAL BARRIERS OR FLAWED HERMENEUTICS?¹

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ABSTRACT

Martin Heidegger's Dialogue on Language² between himself and a Japanese who visited him at his home in Freiburg in March 1954 is the best known but not a singular event of this kind in the last century, either in respect to the topic (the opposition between the East and the West) or setting. The three cases we are referring to in this paper are all communications of the Platonic kind, that is, sites of debate on cultural differences. Generally perceived as statements in the unsurpassable distinctions of mental make-up mapped onto geographical frontiers, these European-Japanese encounters seem, at a closer look, to convey quite the opposite meaning encrypted, however, at a deeper, subconscious level of a false consciousness nourished by fashionable ideas of the moment.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Encounters, Identity Studies, East and West, Martin Heidegger's "Dialogue on Language", Imaginary Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last century the blank spots of literary geographies knew a progressive colonisation which took the opposite direction from what was happening on the geopolitical scene. Whereas empires were breaking up and frontiers were being

¹ Essay based on a paper read at the *1st Bhatler College International Conference on Recent Advances in English Studies*. (July 03-04, 2021).

² Martin Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden", in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Verlag Günther Neske, Pfullingen, 1959.

(re)established, either among the European nation states or between metropolitan states and their former colonies, desire of the other inspired emulation, imitations or borrowings between the East and the West both in art and in science, from the fin-de siècle fascination with Chinese woodblock prints and Japanese Noh plays to the Nobel awards granted to writers who came in from the colonies, from European relativist and quantum physicists turning to Hindu mythology for cognitive metaphors of their revolutionary philosophy of science to the massive presence of Oriental music in modernist and postmodernist compositions in Europe and America. Aesthetic drives and patterns were relocated across the East-West border.

Despite this indubitable East-West merger, the narrative of their ingrained differences was upheld by prominent thinkers of the century. In *The Question of Being*, Martin Heidegger prophesied that planetary building was going to determine encounters for which the participants were by no means equal; he could not envisage a possible conversation between European and East-Asian languages.³

The issue seems to have been of much concern, as three such attempted encounters between western philosophers and Japanese conversationalists are said to have been more or less failures. Our reading of their reported versions is meant to prove the opposite, namely that the asserted incompatibility is contradicted by what Derrida called *inter-dicta*: meanings rising in-between what is actually said.

In the Introduction to a *A Vision* (1925, revised edition 1937), W.B. Yeats recounts a conversation at table with a Japanese guest who confesses his admiration for the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy. Yeats remembers that other Japanese acquaintances of his were also paying tribute to that prominent figure of Eastern fiction who upheld a secularised and moralised version of Christianity consorting ill with a mystical and Asian-oriented Yeats. The guest's addiction calls forth the host's vehement objection: "It is madness for the East, which must face the West in arms". After his guest's departure, Yeats regrets his "exaggerated and fantastic speech" only to find himself confirmed by a mysterious voice telling him that he had said what **they** "wanted to have said".⁴ Yeats had been hearing voices for some time in 1925, the demons he met among the stars, such as Leo Africanus, multiplying after his marriage to Georgie Hyde-Leese, who too proved to be, like himself, a medium for mysterious voices from beyond this world. As well as in his early poems of Hindu inspiration, the couple are passive sites haunted by images, smells and sounds from the environment or by voices attributed to so-called "Communicators" whose messages make sense, serving the building of an esoteric system, or "Frustrators," disheveling them. The simultaneous perception of sounds by himself and his wife from afar was explained by them through the existence of an oversoul which incorporates the individual selves. Henceforth, as Yeats does not want to be held responsible for the reprehension of his guest, he is putting it to the door of an occult case of supernatural possession or some psychotic crisis.

In *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds* (2017), Andrew Gaedtke explains away such delusions of occult visiting, telepathy, "ghost whistling", foreboding smells, the impression of being under the control of "communicators" etc. as effects of "communicational technologies, such as the radio, the telephone, and the tape recorder, which substitute mechanical transmissions for the living voice", an explanatory narrative which does indeed apply to books by Alfred Jarry, Wyndham Lewis, Samuel Beckett,

³ Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, Rowman & Littlefield, 1958, p. 107.

⁴ W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, MacMillan & Co. Lmt., London, 1937, p. 17.

Flann O'Brien, a.o.. The impact of technology was not a mystery to authors of autobiographies or psychiatric treatises at the time either.⁵

The masks and anti-masks, the divided self or the superposition of real and ghostly characters in the Noh plays show Yeats to have been under the influence of theories of the unconscious, split personalities, the "double self" made manifest by Max Dessoir (*Das Doppel-Ich*, 1980) and other psychiatrists of the late nineteenth century through experiments in hypnosis or through the *séances* and occult discourses and spiritualist practices of the British Psychological Society (Ch. S. Myers) or of the Theosophical Society (Helena Blavatsky).

It was in the same year, 1937, which saw the publication of the revised edition of *A Vision*, that C. G. Jung gave his *Terry Lectures on Psychology and Religion: West and East* at Yale University. It may have been under Toynbee's influence that both Jung and Oswald Spengler, whose *Decline of the West* Yeats claimed to have anticipated in his *Vision*, had come to elaborate on the idea of civilizational differences. It had a strong hold on them because Jung supported it even at the risk of contradicting himself: A comparison between the East and the West leads Jung to the conclusion that they differ radically, especially with regard to the understanding and representation of the ego.

The fact that the East can dispose so easily of the ego seems to point to a mind that is not to be identified with our "mind." Certainly, the ego does not play the same role in Eastern thought as it does with us. It seems as if the Eastern mind were less egocentric, as if its contents were more loosely connected with subject, and as if greater stress were laid on mental states which include a depotentiated ego. It also seems as if *hatha yoga* were chiefly useful as a means for extinguishing the ego by fettering its unruly impulses.⁶

Nevertheless, the West's divination of the psychic ontology of existence is traced back to the *Upanishads*:

Psychic existence is the only category of existence of which we have *immediate* knowledge since nothing can be known unless it first appears as a psychic image. Only psychic existence is immediately verifiable. To the extent that the world does not assume the form of a psychic image, it is virtually non-existent. This is a fact which, with few exceptions—as for instance in Schopenhauer's philosophy—the West has not yet fully realized. But Schopenhauer was influenced by Buddhism and by the *Upanishads*.⁷

A paraphrase of Jung's comparison locks us away into a logical contradiction: westerners are not aware of the importance of the ego residing in the ontogenetic function of perception (the world is what appears to each individual mind as a psychic image) with the exception of Schopenhauer who had realised that much thanks to his knowledge of the East's Buddhism and the *Upanishads* ...

The biases induced by fashionable ideas were read into the several versions of Martin Heidegger's encounter with Japanese scholar Tomio Tezuca, whose story was told by the Freiburg philosopher several years later ("Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache (1953/54). Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden," in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 1959). As postcolonial discourse has been fashionable in the postwar era, several commentators claim to have identified in the dialogue an

⁵ See *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* by Daniel Paul Schreber, 1903, in Maud Ellmann, *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds*. Andrew Gaedtke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

⁶ C.G. Jung, Jung, C.G. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. Volume 11. *Psychology and Religion: West and East*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975, (&775, p. 485)

⁷ *Ibidem*, & 769, pp. 480-481.

asymmetric relationship with Heidegger in a position of power as host, as Inquirer and sage figure, referring to Europeans and Japanese in terms of us versus you or even them.

Heidegger's professed utopia of cross-cultural understanding is confirmed by Tezuka's version of the encounter, "An Hour with Heidegger," published in the anniversary volume *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, edited by Reinhard May (1989). He had opted for the articulation of a philosophical argument at a deep level, instead of phenomena one after another. Tomio dwells extensively on Emil Setiger's literary theory and interpretive methodology, who, he says, had been mentioned by Heidegger in their talk, and whose comments on the unity of an artwork, of the levels of language, reflecting the holistic vision of being as containing its past in sublimated forms do indeed inspire a family resemblance. In this way he made an important contribution to the identification of one of Heidegger's sources.⁸

What was implied in Tomio Tezuka's desire to meet Heidegger and learn from him? It had not been a sense of the insufficiency of his own culture or the desire to satisfy some spiritual needs, but, as he confesses, the necessity to understand the new world with which they were coming into contact, and to forge a common idiom by appropriating the Europeans' way of reasoning and theorizing of the aesthetic object. His discourse, as she remembers it, had been an exercise in aesthetics and the philosophy of art in an attempt to come as close as possible to Heidegger's view of language. In his version, the event resembles a tutoring class, with a disciple discussing on a par with his master.

Absent from any actual encounter, Michael Marra, Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at UC Los Angeles,⁹ set out to write an imaginary dialogue between Heidegger and his former interlocutor, *Kuki Shūzō, of Kyoto University, who had attended phenomenology classes under Husserl and met Heidegger, his assistant, in the former's home*. Marra is trying to read the thoughts of Heidegger and of his previous Japanese interlocutor in a way meant to demonstrate their complete incompatibility. *He places Heidegger and Kuki Shūzō into sperate worlds, with the European philosopher converting the intended conversation into a monologic speech on his own philosophy and with a very rich Japanese aristocrat feeling at odds in Paris, disenchanted with women and sickened by French food. He absolutizes the Japanese philosopher's sense of otherness in Paris, which he infers mainly from his poems. They are assumed to reveal Kuki Shoe's rejection of Western metaphysics, and to confess his sense of solitude and discomfort. The passages he reproduces in support of his interpretive hypothesis, however, point in the opposite direction.*

Shūzō is said to have challenged western metaphysics - notions such as necessity, causality, the primacy of identity, sameness, completion, and the law of non-contradiction - whose deconstruction, however, had already started in the West with Nietzsche in the previous century. Moreover, the rise of quantum mechanics was rooted in a philosophy which the founders themselves traced back to ancient Asian wisdom. Much has been said on the modernisation of Japan by way of westernization, but the reverse is also true, as the key concepts of what was to become the Mistress Science of the century had much to do with the superposition of states, such as self/ non-self, contingency/ necessity, being/nothingness about which we read in Shūzō Kuki's *The Problem of Contingency* (published in 1935, but

⁸ Tomio Tezuka, "An Hour with Heidegger" in *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, ed. Reinhard May, London & New York: Routledge, 1989 (p.61). Translated with a complementary essay by Graham Parkes <https://documents.pub/reader/full/reinhard-may-heideggers-hidden-sources>

⁹ Marra, M. (2011). Chapter Nine." *A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer: Kuki Shūzō's Version.*" In: *Essays on Japan* (pp.167-185) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004189775.i-505.23>

on which the author had long been ruminating according to his own confession). In the Introduction to his book, Kuki allows his readers to establish links with the master minds of the time. His definition of metaphysics (to go to a metaphysical thing beyond the material form) in the introduction to his essay is reminiscent of Bergson's forms impeded by the matter they carry within themselves (*L'évolution créatrice*), while his gloss on probability theory comes very close to Husserl's eidetic variation: "theoretical, quantitative relations can be valid only when the number of observations increases to infinity"¹⁰. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is directly quoted and insightfully commented: "One might think quantum mechanics theory treats contingency, Still, it asserts that it is impossible to determine both the position and the velocity simultaneously in quantum mechanics phenomena."¹¹

By going west, Shūzō Kuki only confirmed and completed his early acquisition of contemporary leading theories at the Kyoto Imperial University which he graduated in 1912 with a thesis on the relationship between body and mind. The Buddhist understanding of this relationship - *Vijñāna* appears when mind (*citta*) contacts with objects (*āramāṇa*), it is the link between mind and matter - was the propitious ground for the appropriation of ideas borrowed by Nishida Kitarō from Bergson's intuitionism and William James's empirical philosophy and expounded in his book, *The Sense of Good*, published in 1910, which earned him a position at the Kyoto University in 1912. It was Nishida Kitarō who laid the foundation of the Kyoto School of Philosophy reputed for adopting western conceptualizations but actually reconciling them with Buddhist and Vedantic traditions.

In his turn, William James himself, as one can infer from his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901-1902) was attracted to Hindu mythology which he knew through Swami Vivekananda, whom he met at Harvard University where the latter had been invited to lecture on the Vedanta Philosophy.

The founders of quantum physics went even farther in acknowledging their debt to the Sanskrit-Buddhist lore.

The dynamic emptiness of Buddhist Zen or Indian Sanskrit *dhyana*, in which self and not-self are reconciled (Kuki calls this interiorization of the other), the *Anicca* doctrine of everything being in constant change are notions affined to the quantum subatomic manifold of states in permanent emergence with the collapse of one state or other decohering the system. In the fifth chapter entitled "The Vedantic Vision", of his book, *My View of the World*, Erwin Schrödinger focuses on the superposition of multiplicity and singularity which characterises the wave function (the realised state resulting from the interference of all the virtual states of a system): "the plurality that we perceive is only an appearance, it is not real. Vedantic philosophy, in which this is a fundamental dogma, has sought to clarify it by a number of analogies, one of the most attractive being the many-faceted crystal which, while showing hundreds of little pictures of what is in reality a single existent object, does not really multiply that object."¹² His famous cat experiment (the equal probability of the collapse of Eigenstates before measurement) appears to have been suggested to him by Indian Samkhya philosophy: "Assume two human bodies, A and B. Put A in some particular external situation so that some particular image is seen, let us say the view of a garden. At the same time B is placed in a dark room. If A is now put into

¹⁰ Kuki Shūzō, *The Problem of Contingency* (1935. Translated by Nakai Keigo, p. 3.

https://www.academia.edu/46202944/Kuki_Sh%C5%ABz%C5%8D_The_Problem_of_Contingency_Introduction

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Staiger, Erwin. (1964). *My View of the World*. Translated from the German by Cecily Hastings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 22

the dark room and B in the situation in which A was before, there is then no view of the garden: it is completely dark (because A is my body, B someone else's!).¹³

Schrödinger may also have adopted Sanskrit sources as models of ratiocination:

” Consider these four questions, which cannot, as a whole, be satisfactorily answered with any combination of ‘yes’ and ‘no’, but rather lead one on in an endless circle.

- 1) Does there exist a Self?
- 2) Does there exist a world outside Self?”¹⁴

This fragment on page 18 of his book (“ Self-the World-Death-Pluarlity”) was probably inspired by the following fragment from *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.10, where there is a dialogue relating to the question of self-existence:” The Buddha kept silent with two questions of Vacchagotta: “is there a self? And is there no self?”

Going back to Shūzō Kuki’s aesthetics, we may say that his frame of mind was shaped by his contact with western philosophers and artists. Not only did he, when back in Japan, teach Japanese art by applying European grids but he himself emulated the models of the West starting with his graduation thesis of 1912 on mind and matter, which could be relevantly compared to Bergson’s *Matière et memoir*. It was through this reunion of body and mind, of contingency and metaphysics characteristic both of western phenomenology of embodied consciousness and of the Buddhist Self/Non/Self/ the One that Shūzō Kuki joined a common speculative space in the early twentieth century, of mutual bearings. He would seek Bergson’s company in Paris and write on his work as being that of an affined mind.

Likewise, Shūzō Kuki’s philosophy of eros, or of gender as cultural construct is characteristic of the misogynist intellectual climate of modernism. Is not this poem juxtaposing the conventional gender prototypes of the sensualist woman, with shallow ideals and pursuits, versus the misunderstood, imaginative, and thoughtful male figure so much reminiscent of the dialogue of nerves in T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (second part, *The Game of Chess*)?

[Man]

Oh, the sea, the sea
Born in an island country in the Far East
I pine for the blue sea,
The shore scattered with seashells,
White sand bathing in the morning sun,
The smell of seaweed, the sound of waves,
I wonder, you who grew up in Paris,
Do you understand my feelings?
Tonight, let us go to Pruner
On Victor Hugo Avenue.
Pillars designed with the pattern of scallops,
Lamps shaped as sea crabs,
Watery foam on the walls,

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 19

Fish on the counters,
The ceiling a light turquoise,
The rug the crimson colour of seaweed,
A faint floating light,
A scent more fleeting than a dream,
Like breathing at the bottom of the sea,
My favourite seafood restaurant.

[Woman]

What was your favourite dish?
Salmon roe sandwich,
Sea urchin in its shell
Sprinkled with lemon juice,
The chowder bouillabaisse
A specialty from Marseilles,
Lobsters the thermidor style
Not the American style,
I too like
The steamed flatfish Paris style.
For a dress I will choose clothes of black silk.
Don't you like the way my figure looms over the silver wall,
One snowy white rose on my breast,
Pearls for necklace,
A platinum watch on my wrist,
A white diamond ring,
A hat the green colour of laver
I will pull down over my eyes coquettishly.
Let me please make my lipstick heavy.
Do you still insist I am princess of the sea?
(*Paris Mindscapes*, quoted in [Marra 2004](#), pp. 46–47)

As far as Heidegger is concerned, his narrative of the encounter is a sort of Socratic midwifery: his questions are not meant to annoy his partner but to lead to the final realization of the interlocutors' equal status and similar positions. A monologue instead of a dialogue could one call this indeed, but the reason is precisely the converging of their exchanges with the one initiating a proposition which is completed by the other. The conversation seems to proceed on the assumption that all acts of language are phenomena of a deep underlying order which is thus disclosed, made manifest. Heidegger sees Tezuka and himself as messengers, Hermes figures, hermeneutics being what Heidegger's Japanese student had come all the way to hear him explain.

In comparison to Yeats' mystical dualism, Heidegger's post-war mental makeup shows influences of the changing climate of ideas which meant, among other things, the shift from priority of the self over the other to the priority of the other over the self. In the earlier half of the century the "structure of feeling", as Raymond Williams

would call this unified vision of a cultural phase, had pursued the narcissistic agenda of the aesthetic decadence with its exclusivist cult of art and all its biases against reality, society, and history, and obsession with the otherness of non-European races, or categories of persons marginalized on account of their gender, age or class identity. The post-war world knew a progressive change through processes such as decolonization, the movement for human rights or the imposition of constraints on extremist discourses in the name of political correctness. It was a world in which formerly discriminated categories could accede to the top of the social hierarchy, even in the most powerful states of the world, where oppressive totalitarian regimes collapsed and a global society of connected professionals, such as academics, rose on its ruins. This change of mentality was to a considerable extent the fruit of the critical theories that emerged in the late '50s, Franz Fanon being probably the best-known pioneer of postcolonial studies, which reached their full bloom in the '80s. There was a progressive shift of interest from pure theory and abstractions, such as the terror of theory around the *Tel Quell* group, towards society, reality, and history. New Historicism, Cultural Studies and the Studies of Identity undertook the difficult task of discoursing a better world into being.

What was implied in Tomio Temuco's desire to meet Heidegger and learn from him? It had not been a sense of the insufficiency of his own culture to satisfy their spiritual needs but the need to understand the new world with which they were coming into contact, and to forge a common idiom by appropriating the Europeans' way of reasoning and theorizing of the aesthetic object.

Heidegger's reminiscence of the scene starts from his positioning in an asymmetric relationship with a Tokyo academic dubbed his student, dead but still haunting the living with the image of his tomb and with the unconsumed energy of someone who died young and as such was absorbed into the philosopher's speculations around Rilke's "früh Verstorbenen" (the *too-young* dead) in the Sixth Duino Elegy. As for the present academic of the Tokyo University, Tomio Tezuca, he uses a generic noun preceded by an indefinite article (a Japanese).

Tezuca informs him that, after his return to Japan, Shūzō Kuki had tried to instruct his students in Japanese art through recourse to European aesthetics. Heidegger believes that is not possible because of the linguistic barrier: "If a man by virtue of his language dwells within the claim and call of Being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than the Eastasian man."

The Japanese guest comes up with the commonsensical remark that difference and irreducible otherness are distinct things: "Assuming that the languages of the two are not merely different but other in nature, and radically so." Heidegger is not willing to welcome Eastasians within the space of European thinking and grant them the free use of a word which had sprung therefrom, such as aesthetics. When Tezuca mentions the Japanese need for concepts, Heidegger replies: "Do you need any?", which simply drives his guest's race out of the order of rational thought and logos whose universality is limited to European frontiers. He explains that otherness is not a matter of content – what they are saying – but of *wie* (how?) – the way essence, or true being comes out of hiding through language. Heidegger reinforces his understanding of the object of philosophy which is not *Dasein* (being present) but *Sosein* (being one way or another) from generation to generation, which creates a space of difference, even within the same language community.

This is the point where Heidegger takes a turn, from radical differentiation to growing community. He himself abandons the *ex-cathedra* tone adopting a modest one and fashioning himself as Husserl's assistant, teaching what his master had asked him to, and with Husserl himself as Franz Brentano's disciple – a chain similar

to the Heidegger-Kuki-Tijuca spiritual descent. Heidegger is giving an account of his intellectual history and is trying to explain himself, while Tezuca is asking question, changing places with *Der Frangende* (The Inquirer). The conversation begins to move, not only in between civilizations, but also in between generations with the object of debate historicised and problematised in common. Heidegger's exposition is now balanced between the two poles, east and west, with similar expectations of their capacity to ask more appropriate questions which call forth appropriate answers. The ground of reciprocal encounter is the notion of hermeneutics – the context is no longer conceptual but interpretive. The object of inquiry is no longer language but the field of representation. The coming into the open of being through language in Heidegger's poems, discussed by Heidegger, is pitted against revelation through gesture in Japanese art, such as raising one's hand and looking upwards to suggest the majestic height of a mountain. The conversation is modulated into a singular illocutionary source as one interlocutor continues what the other had begun:

I. Because what truly bears only bears itself *toward* us

J... though we bear only our share to its encounter ...

J: Thus, *you call bearing or gesture*: the gathering which originality unites within itself what we bear to it and what it bears to us.

I: However, with this formulation we still run the risk that we understand the gathering as a subsequent union ...

J: ... instead of experiencing that all bearing, in giving and encounter, springs first and only from the gathering.

Heidegger, as well as Socrates in *Phaedo*, has guided, through questions, the Japanese mind to an understanding of the relationship between *Iki* – aesthetics (the pure delight of the beckoning stillness – essence or being coming forth and causing delight) and *Joto ba* (language: that which comes to radiance in the fullness of its grace). It is in language that emptiness, the being which, like Derrida's *trace*, lies beyond both presence and absence as the matrix of both, and is revealed, not as mere communication but as poetic living in the world (Tezuca is here quoting Hölderlin).

Upon Temuco's leave, Heidegger qualifies their encounter as a gathering of lived moments (*Versammlung des Währenden*) that will endure for the past is never dead. That which has been and will has become a bridge crossing ethnic frontier. A message with Heidegger and Tezuca as messengers, interpreters, for the German *Bot chaft* also means embassy. Tezuca has come as a foreigner from the far East, but the dialogue with Heidegger has made him an ambassador meeting his host, no longer as a German or European, but as another ambassador...

Even more relevant in a discussion of biased perceptions of otherness is the letter Jacques Derrida wrote two decades later to a Japanese philosopher who had turned to him for advice on the translation of the word "deconstruction". Derrida promises Professor Izutsu only "some schematic and preliminary reflections, the word being sooner a notion collocating with a number of philosophies ("écriture", "trace", "difference", "supplement", "hymen", "pharmakon", "marge", "entame", "parergon") than one of the hegemonic concepts of Western metaphysics. Unlike Heidegger's dialogue, which ends up in mutual recognition, Derrida's letter finishes with a tautology of presence: deconstruction is deconstruction the way a poem is a poem. The conclusion sounds strange enough to those who took pains to study Derrida's philosophy, since, if there is something universally agreed upon about deconstruction, that is its incompatibility with the logic of identity.

The irony this time is that a translation of Derrida's texts already existed and that the Japanese equivalents, *hakai* or *kaitai*, come closer to what Derrida means by deconstruction: difference and dissemination. According to Lorenzo Marinucci,¹⁴ *hakai* means not only demolition but also internal subversion, dismantlement, removal, unravelling, untying and even liberation.

2. CONCLUSION

An attentive reading of reports on cross-cultural – more precisely, West-European, and Japanese - encounters of the last century has brought up oppositional structures of meaning. On the one hand, Yeats, Jung, Heidegger and Derrida express beliefs about the incompatibility of geographical imaginaries, not unlike a time-honoured German tradition (Herder, Goethe, Kant, Wundt, Spengler, among others) of musings on the distinct characteristics that tell apart the races of the earth.

On the other hand, slips of the tongue would point to a different conviction, muted and driven into the unconscious by the master narratives of the age.

In reality, Yeats had always been closer to Eastern cultural myths or doctrinary systems of thought than to western Christianity, repulsed as the cycle of lack in imagination and spiritual energy, of cowardice and passivity.

Heidegger changes radically his attitude during his encounter with Tomio Tezuca, with whom he engages in a Socratic *maieutics* meant to transform two strangers into ambassadors to a common land.

Derrida remains unflinching in his distancing theoretical pantomime, but the effect is the denial of his own polyvalent logic.

In the twenty-first century geographical space is no longer automatically invested with cultural capital, or even identity. Developers are now trying hard to fashion their landscapes according to expectations and cultural stereotypes in the minds of rich tourists from other continents. As in Michel Houellebecq's *the Map and the Territory*, post representation alienates real spaces into simulacra – the no-places of international travel - or the museal spaces haunted by former presences. The map precedes the territory as it is supposed to represent it for ethnic others: the idyllic French countryside which exists only in the Michelin guides, or the Dubai skyscrapers center looking like a Manhattan clone.

Real geographies have been replaced with imaginary communities, not only political but also theoretical. The birth of theory after the second world conflagration spawned an international academic space sharing common schemes of conceptualization, disciplinary vocabularies, and protocols. Even if the Tel Quell terror of the 60's is now memory, even if the limited number of theories validated as prototypical approaches have faded away, they have left behind disciplinary lore and theoretical habits in a world free of hegemonic centres, released from the obligation of emulating the prototypes of a few centres of civilization, engaged in building that planetary space which Heidegger had reserved for "us, Europeans".

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