Fracturing the Translation or Translating the Fractures?

Shigemi INAGA

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEIJI DISTURBANCE

The Heiji disturbance, which occurred late in 1159, represents a brief armed skirmish in the capital. One faction, led by Fujiwara Nobuyori, in alliance with the warrior Minamoto Yoshitomo, staged a coup. In the scene depicted here, they surrounded the palace, captured the sovereign, placed him in a cart and then consigned the structure to the flames. Even though Nobuyori and Yoshitomo were triumphant here, they later suffered defeat and death at the hands of their rival Kiyomori.

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Heiji Monogatari scrool, The Boston Museum of Art, MA

The old professor of aesthetics at the Harvard University confessed. He had naturally thought that this part on the extreme left must be the beginning of the scroll, as he had thought that this part on the extreme left must be the beginning of the scroll, as he had thought that this part on the extreme left must be the beginning of the scroll. He had taken it for granted that the scroll should be developed from left to right. He found that the Japanese method of thinking was diametrically opposite to his own. He used to explain to his students that the soldier at the top of the picture is not the character of the epic but the symbol of the entire epic. Upon listening to my lecture however, he finally recognized his fatal error, and told me with humor that he would no longer be able to use his striking comparison. Funny as it were, his confession was so painful to me that I could not find out a word to console him.

Heiji Monogatari scroll, The Boston Museum of Art, MS

By contrast, most surviving picture scrolls showing warriors date from the fourteenth century and show later styles of armor.

Yashiro Yukio (1890-1975), "Recollection of my days in Harvard as lecturer, 1932"

My Artistic Pilgrimage, 1972, pp.289-290

Japanese armor as it was worn during the early Kamakura era (1185-1333).

Night Attack on the Sanjo Palace

From the Heiji Monogataru scroll, Boston Museum of Art, MS.

The hero who suffers fracture on his right arm in the original may be easily transfigured into a superhuman with a hypertrophy at his left arm. This fracture in iconography suggests that the translation of the antipodes may well provide but a reversed version of the original, while erasing the fact that the end product is reversed. To preserve his...
In a Country of Upside-Down (2)

I ideas of order, which we deemed music in them no home, while methods which strike us as preposterously unnatural appear to be their birthright. From the standing of a wet umbrella on its

handle instead of its head to the striking of a match away in place of toward one, there seems to be no action of our daily lives, however
traditional, but feels with them an appropriate reaction—equal but opposite.

On the contrary, the Japanese do many things in a way that runs

approached the wrong end to.

It has often been remarked that the Japanese do many things topsy-turvy, instead of doing them naturally, after the manner of their country people. Ideas of ours which we deemed innate find in them no home, while methods which strike us as preposterously unnatural appear to be their birthright. From the standing of a wet umbrella on its

handle instead of its head to the striking of a match away in place of toward one, there seems to be no action of our daily lives, however
traditional, but feels with them an appropriate reaction—equal but opposite.

Indeed, to one accustomed to the manners and customs of the country (Japan), the only road to right lies in following unswervingly that course which his inherited instincts assure him to be wrong.

Questions of translatability in the Western Reception of Non-Linear Narratives in Japanese Arts and Poetics

Cf. The Japanese Constitution prepared by the G.H.Q of American Occupation

Invisible fractures may put in question the notion of equivalence in translation. It is not necessarily the original Japan which is studied, for the fact that many features of our modern civilization must be considered the result of contact with other cultures. Therefore this electoral reversal task be accomplished during the process of translation, and those who see only the end product as the target language system reject that something has been harbored.


Percival Lowell, The Soul of the Far East, 1888, The MacMillan Cie., 1911, pp.7-8...
Fractured, Transformed Travelling Narratives in Writing, Performance and the Arts Colloquium, The Pinter Centre, Department of Drama, Department of English & Comparative Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London, September 16-17, 2011.


William George Aston, (1841-1911)

Hokku and Haikai, which in ancient Japanese culture are a form of short poetry, are often characterized by their brevity and conciseness. They are typically composed of three lines of poetry, each containing a syllable count of 5-7-5.

Kabuki

Yone Noguchi’s remark of Arakida’s “hokku”

What real poetry is in the above, I wonder, except a pretty, even if high-sounding fancy of its quotation, it might pass as fitting expression if we understand hokku poem, in some Western students delight to understand hokku poems by the word “epigram.” Although, it is a question of the understanding of that word is not necessarily limited to the thought of pointed saying. I may not be much mistaken to compare the world with a still almost dead pond where thought of fancy, in the river, hardly changes, or precipitates itself, the real hokku, a least in my mind, as a running living water of poetry where you can reflect yourself to find your own identification.


One in the hoary ages in the Ravine of Lung Men once dwelt a king of the forest, a veritable king of the forest. In turn tried to draw melody from its strings (…)

At last came Pai Ya. He was a king of the forest. He was a running living water of poetry where you can reflect yourself to find your own identification.

On the morning of that day, the prince of harpists. With tender hand he caressed the heartstrings of the old king, and slowly touched the strings. This caused the strings to vibrate, the sound of vibration and the sound of water, and all the memories of the tree echoed (…)

In summary the Oriental monarch asked Pai Ya whether the secret of the victory, this (…), he replied, “when, having been attracted by the songs of the forest, I left the hokku in his hands, and knew not really whether he had been Pai Ya or Pai Ya. At last I was surprised by the beauty of the hokku which he composed” (…)

As the magic touch of the beautiful sound of the songs of the forest, produced by Pai Ya, was a running living water of poetry where you can reflect yourself to find your own identification.

Kabuki theatre

The Morning-glory. By Edwin Arnold (1832-1904)

A hokku poem is a short verse, usually consisting of three lines, each containing a syllable count of 5, 7, and 5, respectively. The poem is written in the style of the tanka, a form of Japanese poetry that is similar to the haiku but has a more complex form.

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Un objet modèle en terre cuite atteste que, déjà au VIe siècle, les Japonais montaient à cheval par la droite, contrairement à notre usage. Encore aujourd'hui, le visiteur s'étonne de constater que la nécessité d'impulsion, ou en tant qu'on l'utilise vers soi et non en le poussant à notre manière, et qu'il charge progressivement la planche, continue à faire penser qu'elle, comme son nom l'indique, servit à aplatis et atténuer le bois. Au Japon, l'emploi de la scie passe-partout qui coupe en poussant; mais dès le XIVe siècle, la scie qui coupe en tirant inventée sur place est aussi bien qu'employée par les artisans. Le plan de la coupe en tire de la scie un signe qui nous reste encore en un certain sens. Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, pp.7-8.

Car ces usages—les missionnaires jésuites l’avaient déjà remarqué — n’apparaissent pas confirmés le Japon I’Europe. La bonne démarcation passe entre le Japon insulaire et l’Asie continentale. En même temps que rendent aux éléments de sa culture, le Japon et l’Europe, la scie passe-partout qui coupe en poussant; mais dès le XIVe siècle, la scie qui coupe en tirant inventée sur place est aussi bien que l’une qui occupe un certain temps. La plupart de ces usages étaient déjà biventriculaires employés par Chamberlain. S’il avait pu connaître le Traité de Frois, découverte une attisation, il se serait trouvé en approcher d’observations partant identiques aux siennes, mais plus nombreuses et qui tenterait les mêmes conclusions.


• Can we agree with Levi-Strauss’s optimistic theory of universal complementarity of the contraries?
• How to deal with the “fracture”, which inevitably occur at the crossing-point of the “logics”? Can we overcome the cross-cultural fracture without causing fracture in the target language, as the end product of translation work? Or should we fracture the source language so as to reconstruct and realize a non-fractured translation? Is it recommended to visualize the fracture in the process of translation work? Is the caesura the end product of translation work, or should we fracture the source language so as to reconstruct and realize a non-fractured translation? Is it recommended to visualize the fracture in the process of translation work?


• Can the breaking point of the non-linear narrative, kire-ji, or a poetical caesura, bridge the fracture in trans-cultural mis/dis-communication, by its negative “lack of continuity” allowing some “logical leap”? Can we agree with Levi-Strauss’s optimistic theory of universal complementarity of the contraries? Can we overcome the cross-cultural fracture without causing fracture in the target language, as the end product of translation work? Or should we fracture the source language so as to reconstruct and realize a non-fractured translation? Is it recommended to visualize the fracture in the process of translation work? Is the caesura the end product of translation work, or should we fracture the source language so as to reconstruct and realize a non-fractured translation? Is it recommended to visualize the fracture in the process of translation work?