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Literature in Japanese (*Nihongo bungaku*): An Examination of the New Literary Topography by Plurilingual Writers from the 1990s

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the Meiji era (1868–1912), the modern state of Japan has departed from the use of classical Chinese prose (*kanbun*) as the common written language in the East Asian cultural sphere and developed the use of the vernacular as the new written and spoken language, creating a body of work that has come to be identified as Japanese Literature (*Nihon bungaku*) or National Literature (*kokubungaku*). Ideologically, the foundation of the modern state of Japan is inextricably tied to the myth of a single ethnicity and monolingualism, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the narrative of Japanese literary history until the latter half of the twentieth century was created and developed under the illusion of a monolingual condition. This is not to deny that there is an abundance of literature written in Japanese by writers who are bilingual or multilingual, as well as by those who lived and wrote in the *gaichi* (Japanese colonized territories) of Manchuria, Korea, Taiwan, and semi-colonized China, in addition to diaspora literature in Japanese by Korean and other non-Japanese nationals, an issue to which I will return below. My emphasis here is on the myth and illusion sustained in mainstream Japanese literary history and anthologies about the national language of Japanese (*kokugo*) as a singular and unifying tongue that serves as the nexus for race, culture, nationality, and literary expression, reinforcing a simplistic yet strong impression that Japanese literature is a product of a monolingual condition, at the expense of consigning those who do not fit with mainstream literary history to the margins.¹

However, the spontaneous challenge to the monolingual condition arises from the very fabric of the orthography of the Japanese language,



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which is internally non-monolingual, a mixture of two or more languages, marked by a great capacity to accommodate what the scholar Katō Shūichi evocatively calls a kind of hybridity (*zasshusei* 雑種性).² This is evident in the written script of the Japanese language, which embodies three different notational systems—the use of *kanji* ideograms as well as *hiragana* and *katakana* phonetics—to creatively blend foreign words with indigenous expressions, creating a language that allows foreign and indigenous elements to constantly mix and generate new expressions in a seamless fashion. Furthermore, the capacity for the Japanese script to accommodate hybridity is inextricably tied to the ceaseless and tireless act of translation through a process of strategic blending, compromise, and assimilation since its first encounter with Chinese language and civilization. In short, Japanese is a language of hybridity that has translation woven into the fabric of its orthography and its writing practice of incorporating foreign elements.

Even though mainstream literary history since the Meiji era creates the impression that modern Japanese literature is ideologically engendered in the “imagined community” of a modern nation state unified by a single language, this paper attempts to redirect our attention to the emergence of “literature in Japanese” (*Nihongo bungaku*) as a body of work born of a language of hybridity and deeply engaged with plurilingual notations in its creation, written in Japanese by authors who are not necessarily Japanese nationals, thus challenging the approach to Japanese literature as National Literature.³ While this paper focuses on the engagement with *Nihongo bungaku* in three writers from the 1990s, the seeds of *Nihongo bungaku* were scattered in a much earlier stage. They can be found in the adaptation of foreign words and ideas in Japanese literature since early Meiji, as in the works of bilingual and multilingual writers who studied and worked abroad, such as Futabatei Shimei, Mori Ōgai, and Natsume Sōseki. They also germinate in the works of Taishō writers who came under the influence of the European-based elite intellectual cultivation (*Taishō kyōyō shugi* 大正教養主義), such as Arishima Takeo and Mushakōji Saneatsu of the Shirakabaha (White Birch Society), not to mention the robust adaptation and translation of foreign words and culture in the works of, say, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Satō Haruo, both of whom are addressed in a later section.⁴ In addition to the incorporation of foreign elements in the formative stages of modern Japanese literature, the challenge to the nation-based approach to literary history can also be found in what Karen Thornber calls “intra-East Asian literary contact nebula,” the ambiguous physical or creative spaces in which writings and

writers of Imperial Japan interacted with those in colonial Taiwan, Korea, and semi-colonial China during the colonial era, generating a tremendous amount of “literary transculturation” on an interpretive, interlingual, and intertextual level.⁵ Finally, one of the greatest challenges to the notion of national literature is in the diaspora literature in Japanese by Koreans, Taiwanese, and other colonized people and their descendants residing in the occupied territories during the colonial era (1895–1945) and in Japan, then and now. Among them are the works of Li Kaisei (李恢成, b. 1935), Kyū Eikan (邱永漢, 1924–2012), Kim Suok-puom (金石範, b. 1925), and Yū Miri (柳美里, b. 1968), just to name a representative few.

Even though the contemporary notion of *Nihongo bungaku* and its challenge to the concept of a nation-based approach to literary history can be historicized, to some extent, within the above-mentioned contexts of foreign adaptations since the Meiji era, the literary transculturation in the intra-East Asian literary contacts, and diaspora literature, it is important to note that the contemporary use of the term *Nihongo bungaku* to refer to writings in Japanese by non-Japanese writers is a postcolonial phenomenon. That is to say, the current concept of *Nihongo bungaku* did not exist during the period when the slogan “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” was used by the Japanese government from 1940 to 1945 to express a new political order in East Asia, and diaspora literature as well as the products of East Asian literary interaction were not identified as *Nihongo bungaku*.⁶ Moreover, literature by Japanese writers in Imperial Japan, regardless of the abundance of foreign elements in the texts, is categorized in literary history as Japanese Literature (*Nihon bungaku*) or National Literature (*kokubungaku*), and not as *Nihongo bungaku*.⁷ To identify diaspora literature and transcultural literary productions as *Nihongo bungaku* retroactively is a critical and academic phenomenon made possible in the postcolonial, globalized context of literary studies.⁸

Thus it is necessary to distinguish contemporary writings in Japanese by writers who choose freely to live and write in Japanese from diaspora literature in Japanese, not in terms of quality, but in terms of the different set of political and historical conditions under which the different literary productions in Japanese were engendered. While acknowledging the links and debts to works that can be retroactively studied as *Nihongo bungaku*, this paper focuses on the use of the term in the contemporary global consciousness of literary studies, with reference to plurilingual writers who choose to write in Japanese under very different conditions from those who wrote under the oppression of war, hegemony, and imperialism.

Historically, literature in Japanese by non-Japanese writers existed long before the 1990s, but the term *Nihongo bungaku* has finally stepped into the limelight in its contemporary use as a new, viable approach to narrating literary history in the age of global awareness.

Since the 1990s, a number of plurilingual writers have published works with a heightened consciousness of incorporating different languages in the Japanese text, in the original and/or in translation, resulting in a gradual transformation of the literary topography. These include the works by writers with rich overseas experience, such as Mizumura Minae and Tawada Yōko; writers whose mother tongue is not Japanese, such as Hideo Levy and Yang Yi; writers born and/or raised in Japan but remain non-Japanese nationals, such as Yi Yanji and On Yūjū; and bilingual writers such as Iwaki Kei and Yokoyama Yūta. Combining a deft manipulation of a malleable and accommodating Japanese script with the act of incorporating one or more non-Japanese languages in the forms of mixing, glossing, and/or translating, they create new ways to include non-indigenous and foreign elements in their works, leading to the exploration of new possibilities in literature in Japanese.

This paper will focus on the works by Hideo Levy (b. 1950), On Yūjū (b. 1980), and Yokoyama Yūta (b. 1981). These writers share a deep knowledge of and concern for the East Asian cultural sphere, especially the literature and culture in various Chinese societies. Though vastly different in style and temperament, they seek to highlight instead of downplay or mute the effect of foreign words in their writing. They reflect Theodore Adorno's emphasis on the "nonorganic" nature of all languages—that languages are not organic matters like plants or animals that embody a genetic program of development but are open to the addition of foreign elements in their growth and development—and resist the quiet assimilation of foreign words and phrases in Japanese prose.⁹ They challenge the monolingual paradigm of seeing language as a pure and self-contained organism—like a seed growing into a plant—and participate in the continuous production and development of language based on the constitutive act that Adorno calls naming, including the use of foreign words and translation in the naming.¹⁰ They celebrate the emergence of strangeness and differences of foreign or foreign-derived words in their writing, and call attention to hybridity and translation as potentials to transform the topography of literature in Japanese.

Since it is impossible within the scope of this paper to discuss the long history of incorporating Chinese in Japanese writing, this study limits itself to examples that illustrate the different ways of including literary

Chinese (*wenyan* 文言) and vernacular Chinese (*baihua* 白話) in selected modern Japanese literary texts. This will pave the way for analyzing the strategies of incorporating different forms of Chinese (e. g., simplified characters used in mainland China and complex characters in Taiwan and Hong Kong, written and spoken Chinese, dialects, etc.) in the works of Levy, On, and Yokoyama, and to distinguish what is new in their approaches. In an attempt to understand their endeavors to create a polyphonic reading and writing experience peculiar to the East Asian cultural sphere, I will focus on the translation and incorporation of vernacular Chinese and dialects in their Japanese writings. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the potential and limitations of these writing experiments, and an exploration of the possibilities of literature in Japanese.

Incorporating Literary and Vernacular Chinese in Modern Japanese Literary Texts

The incorporation of Chinese in modern Japanese literary texts falls within two major frameworks. The first reflects the encounter with an ancient and venerable civilization and language that inspires emulation and awe and entails an active engagement with literary Chinese via direct quotation, paraphrase, translation, and adaptation. The guiding principle in this framework is succinctly couched in the four-character compound expression *wakan yūgō* 和漢融合 (a smooth blending of [things, words, ideas] Japanese and Chinese), with a touch of the spirit of compromise *setchū* (折衷) to accommodate differences. The processes of mixing, blending, negotiating differences, and reaching a compromise often result in the assimilation of literary Chinese in an organic manner in the Japanese text, allowing it to grow metaphorically as the flesh and blood of Japanese language and writing. The second framework reflects a somewhat more complicated and ambivalent attitude toward vernacular Chinese in the modern age (especially after the defeat of China in the First Opium War, 1842) when Meiji Japan was undergoing rapid modernization and Westernization and China suffered repeated defeats and decline. Vernacular Chinese, when included in Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa Japanese literary texts, has the appearance of an alien script, incomprehensible, out of place, like a fish bone stuck in the throat, a point to which I will return with examples below.

For writers who came of age in the Meiji period and were steeped in Chinese learning, it was nearly second nature to incorporate literary Chinese under the principle of blending and compromise, and in doing so

transform Chinese materials into an organic and integral part of the Japanese text. In *Kusamakura* (Grass Pillow, 1906), Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) evokes lines from the eremitic poet Tao Qian (365–427) to construct the mysterious and remote setting of Nago, as in “Gathering chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge, I gaze calmly at the southern mountain” (採菊東籬下，悠然見南山).¹¹ Literary Chinese blends in comfortably with the Japanese prose, sometimes to entertain, sometimes as a mark of erudition, sometimes as a lesson in the classics, but never stands out as a foreign language to be rejected. Aficionados of Chinese literature—Mori Ōgai, Nagai Kafū, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Nakajima Atsushi, and many others—have integrated literary Chinese texts organically into the corpus of Japanese writing in a similar fashion.¹²

However, vernacular Chinese poses a totally different kind of challenge. In *Garasudo no uchi* (Within the glass door, 1915), when Sōseki’s friend O, a returnee from Karafuto (Sakhalin), makes a comment about being able to see afar “more or less” (*chabuduo* 差不多) with his reading glasses, Sōseki fails to provide the *kanji* for the vernacular Chinese expression and renders it into the *katakana* notation of *chabudō* チャブドー, coupled with a comment of bewilderment, “I have no idea what this *chabudō* means.”¹³ Unlike literary Chinese, vernacular Chinese is treated as an alien language, written in *katakana*, that resists visual and semantic assimilation into the Japanese text.

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s (1892–1927) reactions to literary and vernacular Chinese are even more extreme in his travelogues *Shanghai yūki* (Travels in Shanghai, 1921) and *Kōnan yūki* (Travels in Jiangnan, 1922). Known for his love and knowledge of Chinese learning, which he frequently incorporates into his works in the form of adaptation and quotation, Akutagawa was bitterly disgusted by the vulgarity, poverty, and unhygienic conditions he encountered in his travels to China. He expressed in *Travels in Shanghai* that he would prefer to just keep *Wenzhang qihan* 文章規範 (Standard Classical Chinese prose) and *Tangshi xuan* 唐詩選 (A selection of Tang poetry) and discard the rest.¹⁴ He sprinkles his prose liberally with quotes from classical Chinese poetry and phrases, complete with glosses that indicate the Japanese reading of Chinese names and titles, as well as the Japanese translation of literary Chinese. In doing so, he makes literary Chinese an organic part of Japanese prose.

However, references to vernacular Chinese are treated differently. These include disembodied onomatopoeia (*aiyo* 嘸啲),¹⁵ glossed in

katakana to indicate its foreignness; derisive and meaningless fragments of a song he overheard (“chin chin Chinaman”), deliberately presented in English spelling to emphasize its visual intrusion on the Japanese prose; and finally, anti-Japanese graffiti (“dogs and Japanese prohibited from writing on walls” 犬与日奴不得題壁^{いぬとにちどくかにだいたすることをまじ}) written by local Chinese, jotted down verbatim, and glossed in modern Japanese.¹⁶ While Akutagawa’s treatment of literary Chinese suggests a faint nostalgia for an old Chinese language that was once organic and integral to Japanese writing, his near physical repulsion to vernacular Chinese suggests that it is an alien and vulgar foreign language to be purged from Japanese writing.

Preceding Akutagawa’s travels to China by just a year, Satō Haruo’s (1892–1964) two-and-a-half months sojourn in then colonial Taiwan triggered his intellectual curiosity about vernacular Chinese and other Chinese dialects. In *Jokaisen kidan* 女誠扇綺譚 (A strange tale of a fan with commandments for women, 1925), a story about a Japanese journalist and his Taiwanese friend visiting the ruins of a magnificent house in southern Taiwan where they happen to hear a woman’s plaintive voice in the Quanzhou 泉州 dialect. Rumored to be that of a ghost at first, the voice turns out to be that of the housemaid of the Huang family. In this story, Satō experiments with incorporating vernacular Chinese and dialects in a Japanese text. As a rule, he uses *katakana* in the gloss to approximate the sounds of the local dialects and distinguishes them from standard Chinese. The house is located in a small harbor town called Tutougang 禿頭港, whose reading in *katakana*, “Kututaukan,” marks the foreignness and exoticism of the setting.¹⁷ The same applies to the name of the area in ruins, said to be built by Dutch residents in Japan who initially called it TECASTLE ZEELANDIA, and renamed Shakamusha 赤嵌城^{シカモウシヤ} by the locals.¹⁸ Thus in the first two pages of the story, Satō is happily tossing Chinese dialects, Dutch words, and the colonial adaptation of Japanese pronunciation of Chinese place names into what appears to be the beginning of a plurilingual experimental text. A few pages into the story, the narrator explains that even though the islanders generally speak the Amoy dialect, he is hearing a different dialect spoken by what the local guide identifies as someone from the region of Quanzhou. Satō chooses to capture the state of incomprehensibility with a series of crosses: 「XX!？」

「XX!？」 This is followed by an uncertain translation by the guide: “Well, I’m not sure what she was saying, maybe something to the effect of ‘why, why didn’t you come sooner?’”¹⁹ The clumsiness of “lost in translation”

is no doubt a deliberate strategy to emphasize the bewildering but also profoundly intriguing encounter with an incomprehensible tongue.

In examining the treatment of literary and vernacular Chinese in selected texts by Sōseki, Akutagawa, and Satō Haruo, it is clear that they share a common and long-held respect and appreciation for literary Chinese, and continue to incorporate it as an organic element in their works through a combination of allusions, adaptation, in-text translation, quotations, and bilingual glosses. Their responses to vernacular Chinese are more complex, ranging from Sōseki's mild perplexity and Satō Haruo's intellectual and cultural curiosity to Akutagawa's vehement rejection. Despite the different responses, one feature is common in their experiments of incorporating vernacular Chinese in their texts. Whether quoted verbatim, translated in the text, footnoted, or written/glossed in *katakana*, vernacular Chinese remains an outsider in a Japanese text and refuses to be homogenized. In that sense, it resists the principle of blending and compromise, existing means by which foreign elements are "tamed" and "naturalized" in Japanese writing. Levy, On, and Yokoyama are to take advantage of this stubborn foreignness to explore the possibility of a new form of plurilingual writing in Japanese.

Hideo Levy and the Impulse to Translate

An American citizen of Jewish descent, Levy spent his childhood in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and lived in Japan for a year as a teenager. He received a doctoral degree from Princeton University in 1978, taught Japanese literature at Princeton and Stanford, and in 1990 quit his tenured position at Stanford to teach and write in Japan. In addition to his debut work *Seijōki no kikoena heya* (A room where the Star-Spangled Banner is not heard, 1992) for which he received the Noma Prize for New Writers, his representative works are predominantly I-novel style fiction and essays that can be broadly divided into two major categories: first, reflections on Japanese language and literature, such as *Nihongo no shōri* (The victory of Japanese, 1992), *Wareteki Nihongo* (The world in Japanese, 1996),²⁰ *Nihongo o kaku heya* (The room for writing in Japanese, 2011); and second, writings about China and Taiwan in Japanese, such as *Ten'anmon* (The Gate of Heavenly Peace, 1996), *Kari no mizu* (Imitation water, 2008), and *Mohankyō* (Model village, 2016). His career as a Japanese writer challenges the commonly accepted correspondence of Japanese language to race, culture, and nationality that underlies the ideology of the modern state of Japan.²¹ Promotional blurbs for his books invariably include some versions of the following: "An American-born writer without a single drop

of Japanese blood in his veins,” “Leaving his mother tongue for a striking debut in Japanese,” and “From the United States to Japan, from English to Japanese.”²²

However, Levy’s most significant contribution to the changing topography in Japanese language and literature is not so much in the slightly sensational and unusual move of “going native,” that is, the move from a dominant Western language to a minor, non-Western language, but in the role and identity of a translator-scholar. His English translation of the first five books of the *Man’yōshū* (1981) won the prestigious 1982 National Book Awards for Translation.²³ The linguist Roy Andrew Miller points out that Old Japanese²⁴ consists of a number of orthographic categories, including phonograms (Chinese characters used for their sound alone, without reference to the sense of the words, usually called *man’yōgana*), semantograms (what Japanese calls *kun*, i.e., notations that indicate meaning, not sound), rebus-writings (what Japanese calls *ateji*, Chinese characters borrowed for a phonetic equivalent or a substitute character for meaning), and passages in Chinese notations meant to be read as Japanese (what Japanese calls *kanbun*).²⁵ As an example, a poem by Yamanoue Okura longing for Japan during his sojourn in China (Book 1, poem 63) appears as follows, first, in Japanese romanized reading accompanied by the original *man’yōgana* script and glossed in Japanese transcription, and second, in Levy’s translation:

1. *iza kodomo hayaku Yamato e Ōtomo no mitsu no hamamatsu machikoinuramu*

(Man’yōgana) いざ子ども 早く日本へ 大伴乃 御津乃浜松
待恋奴良武²⁶

2. Levy’s translation:

Come lads, make speed/ for Yamato! The pines/on the beach/ by
Ōtomo’s noble cove/ wait for us in longing²⁷

One imagines the interpretive acrobatics involved in Levy’s English translation: to perceive the mixture of *kanbun* and Japanese grammar and meaning in a line of *man’yōgana* script, to appreciate the Japanese transcription of the poem, and to finally render it into accessible modern English. This process of translating the *Man’yōshū* is significant in shaping Levy’s Japanese writing in three ways: first, it reveals his fascination with the capacity for the *Man’yōshū* to embody a cross-border, polyphonic script in the early stage of Japanese writing and engender complex meaning in an aesthetically appealing and intellectually challenging writing system; second, it compels him to explore the outer

limits of a language through the process of translation and juggling with different notations; and third, it sparks off new combinations of linguistic experimentation when one language collides with another and grapples for the most effective or expressive way to convey thoughts, feelings, and meanings. All these aspects are evident in Levy's Japanese writing, especially in the writings about China and Taiwan that dominate his mature works.

Levy employs different writing strategies in his China-related works to explore a new topography in Japanese writing. These include in-text translation, dialogues or reported speech in multiple languages, a juxtaposition of different forms of Chinese characters, the use of interlineal bilingual gloss, and finally, a deliberate refrain from translation and glossing to highlight his emotional commitment to the Japanese language. In-text translation has visual and aural effects; it allows him to set up a stimulating patchwork of languages on a page to appeal to the eyes and a polyphony to appeal to the ears. This is evident in the opening scene of "The Gate of Heavenly Peace," with the famous communist propaganda song glorifying Mao Zedong buzzing in his head in Chinese, Japanese, and English.

- (C.) *Dongfang hong, taiyang sheng* フンダフアンホンギョウ タイヤンシヤンギョウ 东方红 太阳升
 (J.) *Tōhō wa beni, taiyō ga noboru* 東方は紅、太陽が昇る
 The east is red, the sun has risen.²⁸

The first line consists of the original Chinese lyrics in simplified Chinese glossed in *katakana* to approximate the standard Chinese pronunciation, the second line the Japanese translation, and the third, English. The polyphony is embodied not only in the inter-lingual translation but also in the melody of the propaganda song, no doubt familiar to readers interested in the subject matter.

Another translation strategy is the simple yet thought-provoking technique of juxtaposing different forms of Chinese characters: simplified characters for mainland China after 1949, complex characters for China before 1949 and still used in Taiwan and Hong Kong, Japanese *kanji* for Japanese, and a mixture of these usages in certain expressions. The juxtaposition of characters is straightforward, but the questions about whether they carry the same meaning or if they translate into the corresponding characters in a different writing script is more complicated. In "Henri Takeshi Reuitsuki no natsu no kikō" (The Summer Travels of Henry Takeshi Lewitsky, 1996), the main character is a stand-in for Levy with a plurilingual name that indicates at least three cultural and linguistic

affiliations. Henry is fascinated by simplified characters, some of which he recognizes and some not.

“Travel agency” (*lǚshe* 旅社), “craft” (*gongyi* 工艺), “art” (*shu* 术), “commerce” (*shang* 商), “farming” (*nong* 农): signs with simplified characters that Henry can and cannot decipher entered his eyes.²⁹

In another example, Henry resorts to transcribing the characters in his mind, as in the following:

[Henry] transformed the simplified characters on the sign for Dragon Pavilion (*longting* 龙亭) to the Japanese *kanji* of *Ryūtei* (龍亭) in his head.³⁰

A further example accentuates the V-effect, for the German *Verfremdungseffekt*, coined by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956):

He can understand the simplified characters for Korea (*Hanguo* 韩国) and America (*Meiguo* 美国), but those for art (*shu* 术), fly (*fei* 飞), good harvest (*feng* 丰), and word (*yan* 讠) simply look like dead bodies of squashed insects on the newspaper to him.³¹

In the story, even though these Chinese characters hold the same meaning in simplified and complex forms, and even though some of these characters are translatable into Japanese, Henry experiences an enormous sense of estrangement in reading simplified Chinese characters. Historically, Chinese language reform played a significant role in the cultural construction of post-1949 China, and Mao Zedong instructed the Ministry of Education to establish a preparatory committee for the Committee for Studying the Reform of the Chinese Written Language (CSRCWL) in May 1951.³² In addition to its practical functions, the simplified Chinese script is an important part of the construction of a new cultural and political identity for post-1949 China, as distinguished from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Furthermore, there was a conscious effort to distinguish the Chinese simplification from the Japanese simplification, as in the following examples: the complex character *yīng* 應 is simplified as 应 in Chinese and 応 in Japanese; *yì* 藝 is simplified as 艺 in Chinese and 芸 in Japanese; and 廣 is simplified as 广 in Chinese and 広 in Japanese.³³ Thus, Henry is reacting not only to the visual stimulation of the different types of Chinese characters but to the cultural, political, and national associations they evoke. In search of a linguistic and intellectual identity to define himself, Henry for the most part distances himself from

simplified and complex Chinese characters, and settles for Japanese *kanji* for self-expression, as in the following dual lingual sentences that require minimum translation for the Japanese reader.

(In Chinese) *My nationality is American, but my permanent residence is Japan.*

(In Japanese) When asked about my identity, those were usually the words I assemble in my head to respond.

(「美国国籍、但是」しかし、「常住日本」と、アイデンティティを尋ねられたらそう答えることにしていた、あらかじめ頭の中で組み立ててあった文言で答えた。) ³⁴

The most complex act of translation Levy employs in the text is the use of interlineal bilingual gloss. Owing to the long and rich tradition of incorporating non-Japanese words and grammar in Japanese writing, the use of glosses is resourceful and creative, serving the purposes of simultaneous in-text interpretation, double meaning, or for humor and entertainment. With regards to the bilingual gloss in Japanese modernist fiction in the 1920s and 30s, the scholar William J. Tyler writes, “*Furigana* have been fundamentally bilingual since they were first used in antiquity; in essence, to translate Chinese into Japanese.” ³⁵ He adds:

It is a technique of longstanding tradition in Japanese, having enjoyed currency in the playful and vernacular *gesaku* literature of the mid to late Edo period in which authors exercised great license and were highly imaginative in employing *furigana* as variant glosses. ³⁶

A variety of bilingual gloss or “cross-cultural gloss,” ³⁷ to borrow Tyler’s term, is used with great innovation in Levy’s Japanese text to incorporate vernacular Chinese. He uses a mixture of Japanese *kanji* as well as simplified and complex characters in combination with glosses to indicate Chinese, Japanese, and English reading or meaning to produce a plurilingual reading experience. The glossing methods are aimed at achieving a few effects. First, to facilitate reading in Chinese and understanding the meaning of Chinese terms in Japanese, Chinese expression commonly used or whose meaning can be deciphered in Japanese is written in *kanji* with a *katakana* gloss for Chinese reading to accentuate the foreign nature of the term, for example, “Three Principles of the People” (C. *sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義) and “Reviving the mainland” (C. *guangfu dalu* 光復大陸). ³⁸ Sometimes, Chinese characters and expressions common in Chinese and Japanese are glossed in Chinese, for example, “Japanese” (C. *Ribenren* 日本人) and “a hundred” (C. *yibai* 一百). ³⁹ There are also times when Chinese and Japanese terms written in Japanese *kanji* are glossed with English meaning, for example, “National

Party” (C. *Guomindang*, J. *Kokumintō*, glossed as *nashonarisuto* 国民党) and “diplomat” (C. *waijiaoguan*, J. *gaikōkan*, glossed as *dipuromatto* 外交官).⁴⁰ This glossing strategy achieves a trilingual effect, in that the script triggers Chinese and/or Japanese readings while the gloss indicates its English meaning.

Second, to highlight the foreignness of Chinese expressions and stimulate the reader’s impulse to surmise the meaning from the script, Chinese in simplified characters is presented with partial or no gloss, for example, “Chairman Mao loves the people” (C. *Mao zhuji ai renmin* 毛主席爱人民),⁴¹ “state-run” (*guoying* 国营), “fashion” (*shizhuang* 时装), and “karaoke” (*kalaOK* 卡拉OK).⁴²

Finally, to show that Chinese is an internally diverse language with a profusion of dialects that are often mutually unintelligible, he glosses Chinese expressions both in the local dialect and standard Chinese, as in the following example: “The big guy opened his mouth and said, ‘low-way’ ローウェイ. I realized he was saying *laowai* (老外 = you Yankee) in a local dialect.”⁴³

Overall, the reliance on interlineal cross-border gloss is a reminder of Levy’s search for a complex linguistic, cultural, and intellectual identity that resides not in a homologous and monolingual condition but in the gaps between languages, cultures, and the many Asian cities of his childhood and youth. Precisely because that identity is not ready-made, he struggles to define it in his plurilingual Japanese writing. Summoning all three languages and using only the Japanese script and interlineal gloss, he gives shape to a cross-border identity discovered in a new topography in Japanese, and challenges the reader to perform a necessary act of simultaneous interpretation-in-reading in order to experience a plurilingual world, as in the following quote (*italics* indicates *pinyin* or Chinese expressions):

People, *renmin*, *minzu*; once again, my murmuring hit against the wall.

(ピープル、人民、民族、とまたつぶやきが壁に当たった。)

The number *fifty-six* appeared in the back of my eyes.

(五十六個、と数字が、文字が目の裏に現れた。)

There are fifty-six races in China.

(在中国有五十六個民族。)

What is my race?

(我的民族、は?)⁴⁴

Yet despite this constant engagement in a polyphonic and plurilingual literary space, Levy reaches his own epiphany in transcribing his thoughts into Japanese, stripped of Chinese characters and English references. For instance, in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace,” the mature stand-in for Levy calls out involuntarily “Mao” (マオ) in *katakana* upon beholding Mao’s preserved body in the Mao Zedong Mausoleum, and accentuates the power of the simple sound embodied in a *katakana* appellation: “I wanted simply to bellow out the sound of the name, neither in English nor Chinese.”⁴⁵ In doing so, he allows the phonetic expression to capture the anxiety and bewilderment he sensed as a child overhearing his parents’ discussion of Mao’s “madness.” The sound “Mao” becomes synonymous with the child’s fear and incomprehension before the acquisition of an intellectual and historical understanding of what the name means. Further on in his search for identity, in “Henry Takeshi Lewitsky’s Summer Travels,” after seeking for signs of Jewish residents in China and coming upon a well in the site of a demolished synagogue, the protagonist thinks to himself as follows: “The words of the mainland vanished, and only thoughts of Japanese surfaced in Henry’s mind. . . . the foreigner is no longer a foreigner” (がいじんが、がいじんではなく、なった).⁴⁶ It is as though the journey through a plurilingual world—grappling with his “mother tongue,” “father tongue,” and “step-mother tongue”—has finally taken Levy to a simple phrase written only in *hiragana*, a phonetic notation in which he finds the language he calls home.

On Yūjū and Her Diglossic Mother

Born in Taiwan and raised in Japan since the age of three, On Yūjū received the Subaru Literary Award’s “honorable mention” (佳作 *kasaku*) for “Kōkyokōraika” (A song for safe travels [hereafter “A song”], 2009). She has since produced a steady stream of works, including “Raifuku no ie” (The house of good fortune, 2011), *Taiwan umare Nihongo sodachi* (Born in Taiwan, raised in Japanese, 2016), *Mannaka no kodomotachi* (The in-between children, 2017), and *Kūkō jikō* (Airport moments, 2018). Even though her name is glossed in Japanese reading (おん・ゆうじゅう) under author’s information at the back of the book, it is often romanized as Wen Yūjū on the cover, a combination of the Chinese reading for the surname On (溫) and the Japanese reading of the given name Yūjū (又柔). The paper band of *Airport moments* contains a blurb that identifies her as a Taiwanese Japanese-language writer (*Taiwan-kei Nihongo sakka*), with an emphasis on the promotional strategy of using *katakana* as the notation for “Japanese” (*Nihongo* ニホン語) to suggest a new and hybrid form of

Japanese. Itō Hiromi comments that “[n]either Taiwanese nor Japanese, [On Yūjū] has to be read within a larger parameter.”⁴⁷ These blurbs differentiate her from “native” Japanese writers and emphasize a sense of not-belonging, an identity projected as “cool” in book sales strategies targeting the niche of global minded readers.

On Yūjū studied with Hideo Levy as a student at Hōsei University and has clearly inherited his predilection for self-referential narration, his meme for plurilingual writing, and his use of translation to explore a new topography in writing Japanese. This is evident in the title of her first short story “A song,” alluding to a poem by the *Man’yōshū* poet Yamanoue Okura that prays for safe travels for the delegates to Tang China.⁴⁸ Even though the story makes no direct reference to Okura nor the delegates, it is clearly an acknowledgement of her mentor Levy’s identification with Okura, who was believed to have come to Japan from Korea at the age of four and eventually became a renowned courtier and poet with a deep love for the Japanese language (*Yamato kotoba*).⁴⁹ In choosing “A Song” as the title of her first work, she aligns herself with Okura and Levy, non-Japanese writers who have made the Japanese language their linguistic and intellectual home.

While her intellectual mentor is Levy, her “linguistic mother” is the diglossic mother who features in nearly all her stories and essays.⁵⁰ A term coined by the linguist Charles A. Ferguson in 1959, diglossia denotes “the existence of two varieties of the same language throughout a speech community.”⁵¹ Very often, one form is a literary or prestige variety used in reading, writing, and formal communication, while the other is a common dialect spoken by the general population. There is an in-built hierarchy or stratification in the two forms of speech in that the literary variety is used in education and administration and becomes a language associated with power and labeled as *High* variety, while the common dialect is mostly in oral use and considered less significant and inferior, and labeled as *Low* variety.⁵² This in-built hierarchy is one of the most important features that distinguishes diglossia from bilingualism. A bilingual person speaks two languages (e.g., English and Chinese) that do not necessarily fall within a hierarchy of importance in terms of status and prestige, even though under certain historical, political, social, or cultural circumstances, one language may be considered more prestigious or powerful than the other, particularly in the case of colonial rule.

In the case of On Yūjū’s mother, who grew up in Taiwan, she mixes the Taiwanese dialect, which is a variety of the Minnan dialect, with standard Chinese, which is very close to the spoken language in Beijing

and identified as “the common language” (C. *putonghua*) or “national language” (C. *guoyu*). After the Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek fled to and took control of Taiwan in 1949, standard Chinese from the mainland became the de facto official language, and the Taiwanese dialect, which is mostly in oral use like most Chinese dialects, is rendered less prestigious. This does not mean that the Taiwanese dialect is qualitatively inferior as a tool of communication and expression in comparison to the official language; it means that after 1949, historically, politically, and socially, it is regarded as below the official language in status.

Growing up in Japan, On Yūjū reacts to her diglossic mother with equal parts of wonder and embarrassment. This is how she transcribes/translates their exchanges at home (C = Chinese, D = dialect, Japanese phrases are rendered into English):

Come to think about it, I was using Japanese all the time at home since elementary school.

—“(C) *Haole*, (D) *kin ki see chuu*. (C) *kuaiyao chifan!*”

(好了、キン・キ・セエ・チュウ。快要吃飯！)

(OK, hurry up and wash your hands. Dinner is ready!)

—OK, I know, just wait a sec.

I said.

—(C) *Ni zai gan shimo?* (D) *Hawaa, kinki kun!*

(你在幹什麼？ハワー、キンキ・クン！)

(What are you doing? It’s getting late so hurry up and go to bed!)⁵³

She also records the way her mother throws in fragments of Japanese into her code-switching speech, for example, her mother’s way of saying “When Dad comes home we’ll go to the festival” is: “(D) *Papa, denrai*, (C) *women caiqu* (J) *omaturi?*” (パパ、デンライ、我們才去おまつり！)⁵⁴ Furthermore, she is bemused by her mother’s unidiomatic use of Japanese, such as “Have you *eaten* you medicine?” (*kusuri, tabeta?*), “Don’t *do* a lost child” (*maigo shinai de ne*), “I have a story *of fun*” (*omoshiroi no hanashi, aru yo*), and she explains that what lies behind what she calls “Mom’s lingo” (*mamago*) are Chinese and Taiwanese expressions, such as “eat medicine” (*chiyao* 吃藥), “getting lost” (*milu* 迷路), “a fun story” (*haowan de hua* 好玩的話).⁵⁵

In “A Song,” she recalls a mortifying embarrassment through her childhood stand-in character Yang Yuanzhu (J. Yō Enju). She describes her mother’s scolding in a mixture of tongues when the child Enju, failing

to return home at a specific time in the evening, was found playing with a friend in a sandbox in a park:

Mom yelled at Enju in a tumbled-up mixture of Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese. Mom, please, Miyu is watching, so at least yell at me in Japanese! Enju's begging in Japanese was entirely wiped out by her mother's fury.

“(D) *Li shi chabogyaa* (You are a girl!)”⁵⁶

On Yūjū's use of in-text translation and other code-switching strategies in capturing a plurilingual topography in Japanese writing betrays an indebtedness to Levy, but the hierarchy of speeches and the historical and sociopolitical baggage she attempts to depict far exceeds in complexity what her intellectual mentor faces. Her negotiations with the different languages that constitute her sociocultural self resonate with Yi Yanji's struggle with Korean and Japanese in her tormenting journey of self-discovery. One imagines a Caucasian child in Japan reprimanded in public by a mother speaking in English or any other European languages will be embarrassed by the scolding, but not so much by the mother's language. There is a subtle and unspoken hierarchy with regards to foreign languages in Japan, with English and European languages in the upper rungs and Asian languages in the lower rungs. The assigned prestige to a given language has little to do with the inherent value of the language but is associated with the historical, sociocultural, and sometimes economic settings in which a language functions. The issue of linguistic hierarchy is not limited to her experience in Japan but intensified in her attempts to learn standard Chinese. In “The in-between children,” her thinly veiled stand-in is criticized by her Chinese teacher in Shanghai for having a “southern accent,” as though it is some kind of substandard defect.⁵⁷

Instead of smoothing over the *high* and *low* of the diglossic and plurilingual terrain, On Yūjū emphasizes its ruggedness and negotiates the gaps of meaning with a variety of notational strategies. Sometimes she transcribes Japanese pronunciation into complex Chinese characters in accordance with the writing system in Taiwan to replicate the speech by her maternal grandfather, who received a Japanese colonial education: “*Tōsan* [Dad] speaks like a Japanese!” (*Duosan shuohua haoxiang Ribenren!* 多桑說話好像日本人!).⁵⁸ Sometime she mixes complex and simplified characters (either deliberately or by mistake) with an inter-lineal gloss in *pinyin* (instead of in the Wade-Giles system, which is more commonly used for romanization in Taiwan), resulting in a fusion of Chinese notations used in the mainland and Taiwan: “Keep smiling, keep

laughing” (笑容常在笑口常开^{xiaorongchangzaixiaokouchangkai}), to which she throws in an in-text Japanese translation (always keep a smiling face).⁵⁹ Instead of being hampered by the notions of high and low, standard and substandard, center and margin, she fills her Japanese writing with written and spoken Chinese in mainland China and Taiwan, as well as local dialects, and draws attention to the non-Japanese elements with different translation and notational strategies to create a bumpy and stimulating terrain. In this way, even though she is dispossessed of a mother tongue (itself a sentimental metaphor) and denied “natural” affiliation to her adopted language of Japanese, she has developed what I will call a “mother language” (*hahanaru kotoba*) through innovative mixing, matching, and translation, based on the spontaneous juggling of languages and dialects that her diglossic mother provides.

Yokoyama Yūta and the Culture of Hybridity

Born in Okayama prefecture and a longtime resident of Beijing, Yokoyama Yūta received the Gunzō Prize for New Writers for *Wagahai wa neko ni naru* (I turn into a cat, 2014), a miniature Sōseki parody written in a humorous mixture of vernacular Chinese and Japanese. Unlike Levy and On, who mix in occasional Chinese references in their primarily Japanese prose, Yokoyama experiments with a hybrid form in which Chinese and Japanese are inextricably intertwined in every sentence. The Japanese narrator of the story is a Shanghai resident who sets out to write a story “for Chinese readers learning Japanese.”⁶⁰ The main character is a Sino-Japanese biracial college student, Kakeru, whose mother is Chinese and father is Japanese. The Japanese pronunciation of Kakeru’s name suggests the idea of crossbreeding, as in the expression *kakeawase* 掛け合わせ, a pun that Yokoyama exploits fully to explore the hybridity of culture, language, nationality, and identity, a central theme in the story.⁶¹ Kakeru spent his early childhood in Japan and grew up in Shanghai, and as a result his Japanese is mixed with Chinese. The story is about his trip to Tokyo to renew his passport, ending with a scene in a “maid café” in Akihabara where waitresses dressed in cat costumes end their sentences with a cat’s meow (*nyan*), a *rakugo*-like punch line that gives the story its title.

Kakeru’s biracial background brings to mind Katō Shūichi’s argument in his provocative work *Zasshu bunka* (The culture of hybridity, 1974). The term *zasshu* 雑種, “mixed breed” or “hybrid,” conventionally used in a derogatory manner in contrast to “pure blooded” (*junketsu* 純血) or “pure bred” (*junsuishu* 純粹種), is used evocatively in Katō’s thesis to

suggest an openness to foreign elements and the potential for change and renewal through cultural mixing and intermingling. Writing primarily with regards to the deep influence of the West on modern Japanese literature, Katō argues that Japanese culture is typically a culture of hybridity, where external elements are incorporated not by force (as in a colonial situation) but by virtue of a spontaneous need.⁶² In a dialogue with Takeuchi Yoshimi, a leading Sinologist in Japan, Katō points out

[t]hat Japanese culture is hybrid by nature is not simply a matter of Western influence on the cultural leaves and branches that grow from the main trunk of Japan. The roots of Japanese culture today are nurtured by traditional culture and foreign culture, both of which are inextricably intertwined.⁶³

He argues that it is futile to try to distinguish traditional Japanese culture from foreign influences, and any attempts in “essentialism” (*honshitsu shugi* 本質主義) or “purification movements” (*junsuika undō* 純粹化運動) are bound to fail.⁶⁴ Katō does not attach an absolute value of good or bad to hybridity, just as he does not regard “purity” as essentially good or bad, but he wants to emphasize the fact that Japanese culture is inherently hybrid in nature and he seeks a positive meaning in that fact.⁶⁵

It is in the spirit of identifying the positive and creative aspects of the Sino-Japanese hybrid form of writing that I will examine passages in Yokoyama’s story. The writing is governed by three major notational strategies: first, it is a homage to and a parody of Sōseki. His early comic works, especially the eponymous *I am a Cat*, are full of bilingual glosses for *kanji* and Chinese expressions, for example, “but” (*tadashi* 但) and “in addition to” (*shikanominarazu* 加之).⁶⁶ It is also full of idiosyncratic constructions of four-character compound expressions, such as the Zen expression “understanding one’s innate nature” (*kenshōjikaku* 見性自覚) and “inside a heap of worm-eaten books” (*toshitairi* 蠹紙堆裏); as well as the mockery of meaningless loanwords, such as the trick that the character Meitei plays on the waiter by ordering a non-existent Western dish by the fake name of *dochimenbō*.⁶⁷ Yokoyama’s parody of Sōseki’s bilingual gloss is evident on every page. Typically, he uses vernacular Chinese in the body of the text and glosses words and phrases in Japanese meaning, such as glossing “housing development” (C. *zhuzhaixiaoqu* 住宅小区) as *danchi* だんち. In addition to using bilingual gloss to translate vernacular Chinese and English loanwords into Japanese, he replaces certain common Japanese *kanji* with Chinese characters, such as replacing the expression “to decide” (*kimeru* 決める) with the character *tei* (C. *ding* 訂),

which means “to reserve” in Chinese. The following passage about Kakeru’s neighborhood illustrates the author’s use of bilingual glosses (circled numbers in the translated passages correspond to those in the original text):

I decided① on the first room I saw. It was an old② apartment③ in a small housing development④. There was security at the front gate, and within⑤ the development, a supermarket⑥, a laundromat⑦, a tobacco⑧ and liquor shop, a Hunan restaurant⑨, a Lanzhou ramen joint⑩ were scattered here and there facing the central square.

部屋は一つ目で訂めた①。住宅小区④の古い②公寓③だった。正門には保安がいて、小区の裡⑤には超市⑥、洗衣店⑦、香煙⑧と酒類の商店、湖南⑨料理店、蘭州拉麵館⑩などが中央の広場に面して散在していた。⁶⁸

Further parody of Sōseki includes the invention of four-character compound words and plurilingual glosses for loanwords, as in the following passage:

The young man selling skewered chicken① was fumbling with② his cell phone③ for as long as④ I looked. His ring tone⑤ was Beatle’s⑥ “It’s a hard day’s night.”⑦

例の串焼き①青年は何時④見ても手機③を弄っていた②。ちなみに彼の来電鈴聲⑤は甲殻虫⑥の「艱難時光」⑦であった。⁶⁹

The second strategy involves a three-way notation that embodies English, Chinese, and Japanese. While the common practice in Japanese in representing loanwords relies heavily on the phonetic rendition in *katakana*, Yokoyama adds another layer of meaning to the phonetic notation by supplying written vernacular Chinese to the *katakana* loanwords, for example, the word “virtual” is rendered into Chinese (*xuni* 虛擬) and glossed in *katakana* (*vaacharu* ヴァーチャル). This stimulates a simultaneous trilingual reading of one notation, and has the effect of redirecting the reader’s attention from the narrative to the mental and linguistic acrobatics in each sentence, as in the following example:

I heard today the game software① of the virtual female vocalist② Hatsune goes on sale. If you buy it here, you get a special gift of a cell phone strap③ and an original telephone card④, so people are lining up⑤ for it.

本日は「初音」という虛擬女性歌手②の遊戲軟件①の発売日なのだそう。ここで買うと特典の手機鍵③と原創電話卡④がもらえるというので排んでいる⑤らしい。⁷⁰

The third strategy consists of a combination of translation tactics. Yokoyama sometimes translates idiomatic Chinese expressions to create a new Japanese phrase, such as translating “consuming vinegar” (C. *chicao* 吃醋), an expression that means “to be jealous,” into “he felt jealous as if he had drunk vinegar” (J. *su o nomu yō na shitto o oboeta* 醋を飲むような嫉妬を覚えた).⁷¹ Sometimes, he simply records a conversation in Japanese using simplified Chinese characters and a bilingual gloss to reflect a gap between the verbal deliverance of sounds and its mental images, creating a resonance of inter-lingual meanings in a single line, as in the following dialogue between Kakeru and his mother before his departure:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| (Mother) You are beginning to look alike. | 像てきたね |
| (K) Like what? | なにが？ |
| (Mother) Your profile— | 側顔が |
| Like your dad’s | あなたのお爸さんに |
| (K) What? | はあ？ |
| No way! | 像てねえよ ⁷² |

Finally, there are occasions when Yokoyama creates a kind of bilingual pun by juxtaposing Chinese and Japanese words and sounds for rhythmic and comic effect, as in a wordplay (*dajare* 駄洒落) typically used in *rakugo*:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Open field, ocean, open sky | <i>nohara unabara amanohara</i> |
| (C.) 原野大海大天空 | のはら うなばら あまのはら |
| Padded jacket, caldera, Azuma Temple | <i>dotera karudera azumadera</i> |
| (C.) 棉服火口吾妻寺 | どてら かるでら あずまでら ⁷³ |

The bilingual pun is not simply a Japanese reading of the Chinese expressions but a combination of (1) a two-way translation (for example, matching (C.) *yuanye* 原野 with (J.) *nohara* 野原, (C.) *dahai* 大海 with (J.) *unabara* 海原, (C.) *datiankong* 大天空 with (J.) *amanohara* 天の原, (C.) *mianfu* 棉服 with (J.) *dotera* 襦袍); (2) bilingual glosses (for example, glossing (C.) *huokou* 火口 as (J.) *karudera* かるでら to mean caldera); and (3) the use of *furigana* to indicate Japanese pronunciation of place names (for example, glossing (C.) *Wuqisi* 吾妻寺 as (J.) *Azumadera*). He calls this exercise a “double-layered puzzle game” (*nijū no pazuru gēmu*) and explains its mechanism:

As soon as you take one piece in your hand, another piece in a different layer starts responding like a shadow. But the shapes of the pieces in the two layers are different.⁷⁴

This serves as an effective metaphor to convey the relationship between the different languages in a plurilingual text as well as that between a given word or phrase and its gloss. There is no hierarchical order attached to the pieces of puzzle in the dual or multiple layers of meaning, and the pieces are drawn to their likeness as well as their differences, so that when they come together—in the form of a bilingual or plurilingual gloss, an in-text translation, or a juxtaposition—they compensate and complement each other to form a richer and more complex meaning in the reading experience. This perhaps is what Yokoyama and other plurilingual writers hope to achieve in their writing experiments—a constitutive effort to add new elements to the Japanese language as they address intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional needs that go beyond the confines of a single language. In doing so, they transform the topography in Japanese language and writing.

Conclusion

In examining the variety of styles and innovations in the works of Levy, On, and Yokoyama, one notices a common tactic in their writing strategies. In defiance of the traditional practice of incorporating literary Chinese smoothly into the Japanese prose through a process of blending, negotiation, and assimilation, they choose to emphasize the strangeness of the foreign words and refuse to naturalize them or make them an organic part of the Japanese language. Instead, they employ various means to make them stand out and disturb what would have been a smooth or gently undulating topography of Japanese prose, creating a rugged and bumpy terrain that challenges the reader who ventures into this rough and defamiliarized topography. They also render the Japanese prose opaque, in that language calls attention to itself, instead of serving as a transparent medium for ideas and narrative. In that sense, their works place less emphasis on narrativity and more on the ongoing changes in the Japanese language and its relationship to those who use and inhabit the language, regardless of origin, ethnicity, and nationality.

In a thought-provoking chapter, titled “The Foreign in the Mother Tongue,” Yasmin Yildiz discusses Theodore Adorno’s attitude towards foreign words (*Fremdwort*) in the German language. Yildiz points out that Adorno resists the absorption and assimilation of foreign words in a process that makes them into “unobtrusive loan words” that “cease to stand out in a language.”⁷⁵ Yildiz writes, “the denial of the foreignness of the foreign-derived word and the unquestioned demand for assimilation into a homogenous mass of language is unacceptable to Adorno.”⁷⁶ This

insistence on the visibility of foreign elements in Japanese is evident in Levy's, On's, and Yokoyama's works. Their use of foreign words to convey ideas, meaning, and feelings otherwise unutterable in the current form of a single language underscores the conscious and ongoing construction and development of a language to expand its capacity to tolerate and celebrate differences and strangeness in the linguistic, cultural, and social aspects. On an individual level, they attempt to formulate a non-static and perpetually "work-in-progress" plurilingual tongue to address the needs of multicultural and multilingual writers and readers of the global century in search of identities and ways to narrate a complex polyphonic internal and external world.

The approximation of the effect of in-text simultaneous translation plays an important role in the writing practices of these writers. Most readers who access a text through translation do not read it side-by-side with the "original" and often miss the chance to enjoy the fascinating inter-lingual gap that promises a wealth of intellectual stimulation. In Levy's, On's, and Yokoyama's texts, instead of seeking to replace the words of one language with another and hide the "original," in-text simultaneous translation provides the refreshing opportunity for the reader to feast on two or more languages and dialects at the same time, visually and semantically, in the form of plurilingual expressions, bilingual or multilingual glosses, code-switching, and crisscrossed dialogues in multiple tongues, privileging Japanese only as the ground but not as the "original" or single language from which others are derived or translated. In that sense, the plurilingual passages in these texts depart from the conventional mode of "one-way" translation from one language (the original) to the other (the translated), but are "two-way" translation in which both (or more) languages constitute simultaneously the "original" and the "translated" texts. None of the languages is "host" or "guest," but are all participants in a polyphony of sounds and meanings, celebrating the gaps of meaning in-between.

Levy, On, and Yokoyama, along with many contemporary plurilingual writers, have contributed significantly to changing the literary topography, but this is still the beginning of exploring the possibilities in literature in Japanese. Levy's and On's works remain predominantly self-referential in the I-novel mode of writing. While Levy has gone on to develop a writing career as an essayist rather than a novelist in his writing about China in Japanese from a compound perspective, On's stories have not matured beyond thinly-veiled I-novels about the search for identity. Unless she deepens her search with more thoughtful social critique and

historical reflection, her stories may remain as clever wordplay that begins and ends with the limited world of self-reference. Furthermore, unlike Levy's and Yokoyama's deft integration of two or three languages to create a fascinating strangeness in a new topography of Japanese, On's incorporation of vernacular Chinese and the Taiwanese dialect remains a kind of patchwork or pastiche and fails to break loose, so to speak, from the standard structure of Japanese. Yokoyama's miniature Sōseki parody is witty and innovative, but its attempts in cultural and social criticism remain superficial. He has yet to write another full-length work after his debut novel, and his only other literary publication to date is a short story called *Ajia no junshin* (The innocence of Asia, 2016), a story about the encounter between a Japanese study-abroad student Ryōta and an Iranian student in Beijing.⁷⁷ As these writers develop the craft and content of their work, they will no doubt add to the transformation of the Japanese literary topography in a global age, and the possibilities of *Nihongo bungaku* are unlimited as long as they and other plurilingual writers continue to explore unmapped territories and mature in their writing practices.

NOTES

¹ Except for anthologies dedicated to specific themes of war, postwar, and diaspora literature, the standard narrative projected in mainstream anthologies and literary history of modern Japanese literature since the Meiji era typically includes little or no mention of works by non-Japanese nationals, and has scant reference to colonial and diaspora literature by Japanese and non-Japanese writers in Imperial Japan or its colonies. For example, one of the earliest anthologies that started the so-called *enpon* (one-yen book) boom in 1926, *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū* 現代日本文学全集, 63 vols. (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1926–1931), consists of only Japanese nationals and does not include colonial literature. The same applies to *Gendai Nihon bungaku taikai* 現代日本文学大系, 97 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1968–1973), *Nihon bungaku zenshū* 日本文学全集, 88 vols. (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1975), *Nihon bungaku zenshū* 日本文学全集, 72 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1964), just to name a few major Japanese publishers. For a full list, see Tasaka Kenji 田坂憲二, *Nihon bungaku zenshū no jidai* 日本文学全集の時代 (Tokyo: Keiōgijuku daigaku shuppansha, 2018), 257–261. Standard anthologies of Japanese short stories in English translation are no different in their exclusive focus on writers who are Japanese nationals. These include, but are not limited to, *The Showa Anthology: Modern Japanese Short Stories*, ed. Van C. Gessel and Tomone Matsumoto (New York: Kodansha International, 1985) and *The*

Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories, ed. Theodore W. Goosen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Among representative literary history, *Zadankai Meiji Shōwa Taishō bungakushi* 座談会明治昭和文学史, 6 vols., eds. Yanagita Izumi, Katsumoto Seiichirō, Ino Kenji (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2000) makes no reference to non-Japanese nationals, while the more progressive *Zadankai Shōwa bungakushi* 座談会昭和文学史, 6 vols., eds. Inoue Hisashi and Komori Yōichi (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2003) devotes one out of its twenty-six chapters to diaspora literature by Korean writers writing in Japanese (“Zainichi chōsenjin bungaku 在日朝鮮人文学,” vol. 5, C. 21). Representative studies of literary history in English make no mention of non-Japanese nationals. These include, but are not limited to, Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature in the Modern Era: Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) and, in English translation, Katō Shūichi, *A History of Japanese Literature: The Modern Years* (New York: Kodansha USA Inc., 1983).

- ² Katō Shūichi 加藤周一, “Nihon bunka no zasshusei,” 日本文化の雑種性, in *Zasshu bunka: Nihon no chiisa na kibō* 雑種文化—日本の小さな希望 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974), 27–48.
- ³ The concept of an “imagined community” comes from Benedict Anderson’s much referenced idea of the use of shared language to foster a sense of community and nationalism in “Imagined Communities: Nationalism’s Cultural Roots,” in Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 257.
- ⁴ For a discussion of the *Taishō kyōyō shugi*, see Angela Yiu, “Atarashikimura: The Intellectual and Literary Contexts,” *Japan Review* 20 (2008): 203–230, esp. 213–215.
- ⁵ Karen L. Thornber, “Early Twentieth-Century Intra-East Asian Literary Contact Nebulae: Censored Japanese Literature in Chinese and Korean,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68.3 (2009): 749–775, esp. 749.
- ⁶ A slogan used by the Japanese government during World War II to express the idea of a politically and economically integrated Asia free from Western domination and under Japanese leadership, but also used to rationalize Japan’s expansionist ambitions on the continent. Initially the sphere consisted of Japan, Japanese-occupied China, Manchukuo (Japan’s puppet state in Manchuria), French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. It later included the Japanese-held islands of the Pacific and all of Southeast Asia. *Encyclopedia of Japan* (japanknowledge.com/lib/display/?lid=10800HS019909#honmon0002). Accessed October 10, 2019.
- ⁷ For the historicity of the term *Nihongo bungaku*, see Kim Suok-puom 金石範, “Nihongo bungaku no rekishisei 日本語文学の歴史性,” *Essei: kokyō no kotoba* エッセイ：跨境の言葉 (<https://www.bcjil.org/upload/pdf/jjlls-2-1-4.pdf>), 1–5.

Accessed August 26, 2019.

- ⁸ These include titles such as Hayashi Kōji 林浩治, *Zainichi Chōsenjin Nihongo bungaku ron* 在日朝鮮人日本語文学論 (Tokyo: Shinkansha, 1991) and Taremizu Chie 垂水千恵, *Taiwan no Nihongo bungaku—Nihon tōchi jidai no sakkatachi* 台湾の日本語文学—日本統治時代の作家たち (Tokyo: Goryū shoin, 1995). For an extended list, see Lee Yuhui 李郁蕙, *Nihongo bungaku o yomu* 日本語文学を読む (Sendai: Tōhoku daigaku shuppankai, 2012), 5–6.
- ⁹ Adorno rejects the notion of language as an organic entity: “For him, language is not organically born, but set in an instantaneous act that involves the interplay of thought [grasping thought] and truth [manifested truth].” Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 80.
- ¹⁰ In emphasizing “naming as a constitutive act, Adorno underscores the nonorganic nature of all language.” Ibid.
- ¹¹ *Sōseki zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1993) [hereafter SZ], 3:10.
- ¹² In the historical biography *Izawa Ranken* 伊沢蘭軒 (1916), based on the life of the titular Confucian scholar and physician, Mori Ōgai liberally references Chinese *kanbun* prose and poetic exchanges among Izawa and his fellow scholars, such as the following description of a balmy spring day recorded in Izawa’s journal. “An outing to the countryside on a spring day. On the way field mustard blossoms were in full bloom” 春日郊行, 途中菘菜花盛開, in Mori Ōgai, *Ōgai senshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1979), 7: 48. In *Bokutō kidan* 墨東綺譚 (*A strange tale from east of the river*, 1936), Nagai Kafū quotes an entire poem titled *Shusō fū’u no yūbe* 秋窓風雨夕 (*A windy and rainy evening by the autumn window*) from the famous Qing dynasty Chinese novel *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 (*The dream of the red chamber*, 1791), beginning with the line “The autumn flowers have faded, the autumn grass yellow” 秋花慘淡秋草黃, in Nagai Kafū, *Kafū zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1964), 9:177. In Akutagawa’s “Toshishun” 杜子春 (1920), an adaptation of a Tang dynasty short story by the title of “Duzichun zhuan” 杜子春傳, the author translates and incorporates Chinese poetry into Japanese and retains the parallel structure and characteristics of a typical seven-character verse (*qilü* 七律), as in “Wandering in the North Sea in the morning and Mount Canwu in dusk” 朝に北海に遊び、暮には蒼梧, in *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: Chikuma Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2007), 2: 175. In Nakajima Atsushi’s *Sangetsuki* 山月記 (“A Tale of the moon over the mountain,” 1942), the poet-turned-tiger recites Chinese poetry in the bush to lament his predicament, as in the line “By chance a mental illness has turned me into a monster” 偶因狂疾成殊類, in *Nakajima Atsushi: Chikuma Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2008), 12: 30.

- ¹³ SZ, 12: 540.
- ¹⁴ *Wenzhang qihan*, edited by Xie Fangde 謝枋得 of the Song dynasty, consists of representative classical Chinese prose (*guwen* 古文) in the Tang and Song dynasties. *Tangshi xuan*, edited by Li Panlong 李攀竜 of the Ming dynasty, is an anthology of Tang poetry. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Shanghai yūki, Kōnan yūki* 上海游記・江南游記 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007), 28.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 73.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 69; 118.
- ¹⁷ Satō Haruo, “Jokaisen kidan” 女誠扇綺譚, in *Satō Haruo zenshū* (Tokyo: Rinsen shoten, 1998), 5: 148.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 149.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 157.
- ²⁰ The English translation of the Japanese title is provided in the original text.
- ²¹ For a discussion of Levy’s cross-border writings, see Angela Yiu “National Literature and Beyond: Mizumura Minae and Hideo Levy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, eds. Rachael Hutchinson and Leith Morton (Oxon, U. K.: Routledge, 2016), 227–240.
- ²² Tawada Yōko, “Kaisetsu,” in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo o kaku heya* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2011), 212.
- ²³ *Man’yōshū: A Translation of Japan’s Premier Anthology of Classical Poetry*, Volume One, trans. Ian Hideo Levy (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1981).
- ²⁴ Old Japanese (*jōdaigo*) refers to Japanese used in the Nara period and before, and includes writings such as *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and the *Man’yōshū*.
- ²⁵ Roy Andrew Miller, “The ‘Spirit’ of the Japanese Language,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 3.2 (1977): 261.
- ²⁶ *Man’yōshū* 万葉集, Book 1, vol. 6 of *Shinhen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2011), 60.
- ²⁷ *Man’yōshū: A Translation of Japan’s Premier Anthology of Classical Poetry*, 70.
- ²⁸ Levy Hideo, “Ten’anmon” in *Ten’anmon* 天安門 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2011), 9–10.
- ²⁹ Levy Hideo, “Henrii Takeshi Reuitukii no natsu no kikō” ヘンリーたけしレウイツキーの夏の紀行 in *Ten’anmon*, 188.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 205.
- ³¹ Ibid., 132.
- ³² The name in Chinese for CSRCWL is *Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui* 中国文字改革研究委员会. For a discussion of the development of

- the language reform, see Constantin Milsky, “New Developments in Language Reform,” *The China Quarterly* 53 (1973): 98–133.
- ³³ Ibid., 127. These are examples provided by the scholar, writer, and political figure Guo Moro 郭沫若 (1892–1978) who had studied for twenty years in Japan.
- ³⁴ Levy Hideo, *Ten’anmon*, 190.
- ³⁵ William J. Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan 1913–1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 179.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 179.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Levy Hideo, *Ten’anmon*, 19; 11.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 18; 141.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 17; 18.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 141.
- ⁴² Ibid., 140.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 142.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 175. The gloss for China (*Zhongguo*) in the original text is misprinted as *junguguo* (ジュンググオ).
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 214–15.
- ⁴⁷ On Yūjū 温又柔, *Kūkō jikō* 空港時光 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 2018), paper band on cover.
- ⁴⁸ *Man’yōshū*, 5:894. 『万葉集』 卷五の八九四。
- ⁴⁹ Levy Hideo, *Ware-teki Nihongo* 我的日本語 (Tokyo: Chikuma shoten, 2010), 135.
- ⁵⁰ In an essay titled “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter,” Tawada Yōko identifies the German word for a typewriter, gendered female, as her “linguistic mother.” Tawada Yōko, “From Mother Tongue to Linguistic Mother,” trans. Rachel McNichol, *Manoa* 18.1 (2006), 139–143. <http://muse.jhu.edu/>. Accessed September 8, 2018.
- ⁵¹ “Diglossia,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 11, 2009. <http://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/diglossia/30434>. Accessed August 13, 2018.
- ⁵² Lachman M. Khubchandani, “Diglossia Revisited,” in *Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications* 20 (1985), 199–211, esp. 200. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20006723>. Accessed August 13, 2018.
- ⁵³ On Yūjū, *Taiwan umare Nihongo sodachi* 台湾生まれ日本語育ち (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2016), 15–16.

- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 117.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.
- ⁵⁶ On Yūjū, “Kōkyokōraika” 好去好来歌, in *Raifuku no ie* 来福の家 (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2011), 69.
- ⁵⁷ The Chinese teacher comments, “The Chinese spoken in Taiwan is different from the standard Chinese I am teaching you today. The most obvious difference is in pronunciation. They almost never roll their tongues.” On Yūjū, *Mannaka no kodomotachi* 真ん中の子どもたち (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2017), 50.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 53. Emphasis is mine.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 52, 53.
- ⁶⁰ Yokoyama Yūta 横山悠太, *Wagahai wa neko ni naru* 我輩ハ猫ニナル (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2014), 7.
- ⁶¹ The first-person narrative makes it possible for the writer to not reveal the character’s name until the last one-third of the novel, and when revealed, it is displayed in romanization as ISOTA KAKERU in his passport (Ibid., 97). Another twenty pages later, near the end of the novel, Kakeru reveals that his name is written as 五十田駿, and even though he was called Shun in school or Junjun (Chinese nickname) at home, and even though at times he has been mistakenly called Hayao (after the famous director Miyazaki Hayao) by animation fans, he stresses that the reading of his given name is Kakeru (Ibid., 116–117). The delayed revelation of the kanji for his name strongly suggests an emphasis on the pronunciation of *kakeru* as a sustained pun in the story. The promotional *obi* (paper band) on the cover of the book renders Kakeru’s name in katakana, as in カケル, to suggest foreignness or hybridity.
- ⁶² Using Kobe as an example, Katō argues, “The pier in the harbor, cranes, Western-style buildings, customs, all these were initiated by Japanese to satisfy their own needs.” Katō, *Zasshu bunka*, 31.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 56.
- ⁶⁴ “It is impossible to separate Japanese traditional culture from foreign influence. . . . The intellectual reaction to this kind of cultural hybridity is none other than the history of the essentialist/purification movement, which inevitably is a history of failure.” Ibid., 33.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 31; 50.
- ⁶⁶ *SZ*, 1: 3–4.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 368; 48–49.
- ⁶⁸ Yokoyama, *Wagahai wa neko ni naru*, 19.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 30.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 112.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 55.

⁷² Ibid., 77.

⁷³ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 37–38.

⁷⁵ Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, 79.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Gunzō* (August 2016), 8–21.