Problems in Trans(p)la(n)ting Literary Theory into Japanese

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0. Introduction

Although words can be translated, their usage cannot truly be transplanted because usage depends on word users' habitus, which is always implicit and has no clear-cut stipulations comparable to the rules of games and sports. In the case of Japanese translations of material in the humanities, problems arise less frequently in translation itself than in the transplantation of ideas to a Japanese context and their reception by Japanese-speaking readers.

1. Typical (mis)understanding about narratological notions: ironic proof of narratology's universality?

Narratology aims to be a science; that is, it endeavors to be a universal field of knowledge. On a basic level, certain fundamental understandings seem to be widely shared among many Western and Eastern researchers in narratology. Some may state that these narratological understandings are insufficient to justify the universality of the discipline; I respond that the same types of misunderstandings occur in the East and the West which, ironically, makes a strong case for the worldwide relevance of narratology.

The Japanese scholar SAKAKI Atsuko erroneously criticized structuralist narratology by mistaking the notion of story (*histoire*) for the narrative referent.[1] This

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[1] "A narrative text is not a realistic representation of objectively grasped events but a once-in-a-lifetime act performed in the context of each occasion. [...] [In some pages in KANAI Mieko's novel *Bunshô Kyôshitsu*], [n]arration takes a predictive form; by this, the major structuralist premise of the pre-existence of the story in relation to narrative discourse is denied. It is not to communicate events that have already occurred but events that come into being, using words that have existed previously. Binary opposition of content and discourse is no longer valid. Events are now hypothetically supposed in the act of narration" (Sakaki 1996: 238, translation mine).
Despite this, readers cannot find any "major structuralist premise of the pre-existence of the story in relation to narrative discourse." Sakaki speaks in scathing terms mainly about *Narrative Discourse : An Essay in Method* by Gérard Genette, which had already offered, despite Sakaki's judgment, a firm dismissal of the idea: "It seems evident that the narrating can only be subsequent to what it tells, but this obviousness has been belied for many centuries by the existence of "predictive" narrative in its various forms [...], whose origin is lost in the darkness of time [...]" (Genette [1972] 1983: 216).

misunderstanding is identical to that in Jonathan Culler's *The Pursuit of Signs*.[1] Another Japanese scholar, HARA Kōichirō, faults Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic with confusing the notion of the implied reader with the empirical reader.[2] This error is similar to one previously made by Harold Bloom in *Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism*.[3] Scholars thus sometimes reproach narratologists for statements they never made. All these misunderstandings ironically demonstrate narratology's universality by crossing the border between the West and the East.

The universal character of narratology reassured me during my translation of *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991) by Marie-Laure Ryan into Japanese (published in 2006), as theoretical terms are generally easy to translate into modern Japanese, which has a considerable capacity for word formation. However, this ease of translation is limited only to the aspect of converting English terms into "modern" Japanese words. Because the Japanese language owes its capacity for coining words to Chinese characters, or semes, it is difficult for a translator to convert theoretical and logical speculations, despite their universality, into Japanese modes of thought.

2. The lack of abstract and generic notions in native Japanese vocabulary

The original Japanese language had no written form. Early speakers of the language borrowed the writing system from Chinese, a completely different language. The Japonic language family is often regarded by linguists as an isolated group of dialects (Japanese-Ryukyuan languages), whereas Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family. Phonetically, the former is a typical moraic language with a simple

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[1] "The [psycho]analyst must always choose [between story and discourse] which will be treated as the given and which as the product. Yet either choice leads to a narratology that misses some of the curious complexity of narratives and fails to account for much of their impact." (Culler 1981: 186). Marie-Laure Ryan criticized this idea as follows: "This confusion reduces language from a triple relation between signifier, signified, and referent to a binary relation between sign and referent." (Ryan 1991: 264)

[2] "Each reader, living at a different time and space in a constantly changing world far from the absolute, cannot be one with the implicit reader. I think this is the reason why it is a pleasure to read literary works and why new interpretations spring forth […]. [Todorov's] classification has no foundation other than reader response, so it should be controversial" (Hara 1995: 120–123, translation mine).
Scholars can easily find in Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* a simple disproof to this reproach: "It must be noted that we have in mind no actual reader, but the role of the reader implicit in the text (just as the narrator's function is implicit in the text)" (Todorov [1970] 1975: 31).

[3] "[...] I pause here to cast off, with amiable simplicity, the theory of fantasy set forth by Todorov. We do not hesitate between trope and the uncanny in reading Hoffmann of David Lindsay or Lewis Carroll or *The Tin Drum*, and indeed we can say that here the reader who hesitates is lost and has lost that moment which is the agonistic encounter of deep, strong reading." (Bloom 1982: 205)

pitch accent whereas the latter, a representative Sino-Tibetan language, is characterized by its contour tones. On the basis of the classical grammatical typology created by August Schleicher, these two languages can be classified as agglutinative and isolating languages, respectively.

Translators experience many difficulties in transplanting literary theory into Japanese because the native Japanese lexicon traditionally had few vocabulary words, abstract notions and generic terms: without Chinese, the Japanese lexical repertoire could not create new words by coining semes. Scholars have reported that earlier versions of the Japanese language included only five or six abstract concepts such as honor, pride and shame (cf. Tōdō 1969: 242). Additionally, although Japanese contains words referring to rain or snow, its speakers had to borrow Chinese expressions to express a general idea such as weather (cf. Takashima 2001: 23–27). As the linguist ŌNO Susumu states, "Even now, in general, most of our abstract nouns rely on Sino-Japanese vocabulary" ([1967] 2006: 102).

A thousand years ago, Japanese writing had two main styles. *Kambun*, or composition in Chinese, can be found in Chinese poetry created by Japanese male poets, public documents by officers and scholarly treatises by priests. There was also *wabun*, or composition written predominately using the native Japanese vocabulary (*yamato-kotoba*); it is understood among scholars that *wabun* reflects the oral features of Japanese at that time. We find *wabun* in Japanese poetry by male and female authors and also in prose by female authors including personal essays such as *The Pillow Book* by Imperial Court gentlewoman Sei Shōnagon and fictional narrative texts such as *The Tale of Genji*, which was written by lady-in-waiting Murasaki Shikibu in the early eleventh century.

These two styles resulted in the creation of a third, a hybrid Sinicized style of Japanese syntax and mixed Sino-Japanese vocabulary (*wakan konkō bun*), which was a learned and literary style mainly used by male intellectuals. Sinicized style and native style corresponded approximately to two clusters of intellectuals, male and female. These two styles became diversified, as their users produced many stylistic variations that then fused. If women only rarely had the opportunity to learn Sinicized vocabulary, this happened simply because they lacked had no need to write documents for public use.

Vocabulary	Chinese / Sino-Japanese	Native Japanese
Main writing system	(Mainly) Chinese logograms	Japanese syllabograms* created from Chinese characters
Feature	Usually represented	Almost entirely limited to

	abstract / generic notions; static	concrete and individual subjects; rich in onomatopoeia
Style	Chinese / hybrid style	Native / hybrid style
Purpose of style	Chinese poetry, Public documents, scholarly treatises	*Waka* poetry, letters, essays, narrative texts (*monogatari*)
Users	Men	Women (and men, in poetry)
Connotation	Written, public, scholarly	Oral, private, secular

Table 1. Two sources of Japanese vocabulary and two corresponding styles of written language from the Heian Period (late eighth century to late twelfth century)

* A syllabogram is a letter representing a syllables or a mora, which consists of a consonant sound (optional) followed by a vowel sound. A set of syllabograms compose a writing system called "syllabary."

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, which marked the starting point of the modernization in Japan, Japanese intellectuals created hundreds of words using Chinese semes. This was necessary for the translation of ideas such as "comedy," "fine arts," "theory," "thought," "science," "culture" and "civilization" – ideas that these thinkers encountered in Western texts. These new Chinese words, coined in Japan, were re-imported into modern Chinese vocabulary.

Since that time, most of the terms used in Western humanities texts have been translated into Japanese by coining Sino-Japanese semes. For example, the translation of the term *sociology* is composed of a combination of the terms "society" and "study"; *aesthetics*, "beauty" and "study"; *atheism*, "none," "God," and "discussion" or "theory"; *naturalism*, "nature" and "principle" or "doctrine." These ideas introduced into Japan were all abstract; as a result, the Japanese language necessarily continued to rely on Sino-Japanese semes. Ever since that time, most of the terms used in Western humanities texts have been translated by coining Chinese semes.

社会　　＋学　　　　＝社会学
shakai　+ *gaku*　　　= *shakaigaku*
society　+ study　　　= sociology
美　　　＋学　　　　＝美学
bi　　　+ *gaku*　　　= *bigaku*

	beauty	+ study	= aesthetics
無	+ 神	+ 論	= 無神論
mu	+ *shin*	+ *ron*	= *mushinron*
none	+ God	+ discussion or theory	= atheism
自然	+ 主義		= 自然主義
shizen	+ *shugi*		= *shizenshugi*
nature	+ principle or doctrine		= naturalism

Table 2. Examples of abstract notions expressed in Japanese by coining Chinese semes

Because the words shown in Table 2 represent fundamental notions for Westerners, it might surprise them that scholars of the Japanese language can sometimes identify when and by whom these words were created. The word *shakai*, meaning "society," is attributed to an 1875 newspaper column written by journalist and politician FUKUCHI Gen'ichirō (1841–1906), and *tetsugaku*, meaning "philosophy," to a 1874 treatise by scholar-bureaucrat NISHI Amane (1829–1897). As pointed out by NAKAMURA Hajime, a scholar of the Vedic and Buddhist scriptures, Japan had, in the 1870s, no independent disciplinary subject or domain that corresponded to Western philosophy.[1]

Japanese lexes rely on Chinese semes to represent abstract and generic notions. Many Japanese people, including intellectuals, find these concepts, at root, to be somewhat unfamiliar. Their interest continues to be concrete, individual objects which can be handled with native *yamato kotoba* and by native syntax without the need for Chinese semes.

3. *Monogatari*: "narrative" in native Japanese vocabulary

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[1] "An equivalent for 'philosophy' in the modern philosophical sense was likely not to exist in Far Eastern countries. When Japanese intellectuals finally found modern Western philosophy, what is called philosophy appeared to them to be somehow novel. They were astonished. NISHI […], who tried to introduce Western philosophy to Japan, created a new word, 哲学*tetsugaku*, to represent philosophy and used it in his work *Hyakuitsu Shinron* (1874).

"Additionally, of course, Japanese intellectuals had previously pursued philosophical thinking. However, there had been no independent disciplinary subject or domain in Japan named philosophy. […].

"This neologism was introduced into Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and overseas Chinese people. The word is now widely and generally used among these groups. This fact means that there is a certain unfamiliarity with philosophy among Far Eastern intellectuals and a lack in the past Eastern world of what is called philosophy in the modern West." (Nakamura [1987] 2009: 435–436, translation mine). For detailed discussion, see ibid. chap. 1, section 3.

As I mentioned earlier, the native Japanese composition, style and vocabulary during the Heian period were rendered using a *hiragana* syllabary (set of syllabograms) that originally gained popularity among court gentlewomen in writing personal communications and Japanese poetry. Men also used the native Japanese style in private modes of communication and in composing *waka* poetry. However, they sometimes wrote prose using this female style, as in *Tosa Nikki* (*Tosa Diary*, ca. 935) by KI no Tsurayuki.

Another domain of language was written in the native Japanese style and vocabulary during the Heian period, namely, the fictional narrative literary genre *monogatari* ("tale").[1] This genre, which arose during that period, is understood by scholars to retain aspects of the oral tradition, as demonstrated by the fact that texts were always written in a native Japanese style. Works of literature written in this style were disguised as records of oral storytelling and were recited by court gentlewomen to other gentlewomen and to princesses.[2] Surviving examples of this genre have primitive characteristics and generally more closely resemble tales than novels. However, a few exceptions are more voluminous and have a reasonably complex structure such as *The Tale of Genji*[3] (*Genji Monogatari*), which includes strikingly modern psychological descriptions, and *Hamamatsu Chūnagon Monogatari* (*The Tales of Hamamatsu Chūnagon*), a paranormal romance on the theme of reincarnation. In any case, *monogatari* is a term that refers to a genre written mainly in native Japanese vocabulary; the term itself was derived from native Japanese vocabulary. However, this word also refers not only to a certain literary genre of Japanese classical literature but also to narratives in general.

Hence the term *monogatari* has two meanings in literary studies in Japan. First, it refers to a group of concrete works in Japanese classical literature: this meaning is historically and geographically limited, similarly to genres such as Menippean satire, *chanson de geste*, penny dreadfuls, *Neue Sachlichkeit* theater and slash fiction. The other

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[1] Examples include *Taketori Monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*) and *Ise Monogatari* (*The Tales of Ise*) in the mid-tenth century, *Utsubo Monogatari* (*The Tale of the Hollow Tree*) and *Ochikubo Monogatari* (*The Tale of Ochikubo*) in the late tenth century, *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) in the early eleventh century, *Eiga Monogatari* (*Story of Splendor*) and *Hamamatsu Chūnagon Monogatari* (*The Tales of Hamamatsu Chūnagon*) in the eleventh century, and *Torikaebaya Monogatari* (*The Changelings*) in the twelfth century.

[2] All the examples in the former note, other than *The Tale of Genji*, which was written by court gentlewoman, Murasaki Shikibu, are anonymous; it is difficult to determine the authors' sex.

[3] If the term "novel" is defined simply as a fictional narrative written in prose, *The Tale of Genji* is not the world's first novel, because scholars could never ignore the works of Gaius Petronius Arbiter (Petronius) and Longus, analyzed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Erich Auerbach and Northrop Frye, are eight or nine centuries older. However, conceivably, scholars may call *The Tale of Genji* the oldest example of a literary work that gives narrative fiction a modern twist, or at least a certain modern feature, namely, psychological descriptions of characters.

meaning of *monogatari* refers to narratives in general, literary or otherwise, in any language.

The native Japanese word monogatari is primarily a continuative form of verb *monogataru* (to narrate) which is turned into a common noun that can be translated as "narrative." The term *monogatari* can be applied to the narrative act as well as to narrative text and narrative content. Hence it has a three-fold meaning, parallel with the meaning of the French word *récit* as analyzed in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* by Gérard Genette (Genette [1972] 1983: 25–26).

The term *monogatari* is a native Japanese word composed of the words *mono* (thing) and *katari* (narration). The latter form is also a continuative form of the verb *kataru* (to narrate, to relate). ŌNO Susumu delineates four aspects of the verb *kataru* in the Heian era:

1) to confide one's secret or inner matters;
2) to inform listeners of states of being or inside information that they do not know;
3) to recount the development of an event in chronological order;
4) to make a fictitious speech or to deceive. (cf. Ōno [2001] 2006: 54–56)

The fourth aspect, "to make a fictitious speech or to deceive," speaks to the affinity between the notions of narrative and fiction, with the latter concept being akin to the Latin word *fingere*, meaning "to form or to forge." This aspect, from an etymological viewpoint, leads us to seek *kataru*'s root in another verb, *katadoru* (to make something in the shape of something else, to model on something, to represent visually).[1]

物語論 [*monogatariron*], a Japanese word referring to narratology, is a portmanteau word composed of a native Japanese word *monogatari* (narrative) and a Chinese seme *ron* (theory, doctrine). This was a highly unusual case in which native Japanese vocabulary is used in an academic domain. In the Japanese way of thinking, the notion of narrative is concrete and familiar.

4. The process of transplanting of theoretical terms and systems into Japanese

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[1] Referring to the idea of the "narrative sentence," put forth by Arthur Danto, the philosopher NOE Keiichi defines *katari* (narration) as an act of fashioning discourse in the shape of private experiences to render it common (cf. Noe [1990] 2006: 80–81). Another philosopher, SAKABE Megumi ([1990] 2008), compares a pair of verbs, *hanasu* (to speak) and *kataru* (to narrate), with two groups of tenses in some European languages (*besprechenden Tempora* and *erzählenden Tempora*, in Harald Weinrich's classification).

The process of translating and transplanting Western terms has been far from simple and has encountered many obstacles. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Western knowledge contained many concepts that were unprecedented in Japanese intellectual life at that time. These concepts generally fell into two categories: the systematic and theoretical pursuit of sociological and scientific principles (which, as pointed out above, came in the absence of philosophy as a discipline in Japan) and historical positivism.

The modern institutional basis for the study of literature in Japan was set out by the scholar HAGA Yaichi (1867–1927), who in 1899, studied in Berlin. There, he encountered German philology, which was then under the influence of historicism in the line of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) and Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884). Haga understood positivism simply to be a sweeping dismissal of theoretical speculation. Such an understanding, or misunderstanding, was essentially inevitable for a scholar brought up in circumstances in which notions such as theory and philosophy were new. As pointed out by KONISHI Jin'ichi in *Introduction to the Study of Japanese Literature*:

> Academic treasures, for Haga, [resulted from] the rigid process of grasping and proving individual facts and the method used to support this process. This is an inevitable choice for a man taking the first step toward a modern study of Japanese literature. [...]
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> The problem lies in the fact that, ever since, [Japanese] scholars have studied *only individual facts*. We should not be able to blame von Ranke and Droysen for the throngs of [Japanese] scholars who could not criticize Marxist extension into the humanities and, especially after World War II, who patched up the situation, garnishing their discourse with Marxist jargon. (Konishi 2009: 450–451, translation mine)

Even up to now, the Japanese academic climate has maintained this stance deplored by Konishi: in literary study in Japan, scholars have been interested almost exclusively in subjects, or what to study, but scarcely interested in methods, or how to study. The goal of study is almost entirely limited to particular individual facts about singular, often famous, writers. This tendency restrains practitioners of adjacent academic domains from pursuing necessary interdisciplinary interactions.

Currently in Japan, when pupils study the English language in junior high school, they encounter grammatical concepts such as *mokutekigo* (object) and *hogo* (predicative complement). After six years, a student who starts to learn French, for

instance, in the university setting discovers that *hogo*, in French grammar books, means not the predicative complement but the object argument of a verbal predicate – what they learned to call *mokutekigo* in English grammar. Pioneers of French studies in Japan translated this word from the French term *complément (d'objet)*. The French equivalent of the predicative complement in English is known in Japanese as *zokushi*, which refers to the French term *attribut*.

English grammar textbooks		French grammar textbooks
目的語*mokutekigo* (translation of "object")	=	（目的）補語 (*mokuteki*) *hogo* (translation of "*complément [d'objet]*")
補語*hogo* (translation of "predicative complement")	=	属詞*zokushi* (translation of "*attribut*")
Sino-Anglicized equivalent		Sino-Gallicized equivalent

Table 3. Japanese translations of basic terms in English and French grammar textbooks

In other words, in Japan, pioneers of the study of the English and French languages who translated these terms from those languages into Japanese made up two different clusters that used different ways of writing and thinking, just like the clusters of male and female intellectuals in court in the Heian period. They only translated "what English calls 'object'" and "what French calls *complément d'objet*" and thought nothing about the equivalence (or lack thereof) between translated terms.

The conjugation of verbs in the first-, second-, and third-person forms has no equivalent in the Japanese language. As a result, in Japanese translations of Western texts, it is difficult (and sometimes almost impossible) to grammatically distinguish the nuances of free indirect speech that represents characters' speech or thoughts. Many young Japanese students who encounter narratology and textual linguistics for the first time are confused by this grammatical feature.

The term "free indirect speech" has a word-for-word translation in Japanese, namely, *jiyū kansetsu wahō*. This term has been used almost exclusively for the past three decades. Until the early 1980s, however, three equivalents were employed in Japan. First, scholars studying French translated this term as *jiyū kansetsu wahō* because they followed the French version, *discours* (or *style*) *indirect libre*. Secondly, Germanists in Japan preferred to translate this phrase as *taiken wahō*, which is surely a translation of

the German term *erlebte Rede*. Third, Anglicists were inclined to translate the phrase as *byōshutsu wahō*. *Byōshutsu* is a word created from a forcible Sino-Japanese reading of a native Japanese verb *egakidasu*, meaning "to paint out, to delineate." This process results in a pseudo–Sino-Japanese word created in a deplorably awkward way. As a consequence, Anglicists adopted the concept put forth by Otto Jespersen of "represented speech."

There is also a fourth translation of "free indirect speech," namely, *chūkan wahō*, meaning "intermediate narration." This term is sometimes used as an equivalent of free indirect speech.[1] In general, however, the term also includes free direct narration (cf. Yasogi 1991: 89–90) by which a character's utterances and thoughts are presented verbatim, with no quotation marks.

Japanese	自由間接話法* *jiyū kansetsu wahō*	体験話法** *taiken wahō*	描出話法*** *byōshutsu wahō*	中間話法**** *chūkan wahō*
Original	*discours (style) indirect libre*	*erlebte Rede*	represented speech	intermediate narration

Table 4. Four Japanese equivalents for the expression "free indirect speech"

* *jiyū* = free, *kansetsu* = indirect, *wahō* = way of discourse
** *taiken* = experience
*** *byōshutsu* = to paint out, to delineate
**** *chūkan* = medium

During the Heian period, intellectual terms were Sinicized. In the twentieth century, the same term could be Sino-Teutonized, Sino-Anglicized or Sino-Gallicized, based on which of the three different clusters the translator identifies with.

Moreover, translating Western texts into Japanese requires a translator to repeatedly choose whether to search for literally equivalent terms or concepts; to combine existing Chinese characters as seems most appropriate; or to phonetically transcribe, transliterate, or trans-vocalize a foreign term into the Japanese syllabary. Some Japanese translators refer to narratology as *monogatariron*, which involves combining

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[1] "Intermediate speech that is neither direct nor indirect has varied names, such as *byōshutsu wahō*, *jiyū kansetsu wahō*, *chūkan wahō*, and *taiken wahō*. If we use these terms, we should keep a clear explanation in mind, in consideration for readers of varied backgrounds." (Noda 2002: 1)

Chinese ideograms; others call it *naratorojī*, simply trans-vocalizing the English word into the Japanese syllabary.

In the Japanese context, each of these options may affect the nuance of the text in significantly different ways. In any case, abstract notions, always translated by Chinese semes, are sometimes still somewhat unfamiliar to the Japanese mentality.

As a result, more than one equivalent of the same Western concept can be found in Japanese. Has this situation made academic discussions confusing? Without mentioning the case of linguistics, it seems that there has been little confusion in the study of literature: *this* is the central problem of Japanese academic activities.

Why could three or four equivalents coexist for such a long time in literary academic parlance in Japan? Because there was little confusion in academic discussions. Why was there little confusion in these discussions? Because initially there were few discussions among specialists of different domains in literary research in Japan. Little interdisciplinary discussion resulted in little confusion; as a result, there was no unification of terminology.

In the Japanese academic context, literary theory is not yet considered a legitimate territory of study.[1] In Japan, English literature, French literature and Japanese literature are considered full-fledged domains, but literary theory is not: it has no congresses and no academic society. There are few classes devoted to literary theory in universities and no departments dedicated to this area of study. Literature students in Japan mostly consider theory to be a simple apparatus for studying individual people of letters; they scarcely reflect on theory itself.

5. Conclusion

Theoretical approaches to verbal phenomena are still novel in literary study in Japan, where the interest is typically in concrete and individual, biographical and antiquarian matters rather than in systematic, abstract or general questions. Marcel

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[1] According to an unwritten academic rule, a Proust specialist can talk about Proust's free indirect speech, a Joyce specialist can talk about Joyce's free indirect speech, and a specialist of Mishima can talk about Mishima's free indirect speech, even if the Japanese language does not include the concept of free indirect speech. Any specialist of free indirect speech in literature in general cannot exist without the disguise of specialty in the works of a certain writer. A number of years ago, at a Japanese university, I gave a presentation devoted to proper names in fiction (Iwamatsu 1999: 62–72), quoting Umberto Eco, Saul A. Kripke, and Félix Martínez-Bonati; I also presented examples from Raymond Queneau, Jacques Roubaud, Renaud Camus, Patrick Modiano, Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, and Ursula K. LeGuin. After my presentation, an audience member asked me, without irony, in which author I *really* specialize.

Proust, James Joyce and MISHIMA Yukio are viewed as concrete notions, such as snow or rain, in native Japanese vocabulary. By contrast, abstract notions such as free indirect speech, literary genre, authorship, diegetic levels, point of view, speech act theory and fictionality are still somewhat unfamiliar to most native speakers of Japanese.

As a consequence, words themselves can be translated but their usage can be scarcely transplanted. In the Japanese academic climate, which treats what to study (field and object) as more important than how to study (discipline and method), scholars refer to theory not in the general sense but rather to Marxist, psychoanalytic, gender or other types of theories which are sets of concrete questions designed to work out concrete answers. This contrasts with narratology, which is a system made up of a set of abstract terms and notions to inspire scholars to *discover unexpected questions*.

Needless to say, all the phenomena that I have described above cannot necessarily be directly linked only to the lack of abstract nouns in the original Japanese language. However, literary study in Japan is still haunted by its own historicism and tends to bury itself in its focus on concrete objects along the lines of topics such as "life and work" or "life and manuscripts."

In conclusion, the Japanese translation of theoretical terms inevitably entails problems in transplantation. I find this conundrum interesting in the situation of the humanities in Japan: one can translate terms but not their usage, which belongs to the users' linguistic habitus.

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