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2. TRANSLATION

Shigemi Inaga spoke about historical misunderstandings between Japanese and Western art historians, with special emphasis on misunderstandings that are unavoidable because they are built into the structure of language. He opened with several examples of cross-cultural misunderstandings, and conversation turned to the obliviousness of the global art world to inbuilt problems of translation and understanding.

The following excerpt presupposes Shigemi Inaga's essay in the book Is Art History Global?[1]

SHIGEMI INAGA: My work has always dealt with problems inherent in cultural crossings. We tend to have the illusion that everything necessary for understanding each other in a global market can be gotten from a translation, but there are many reasons to doubt this. First of all, only very limited information can filter through cultural barriers. Among the papers I assigned for this seminar, for example, there is one on the assassination of the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.[2] Another paper which I have written on the same issue was originally given at a seminar on "The Conditions of Reciprocal Understanding" held at the University of Chicago in 1992, and I was invited to submit it to *Critical Inquiry*, but it was rejected with the interesting note that it was "too ethnographic." I wanted it to be theoretical, but it was regarded as ethnographic—

BHASKAR MUKHOPADHYAY: It did not appear to be universal in scope, that's what the judgment meant.

SHIGEMI INAGA: Thanks for the relevant comment. This is precisely the problem. A simple reading of my paper would be enough to understand that the Japanese translator, Igarashi Hitoshi (1947–1991), was not an innocent translator but was one of the top Japanese Islamic scholars of the generation. As a translator of Ibun Sînâ (Avicenna), he felt it necessary to intervene into the affair as a third party, just like the case of a medical intervention. He took advantage of his solid philology in Islamic studies, and tried to criticize both the Western claim to freedom

1. James Elkins, ed., *Is Art History Global?* The Art Seminar 3 (New York: Routledge, 2006). The book was a starting place for the discussions throughout the 2007 Stone Summer Theory Institute (it is presupposed in this book). Six people in the seminar had contributed to that book (Shigemi Inaga, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Suzana Milevska, Keith Moxey, Charlotte Bydler, and Shelly Errington).

2. Shigemi Inaga, "Negative Capability of Tolerance: The Assassination of Hitoshi Igarashi," in *The Conditions of Reciprocal Understanding: A Centennial Conference, International House, the University of Chicago, September 12–17, 1992*, edited by James W. Fernandez and Milton B. Singer (Chicago: Center for International Studies, University of Chicago, 1995), 304–36. Further, Shigemi Inaga, "Freedom in Suffering and Freedom of Suffering: The Case of Japanese Translator of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*," paper delivered at First International Conference of Literature and Religion, Chungnam National University, Daejeon; published in *Literature and Religion* 10, no. 2 (2005): 229–51.

of expression and the Islamist self-righteousness in the Rushdie affair so as to serve as a mediator in the controversy.[3] To take his case simply as ethnographic and to reject it as irrelevant with regard to our global concerns is more than symptomatic: it shows what "universal" means in North-American and English scholarship in critical theory. The death of a Japanese scholar does not deserve serious attention.

Here is one parable which will show the other side of the same coin: Harry Harootunian talked about the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurô (1889–1960), in connection with his comment that Japanese art occupies a kind of double register. This reminds me of another philosopher, Karl Löwith (1897–1973), who taught in Japan in the prewar period. He remarked that it was true that Japanese students were seriously studying Western philosophy, but their life was subdivided into two layers: it happened as if they studied Western philosophy in the first-floor classroom, but when the class was over they went down to a lower level, a lower floor, where they lived in a completely Japanese fashion—and it was beyond the German professor's comprehension. For him, the problem was that there was no connecting ladder between the two floors. He couldn't see any connection between their two levels of activities.[4]

PEDRO ERBER: But is this really particular to Japanese? Can't the same claim be made about European or North American philosophy students? I know very few who actually live, so to say, "on the same floor" of their studies.

SHIGEMI INAGA: You may be right, but Löwith himself saw a huge gap between Europe and Japan. In the European intellectual tradition, the philosophical vocabulary is closely connected with everyday life, and this is why Heidegger had to try so hard to "sublimate" philosophical terms out of the yoke of everyday existence (like *Seiend* and *Fürsorge*). Whereas the problem in Far Eastern cultural spheres under Chinese influence is that the basic Western ideas remain so alien and alienating that the translated philosophical terms circulate only on the "second floor," without any linkage with vernacular language. This is also the case in Indonesia, as far as I know. Let me explicate further by taking the case of "literature." The definition of "novel" as a literary genre seems to be self-evident, for Westerners who look into only Western translations. But if you have access to the original non-Western texts and compare it with the translation, many inconveniences become evident. It is well known that Tanizaki Jun'ichirô's (1886–1965) *Makioka Sisters* (1948)[5] looked so disrupted and fragmentary that the famous English translator, E. Seidensticker, had to re-create a coherent and continuous

3. Shigemi Inaga, "Additional Recommendations for a Dialogue Between Civilizations," paper delivered at International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilizations, United Nations University, Tokyo, July 31–August 3, 2001, www.unu.edu/HQ/japanese/dialogue/dialogue-programme-j.html.

4. Shigemi Inaga, "Philosophia, Ethica, and Aesthetica in the Far Eastern Cultural Sphere: Receptions of Western Ideas and Reactions to the Western Cultural Hegemony," paper delivered at "Culture of Knowledge," International Conference, Ranscultra, Pondicherry, 2005 (publication forthcoming).

5. Tanizaki, *The Makioka Sisters*, translated by Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Knopf, 1957).

narrative. Otherwise the Western readers could have lost patience. However, by so doing, some of the key incidents of the novel evaporated as they had been suggested by these chronological disruptions or left silent by way of discontinuous narratives. The important "silence" was effaced by the continuous narrative.

A similar thing happens with the Nobel Prize winner Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972). Some Western literary critics continue to complain that Kawabata's novels, like *Snow Country*,[6] are, even in their English versions, too incoherent and incomplete to be entitled to be called finished novels.

I will give one more example (among many others) to clarify the question. Consider Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's famous essay. His *In Praise of Shadows* (1933)[7] is regarded as the incarnation of Japanese aesthetics, but at the same time he was mad about Hollywood films. His writings mention a number of Hollywood stars, like Mary Pickford or Douglas Fairbanks, but according to a specialist, the first English translation had to omit them: the names were erased, probably by the clever judgment of the editor. These kinds of things (a sort of cultural censorship) happen often, and as a result you may have an exaggerated, purified, and "essentialistic" idea of what Japanese aesthetics is; the crucial elements in the original may be erased as irrelevant in English and cannot always survive the process of cross-cultural translation (which is no less technical than social), and the reality is hidden to the readers of the target culture (at the expense of the illusory communicability).

JAMES ELKINS: In English that book comes across as very "Western" and romantic in a nineteenth-century sense, especially, for me, the passages about the sensual beauty of dark, wood-lined Japanese toilets! I suppose the names of Hollywood stars would have ruined that for me.

SHIGEMI INAGA: And the irony is that the Japanese writer is said to have preferred a Western toilet to the Japanese one. He seems to have hated the darkness that he praised in his essay.

Here is an example closely connected with fine arts that we might discuss: there was a huge show at the Centre Pompidou in 1986–87, with the title *Le Japon des avant-gardes*. It was one of the first retrospectives of the avant-garde in Japan, and I discuss my experiences of it in *Is Art History Global?*[8] That moment is related to my current work on Japanese arts and crafts. Even today in most of the Western countries, crafts are not categorized at the same level as fine arts. But it was not the case in Japan, where the hierarchy was typically the product of the Western Renaissance as it was reinterpreted by classicism, where the "artists"

6. Kawabata, *Snow Country*, translated by Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Knopf, 1956).

7. Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, translated by Charles Moore (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1977), *Naomi*, translated by Anthony H. Chambers (Tokyo: New York: Knopf, 1985), and *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1965) faithfully give names of Hollywood movie stars.

8. Shigemi Inaga, "Is Art History Globalizable," in Elkins, *Is Art History Global?* 267. "By systematically eliminating every domain of artistic creation where no equivalent can be found in Western avant-garde, this huge exhibition helped the French public form a firm but tautological conviction: everything recognizable as partaking of the avant-garde in Japan is a Western imitation; and everything original in Japan does not fall into the category of avant-garde.

wished to be socially distinguished from craftsmen. And if you think about the arts in a global context, the so-called fine arts turn out to be a modern Western invention that occupies only a small portion of the entire map of art, and there is an enormous "third world" of arts and crafts that is not treated seriously by Western historians.[9] The issue is closely connected to the discussions we have been having regarding the possibility of a world art history.

SHELLY ERRINGTON: Would you please say more about how "crafts are categorized at the same level as fine arts"? By whom, and what are the hierarchies based on, and what is at the bottom if crafts are not, in Japan? Since the eighteenth century, arts and crafts were separated in the West, but apparently that doesn't map onto Japanese art categories and hierarchies. Please say more on that topic.

SHIGEMI INAGA: This is not so much a Japanese or non-Western issue as the specific Western issue. In Japan, at least up until the mid-nineteenth century, no clear hierarchy did exist according to genres (a modest ceramic ware by an unknown Korean craftsman with special provenance could be more highly appreciated than a decorative painting by a famous master), if not in each genre, where you can of course distinguish pieces for aristocratic clients and pieces for ordinary customers. I wrote a book on Manet, and I have studied the process of new canon formation in the second half of the nineteenth century.[10] At the moment of Manet's studio auction sale in 1884, his etchings and drawings were not yet as highly evaluated as the finished painting in the art market. But that hierarchy was on its way to collapse. The new category of *estampe originale* was introduced in the late 1860s so as to give to some etching or graving a higher artistic status. By the 1880s they were no longer regarded as mere reproductions and drawings were no longer categorized as preparatory state of the completed painting. Manet's auction sale was a touchstone for this "revolution" in artistic appreciation. Hokusai's evaluation and his high reputation in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe must be understood in this precise Western context. His drawing model known as *Hokusai Manga* provided the Western vanguard artists—Manet being one of the first—with a precious model so as to invalidate academic criteria. It so happened that a Japanese print craftsman was venerated by liberal republican French art amateurs and Manet's friends as the highest summit of Japanese art history, comparable to such Western masters as Michelangelo, Rubens, or Rembrandt. In contrast, modern scholars in Japan, equipped with newly introduced Western aesthetic value judgment and "en-

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Only the group Gutai 具体 attracted the French public's interest because it had influenced the Parisian art scene and had therefore been authenticated *a posteriori*. The logical coherence of the selection in *Le Japon des avant-gardes* perfectly epitomized the grandeur and misery of auto-intoxication. Applying one's own prefabricated category by force, to foreign realities, only testifies to the cultures' mutual incommensurability." For further theoretical reflection, see also Shigemi Inaga, "The Impossible Avant-Garde in Japan," *Year Book of Comparative and General Literature* 41 (1993): 67–75.

9. Shigemi Inaga, "Les traces d'une blessure créatrice: Yagi Kazuo entre la tradition japonaise et l'avant-garde occidentale," *Japan Review*, no. 19 (2006):133–59.

10. Shigemi Inaga, *Le crépuscule de la peinture: La lutte posthume d'Édouard Manet* (in Japanese with French summary) (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press,1997).

lightened" by the Western Renaissance canon, began to repudiate Hokusai and other popular ukiyo-e print craftsmen. The literati class in westernizing Japan was literally ashamed of the success of Ukiyo-e prints in the West.[11]

To return to Shelly's question, I should say that the Western valuation of "high" fine art is very well studied, especially in connection with the idea of "artist" as individual creator of original pieces of fine art. The idea was elaborated in the *siècle des lumières*, and culminated in the formulation of *The Faculty of Judgment* (1790) by Kant. What is the consequence? On the one hand, the idea of fine art prevailed all over the world up until 1980s. And the studies of Western fine art saturated the discipline of art history. The academic market is now facing stagnation for lack of new material. On the other hand, however, the idea had to confront the non-Western world for the last two hundred years. Its exposure to the non-Western realities came to discredit its validity. The Western aesthetic hierarchy has lost its competence, especially in the current global situation. And yet the global art market still seems to remain clinging to this outdated idea of fine art of the Enlightenment. So what should be done about this triple imbalance? It is a rational choice to move to the "hidden" arena of fine art, or more precisely to see what has been hidden by the notion of "fine arts."

THOMAS DACOSTA KAUFMANN: Sotatsu is a good example of this problematic, because he made calligraphy and paintings, but also objects, and there are people like Zeshin who made objects—lacquer boxes. I am myself guilty of writing books that don't pay as much attention to *Kunstgewerbe* as they perhaps should.

I would propose it is not only the exhaustion of the study of fine art that would lead to the study of these sorts of objects. Alois Riegl, Julius von Schlosser, Ernst Kris, and others have dealt with such objects.[12]

It might be fruitful to consider the expanded sphere of what might comprise works of art, such as the Japanese sense before it was narrowed by contact with Western art history: porcelain, *netsuke*, many other kinds of objects—

MICHAEL HOLLY: So many of the Viennese scholars who formed art history were interested in the minor arts. It wasn't just Riegl, but Franz Wickhoff and others—but the reason they turned to arts and crafts was because they could discern *laws* of stylistic change more transparently in the minor arts than in the great traditions of painting and sculpture. So really, it was an attempt to follow the Hegelian story into the minor arts.

11. Shigemi Inaga, "The Making of Hokusai's Reputation in the Context of Japonisme," *Japan Review*, no. 15 (2003): 249–79.

12. It is worth recalling that Riegl worked at K.K. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, what is now the Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna, and that Schlosser was head of the Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe of the Kunsthistorisches Museum there. It is, however, perhaps not well known that Kris was also a curator in Schlosser's department and that he wrote many books and objects related to objects in the collection of the museum.

THOMAS DACOSTA KAUFMANN: It's true that it's easier to find laws in such objects, but there is more to it than that: Schlosser, who was a very great scholar of such matters, including wax portraits, is behind the idea, made famous by Gombrich, that there is no such thing as the history of art, there are only artists.[13] Schlosser could have said as much himself, and the idea itself comes from Croce, not Hegel. Schlosser's theory, then, was dissonant with his practice, but it is important to keep the practice in mind as well, because it provided the focus from which the Viennese developed their theories.[14]

KEITH MOXEY: It seems to me this turn to popular arts, folklore, and so forth had another dimension as well: it was an attempt to trace unique national characteristics by means of art. Art became the place where the passage of the spirit could be traced; according to Riegl, *Kunstwollen* differed with each national/racial community.

SHIGEMI INAGA: In connection to the national/racial factor, let me add one more aspect in terms of museum politics of classification. In the Louvre, the Département des objets d'art was created as late as 1896: before that, the category did not exist. Under the Third Republic, that department became as important as the Département de la peinture because many precious treasures were transferred from the Catholic churches to the museum. Beside the Département des antiquités, the two departments became concurrent in budgetary terms. It was in the Département des objets d'art that Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), for example, tried to enlarge the Japanese collection. But the discovery of the Japanese Buddhist antiquities from the eighth century at the Exposition universelle in 1900 inevitably made it impossible to classify Japanese art solely in the category of *objets d'art*. It is selfevident that the Japanese official side hoped to demonstrate that the Empire of the Rising Sun as a nation-state possessed the national treasures which could be incontestably classified in the category of "fine arts." To be labeled as a not-civilized, barbarous country producing only minor arts was so humiliating.

MICHAEL HOLLY: This was apart from discerning any laws in stylistic change? It had to do only with the objects themselves?

SHIGEMI INAGA: I think there is a tautological mechanism between objects and classifying law (if not laws of stylistic change), and the argument is somewhat circular: The framework of appreciation modifies the choice of the relevant objects, and the chosen objects reflect the implicit law (or criteria) in stylistic and hierarchical judgment.

Let me add one more case to reply to Michael's question. The first British Consul to Japan, Rutherford Alcock (1809–1897), published his first book in 1863, *The Capital of the Tycoon*. There he said no higher art existed in Japan and that the lack proved Japan's delay. Later, in a book dated 1878, *Art and Art Industries in Japan*, he borrowed an idea from William Morris, and completely changed his idea—he said then that it is better that Japan has no higher art.

13. See E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 11th ed. (London: Phaidon: 1970), 5, originally published 1950.

14. And thus not necessarily from any a priori theories: this is quite clear, for example, in Riegl's *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*.

THOMAS DACOSTA KAUFMANN: You mentioned art industry. That is also a key concept in relation to the change from the premodern to the modern: it is marked by the change from *Kunstgewerbe* to *Kunstindustrie.* It would be helpful to consider what the "industrial" aspect of this development might be, and why the latter word, or its equivalents, is used. It is found in Slavic-speaking countries, in German-speaking countries, and elsewhere, where the transformation occurred from craft to industrial production.[15] So what you are saying is resonant with what was happening outside Japan at the same time. The question from a global point of view would be how much contact there was between these ideas.

JAMES ELKINS: I would like to ask the same questions in a different kind of way. Your initial anecdote about your reaction at the Pompidou is a very poignant one, and for me it works on two levels: on one level it is about the fact that the exhibition did not recognize or value art outside of Western categories. On another level, it is about your own anxiety, unhappiness, and embarrassment: you are suddenly required to be the expert, to speak for all Japanese art, and yet it is impossible to do so. You don't pursue the second level, but you do say a lot about the first level.

This makes me wonder what you consider to be solvable: I assume that the anxieties and discomfort of the person who must unexpectedly exemplify his or her culture is endemic, and has no solution, but I notice that your very detailed essay in *Is Art History Global?* (which I think is a truly exemplary essay, one of the best texts on cross-cultural understanding in the visual arts) ends with a complex "elliptical" model of the impossibilities of understanding. And I note that our conversation here has been following a path that is largely complementary to the path of your essay: we have been exposing some moments in Western historiography when minor and decorative arts were valued differently, implying perhaps that by understanding the past we might affect future developments. But it's not clear to me that a conversation like this one can solve the problem, and the other register of your story—the personal one—seems irremediable. Both registers are fraught with misunderstandings, and neither seems closer to resolution now than before. So what might be solved here?

SHIGEMI INAGA: The simplest way to reply to your question may be the opposition between two kinds of heterogeneity. Cultural heterogeneity *must* be represented: otherwise there is a flattened global market. But the heterogeneity must be an acceptable one, and if it is accepted, then it will fit with a conception of heterogeneity that is already presupposed at a meta-level. The acceptable heterogeneity implicitly presupposes admissible homogeneity. In contrast, an unacceptable heterogeneity is by definition discarded out of the playing ground.

15. This change seems to me to be reflected not only in the choice of words used in such books as Riegl's, but in the nomenclature used for museums, such as the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Vienna, or the Umeleckopr myslové Museum (Kunstindustrieles Museum) in Prague, as well as in the response to the transformation of modern forms of production reflected in the reasons for the founding of the South Kensington, now the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

So what is permitted in the art market is just the interplay between permissible heterogeneity (as for items in circulation) and the admissible homogeneity (as for market tolerance). Things advance within that zone, and if you are outside that zone, what you say is not communicable at all; you have to be literally "ex-communicated." That would be an abstract way of explaining the issue.[16]

As I mentioned in the opening roundtable, there are kinds of literature that gain through translation—candidate of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*—they get more readers, and it is assumed that they have a universal message.[17] But there are also kinds that do not benefit from translation and do not easily cross linguistic boundaries: they are in the excluded zone, not in the zone of permissible heterogeneity but in the zone of impermissible heterogeneity.

KEITH MOXEY: Permissible heterogeneity and acceptable heterogeneity are useful terms, and I just want to make sure I understand them correctly—

SHIGEMI INAGA: Just one illustration to clarify my point. It seems that Western nation-states showed quite divergent judgment in their admission policies when they organized *expositions universelles*. Let me give a brief overview. It was in 1872 that the Japanese Meiji government officially took part in the *Weltausstellung* for the first time. At that point the Japanese government could not establish any clear distinction between "fine arts" and "arts and crafts" (or *Kunstgewerbe*) and presented their items in such confusion that the Austrian adviser, Gottfried Wagner (1831–1892), had to warn the Japanese that "fine arts" did not mean only technical merit but also had to manifest spiritual aspect (*Idee*) with *expression de passion*, if one may use the term from French classicism (1875). It was not until 1890 that the Japanese could finally establish the distinction between "fine arts" and "industrial art" or "artistic crafts" in the classification list at the third domestic Industrial Fair. But in the following Chicago World Fair in 1893, the Japanese delegation became nationalistic and insisted upon the specificities of Japanese arts and industry, which they claimed had no clear distinction between higher and lesser arts. They had a number of bronze wares with artistic merit be accepted, not in the section of applied arts but in the section of fine arts, as sculptures.[18] The generosity of the American organizer allowed this exceptional treatment. However, in the following Exposition universelle in Paris in 1900, the Japanese delegation once again changed its mind and decided to faithfully follow the French hierarchy of fine arts so as to make clear that Japan was capable of presenting pieces of work worth being regarded as incontestably belonging to the category of *beaux-arts*. By the way, it is well known that the French authority

16. For further reflection on this idea, see Shigemi Inaga, "Between Revelation and Violation: Ethics of Intervention," in *Crossing Cultural Borders: Toward an Ethics of Inter-Cultural Communication—Beyond Reciprocal Anthropology*, edited by Shigemi Inaga (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2001), 125–38.

17. David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

18. Shigemi Inaga, "Cognitive Gaps in the Recognition of Masters and Masterpieces in the Formative Years of Japanese Art History, 1880–1900," in *Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretations*, edited by Michael Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 115–26.

at that moment was notoriously conservative in aesthetic judgment, compared to the previous Parisian Exposition in 1889. Thus, the Japanese had difficulty in accommodating themselves to the unstable "universal standard." The typically Japanese aesthetics, as they conceived and promoted it, was balanced on the boundary of acceptable heterogeneity and unacceptable heterogeneity; and the Japanese side was also measuring the limit of the acceptable homogeneity of the "universal" marketplace in transition.[19]

KEITH MOXEY: There are all sorts of implications for the present. African photography, for example, succeeds at the moment because it bears the marks of its Africanness. If it didn't, it would lose its appeal to the international market.

JAMES ELKINS: And for me, this is a fruitful restatement of a problem I raised in the opening roundtable, about how the international art market is "coy" about signs of nationalism and ethnicity: it requires them—they are permissible—but not if they appear overly articulated—beyond the admissible.

SHELLY ERRINGTON: That's a general problem with arts that are from outside the centers of power, or anyway of art power, don't you think? Painters want to be known as great artists, not great artists with a qualifier like "a great Native American painter" or "a wonderful woman artist." But the unmarked category, the "universal" one, is the one that does not bear any marks of ethnicity except whiteness, which is unacknowledged. Artists from the peripheries also develop a market of collectors who want their art to have the mark of the peripheries.

THOMAS DACOSTA KAUFMANN: Or there is the retrogressive movement of museum display exemplified in Berlin, where, if you are a contemporary non-European artist, your works may be shown in the center of the city, but the "traditional" non-European works are now back in Dahlem, far from the center of the capital, where non-European art, and especially what were regarded as ethnographic finds, had been displayed in the early twentieth century. So they are together again with the former ethnographic collections, in such a way that the East Asian collections are displayed in the same building once again with pre-Columbian, African, and Oceanic works of art. So there is a contemporary problem in museology as well.

SHIGEMI INAGA: Yes. German reunification and the master plans at the Museum Insel completely dismantled the previous universal conception of the Dahlem complex. What remains now in Grünewald in West Berlin is like the ruin of the broken dream of the universal art museum. The reorganization of the British Museum after the departure of the British Library is another example. When the Museum of Mankind was dismantled the question was raised as to how to relocate the ethnological collection. There was a planning of creating permanent exhibition area for Asia at the Central Court of the British Museum, but the idea was finally modified. Instead, temporal shows, such as the Chinese *First Emperor*

19. For a more detailed overview, see Shigemi Inaga, "Images changeantes de l'art japonais: Depuis la vue impressionniste du Japon à la controverse de l'esthétique orientale (1860–1940)," *JITA* 29–30 (2004–5): 73–93.

as well as the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* show, are currently realized at the Central Court exhibition halls in 2007.

In France, le Musée Quai Branly finally opened its doors in 2006. It is well known that the original idea of reunifying *l'art premier* was abolished because systematic reclassification was impossible, materially as well as administratively. In the meanwhile, some ethnological objects which were judged worth being exhibited at Quai Branly were transferred from the former Musée de l'homme in Trocadero and the Musée des arts africains et océaniens in the Vincennes Park (which was previously the Musée des colonies established at the international Exposition coloniale in 1931).

The criteria of distinction between ethnological objects and pieces of fine art in the selection process remain problematical, to say the least (the question was already raised by Guillaume Apollinaire), and the political will which was involved in the decision making inevitably affected the aesthetic criteria in a complicated manner. Thus, the main European capitals are now facing drastic modifications in museum politics in terms of presentation of non-Western objects. Judging from these three cases, it seems to me that the global vision of world art history is not easily materialized nor materializable in the gigantic museum complexes at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

MICHELE GREET: I want to come back to Jim's point about the history of reception. In my work I look at the critical reception of paintings by Ecuadorian artists working in Paris in the 1920s. There is a huge contrast between what Parisian critics praised and what Latin American expatriates living in Paris found admirable. The Parisian critics praised what they perceived to be an innate expression of primitivism, whereas the Latin American critics commended the artists' bold appropriation of European avant-garde styles.

I think the gap in this history of reception is extremely revealing because it demonstrates the kinds of miscommunication that continue to plague our understanding of cross-cultural exchanges.

SHIGEMI INAGA: Yes, I did have precisely the same impression when I saw the film *Tangos, l'exil de Gardel* (1985) by Fernando Solanas with Marie Laforêt, in Paris about twenty years ago.[20] The subtle combination of primitive savageness and urban refinement were carefully dosed so that it could be attractive enough to meet the Parisian public expectation while not betraying the susceptibilities of Argentinean immigrants. But the highly sophisticated artificial calculation was almost completely overlooked not only by (slightly caricatured) Parisian promoters in the film but also by most of the real film critics who commented on the film. This double blindness is another case of practice between the search for admissible heterogeneity and the compromise with acceptable homogeneity. And my question would be: do the same issues persist in the so-called global market? Are the problems I have been expositing still relevant in contemporary art?

20. *Tangos, l'exil de Gardel*, 1985, directed by Fernando Solanas, music by Astor Piazzolla, script and realization by Fernando Solanas, photography by Félix Monti, choreography by Susana Tambutti.

JAMES ELKINS: Definitely, yes. I don't think anything we have been talking about has been solved, and I don't think anything has gone away: but it is massively ignored—it's invisible. I wonder if the international art market is not suffused with an unanswerable optimism concerning the representation of cultures—an optimism that is camouflaged by the notion that visuality can somehow help communicate things that language cannot.

The very idea that there might be limits to understanding across cultural practices is taken for granted in the humanities, but I think not as much in the contemporary art world, where it seems to be an article of faith that *because* the work is visual, it has the capacity to communicate immediately, without the barriers we associate with literary or linguistic translations. With Shigemi's help, we have been considering such things as *necessary* misunderstandings, *irreparable* differences, and "permissible" and "impermissible" heterogeneities: these things are absent from the art world, except when they take the reductive form of rote acknowledgment of Otherness. For example, in an exhibition of Wenda Gu, there is no *worrying* about what cannot be understood of his Chineseness. It doesn't come up in that way, I think because the work's visuality is thought to permit it to simply be there, showing and not saying. Discourse can float above the artwork, maybe making contact here and there, as Lacan would have said, but it isn't necessary to work hard on what cannot be understood. Shigemi, can you say something to that?

SHIGEMI INAGA: For example, consider the problem of "revolution," understood as a discontinuity imposed on the stream of history. The notion is of course Western. In Chinese there is the term *gémìng*, and in Japanese *kakumei* (using the same combination of the Chinese characters). In Beijing, I had a interesting discussion with Alain Rey, lexicologist and editor of the *Dictionnaire Robert*, shortly after he had written a book on the notion of "revolution," that is, "*Révolution": Histoire d'un mot.*[21] He excluded the Chinese idea of *gémìng* from his consideration because he understands the Chinese concept as a vocation that the emperor received from heaven; according to him it has nothing to do with the Western notion of revolution. But the Orientals in the Chinese cultural sphere use *gémìng* or *kakumei* as a translation of the European notion of revolution. The Chinese "Great Cultural Revolution" is nothing but *Wěng-huà Da-Géumìng*. How, then, could it be possible to describe revolution at the global revel? This kind of miscommunication happens easily and frequently, in many contexts, without people who are relying upon translation noticing what is happening.

HARRY HAROOTUNIAN: Shigemi, your observation about revolutions is apposite. There is also the concept of "state," and its forms in Japanese and Chinese. The Japanese translation of state was *kokka*, which took the ideographs for realm (*kuni*) or country and family in Japanese; Chinese merely took this "translation" over and enunciated it as *guojia*.

21. Alain Rey, *"Révolution": Histoire d'un mot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

There is an interesting multiple meaning, in which "state" also has the meaning "family." In the West, nothing of the sort applies. You're right, Shigemi, and it would be possible to go on and on . . .

SHIGEMI INAGA: There is also the question of "society." When one of the first Japanese diplomatic delegations came to Washington, DC, in the middle of the nineteenth century, they tried to translate the American Constitution into Japanese. They had difficulty, among many others, in finding out equivalent of "society" in Chinese classics or in Japanese vocabulary. Nowadays the Western notion of "society" is automatically translated as *shakai* in Japanese and *shakai* is made into "society" in English. However, you need not be agnostic to question if a Chinese or a Japanese person who is using the term is precisely thinking of the same thing as "society" in English. Indeed, it took some twenty or so years before the Japanese could understand the difference between "society" and "company" by putting *sha-kai* for the former and *kai-sha* (reversed combination!) for the later, so as to make the difference clear. Once socially accepted, these translated technical terms become social convention. These terms look as if they were transmitting equivalent of Western ideas, but the implications are inevitably divergent from the original context. Whenever conflict happens in cross-cultural negotiations, the implicit gap becomes evident in a negative fashion.

Of course, it is a basic political maneuver to bestow the common and unifying meaning on a term—like "society"—which, in reality, is endowed with extremely divergent and even contradictory or antagonistic implications—even within one language—according to political opinions. However, this is why we must be extremely careful about the illusion of equivalence and communicability which the translated terms tend to give us.

JAMES ELKINS: All this applies just as much to the foundational terms of art history and criticism. In *Is Art History Global*, there are thickets of confused lexica, involving such terms as "representation" and "picture." The contemporary art world seems to be oblivious to these problems. The problems of translating words like "representation" are as immediate, as fundamental, as the problem of bowing at the opening of a martial arts tournament, or using the word "revolution" in a historical account.

Instead of pondering these issues, the global art world pays a great deal of attention to *local* terms: if an artist refers to Sufism, the ninety-four tribes of Kazakhstan, or *kumys* (those are examples from my trip to Central Asia), a critic will want to explain them at length. Or if a Renaissance altar reminds a critic of a Peruvian *huaca*, she'll mention it. But enabling terms like "refer" and "representation" go unnoticed—they are like commodities in the world of global art discourse. There is a deluge of mistranslations, but contemporary critics pay attention instead to these little evaporating droplets.

HARRY HAROOTUNIAN: I think we in Euro-America have, by training and imperial disposition, always assumed that the conceptual language and cultural forms we've employed will always have transparent equivalents in the world outside, in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, in the regions of the Third World and former colonies. This "imperial" impulse has been an enabling condition of our area studies in the social sciences and humanities. It is not simply or only art history and criticism that has overlooked these fundamental problems and ignored the immense disparities between terms and forms we take for granted and their presumed equivalents. The problem with this kind of easy gesture to simply assimilate other cultural intensities is its putative grounding in appeals to universalism over particularisms. While the fundamental problem between translation and appropriation opens up a large gap interpreters in the human sciences have scarcely engaged, the principal result has been to tyrannize conceptions of chronology and periodization and the "authority" of the breaks each new moment is supposed to represent. The most recent declaration of the change from modernism to postmodernism is a case in point. Whether one is talking from disciplines like art history, history, literary studies, and so on, we seem to be bonded to forms of periodizing that have the force of natural dictations, even though they have grown out of a specific cultural experience and made to mark time in the histories of societies outside of Euro-America.

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