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Fracturing the Translation or Translating the Fractures?
Questions in the Western Reception of Non-Linear
Narratives in Japanese Arts and Poetics

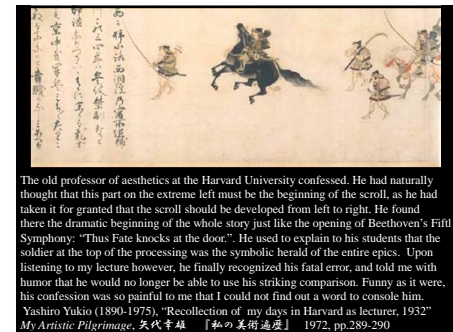
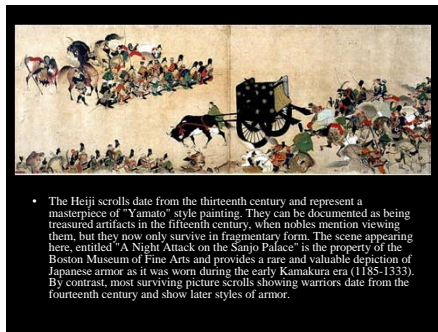
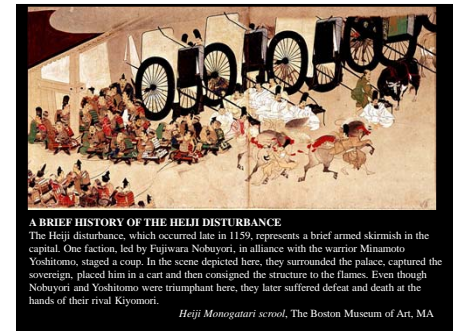
Shigemitsu INAGA

In a Country of Topsy-Turvy

The boyish belief that on the other side of our globe all things are of necessity upside down is startlingly brought back to the man when he first sets foot at Yokohama. (...) They seem to him to see everything topsy-turvy. Whether it be that their antipodal situation has affected their brains, or whether it is the mind of the observer himself that has hitherto been wrong in understanding to rectify the inverted pictures presented by his retina, the result, at all events, is undeniable. (...)

Intellectually, at least, their attitude sets gravity at defiance. For to the mind's eye their world is one huge, comical antithesis of our own. What we regard intuitively in one way from our standpoint, they as intuitively observe in a diametrically opposite manner from theirs. To speak backwards, write backwards, read backwards, is but the *a b c* of their contrariety. (...)

Percival Lowell (1855-1916) *The Soul of the Far East*, 1888,
The MacMillan Cie., 1911, pp.1-2.



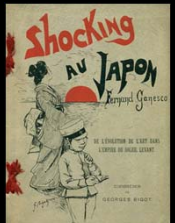
- Topsy-turvydom
 - It has often been remarked that the Japanese do many things in a way that runs directly counter to European ideas of what is natural and proper. To the Japanese themselves our ways appear equally unaccountable. It was only the other day that a Tokyo lady asked the present writer why foreigners did so many things topsy-turvy, instead of doing them naturally, after the manner of her country-people. Here are a few instances of this contrariety...
 - Japanese books begins at what we should call the end, the word *finis* (終) coming where we put the title-page. The foot-notes are printed at the top of the page, and the reader puts in his marker at the bottom. (...)
 - Politeness prompts them to remove, not their head-gear, but their foot-gear. (...) In Europe, gay bachelors are apt to be captivated by the charms of actresses. In Japan, where there are no actresses to speak of, it is the women who fall in love with fashionable actors.
- Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935), *Things Japanese*, first edition, 1890, pp.354-355.

In a Country of Topsy-Turvy (2)
 Ideas of ours which we deemed innate find in them no home, while methods which strike us as preposterously unnatural appear to be their birthright. From the standing of a wet umbrella on its handle instead of its head to dry to the striking of a match away in place of toward one, there seems to be no action of our daily lives, however trivial, but finds with them its appropriate reaction—equal but opposite.

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

Percival Lowell, *The Soul of the Far East*, 1888, The MacMillan Cie., 1911, p.3.

- In a land where, to allow one's understanding the freer play of indoor life, one begins, not by taking off his hat, but by removing his boots, he gets at the very threshold a hint that humanity is to be approached the wrong end to.
- When, after thus entering a house, he tries next to gain admittance to the mind of its occupant, the suspicion becomes a certainty. He discovers that this people talk, so to speak backwards; that before he can hope to comprehend them, or make himself understood in return, he must learn to present his thoughts arranged in inverse order from the one in which they naturally suggest themselves to his mind. His sentences must be all be turned inside out. He finds himself lost in a labyrinth of language.
- The same seems to be true of the thoughts it embodies. The further he goes the more obscure the whole process becomes, until, after long groping about for some means of orienting himself, he lights at last upon the clue. This clue consists in "the survival of the unfittest."
- Percival Lowell, *The Soul of the Far East*, 1888, The MacMillan Cie., 1911, pp.7-8.



It is not necessarily the original Japan/Orient that is shocking; but the fact that many factors (if not entirely everything) must be reversed for the sake of communication and translation.

However this structural reversal tends to be concealed or foreclosed during the process of translation, and those who see only the end product in the target language cannot recognize that something has been broken.

Translation worthy of the name takes place only at the risk of causing this kind of fracture, either in the original, or in the end product. Unavoidable sacrifices requested in the process of translation may cause some Mental fracture in the mind of translator.

This can be easily observed in the process of simultaneous interpretation in the diplomatic negotiations crossing over different languages and social conventions and customs.

Lost in Translation:
 Invisible fractures may put in question the notion of equivalence in translation

- How can the "unfittest" topsy-turvy, upside-down, and inside-out survive in the process of Translation? Without causing fracture? or necessarily causing fracture?
- Cf. Euro-Tunnel, Dover Channel drive right or left ?
- Is it the case of fracturing the (faithful) translation or translating the fractures (which the translator has to experience)?
 - Questions of translatability in the Western Reception of Non-Linear Narratives in Japanese Arts and Poetics
- Cf. The Japanese Constitution prepared by the G.H.Q of American Occupation


Against the regime of representation

In Western houses we (Japanese) are often confronted with what appears to us useless reiteration. We find it trying to talk to a man while his full-length portrait stares at us from behind his back. We wonder which is real, he of the picture or he who talks, and feel a curious conviction that one of them must fraud.

Many a time have we sat at a festive board contemplating, with a secret shock to our digestion, the representation of abundance on the dining-room walls. Why these pictures victims of chase and sport, the elaborate carvings of fishes and fruit? Why the display of family plates, reminding us of those who have dine and are dead?

Tenshin, Okakura Kuzō, *The Book of Tea*, 1906; Dover Edition, p.41

*A tacit riposte to Percival Rowell by an indigenous intellectual (1863-1913) trained in a Western fashion



"Useless Reiteration" Observed by a French Caricaturist in Japan

Shocking Au Japon Illustrations by G. Bigot, 1897

Ganesco, Fomand Villetard de Laguerie (Preface) Bigot, Ferdinand Georges (illustrations). *Shocking Au Japon, De l'Evolution de L'Art Dans L'Empire du Soleil Levant, Dessins de Georges Bigot*, no date or location of publication stated, ca 1897

- *Culture of grafting, and not assimilation; a sign of lack in originality?*
- From before the time when they began to leave records of their actions the Japanese have been a nation of importers, not of merchandise, but of ideas. They have invariably shown the most advanced free-trade spirit in preferring to take some body else's ready-made article rather than to try to produce an brand-new conceptions themselves.
- What they took they grafted bodily upon their ancestral tree, which in consequence came to present most unnaturally diversified appearances. (...) They were peculiar in that they never assimilated what they took. They simply inserted it upon the already existing growth. There it remained, and thrived, and blossomed, nourished by that indigenous Japanese sap, taste.
- But like grafts generally, the foreign boughs were not much modified by their new life-blood, nor was the tree in its turn at all affected by them. Connected with it only as separable parts of its structure, the cuttings might have been lopped off again without influencing perceptibly the condition of the foster-parent stem. (see the following chapter on "adaptation.")
- The grafts in time grew to be great branches, but the trunk remained through it all the trunk of a sapling. In other words, the nation grew up to man's estate, keeping the mind of its childhood.
- cf. General Douglas MacArthur, head of the American occupation Army to Japan, comparing the Japanese with a kids of 13 years old.
- P. Lowell, *The Soul of the Far-East*, 1888, 1922, pp.11-12

Aesthetics of Taking off the shoes or a way of grafting foreign culture

- When committing suicide, the Japanese take off the shoes. Either dropping oneself in water, throwing oneself from the top of a building, or pending oneself outdoors. In every case, the shoes are neatly arranged. The left shoes witness to the fact that the case was not a murder or an accident but an act of killing oneself out of conviction. The well arranged shoes serve as the last message that those who are illiterate leave to this world in the guise of the poem for eternal departure or the last will to be transmitted to the posterity. (...)
- Despite westernization, the habit of taking off shoes to enter a house remains a custom in Japan. Living in a Western style while taking off the shoes is a sign of fake (*ikamono*) of which the Japanese manners and customs are composed. A sign of stubborn resistance to the Continental influence, which constitutes a key to the understanding of the Japanese style originality.

Sadako Yokoyama, *Tool for Daily Life as Art*, 1979, p. 109 and p.120
 Translator of *Isak Dinesen Collection* in 4 volumes into Japanese. (tentative translation by Shigemi Inaga).

Is a “*Hokku*” equivalent of “epigram” ?

“It would be absurd to put forward any serious claim on behalf of *Haikai* to an important position in literature.”
William George Aston, (1841-1911)
A History of Japanese Literature (1898, p.294)

“The native name is *Hokku* (also *Haiku* and *Haikai*), which in default of better equivalent, I venture to translate by “Epigram,” using that term, not in the modern sense of a pointed saying,—un bon mot de deux rimes ornées, as Boileau (1636-1711) has it,—but in its earlier acceptation, as denoting any little piece of verse that expresses a delicate or ingenious thought.
Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935)
“*Bashō* (1644-1694) and the Japanese poetical epigram,”
Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, vol.30 (1902)
in Japanese Poetry, London, 1910, p.147

Augentäuschung *fracture in visual and semantic perception
Wie? Schwebt die Blüte, die eben fiel,
Schon wider zum Zweig am Baum zurück ?
Das wäre für wahr ein seltsam Ding!
Ich näherte mich und schärfte den Blick.....
Da fand ich—es war nur ein Schmetterling
Karl Florenz (1865-1935), *Dichtergrüsse aus dem Osten: Japanische Dichtungen*, Leipzig, 1895.
落花枝に戻ると思れば胡蝶かな
Arakida Moriaki 荒木田守武 (1473- 1549)
“Florenz’s translation is too long and destroys the original taste...”
Ueda Kazutoshi (1895)
“The shortness of Japanese poetry is the cause of fatal disaster, and if translated in an equally short form, the resulting destruction would be helpless...
The Japanese literature could otherwise occupy only a feeble position in the World Literature.”
objection by Florenz to Ueda (1895)

Thought I, the fallen flowers
Are returning to their branch;
But lo! They were butterflies! (W.G. Aston, 1870)

What I saw as a fallen blossom
Returning to the branch, lo! It was a butterfly
(B.H. Chamberlain, 1888)

I thought I saw the fallen leaves
Returning to their branches:
Alas, butterflies were they. (Yone Noguchi, 1914)

**Kire-ji* (cutting, scissoring word, *caesura*, fracture): Semantic and syntactic disjuncture, which “lends their vers structural support, allowing it to stand as an independent poem.” Konishi Jin’ichi, Karen Brazell, Lewis Cook, “The Art of Renga,” in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol.2, no.1, Autumn, 1975, p.39.

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

What real poetry is in the above, I wonder, except a pretty, certainly not high ordered, fancy of a vignettist; it might pass as fitting specimen if we understand *Hokku* poem, as some Western students delight to understand *Hokku* poem, by the word “epigram.” Although my understanding of that word is not necessarily limited to the thought of pointed saying, I may not be much mistaken to compare the word with a still almost dead pond where thought of fancy, nay the water, hardly changes or procreates itself; the real *Hokku*, at least in my mind, are a running living water of poetry where you can reflect yourself to find your own identification.

Yone Noguchi, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, 1914, pp.50-51

Fracture, a leap of meaning or a spiritual revelation?
Old Pond—frogs jumped in—sound of water
Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) “Frogs” (1898)

An ancient pond! Furuike ya
With a sound from the water Midzu no oto
Of the frog as it plunges in. Kawazu tobikomu
G.B. Aston, *A History of Japanese Literature* (1898)

Furu-ike ya Kawazu tobikomu Mizu no oto
The old pond, aye! and the sound of a frog leaping into the water

From European point of view, the mention of the frog spoils these lines completely; for we tacitly include frogs in the same category as monkeys and donkeys—absurd creatures scarcely to be named without turning verse into caricature.
B.H. Chamberlain, 1902; 1910, p.181.

Cf. “Are you Donkey, Monkey or Yankee?” Tenshin, Okakura Kakuzō (1863-1913), is said to have reacted by this utterance, when asked if he was “Chinese, Javanese, or Japanese?”

古池や
かはず飛び込む水の音

The old pond!
A Frog leapt into—
List, the water sound!
Yone Noguchi (1914)

I should like, to begin with, to ask the Western readers what impression they would ever have from their reading of the above; I will never be surprised if it may sound to them to be merely a musician’s alphabet; besides, the thought of a frog is ever absurd for a poetical subject.

Basho is supposed to awaken into enlightenment now when he heard the voice bursting out of voiceless-ness, and the conception that life and death were mere change of condition was dispersed into faith. It is true to say that nobody but the author himself will ever know the real meaning of the poem; which is the reason I say that each reader can become a creator of the poem by his own understanding as if he had written it himself.

Our Japanese poets at their best, as in the case of some work of William Blake, are the poets of attitude who depend so much on the intelligent sympathy of their readers.
Yone Noguchi, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, 1914, pp.44-46

Once in the hoary ages in the Ravine of Lung Men 龍門 stood a kirishō (paulownia) tree, a veritable king of the forest. (...) And it came to pass that a mighty wizard made of this tree a wondrous harp (...) but all in vain were the efforts to those who in turn tried to draw melody from its strings (...)

At last came Pai Ya pai ya, the prince of harpists. With tender hand he caressed the harp as one might seek to soothe an unruly horse, and softly touched the chords. He sang of nature and the seasons, of high mountains and flowing waters, and all the memories of the tree awoke! (...)

In ecstasy the Celestial monarch asked Pai Ya wherein lay the secret of his victory.” Sire,” he replied, “others have failed because they sang but of themselves. I left the harp to choose its theme, and knew not truly whether the harp had been Pai Ya or Pai Ya were the harp.” (...)

At the magic touch of the beautiful the secret chords of our being are awakened, we vibrate and thrill in response to its call. Mind speaks to mind. We listen to the unspoken, we gaze upon the unseen.
Kakuzō Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, 1906; Dover ed. pp.42-43

A favorite game at these tournaments, called *Renga*, wherein one person composes the second hemistich of a verse and another person has to provide it with a first hemistich, seems to date from the eleventh century. Out of this, at a later date, by the dropping of the second hemistich, grew the *Haikai* and *Hokku*, an ultra-Lilliputian class of poem having but seventeen syllables (5,7,5), (...)

Naturally the brevity needed to put any statement into so narrow a compass soon led to an elliptical and enigmatic style, which continually crosses, the border-line of obscurity.
Basil-Hall Chamberlain, “Poetry,”
Things Japanese, 1890; 1939 (unchanged), pp.407-408.

I agree with Ransome in saying: “Poetry is made by a combination of kinetic with potential speech. Eliminate either, and the result is no longer poetry.” But you must know that the part of kinetic speech is left quite unwritten in the *hokku* poems, and that kinetic language in your mind should combine its force with the potential speech of the poem itself, and make the whole thing as once complete. Indeed, it is the readers who make the *hokku*’s imperfection a perfection of art.

Arthur Ransome (1884-1967), “Kinetic and Potential Speech,” *Portraits and Speculations*, 1913, pp.189-225.
Yone Noguchi, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, 1914, p.51

The Morning-glory
Her leaves and bess has bound (sic)
My Bucket handle round.
I could not break the bands
Of these soft hands.
The bucket and the well to her left
Let me some water, for I come bereft.
Edwin Arnold (1832-1904)

Kamo no Chiyo jo (1703-1775)
---caesura---

The Well-bucket taken away,
By the morning-glory---
Alas, water to beg!
Yone Noguchi (1914)

To a Morning- Asagao ni 朝顔
glory 顔
に つるべ
へん べん
とら たら
れ たり
て もら
ひ ぬ
ら ぬ
水

Handle tsurube
being taken away torarete

begging Morai
some water Mizu 水

“I come always to the conclusion that the English poets wastes too much energy in “words, words, words,” and make, doubtless with all good intentions, their inner meaning frustrate, at least less distinguished, simply from the reason that its full liberty to appear naked is denied.”
Yone Noguchi, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, 1914, p.14

The great masters both of the East and the West never forget the value of suggestion as a means for taking the spectator into their confidence. (...) Like the musicians who vainly invoked the Lung Men harp, he sings only for himself. His works may be nearer science, but are further from humanity. We have an old saying in Japan that a woman cannot love a man who is truly in vain, for there is no crevice in his heart for love to fill up. In art vanity is equally fatal to sympathetic feeling, whether on the part of the artist or the public. (...)

crevice=fracture=passage=Treffpunkt

At the moment of meeting, the art lover transcends himself. At once he is and is not. He catches a glimpse of Infinity, but word cannot voice his delight, for the eye has no tongue. Free from the fetters of matter, his spirit moves in the rhythm of things. (...)

Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, 1906;Dover, p.45

crevice=fracture=in-between-ness=passage=Treffpunkt-meeting place

At the moment of meeting, the art lover transcends himself. At once he is and is not. He catches a glimpse of Infinity, but word cannot voice his delight, for the eye has no tongue. Free from the fetters of matter, his spirit moves in the rhythm of things. (...)

Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, 1906;Dover, p.45

切れ kire=cutting=caesura=point de rupture=Gelassenheit 放下
大橋 良介 Ryōsuke Ohashi, *Structure of 'kire'*, 1986, p.293.

Walter Benjamin
aura=atmen=pneuma=qi-yun-sheng-dong 氣韻生動
rhythmical movement of vital energy

Dem Winde tut mir gleich, wenn er aus seinen Berghöhlen stürzt: nach seiner eignen Pfeife will er tanzen, die Meere zittern und hüpfen unter seinen Fußstapfen.

我は風の如くなり、山の洞よりころげ出て、己が笛に踊らんとする。
Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Teil 4.20

Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre. (P. Valéry)

Récapitulation en français

Dans un de ses livres (par Basil Hall Chamberlain, 1850-1935), *Things Japanese*, paru en 1890, composé en forme de dictionnaire, sous la lettre T un article intitulé Topsy-Turvydom, « le monde du tout-à-l'envers », développe l'idée que « les Japonais font beaucoup de choses de façon exactement contraire à ce que les européens jugent naturel et convenable. »

Ainsi les coutumières japonaises enfilent leur aiguilles en poussant le chas sur le fil au lieu de pousser le fil dans le chas. Elles piquaient aussi le tissu sur l'aiguille au lieu, comme nous faisons, de piquer l'aiguille dans le tissu. (source: Monique Lévi-Strauss ?)

Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour *Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs*, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, pp.7-8

Un objet modelé en terre cuite atteste que, déjà au VIe siècle, les Japonais montaient à cheval par la droite, contrairement à notre usage. Encore aujourd'hui, le visiteur étranger s'étonne que le menuisier japonais scie en tirant l'outil vers soi et non en le poussant à notre manière; et qu'il manie parallèlement la plane, couteau à deux marches qui, comme son nom l'indique, sert à aplatir et amincir le bois. Au Japon, le potier lance le tour du pied gauche dans le sens des aiguilles d'une montre, à la différence du potier européen ou chinois qui lance le tour du pied droit et le meut donc dans l'autre sens.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour *Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs*, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, pp.7-8



- Car ces usages—les missionnaires jésuites l'avaient déjà remarqué -- n'opposent pas seulement le Japon à l'Europe: la ligne de démarcation passe entre le Japon insulaire et l'Asie continentale. En même temps que maints autres éléments de sa culture, le Japon emprunta à la Chine la scie passe-partout qui coupe en poussant; mais dès le XIVe siècle, la scie qui coupe en tirant inventée sur place évinça le modèle chinois. Et la plane qu'on pousse, venue de Chine au XVIe siècle, céda cent ans plus tard la place à des modèles qui occupent en tirant vers soi.
- La plupart de ces exemples étaient déjà brièvement cités par Chamberlain. S'il avait pu connaître le Traité de Frois, découvrez onze ans après sa mort, il y aurait trouvée un répertoire fascinant d'observations parfois identiques aux siennes, mais plus nombreuses et qui tendent toutes à la même conclusion.

- Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour *Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs*, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, p.8
- La scie passe-partout: yari-gama

- Entre les usages de deux civilisations, l'une exotique et l'autre domestique, Hérodote, Frois et Chamberlain ont partagé la même ambition. Au-delà d'une intelligibilité réciproque, ils insistent pour faire voir des rapports transparents de symétrie.
- Mais n'est-ce pas là une façon de reconnaître que l'Égypte, pour Hérodote, le Japon, pour Frois et Chamberlain, possédaient une civilisation nullement inégales à la leur? La symétrie qu'on reconnaît entre deux cultures les unit en les opposant. Elles apparaissent tout à la fois semblables et différents, comme l'image symétrique de nous-mêmes, réfléchie par un miroir, qui nous reste irréductible bien que nous nous retrouvons dans chaque détail.
- Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour *Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs*, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, p.11

- Quand le voyageur se convainc que des usages en totale opposition avec les siens, qu'ils seraient, de ce fait, tenté de mépriser et de rejeter avec dégoût, leur sont en réalité identiques, vues à l'envers, il se donne le moyen d'apprivoiser l'étrangeté, de se la rendre familière. (...)
- Frois, sans le savoir, car c'était trop tôt, et Chamberlain en le sachant, nous offrirent un moyen de mieux comprendre la profonde raison pour laquelle, vers le milieu du XIXe siècle, l'Occident acquit le sentiment de se redécouvrir dans les formes de sensibilité esthétiques et poétiques que lui proposait le Japon.
- Claude Lévi-Strauss, préface pour *Européens et Japonais, Traité sur les contradictions et différence de mœurs*, par R.P. Luis Frois au Japon, en 1585, Chandeigne, Librairie Portugaise, 1998, p.11

Limit of « Verfremdung » : in the guise of a fractured conclusion

- Can we agree with Levi-Strauss's optimistic theory of universal complementarities of the contraries?
- How to deal with the "fractures" which inevitably occur at the crossing-point of the "regards croisés"?
- Is "apprivoiser l'étrangeté" (taming the uncanny) the aim of, or a proper way for "understanding the Other"?
- Can the breaking point of the non-linear narrative, *kire-ji*, or a poetical *caesura*, bridge the fracture in trans-cultural mis/dis-communication, by its negative "lack of continuity" allowing some "logical leap"?
- Can we overcome the cross-cultural fracture without causing fracture in the target language, as the end product of translation work? Or should we fracture the source language so as to reconstruct and realize a non-fractured translation? Is it recommended to visualize the fracture in the process of translation or conceal it? And to which extent and in what conditions?
- Who is authorized to sever the border between permissible heterogeneity (limit of acceptable strangeness) and intolerable homogeneity (lack of necessary exotic flavor and foreign taste), making the fracture between the two?