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Temporalities, spatialities, subjectivities: Kuki Shûzô and the poetico-ontology of the nation

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Abstract

The postmodern is characterised by an incredulity towards the universal truths which mark modernity. Kuki Shûzô, like many intellectuals in Japan during the twenties and thirties, anticipates this discourse by attempting to confront the hegemonic claims and universal pretensions of modernity. Using the latest European methodologies, Kuki attempted to define a site of difference—a site that could escape the putative universality of Western modes of dealing with historical development and consciousness—through a particular reading of cultural artefacts, especially Edo poetry and painting. Yet Kuki would ultimately locate this special site within the temporal, spatial, and subjective boundaries of the modern nation implicating the geopolitics of modernity and providing an interesting context to study the complicity of art, ideology, and aesthetics in modern discourse.

Précis

On characterise la condition postmoderne par une incredulité envers les grands récits de la modernité. Kuki Shûzô, comme la plupart des intellectuels japonais des années vingts et trentes, anticipe ce discours par sa tentative de confronter les prétentions hégémoniques de la modernité. En utilisant les méthodologies intérpretives européenes de l'époque, Kuki tenta de définir un moment de différence—un moment qui pourra s'échapper de l'universalité putative du développement historique et intellectuel de l'Ouest—dans ses études sur la production culturelle de la période Edo. Néanmoins, Kuki repéra son site de différence à l'intérieur des frontières spatialles, temporelles, et subjectives de la nation moderne impliquant la géopolitique de la modernité et fournissant un contexte interessant pour étudier la complicité entre l'art, l'idéologie, et le moment esthétique du discours moderne.

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Contents

I. Introduction

> Okakura said very justly that 'the history of Japanese art becomes the history of Asiatic ideals.
>
> Kuki Shûzô
> The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art"[1]

With these words, Kuki Shûzô, student of European letters, begins a lecture delivered in France during his almost ten-year apprenticeship in European learning. This lecture, entitled "The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art," and another, "The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time," were delivered at Pontigny during the *décade*[2] of August, 1928, and were to be subsequently published in France and Japan during the 1930's. Recently translated into English,[3] these articles are of particular interest within Kuki's collection of published works because they appear at the conclusion of his European travels and mark the beginning of a turn in his intellectual preoccupations. With these lectures Kuki turns his attention back to Japan after a life devoted to European letters.

Just as Okakura Kakuzô, in *Ideals of the East*, had turned to Hegelian history in order to posit Japan as the culminating point of Asian art, so Kuki turns to European philosophy in an attempt to define an artistic sensibility unique to Japan. According to Kuki, the influence of Indian religions and Chinese philosophies combined with Japan's native idealism, *bushidô*, to engender a unique artistic awareness, one that expresses the "inward art" of Japan and its "aesthetics of

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1 Kuki Shûzô, "The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art," in Stephen Light, *Shûzô Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 51.

2 The *décades* were a series of gatherings for a select group of prominent international intellectuals which took place in France from 1910-1939.

3 Stephen Light, *Shûzô Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

suggestion." Japanese art, for Kuki, is the idealist expression of the "liberation from time and space."[4] Through hermeneutics and phenomenology, Kuki weaves his argument through particular transhistorical ideals and universal pretensions in the aesthetic contemplation of Japanese poetry and painting. Oddly enough, it was through European scholarship that Kuki came to the realisation that he had to delineate the particularity of Japan against the impending shadow of the putative universalism of Western discourse.

Historical Contexts: Discontinuities and Dispossession

How is it, then, that Kuki's ruminations during a conference in 1928 become relevant for the study of Japanese intellectual history today? What do these lectures and their context indicate? Kuki studied philosophy[5] at Tokyo University during the tail-end of Japan's most ambitious period of modernisation. Graduating at the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912), however, Kuki witnessed the social dispossession characteristic of industrialisation due not only to massive structural changes, labour movements, and the formation of new classes, but also due to major changes in the epistemological framework of intellectual discourse in Japan. The shift from Meiji to Taishô (1912-1926) was a transitional period from Meiji positivism and utilitarianism towards new modes of inquiry that would profoundly alter the nature and preoccupations of philosophic discourse in Japan. Among the many preoccupations of Meiji intellectuals, the appeal to ***bunmei*** (civilisation) provided the primary impetus for many Meiji intellectuals and bureaucrats to direct

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4 Kuki Shûzô, "The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time," in Light, p. 52.

5 The study of philosophy, designated as *tetsugaku*, in Japan is reserved for strictly European modes of inquiry. The term itself is of relatively recent origin, first used by Nishi Amane of the Centre for the Investigation of Barbarian Books (*Bansho Shirabe-sho*) in lectures concerning Greek and European learning. The study of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and other modes are each pursued within their own departments. See Gino K. Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1862-1962: A Survey* (Tokyo: Enderle Bookstore, 1963), p. 1.

their efforts towards the construction of a modern nation-state. Meiji concerns were, therefore, mainly practical and focused on the development of institutions and infrastructures possible within the conditions of modernity. Anglo-American pragmatism and utilitarianism were the first philosophic trends to be studied and used as tools in the construction of the modern nation-state. From the time of the consolidation of the University of Tokyo in 1886, English was widely used as a teaching language further strengthening the importance of English empiricism and utilitarianism.[6]

Of course, the Meiji government, for all its outward air of confidence, was not a stable ship riding a universal wave of progress. Although the first two decades of Meiji are generally characterised by the eager adoption of Western ideas and customs by the elite,[7] opposition came from many different sources, both internal and external to the Meiji bureaucracy. Furthermore, Japan's three centuries of relative isolation (Edo period: 1600-1868) and the inequalities of initial treaties with the West, did not impede anti-foreign sentiment. Reaction to foreign intrusion came from a variety of sources including Confucianists, *Kokugakusha* (Nativist Scholars), and those with Western learning such as Katô Hiroyuki with his brand of Social Darwinism or Uchimura Kanzô and his transplanted form of Christianity. One should note, therefore, that the spaces reserved for such criticism were thoroughly heterogeneous and were not premised on issues of national and ethnic purity.

The context for Kuki's project materialises in the Taishô period and the first decade of Shôwa (1926-1989). Kuki pursued graduate studies in philosophy during the first decade of

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6 Ibid., p. 23.

7 The Meiji Restoration was initiated from the top down and thus the peasantry would not feel the wave of changes for many years to come. If anything, their situation deteriorated until the late 1950's as the benefits of any agricultural surplus was continually shifted over to the ever expanding class of urban workers in order to provide a stable and cheap supply of food and facilitate urban development and industrial expansion. See Hayami Yûjirô, *Century of Agricultural Growth in Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), p. 55.

Taishô. Society continued its dizzying transformation. How was one to make sense of changes that continually changed the face of society? Not yet fully divorced from the conditions of Meiji, those who, like Kuki, matured during Taishô witnessed an ever expanding rift with the past. The Meiji state apparatus pursued nation-building with the past still in sight, with identities still rooted in the past. Although such a past has more to do with the need for nations to present a continuous history, a well-spring from which modern conceptions of nation and peoplehood arise,[8] the Taishô intellectual, could, nevertheless, no longer rely on such a past, not even an imaginary one. The past had effectively faded into dim recollection. Whether we call these transformations modernisation or Western cultural imperialism, the new landscape did not allow the Taishô intellectual to be at home in the past or the present.

Kuki's work during the 1920's exemplifies these shifting moments. Using overtly anti-Western currents in European methodologies, Kuki repositions Japan within modern discourse giving it special significance. Western universalism is questioned and Meiji rationality overturned, yet the conditions of Taishô would not lead to the national particularism of Shôwa. Part of the reason would be the recognition that the convergence of culture and politics during Taishô was as much a reaction to the internal spectre of mass culture—consumerism and consumption—and the emergence of new social classes, as it was the threat of Western cultural imperialism. The uncompromising ideology of the modern nation-state and comprehensive institutional policies of Meiji definitively aimed to reform whatever social forms had previously existed. By late Meiji, emigration from rural areas reached a hectic pace. The new industrial

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[8] Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), p. 86.

landscape created a set of urban anxieties that usually accompany modernisation. New political associations and interest groups arose in response to both the material effects of industrialisation and the government's efforts to regulate the public. These conditions spawned the need to "retrieve," and in many cases create, a tradition that could stabilise newly formed social groups and their very particular interests. Tradition could not be located within the rapidly transforming industrial centres—it began to recede into the countryside for the ethnographers, and into history for those like Kuki. Taishô ideologues thus pitted culture not only as a defence against the putative universality of Western civilisation, but also as a defence against the "onslaught of debasement which the masses promised to bring in their wake."[9]

Taishô is thus marked by a deeply personal and individualistic impulse. Culture is debased by the masses but can be restored through personal aesthetics. Tradition is displaced by industrialisation and the formation of new social groups but can be retrieved by a particular and very personal orientation with the past. The importance of certain overtly anti-modern, strongly individualistic impulses in Western thought attests to this fact. Kuki shared a fascination of Bergsonian intuitionism with many of his contemporaries in Japan, including Japan's eminent modern philosopher Nishida Kitarô.[10] Many intellectuals eagerly adopted Husserlian phenomenology with its supposed roots in lived experience through individual contemplation and abstraction as an antidote to both the losses of Western modernity and the ravages of the masses.

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[9] H.D. Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taishô," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays in Taishô Democracy*, eds. Bernard S. Silberman and H.D. Harootunian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 17.

[10] Kuki, Nishida, and other philosophers associated with Kyoto University who would participate in this anti-modern discourse through an appeal to hermeneutics, phenomenology, and, often, Buddhism, would be known as the Kyoto School. For a very interesting account of the convergences of phenomenology, Buddhism, and nationalism in the Kyoto School, see Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *History of Religions* 33.1 (August 1993), pp. 1-43.

> In any case, we in Japan have been led from neo-Kantianism to "phenomenology" by means of Bergsonian philosophy.[11]

As early as 1924, phenomenology had an important place in Japanese academic circles with the publication of Tanabe Hajime's article, "*Genshôgaku ni okeru atarashiki tenkô—Haideggaa no sei no genshôgaku*" ("A New Turn in Phenomenology—Heidegger's Phenomenology of Life").[12] The Taishô intellectual thus witnessed these shifting moments between Western methodologies and Japanese culture, between the masses and the individual.

Kuki's Japan parallels this moment in Taishô. In his lectures delivered at Pontigny, Kuki simultaneously attempts to reposition Japan within Western discourse, and redefine the cultural moment which exemplifies Japan. For Kuki, culture saves Japan both from the West and from itself. This ambivalence leads Kuki to align Japan with the West insofar as they are compatible—the very possibility for comparison. Yet Kuki strategically maintains an incommensurable gap: Japan is certainly not the West, but it is not quite its opposite either. Kuki will ground this complicity with the West in a reading of Japanese art and poetry as inward and temporal. The convergence of the individual and culture, or rather culture through the individual, makes Kuki more a phenomenologist than his hermeneutic strategies might lead us to believe. Yet these conditions are of paramount importance for they demonstrate the historical complicity of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and cosmopolitan commodity culture in Kuki's repositioning of Japan.

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[11] Kuki Shûzô, "Bergson in Japan," in Light, p. 72.

[12] Leslie Pincus, *The Allure of Difference: "Iki" no kôzô and the Construction of the Japanese Spirit* (PhD. diss., University of Chicago, 1989), p. 56. Tanabe, like Kuki, studied in Europe with Husserl and Heidegger, and was an important member of the Kyoto School.

Between Meiji and Taishô: Recuperation of History or Repression of Historicity?

In this discussion of the gap between Meiji and Taishô, an earlier reaction, that of Natsume Sôseki, seems particularly apposite. Sôseki is widely credited as being the first, and greatest, "modern" writer in Japan. Maturing during Meiji, Sôseki still recalled a time when modernity and the nation-state were not immanent. As Karatani Kôjin discusses in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Sôseki's self-professed alienation can be characterised as part of the interiorisation of categories such as "literature" and the naturalisation of a "national" subjectivity: a repression of the historicity of such categories and of the nation itself. Karatani argues that for Sôseki, trained in *kanbun* (Chinese learning), as were most intellectuals of his time, there could be no "national literature." Thus, the history of literature was equally problematic. For Sôseki, there was no *a priori* subject which could take the existence of universals as self-evident in order to read works across different modes of production, drawing timeless truths and discovering subjective interiority.[13] These categories rely on a particular conception of history, one that came to prominence in nineteenth-century Europe and which relies on the eventual repression of its own historicity.[14]

Sôseki's alienation is thus not compatible with Kuki's reaction. According to Karatani's discussion, Sôseki considered modernity's rupture with the immediate past incommensurable. That is why he questioned the conception of a subject or a literature that could transcend history and social convention. Kuki, however, wrote at a time when the nation-state was immanent, but

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[13] Karatani Kôjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett deBary (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 13.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 12.

when the West and rapid domestic transformation threatened to obscure its convergence with a timeless national culture.

As a result, while the Meiji intellectual crossed the boundary and stepped into modernity, those who matured during Taishô were truly in-between periods. Successive military victories over China (1895) and Russia (1905) clearly demonstrated that Japan's initial period of industrialisation had reached its fruition. There were new questions to confront and important changes in philosophic preoccupations. With new vocabularies couched in the language of Continental rationalism and German *Wissenschaft* studies, the major problematic facing Japanese intellectuals leading into the 1920's concerned epistemology.[15] The "objective" status of the divisions of modern society and its scientific rationality came into question, and the massive importation of Western systems of knowledge during Meiji and their supposed universality came under severe criticism. During this period the modern appeal to *bunmei* became an anti-modern appeal to *bunka* (culture).[16] The proponents of this trend in intellectual discourse sought to delineate the particularities of Japanese culture in order to confront the supposed universality of modernity and Western forms of knowledge. In Europe, similar conditions had previously led to the study of cultural hermeneutics in an attempt to "restore," or rather construct a continuity with a lost past through select cultural artefacts. By the late 1920's many intellectuals in Japan, and especially those versed in European learning, sought to assert the particularity of Japan against modernity's expanding claims to universality, usually articulated as "Europeanisation" or "Americanisation." And yet, the very vocabularies and values of the West had already become

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[13] Robert W. Adams, *The Feasibility of the Philosophical in Early Taishô Japan: Nishida Kitarô and Tanabe Hajime* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1991), p. 23.

deeply entrenched within the space of intellectual discourse in Japan. As a result, attempts to recover the past were fated to invent another past, to obscure various histories with a more single-minded and unitary national history (modernity).

K ıki and Postmodernity

In many ways, Kuki's response to the universal claims and grand narratives that are constituted within and constitute modernity foreshadows the present debate concerning postmodernity. If the postmodern is characterised by an incredulity towards such self-legitimating *grands récits* as "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of a rational subject or worker, or the creation of wealth,"[17] then Kuki anticipates this discourse in his attempt, beginning with his lectures at Pontigny, to locate a site that could resist and escape the hegemony of European meta-discourse. Kuki, however, located this non-modern site in Japan, implicating the national and cultural geo-politics of modernity.

In short, any such outward hostility towards modernity must be complicit with modernity, for this manner of articulating difference predicates an acceptance of modernity itself. In this way, the postmodern itself has been criticised for relying on and reproducing the same logic and language of modernity. Difference itself may become a hegemonic concept if its celebration reduces the voices for whom it supposedly speaks; it risks reducing difference to the self-same categories it seeks to disrupt. Indeed, the postmodern may simply reinscribe the same categories, hierarchies, and methodologies by taking modernity as the starting point, thus reaffirming its

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[17] Jean-François Lyotard, La condition postmoderne (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979), p. 7. All subsequent translations of non-English sources are my own unless otherwise specified.

inevitability. Kuki succumbs to this desire by locating his site of difference within the unitary nation.

In reading Kuki's texts, I will attempt to question both the inevitability of modernity as well as the possibility of a critique that resides in a space external to its logic. I hope to disrupt the closure engendered when the spatio-temporal mapping premodern-modern-postmodern is given a continuity that enables us to navigate through time and space by reproducing our stable subjectivities and national boundaries. While such an endeavour deals with culture, I will not adopt an essentialist posture towards culture. As such, I aim neither to reduce difference to its celebration nor to a monologic "Other," but rather open up the possibility for multiplicity and heterogeneity, both from within and without. Using mainly, although not exclusively, Kuki's writings on time, poetry, and painting, I will explicate how his critique of modernity reproduces the problematics of the geopolitics of cultural nationalism, and the very modernity he hoped to banish.

This thesis may be divided into two main parts: the first three sections which provide background historical information, theoretical preliminaries, and an introduction to Kuki's life and work, and the last five sections which deal specifically with the lectures Kuki delivered during the *décade* at Pontigny and related issues. Following this general introduction I will provide a brief discussion on modernity. I will ask what modernity meant for Kuki and what it means for myself in relation to Kuki's project and the materials I have chosen to analyse. The subsequent section will provide background biographical information and an introduction to Kuki's professional career. Beginning in section four I will provide an exposition of Kuki's organisation of time and its complicity with other well-known movements, particularly the work of Martin Heidegger. I will

then move to a discussion of the implications of such methodologies and temporal organisations concerning culture and history. Finally, I will focus on Kuki's conceptions of poetry and painting and the ideological implications inherent in Kuki's logic. Of particular importance for the present paper is the ease with which Kuki moves through different periods creating the illusion of closed, stable, continuous, and homogeneous spaces for subjectivity, culture, and the nation. Kuki creates these spaces through a particular reading of cultural artefacts such as poetry and painting, one that is grounded in a particular subjectivity and a particular relationship between text and reader. I will ultimately argue that Kuki's system is predicated upon an ideological framework whose particular historical awareness, spatio-temporal mapping, and dichotomy between word-arts and visual-arts are conditioned by modernity and the emergence of a very specific subjectivity: interiority. Finally, in the last section, I will discuss how Kuki's ontological reading of cultural artefacts such as painting and poetry relates to a national ethnic ontology.

II. Preliminaries on Modernity

> Contemporary Japan has come face to face with a crisis. Every aspect of our life is tainted by the West, a condition commonly believed to be "modern." But this is a dangerous delusion, one which must be dispelled.
>
> Kuki Shûzô
> "Japanese Culture"[18]

Modernity, Modernities

The subtle form of intellectual and cultural colonialism characterised by the Meiji importation of Western forms of knowledge preoccupied much of Kuki's later work. Kuki, however, creates an ambiguous space for the term "modern." He informs us that contemporary Japan is in "crisis." Life is "tainted by the West." This condition is clearly neither natural nor inevitable for Kuki. It is a delusion to call contemporary Japan "modern." Kuki leaves open the possibility for a modernity that is distinctly Japanese, one that can escape the hegemony of the West. It is not modernity itself that creates a rupture with the past, but rather the West's modernity, imposed so recently from without. Therefore, Kuki's modernity may be split, allowing for both Western and Japanese manifestations. The sense of loss and discontinuity belong to the West's modernity. A Japanese modernity affords the possibility for a recuperation of historical losses.

Kuki left Europe shortly following the *décade* of 1928. After nearly a decade abroad, he returned to Japan to find a landscape transformed beyond recognition. The proliferation of dance halls, Western fashions, billboards, and consumerism all pointed westward for Kuki. While in

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[18] Kuki Shûzô, "Japanese Culture," cited in "In a Labyrinth of Western Desire: Kuki Shûzô and the Discovery of Japanese Being," trans. Leslie Pincus, in *Japan and the World*, eds. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 223.

Europe, however, Kuki believed Japan incapable of such crass materialism. During his stay in France he would write:

> ... I was contemplating the sweetness of the mimosas, when my dream was brusquely interrupted by an accentuated voice: "Very expensive isn't it?" A lady sitting facing me, wearing a green outfit and a green hat, a bracelet encrusted with emeralds on her wrist, was speaking with her neighbour on I do not know what subject and repeated once again: "Very expensive!" ... For our taste the ugliest proverb imaginable would be: Time is money. ... Ours is a different logic.[19]

Kuki's aesthetic contemplation of the mimosas is interrupted by the inelegant materialism of the two European women next to him. Yet upon his return to Japan Kuki would discover that such an exchange could have just as easily occurred on the bus along Higashioji to Kyoto University instead of the Boulevard de Cimiez in Nice. Thus, while Western forms of culture and knowledge pointed to Western intrusion, a particular internal anxiety over mass culture and consumerism motivated Kuki to reimagine and reposition Japan outside the reality of modernisation in the European manner. For Kuki, the particularities of Japanese culture were located outside modernity since industrialisation and technology created a landscape which risked proving sameness with the West. Kuki's conception of culture seems to provide an abode where the historical losses of modernity could be confronted and eventually recuperated. He attempted to situate tradition historically anterior to Japan's modernity, yet attributed modern conceptions of subjectivity and the nation to the past in order to prove that a distinctly Japanese modernity is possible. Kuki placed his ideal Japan in a past distant enough to avoid confusion with Meiji, yet recent enough to remember. The Edo period served this purpose well, and could easily be resurrected through a particular reading of cultural artefacts. Kuki affirmed culture as a site for

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[19] Kuki, "Time is Money," in Light, p. 81.

contested values. Tradition is pulled into modernity and now transcends history, whereas originally in modern discourse history was to transcend tradition.

> Now progress, in whatever sense one understands it, is in no way conceivable if it is not solidly united with tradition. Whoever says progress, says, thereby, tradition. Our oriental thought, although willing to study Western thought, will never achieve true progress without abundant nourishment from its own tradition.[20]

Kuki aligned culture with tradition and opened a space where progress, provisionally tending towards a particular culturally specific modernity, is rooted in the past. Yet Kuki neglected to consider the losses and transformations of history by failing to acknowledge the very historicity of modernity.

I have implied that modernity's relation to the past is much more complex than normally acknowledged. For the purposes of the present paper I accept that modernity is characterised by a sense of loss, of alienation from tradition and traditional lifestyles. With the universal claims of its metanarratives, and the violence of its derivatives such as colonialism, modernity displaces localised forms of social practice. Modern ideologies of progress similarly displace the various histories of the past by articulating timeless truths, the universality of human progress, and the emancipation of a rational subject. Even such benign contemporary concepts as "internationalism" take the nation as the starting point, affirming the inevitability of the nation-form. Modernity, therefore, masks such a displacement of the past with a selective recuperation of it, thus inscribing an ambivalence—a desire for the past and a misrecognition of a lost past. By the time of Kuki, hermeneutics and cultural studies effectively accomplished this task in Europe. Japanese intellectuals, however, reacted with more passion and urgency because modernity had been

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[20] Kuki, "Bergson in Japan," p. 74.

imposed relatively recently from without under the impending threat of colonisation. Opposition to the West, therefore, is synchronous with the gathering of the subject called "Japan"—of a unitary Japanese nation immanent at all points in the past—in Western discourse.

While Kuki's project takes a critique of the West as its starting point, it should be emphasised that it is modernity which constitutes the West and not vice versa. The "West" possesses no transhistorical substance as both its critics and apologists would have us believe. It is constituted and constitutes itself discursively. So while I will inevitably make frequent use of categories such as the "West," I mean something quite specific to nineteenth-century Europe. By the "West" I refer to that supposedly natural entity which constructed itself only once it had constructed its Other through colonial expansion and cultural imperialism. Europe's nineteenth-century marks the historical (mis)recognition that modernity need be universal and that Europe's encounters with other peoples and communities merely attested to the inevitability of modernity based on some perceived technological and economic superiority, and, more tellingly, with recourse to a clearly evident military superiority.

Equally dubious is the construction of a stable, internally homogenous space for the "East" or the "Orient. " These categories—East and West—have a history closely tied to European colonial discourse and are meaningful only in reference to this context. Even the use of "Japan" is not unproblematic for the nation-state has not always been immanent among the varied cultural forms found on the archipelago prior to the emergence of the nation-state. The notion of "Japan" as a unified category based on some unifying ethnos producing "Japanese culture" and the

nation-state is, arguably, thoroughly modern.[21] Kuki participates in this logic by accepting the putative unity of such an object, "Asia," and by positing a transhistorical "Japan" as its historical culmination. He appropriates Japan as constituted within European discourse, that is, as an outside to Western modernity, and simultaneously hopes to defend its particular value within a supposed universal mode of inquiry. It is clear, then, that at the heart of Kuki's discourse is a particular conception of ideology. Kuki is a modernist, at once accepting and rejecting modernisation. His modernism, however, remains too complicitous with modernity. While he overtly rejects the modern, his methodologies and conclusions reveal a complicity with modern national ideologies which he is unable or unwilling to properly interrogate.

For the purposes of the present inquiry there are two important characteristics which mark modernity: the construction of subjectivity as interiority and the notion of linear history. The two are complicitous. Interiority creates the illusion of stable national boundaries and subjectivities, conditioning the latter. Simultaneously, linear history subsumes previous moments within stages: ancient, medieval, modern. The nation defines the boundary in space. Linear national history binds the temporal framework giving it a particular spatial substance. Interiority is thus both spatially and temporally gathered around the unitary nation. Yet subjective interiority also entails certain notions of cultural production and expression. In Kuki's discussion of poetry and painting

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[21] See Naoki Sakai, "Modernity and its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, eds. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 95. Sakai claims that although the unities of Japanese culture and language materialised discursively in the eighteenth-century, these conditions were radically different from the conflation of language, culture, and nation characteristic of the rise of the modern nation-state in Meiji Japan. "What happened in the late nineteenth-century was the collapse of the distance that had kept the unity of the Japanese apart from the immediate "us." It is because of this distance that eighteenth-century discourse did not totally denigrate into a version of cultural nationalism. But as this sense of distance and loss were erased, the unity of the Japanese and the "interior" were equated to the existing language and community without mediation." Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 335.

these issues prove particularly important since he largely works his discussions of poetry and painting through the modern binarisms of interiority and exteriority, temporality and spatiality, and word-arts and visual-arts.

Time, Space, Modernity

Time and Space are Real Beings
Time is a Man Space is Woman

William Blake
A Vision of The Last Judgement[22]

W.J.T. Mitchell's critique of the very modern distinction between the temporal and spatial arts opens up an interesting line of inquiry. It may now seem normal to draw boundaries between painting and poetry, for we assume a distinction between the temporality of narrative and the spatiality of the plastic arts. This distinction is articulated in a number of ways: linguistic versus plastic, speech versus art, poetry versus painting. The differences between something like poetry and painting, however, do not reside in some incompatibility of temporal and spatial essences. They do not even reside in a "relative" difference in temporality or spatiality—the argument that poetry is "relatively" more temporal and painting "relatively" more spatial.[23] A genealogy of the modern division between time and space would undoubtedly prove interesting but is clearly beyond the scope of the present paper. I would, however, like to briefly interrogate the sources of these distinctions between time and space.

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[22] William Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, cited in W.J.T Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 95.

[23] Mitchell, pp. 100-104.

As Blake's dictum demonstrates, a certain form of authority is at stake. Recall that European discourse often proclaimed that, for the "Orient," time stood still.[24] The West had history, the Orient had tradition. The West was dynamic, the Orient was static. This distinction emerges at the moment when Western Europe begins constructing a unified history of the West. The West was able to define itself through particular geopolitical boundaries and temporal identities. This awareness was based on the supposed universality of European history and progress and conditioned the geopolitics of modernity. The construction of the West depended on the construction of temporal divisions of the globe into historical stages. The "Orient," as constructed within nineteenth-century Western discourse, had not progressed beyond a particular stage of development.

Colonial rhetoric constructed the Orient in terms of an absence of time (or rather of history, a particular use of time) in the legitimating process of its expansive and destructive practices. In the standard narrative of progress and development, modernity is regarded as the culminating point of an increasing rationalisation of civilisation. According to this logic, history realises itself through the successive sublation of heterogeneity. Through this mechanism the West came into being as the Subject of history. No longer confined to local traditions, the West was able to rationalise a truly transcendental historical position by constructing the "Orient" as its "Other," as that which time had passed over. Linda Nochlin, in "The Imaginary Orient," details the convergences of nineteenth-century European art and colonialism asserting that Western

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[24] I would prefer not to use the term "Orient" since it is a term defined within very particular relationships of power closely tied to colonialism and racism. However, it more adequately captures the lopsided power relationships of colonial discourse than the "East." The "non-West" would also be a good choice since it adequately conveys a sense of lack in relation to the reference point which must always be the ubiquitous "West."

representations suggest "that this Oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless, atemporal customs and rituals, untouched by historical processes."[25]

Time is the animating agent for discourses on modernity. To time we can attribute a beginning, middle, and end. We can trace our origins and define everything in terms of the present age. We can trace development and assure continuity with the past. Thus when Western representations of Japan posit the spatiality and exteriority of Japanese art, there is a very particular form of authority at work. Kuki responds to these representations by emphasising immateriality and inwardness in Japanese art. Yet Kuki is unable to dismantle the binarisms of Western thought. He properly interrogates Western uses of time, but does not question the very grounds for distinguishing between time and space on an essential level. In short, Kuki attempts to appropriate modern discourse for the Japanese subject and thus allies himself with many of the positions he would critique.

Time, Space, Postmodernity

It has been suggested that the postmodern is an era of space, overturning the temporal sublations of modernity. And yet, the postmodern, in its effort to privilege time's Other, may simply reinscribe the same distinctions, reaffirming modernity's very methodologies and instruments of analysis. Mitchell understood the dangers inherent in the spatialisation of literature to be specifically political and linked to fascist impulses when they result in aestheticised politics

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[25] Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 36.

instead of politicised aesthetics.[26] As Foucault suggested in "Of Other Spaces," the truly difficult alternative would be to realise that space and time share each others' spaces.[27] Such an approach could open up the possibility for different conceptions of space and time, not to mention those modes of expression linked to them (like painting and poetry). And yet, regardless of the warnings of Mitchell or the admonitions of Foucault, discussions of cultural signification insist on the temporal, relying on a narrative of national and conscious self-realisation. Kuki correctly problematises Western uses of time, but rather than dismantle the grounds for differentiating time and space, he proposes an Oriental time—an by extension, an autonomous Oriental development culminating in Japan.

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[26] Mitchell, p. 97.

[27] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," in *Diacritics*, trans. Jay Miskowiec (Spring 1986), p. 22.

III. Turn to the West, Return to the East

Kuki's engagement with the West began at an early age and formed an enduring relationship which was to pass through a series of rather remarkable events. Kuki was the son of a successful Meiji bureaucrat and an alleged *demimondaine* from Kyoto. While Kuki pursued studies in the Western philosophic tradition, he later turned to a particular historical moment, the Edo period, as the object of most of his philosophic speculation. In the following pages I will present background biographical information and introduce some of his major works. I hope to trace Kuki's tightrope walk between the dualities and ambiguities of East and West that lead into his particular organisation of time and space, and his complicity with modernity. Some biographical information will serve to introduce Kuki and place his work within its historical context.

Biography: Between Ambiguities and the Problem of Historical Origins

Kuki Ryûichi, Kuki Shûzô's father, held the rank of samurai in the late Edo period (*bakumatsu*).[28] Apparently, Ryûichi left home in order to study with Fukuzawa Yûkichi, moderniser and major contributor in the formation of the Meiji nation-state.[29] Ryûichi moved quickly through the proper channels and became a rather prominent officer in the Ministry of Education holding several important positions and participating in a number of diplomatic missions abroad. By all accounts Ryûichi exemplified the Meiji bureaucrat, a keen official with the interests of the newly formed nation-state at heart.

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[28] *Bakumatsu* refers to the end of the Tokugawa period (1600-1868). It designates the end of feudal bonds of kinship and suggests the beginning of modernisation, a time when many samurai became Meiji bureaucrats.

[29] Leslie Pincus, *The Allure of Difference*, p. 15.

Kuki's mother, Hatsuko, however, has not been portrayed with equal acclaim in accounts of Kuki's childhood. Coming from the geisha district of Gion in Kyoto, she was the complete opposite of the successful contributor to Japan's *bunmei kaika* (civilisation and enlightenment) whom she married. Described as "physically weak and emotionally very sensitive,"[30] she is portrayed as a dark, mysterious figure. In opposition to the "enlightened" brilliance of Ryûichi, Hatsuko lived and died in obscurity. During a diplomatic mission abroad, she fell ill and returned to Japan with her son Shûzô, under the care of Okakura Kakuzô, Ryûichi's friend and an important writer on Japanese culture. After living apart for some time, Kuki's parents separated, and Hatsuko became engaged in a relationship with Okakura that caused shame and contributed to her mental decline. She entered a mental asylum where she would eventually die.

It is commonplace to emphasise these parental and genealogical conflicts in Kuki's upbringing. He divided his time between his estranged parents, and as a result it has been suggested that Kuki owed his scholastic aptitude and rational thought to his father, and his artistic sensibility and appreciation of emotional expression to his mother. According to Nakano Hajimu, in "Kuki Shûzô and *The Structure of Iki*," Kuki inherited "inherent mental skills" from his father, but "might not have been able to write so intimately of his emotions" without his maternal inheritance.[31]

Yet it would be more interesting to consider these circumstances as an historical allegory for Kuki's lifelong balancing act between West and East. With respect to the popular characterisation of the feminine East and masculine West, Kuki may be situated within a particular

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[30] Nakano Hajimu, "Kuki Shûzô and *The Structure of Iki*," in *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals during the Interwar Years*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 264.

[31] Ibid., p. 265.

moment in Japanese intellectual history, a time when Japan's own modernity was being constructed and repressed. Kuki's father had been a major contributor during the Meiji enlightenment project. Steeped in his father's significance as a symbol of Meiji pragmatism and Western rationality, Kuki eventually represses the father figure in favour of the shadowy figure of his mother. His later attachment to the Edo world of geisha takes on symbolic resonance when one recalls that the young Kuki returned to Japan with her and Okakura, leaving his father Ryûichi behind. This return to Japan after an initial turn towards the West would find its parallel many years later in Kuki's account of Edo culture.

Hatsuko's geisha background recalls the Edo pleasure quarters, which would form Kuki's object of choice in many of his later works. Indeed, Kuki's preoccupation with the pleasure quarters, both on a professional and personal level, invokes the ambiguities introduced above. According to Karatani, the Edo pleasure quarters, created by a progressively active mercantile population, "offered a space free of class and sex discrimination (although money was a prerequisite), a space—albeit imaginary—where the feudal system could be transcended."[32] These pleasure quarters shaped Kuki's ideal, an imaginary space where "*iki*," a certain *savoir faire*, determined whether you were a player or a pretender.[33] It is a term highly charged with sexual connotations, and it should not be surprising that these interested Kuki. He is reputed to have compiled little books filled with names and notes of women he became acquainted with in Paris. He is also reputed to have collected guidebooks to Kyoto geisha, and to have been a regular at the

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[32] Karatani Kôjin, "One Spirit, Two Nineteenth Centuries," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, eds. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 265.

[33] "Iki" is offered as an object for analysis in several works, including the ones considered here. For the most ambitious discussion of "iki" see Kuki Shûzô, *"Iki" no kôzô* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979).

exclusive geisha houses of Gion.[34] The figure of Hatsuko, then, is richly symbolic not only within the dualism opposed to Ryûichi, but also because Kuki placed the "ideal" of Japanese "being" at a particular historical moment when the figure of the geisha, whom Kuki styled *demimondaine*, played an integral role. Thus he would write:

> In Europe the *demimondaines* are "half-dead." They are exiled from the world, *hors-mondaines*. People are, thus, astonished to learn that in Japan the geisha play a certain role in society.[35]

Indeed, Kuki's impulse to exoticise the female body, inscribing it with sexuality and aligning it with culture and tradition, is repeatable and charged with a double ambiguity. In fact, in Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language," a conversation between a German interrogator and a Japanese interlocutor inspired by Heidegger's intellectual engagement with Kuki, Heidegger recalls their discussions on *iki* and comments that Kuki's wife would occasionally be present, wearing "festive Japanese garments." Her presence, writes Heidegger, made "the Eastasian world more luminously present."[36] All this is made all the more interesting when one considers how Kuki repeatedly associates the feminine image with culture, in the body of the *demimondaine*, and against the body of the masculine *iki*. These gestures are particularly apposite and fit nicely within Kuki's ambiguous stance between East and West, especially when one considers how European discourse on the Orient similarly feminised its object.

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34 Pincus, *The Allure of Difference*, p. 26.

35 Kuki Shûzô, "Geisha," in Light, p. 87.

36 See Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 4.

Academic Formations

Such dualities and ambiguities become intensified throughout Kuki's academic career. From 1909 to 1917 Kuki pursued undergraduate and graduate studies in Western philosophy at Tokyo University. During this time he became the student of Raphael Köber, an intellectual figure responsible for many changes in the study of philosophy in Japan. Until that time, Continental philosophy such as German idealism, in contrast to Anglo-American utilitarianism and pragmatism, had not been widely studied at universities in Japan.[37] Köber left a profound legacy in academic circles during the thirty odd years he spent in Japan training his students in philology, hermeneutics, and even encouraging the study of classical Greek and Latin. A perfect example of nineteenth-century European refinement, Köber figured in the development of an epistemological framework which would lead Kuki and many others towards new modes of inquiry that would emphasise culture and the reading of cultural artefacts in national self-undersanding. That his students called Köber "*sensei*," a term characteristic of a very particular teacher-student relationship, exemplifies the ambiguous status of European modes within the strategies adopted by certain Taishô intellectuals. That an European methodology such as hermeneutics would be so important in Japanese self-understanding points to the extent to which Japan had by this time embarked on modernity.

The hermeneutic enterprise has its ideology. While it is overtly historicist, the practice of interpretation is covertly ahistorical insofar as it relies on the recuperation of a selectively chosen (not all cultural products are worthy of the culture in which they appear) past into the present. Thus, while assuming a break with the past, such methodologies must repress this rupture in order

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[37] Piovesana, p. 51.

to create stable spaces for national ideals and subjectivities. It is a stable national consciousness that organises and navigates the national archive and affords the very possibility for strategies of interpretation. By selectively expropriating works from their historical and material specificity, interpretative strategies of collective self-understanding such as hermeneutics must reinforce a stable subjective position. Subjectivity must always be *a priori*. This allows the hermeneuticist to imagine continuity where there is only discontinuity, homogeneity where there is only heterogeneity, singularity where there is only multiplicity.

And yet, it is not simply that Köber or any other individual is at the heart of this hermeneutic turn in Taishô. The discursive formations and conditions of production that made the acceptance of such foreign modes were already in place with the formation of the modern nation-state and institutional changes which enabled the epistemological framework for the interiorised spaces for literature, art, and national subjectivity.[38]

Kuki's biography does, however, provide an analogy for the ambiguities and dualities in his future work. These tensions lead Kuki to construct a particular configuration of time and space, one that ultimately discloses his modernity. To bring this chapter of Kuki's life to a close, another parallel may be drawn, one that also coincides with the opening of the Taishô period. The shift from Meiji nation-building and *bunmei* to Taishô cosmopolitanism and *bunka* parallels a particular (lack of) historical awareness that Kuki was to exhibit in a short article written some years later while in Europe. Just as I have asserted that the repression of a break with the past coincides with

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[38] Of particular importance was *genbun itchi*, a programme designed to equate language with "inner voice" (interiority), which, while not succeeding in its practical goals of language reform, did manage to change the epistemological constellation of language. See Karatani, "The Discovery of Interiority," in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* , pp. 45-75.

a turn in Taishô, Kuki "forgets" the importance of certain philosophies in the building of the Meiji nation-state.

> The utilitarianism of [John] Stuart Mill and Spencer was the first Western philosophy we knew. Fortunately, the Japanese spirit was not such as to fully accept this genre of thought. We turned away from it without having found any satisfaction.[39]

"Almost European"

In 1921 Kuki finally left for Europe under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. He spent eight very productive years studying with an impressive list of European intellectuals. Coming to Europe after acquiring a certain reverence for culture and hermeneutics at Tokyo University, Kuki deepened an interest that was poised to flourish. First, in Heidelberg, Kuki studied Kant and Neo-Kantianism with Heinrich Rickert and Eugen Herrigel. After travelling in the Alps, Kuki left for Paris where he spent three years studying philosophy and publishing articles and poetic manuscripts. In 1927 he moved to Freiburg to study phenomenology with Husserl, and then to Marburg to study with Heidegger. Kuki's academic formation thus reads like a European who's who of philosophers and professional intellectuals. And yet, with the lectures delivered at Pontigny in 1928, Kuki began to turn from Europe in order focus on Japan. Equipped with the latest in European methodologies, Kuki would, once again, return to Japan.

A range of important intellectual figures from across Europe attended the lecture at Pontigny. To at least one European, Kuki appeared to be a man of "unusually distinguished bearing, extremely different from his fellow countrymen: of tall, slender figure, he had a somewhat

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[39] Kuki , "Bergson in Japan," p. 71.

small face, an almost European nose, and hands of extremely delicate proportion."[40] Kuki, the "almost European" gentleman, recited poetry and gave discussions on art deploying his impressive knowledge of European philosophy. He situated himself in much the same way as he treated Japan *vis-à-vis* the West. He advocated a type of detachment which he attributed to Buddhist resignation, yet his detachment possessed a far more aristocratic tone. He was a dandy, a *flanêur*, and his writings exude an aloofness predicated on his desire to distinguish himself from his surroundings.

Similarly, since he moved in on the anti-Western strain in Western thought (especially Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology), Japan took on new significance. Kuki rejects Western modernity and attempts to fashion a particularly Japanese modernity. But having denied the West in Japan, Kuki loses a sense of his material history, of the historical specificity of the particular moments he chooses to discuss. Without a material history, Kuki's Japanese modernity loses its own history and thus succeeds only insofar as it is not rooted in Japanese tradition, but is thoroughly modern.

Furthermore, Kuki cited certain overtly anti-modern[41] elements in modern thought during his lectures at Pontigny creating strange parallel tensions within Japan and between Japan and the West. Kuki denies the reality of Western modernity in Japan, and resorts to an "aristocracy of taste" in order to distinguish the reality of Japanese modernity from his ideal Japan.[42]

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[40] Light, 5. Light is translating an account by Hermann Glockner, assistant to Rickert in Heidelberg.

[41] Kuki has a preference for Bergsonian intuitionism and Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology. For Kuki's interest in Bergson see Kuki's "Bergson in Japan," in Light, pp. 71-74. I will make Kuki's affinities with Heidegger explicit in the next section.

[42] I am using terminology from Pincus' "An Aristocracy of Taste in an Age of Mass Culture," in *The Allure of Difference*, pp. 213-260.

> Does not Japanese art for most Europeans consist in woodblock prints of women and landscapes, or the tea ceremony with its multi-colored porcelain? Yet for the most part these things are rather insignificant.[43]

Woodblock prints, easily reproduced, flourished amid the urban culture during the Edo period. Kuki dismissed such forms in favour of "inward art" and "*iki.*" Yet he fails to locate "*iki*" within its particular historicity—within a space defined by a progressively active mercantile class and a particularly important transformation from cultural production located at the court to an urban cultural economy driven by newly developed wealth and a desire to escape feudal order. Kuki's elaboration of the spirit of "*iki*" loses its embodiment, just as his discussions of poetry and painting miss the importance of their mode of production.

Shortly after the *décade* of 1928, Kuki returned to Japan and assumed a teaching position in French philosophy at Kyoto University.[44] In January 1930 he began to publish a series of articles in the journal *Shisô*. These articles would subsequently become Kuki's famous inquiry into Edo style and Japanese sensibility, *"Iki" no kôzô*.[45] In 1932, upon completion of his doctoral dissertation on contingency, he became assistant professor, and finally in 1935, full professor.[46] He continued to write prolifically on matters announced by his interests in Japanese culture and European theory until his death in 1941 at the age of fifty-three.

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43 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 52.

44 Light, p. 33.

45 There has been considerable scholarship on *"Iki" on kôzô* ranging from uncritical approval to blind criticism. By far the most interesting I have come across are Leslie Pincus' *The Allure of Difference* and "In a Labyrinth of Western Desire," both of which I have previously cited.

46 Kuki reworked and expanded his dissertation leading to the publication of *Gûzensei no mondai* in 1935. The only translation I am aware of is the French *Le problème de la contingence*, trans. Omodaka Hisayuki (Tokyo: University of Tokyo, 1966).

IV. Time as a History of Mind, Nation as a State of Mind

> A Great Year, periodically repeating itself, can thus be considered, if I may use the terminology of M. Husserl, the realisation of an *eidetische Singularität*, an "eidetic singularity," an "ideal singularity." All Great Years are identical, absolutely identical among themselves.
>
> Kuki Shûzô
> "The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time"[47]

The article, "The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time," centres on a discussion of time. Kuki weaves various sources—European, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese—in his attempt to define the singular ideality of time. By defining time as a matter of consciousness, Kuki proceeds to invoke a series of associations, from Heidegger to transmigration. As the preceding excerpt demonstrates, Kuki will eventually conceive of time as the repetitive unfolding development of a singular ideal. In this section, I will explore the many associations Kuki makes with respects to time. Drawing mainly, although not exclusively, from his lecture, "The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time," I hope to provide an accurate account of Kuki's use of time, present the context for Kuki's important interrogation of Western uses of time, present the sources which inform Kuki's project, and draw out some important ideological implications in relation to culture and cultural production.

Kuki's understanding of history was radically different from the standard theories of progress and developmental stages that rule modernity. Even during Japan's *bunmei kaika*, advocates of civilisation and national industrial development envisaged history as the movement of increasing intellectual and material wealth articulated by European history and modernity. The putative universality and singular linearity of this movement were not questioned. Yet Kuki

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[47] Kuki , "The Notion of Time," p. 45.

queried the universality of such notions and attempted to articulate an "Oriental" time as an outside to Western modernity. Kuki's contrasts repetitive "Oriental" time with the singular narrative of development characteristic of Western uses of time. This notion of repetition proves particularly important because it allows Japan to appear at all points of time and disrupt the progress and development of the West. For Kuki, this outside to linear time provided an abode for Japanese culture, a refuge for cultural ideals and authentic experience amid modern anxieties about mass-culture and the fear of Western cultural imperialism. Yet in this moment of resistance, Kuki spoke of history as time, of historicity as temporality, and transformed the multiplicity and historical specificity of Japan into an interiorised collective experience.

> Thus it follows that the language and concrete meaning of a single ethnos, as the expression of the being of that ethnos, are tinged with the special shades of the experience of that ethnos.[48]

Meaning, for Kuki, was to be found in the unfolding and repetitive development of the ethnos, "tinged" with its special shades of particular consciousness and experience.

Time and "Consciousness"

Kuki begins by aligning time, experience, and consciousness.

> What is time? Time is of the will. I say that time is of the will because time does not exist so long as there is no will. For a table, a chair, there is no time. If time exists for them, it is because consciousness, as will, has given them a time. Time exists for them only in relation to the will, to consciousness.[49]

Simply stated, time is consciousness, and consciousness is time. Just as there are different consciousnesses—different experiences—there exist different notions of time. Hence the title of

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[48] Kuki, *"Iki" no kôzô*, p. 12.

[49] Kuki, "The Notion of Time," p. 43.

his article: there exists an Eastern consciousness, an Eastern time. Kuki concerns himself with the construction of such an Eastern time, in opposition to Western time, based on essential differences in consciousness.

While Kuki interrogates the West he does not seek to completely disqualify it. Kuki summons an impressive list of Western philosophers—Heidegger and Bergson to name but two—in order to provisionally align East and West. "All these conceptions are in accord in envisioning time as constituted by the will."[50] Kuki's construction of Eastern time is thus not initially at odds with concepts of time as will, consciousness, and inwardness. Both Kuki's initial exposition of Oriental time and Western uses of time are matters of consciousness, of interiority. Kuki aligns East and West in order to guarantee compatibility with Western discourse. Yet the inwardness of Eastern time is not that of Western time. Kuki's Japan will come to sit between two poles—certainly not the West, but not its opposite either.

For Kuki, the distinguishing mark of Eastern time is repetition. Kuki invokes repetition through an appeal to the concepts of transmigration and karma. According to Kuki, "transmigration is ... the perpetual repetition of the will."[51] Repetition is aligned with Eastern time and consciousness through Buddhist and Hindu soteriological terminology. Kuki evokes particular temporalities through particularly Eastern experiences and modes of consciousness. That Kuki uses terminology associated with salvation is quite significant. After all, Kuki is wrestling with modes of articulating liberation. Yet Kuki is interested in a specific form of liberation. Although Kuki asserts that his project deals with the liberation from "measurable time,"

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50 Ibid., p. 43.

51 Ibid., p. 44.

from time in general, it becomes clear that his desire is to critique the linear time of Western modernity (non-repetitive historical stages).[52]

Difference and Repetition

Kuki begins with the desire to articulate difference, to construct a site that disrupts Western hegemony. Western uses of time and history centre upon notions of universal development and linear progress. Thus, Western time excludes repetition and identity, only to place them in God (theism, Hegel), Man (humanism), or Being (Heidegger) as transcendental signifiers. Kuki places them elsewhere, in the identities that persist through karma, transmigration, and the notion of a circular time subject to the principle of identity.

> Thus, despite ever recurring cosmic interruptions, there remains for the order of the universe, for the various orders of living beings (gods, animals, and men), and for the different states of castes, *âcrama*, duties, and recompenses ... a rigorous determination.[53]

Kuki begins to fashion what will develop into an important ontic/ontological distinction. The ontic identities defined by karma are conditioned by "a rigorous determinism." As I will discuss in the subsequent section in greater detail, Kuki grounds these ontic identities in ontological differences between East and West—identities which are based on temporalities rooted in different forms of consciousness. Therefore, the supposed universality of Western time and progress can not disrupt and subsume them.

If there is difference there must be repetition. Kuki then moves to a sense that time opens repetition and history opens identities.

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[52] This point will be clarified in the next section where I examine Kuki's use of Japanese poetry and painting as tools for such liberation.

[53] Kuki, "The Notion of Time," p. 45.

> Everything particular here is only part of a more consequential logic, a more profound abstraction. Hence, by enlarging the horizon and, at the same time, by following this logic out to its conclusion, we end up with the conception that all men, in their concrete relations with one another, in the ensemble of their concrete circumstances, periodically return. In a word, the world—in its state of identity—periodically returns.

According to Kuki, "in appearance there is change ..., but, at bottom, there is none at all."[54] He likens the repetition opened by time to the "Great Year," a term he attributes to Pre-Socratic thought, and the *kalpa*, a measure of cosmic time attributable to Hindu eschatology. They are both concepts of an "identical time repeating itself in perpetuity."[55] The characteristics of Great Years and *kalpa* are identical in being exemplars of an *eidos*, of an ideal. Thus, such repetition is the realisation of an "eidetic singularity," an "ideal singularity." The unfolding of time, the development of history, becomes the site where identities are disclosed, where ideals are concretised. Since time and consciousness are inexorably entwined, it makes sense that time has this affinity with the disclosure of a particular *eidos*. Therefore, according to Kuki's logic, the ontic differences between East and West are divided by ontology, disclosed through particular temporalities. Hence Kuki distinguishes between time and temporality, between the ontic and ontology.

Time and Temporality

Kuki articulates his ontic/ontological distinction even more concretely through his notion of a dual structure to Eastern time. This dual structure to time postulates a distinction between time and temporality. Hence, Kuki posits two temporal planes, one normal, the other

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54 Ibid., p. 44.

55 Ibid., p. 44.

metaphysical. Normal time is the mode we normally characterise as the linear unfolding and singular development of the West. According to Kuki, the normal mode manifests a "pure heterogeneity" of elements.[56] There is no identity to this mode, no repetition. Kuki thus aligns normal time with Western models of developmental stages and universal linear history. Once again, Kuki positions the East, at least provisionally, as wholly compatible with the West at the level of normal time.

Yet there is a special characteristic to Eastern time which distinguishes it from the West and grants it special status. If at first Kuki speaks of the normal plane as "time," then he subsequently describes the metaphysical plane as "temporality."[57] Temporality thus gathers this special mode of existence and grants it ontological difference from the West. In this mode there is an "identical homogeneity" of elements.[58] Identities persist across temporal horizons. Time is, thus, in a sense "reversible" or "interchangeable," opening the possibility for identity and difference. This special feature to Eastern time negates the singular development and linearity of Western time since this temporality opens up the ontological difference between East and West.

In this way, Kuki posits the autonomous development of the East founded upon the necessity of ontological difference. The East and West share a model of progress, yet are separated by an unbridgeable gap. This gap is premised on an "ideal singularity" which is ontologically different. Hence Kuki asserts an earlier presumption that there is a modernity characteristically Japanese, based in tradition and fundamentally different from Western modernity.

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[56] Ibid., p. 46.

[57] Ibid., p. 46. Kuki originally describes this plane as "mystical" but later uses the term "metaphysical" (p. 48). I use "metaphysical" because of my emphasis on Kuki's ontology.

[58] Ibid., p. 46.

The distinction between time and temporality opens up the distinction between the ontic and the ontological, and ultimately the ontological differences between East and West. Kuki articulates notions of repetition and temporality in Eastern time as the necessary ontological difference between the ontic categories of East and West.

Ontological or Historical Beginnings? Being and Time, beings and History

Kuki's construction of ontological difference through temporality shares certain important affinities with the early Heidegger. In many ways Kuki followed his mentor's methodologies drawing heavily from Heideggerian terminology. The Heidegger of *Being and Time* began with the absolute distinction between beings and Being, between the ontic and the ontological. Being is the ontological necessity of the world, the very determination of all that is. Amid all beings, humanity is the single ontic entity which questions its own being and can thus engage in a special relationship with Being. Heidegger's protagonist in this scenario is *Dasein*, that form of transcendence which rises above the ordinarily ontic, the realm of beings, in a relational movement with Being. It is relational because Heidegger's project is simultaneously motivated by the assertion that the entire history of Western philosophy and metaphysical speculation has been the "forgetting of Being," the forgetting that, as the title points to, Being is not the timeless eternal presence that Western metaphysicians have long argued for, but rather inexorably related to historicity and temporality.

> We have already intimated that Dasein has a pre-ontological Being as its ontically constitutive state. Dasein *is* in such a way as to be something which understands something like Being. Keeping this interconnection firmly in mind, we shall show that whenever Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like Being, it does so with time as its standpoint. Time must be brought to light—and genuinely conceived—as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to

> discern this, *time* needs to be *explicated primordially as the horizon for all understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being.*[59]

Herein lies the logic in Heidegger's construction of *Dasein*, "being-there." *Dasein* is to designate the very in-the-worldness of the ontic's relation to Being.[60] *Dasein* is thus ineluctably bound to the concrete relations and historical specificities that constitute the world. According to Heidegger, a philosophy that seeks to abstract the human (being) from its facticity within the world can tell us nothing of *Dasein*. It is not the case, then, that *Dasein*, as the particularly *human* being, exists *a priori* and enters into a living relationship with the world. Rather, it is because of the very bound-upness of *Dasein* and the concrete situations of the world that there is the relational movement of, and possibility for understanding between, beings and Being. *Dasein* is thus conceived as a thoroughly temporal possibility.

This temporal movement implies that *Dasein* is constantly engaged in the process, or possibility, of understanding Being—of entering into an authentic relationship with it. This is the "futural" moment, as Heidegger himself called it—the moment that *Dasein* understands itself as an entity oriented towards the future.[61] According to Heidegger, these movements are historicising—they are based on the facticity of *Dasein*'s existence within the world, within time, within history.

> The specific movement in which Dasein *is stretched along and stretches itself along*, we call its "*historicising*." The question of Dasein's 'connectedness' is the ontological problem of Dasein's historicising. To lay bare the *structure of historicising*, and the

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[59] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 39.

[60] George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 83.

[61] Stated simply, the possibility of *Dasein*'s authenticity is conditioned by *Dasein*'s very finitude. For *Dasein* to grasp the wholeness of Being it must meet its own end. Therefore, for Heidegger, the importance of temporality lies in the futural quality of authentic being characterised as a being-towards-death. See Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 378.

existential-temporal conditions of its possibility, signifies that one has achieved an *ontological* understanding of *historicality*.[62]

Hence we arrive at Heidegger's hermeneutic movement, a mode which was supposed to radically historicise phenomenology. Heidegger insisted that temporality must be thoroughly investigated and interpreted.[63] Heidegger understood the history of philosophy as the "forgetting of Being." In previous periods, under different circumstances, the gap between beings and Being was not as great. Therefore, a special orientation with the past could recuperate history's losses. Yet it is clear from the preceding excerpt that Heidegger aspires to an "ontological understanding of historicality." Herein lies Heidegger's hermeneutic impulse to ontologise the historicality of *Dasein* since the necessary concealedness of Being and the importance of temporality implies neither historical construction nor a local understanding of historicity, but rather the disclosure of ontological foundations *temporally*. There is thus preciously little historical understanding in Heidegger's account. Heidegger's history is temporality. Heidegger's understanding of existence and Being is strictly in relation to this temporality. The historical truths gathered under the banner of Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology are strictly ontological.

National "Consciousness" and Cultural Closure

While Kuki and Heidegger shared such ontological moments in their hermeneutic endeavour, there were also important differences. It is true that both reacted to modernity and the supposed debasement of authentic being by mass-culture by attempting to reconstruct the subject. Heidegger opposes *Dasein* to the faceless masses of *das Mann*, "the they," turning to ancient

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62 Ibid., p. 427.

63 Ibid., p. 427. Also in Heidegger's conclusion, especially on p. 488.

Greece and the German *Volk* in search of the authenticity necessary to close the gap between Being and beings.[64] Kuki, meanwhile opts for a particular historical moment, Edo, in order to bridge the gap between Japan's modernity, tainted with the West, and authentic Japanese being. Kuki attempts a much more particular reading of history. Thus, Kuki can escape some of the expansive universalist claims of Heideggerian discourse.

Nevertheless, Kuki's temporality necessarily leads him into the cultural closure and ethnic ontology reminiscent of Heidegger. For Kuki, temporality discloses ethnic being. The present is always immanent in the past, and in particular, the present of the nation as ethnos. Thus the modern nation is severed from history and thrown back to all points of time, immanent in its temporality. All previous historical moments are subsumed within a massive, unitary, snowballing "consciousness" that moves through time without any loss, or at least without loss that is not recuperable. His move is made all the more questionable as Japan rises above the rest of Asia at the end of his article on time. Up until this moment, Kuki had been concerned with constructing an outside to Western uses of time, Western modernity, Western consciousness. Yet his strategic use of Buddhist liberation terminology ultimately relies on the specificity of a particularly Japanese mode. For Kuki, Buddhism (and hence Asia) alone is, in a sense, deficient.[65] It inadequately

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[64] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 298.

[65] I do not mean to imply, as Kuki does, that there is a single "Buddhism," transectarian and universal, or that Buddhisms develop along national boundaries. Buddhism is a term we loosely attribute to a multiplicity of practices and forms of learning. Buddhism is not unified by some phenomenological sense of subjectivity, as a means to access the true state of things through contemplation. It is not a form of "unlearning." The ritual, liturgy, classical training, and diverse modes of practice within Buddhist forms do not configure some singular transcendental consciousness, but imply very specific forms of learning, of learning thoroughly exteriorised. Interiorised Buddhism and the convergences of Buddhism, the nation, and phenomenology in Japan were the product of a select group of prominent modern intellectuals following varying degrees of persecution of Buddhism during various periods and even as late as the Meiji period. This is an interesting topic which has been taken up elsewhere. See Robert Sharf's "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," previously cited, and James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

addresses the question of liberation of time through *nirvâna*, extinction: the denial of the will and of consciousness. Thus, when Kuki poses the ultimate question of emancipation from (Western) time, he does so through Japanese Buddhism, tinged with the active principles of *bushidô*.[66]

> In Japan during the feudal period another moral ideal, *Bushidô*—"the way of the *Bushi*"—was developed alongside Buddhism. ... *Bushidô* is the affirmation of the will, the negation of the negation, in a sense the abolition of *nirvâna*. Thus, the perpetual repetition of the will, the supreme evil for Buddhism, now becomes the supreme good.[67]

Kuki ultimately conceives of a liberation from Western time that is not of Asia but rather of Japan. The horizon for emancipation becomes cultural, and Japan is the site of an important synthesis which makes this possible.

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[66] Again, there is a particular history to the convergence of *bushidô* and the modern nation. Bushidô is rarely mentioned in pre-Meiji Japan. Sharf, p. 6.

[67] Kuki, "The Notion of Time," p. 49.

V. Cultural Horizons and Synthesising Discourses

Intertexuality, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics

Before I move to a discussion of the synthesis responsible for Kuki's Japan I would like to introduce certain issues associated with the study of culture and its artefacts. I wish to stress the importance of intertexuality. No cultural artefact appears in a vacuum. We commonly describe cultural and artistic works in terms of a self-enclosed and self-sufficient object full of significance, as a symbol of subjective, cultural, or national interiority. However, an endless array of constraints and possibilities occasion the work itself and saturate it with exteriority. That is to say, cultural artefacts appear under specific modes of production and circulation—of relationships of power—that constitute them thoroughly. The inexhaustive accumulation of these factors defines the work in question.

Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that "the domain of ideology coincides with the world of signs."[68] For him, a sign is not a reflection of reality but a material part of reality.

> A sign is a phenomena of the external world. The sign itself, and all the effects that it produces (all those actions, reactions, and new signs that it gives existence to in its immediate social environment) appear in external experience.[69]

Furthermore, "consciousness itself can only become manifest and affirm itself by the very materiality of signs."[70] As Terry Eagleton has commented, "consciousness is less something

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[68] Mikhail Bakhtine, *Le marxisme et la philosophie du langage*, trans. Marina Yaguello (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1977), p. 27.

[69] Ibid., p. 27.

[70] Ibid., p. 28.

'within' us than something around and between us, a network of signifiers which constitute us through and through."[71]

With respect to Kuki's reflections, the notions of intertextuality and the exteriority of consciousness stand in opposition to his notions of poetry and painting. Through Kuki's hermeneutic and its particular form of archival learning, art becomes the work of an interiorised subject. The work of art discloses the interiority of subjectivity and of the cultural horizon. It is up to the reader or spectator to abstract the timeless essence of Japanese culture and the truth of individual artistic expression phenomenologically. His emphasis on interiority and omission of intertextuality in his reading of artefacts defines his preference for a hermeneutical phenomenology.

A brief account of phenomenology is in order. The transcendental phenomenology of Husserl begins with what is given immediately in consciousness because we can only be certain of things as posited by consciousness. Thus consciousness does not receive external reality passively, but rather "intends" it.

> Further: if knowledge will nevertheless investigate the problems of the relationships between consciousness and being, it can have before its eyes only being as the correlate of consciousness, as something "intended" after the manner of consciousness: as perceived, remembered, expected, represented pictorially, imagined, identified, distinguished, believed, opined, evaluated, etc.[72]

The world is bracketed out and reality is treated as pure phenomena given in the mind. Appearing within a system of universal essences, consciousness is able to sort out these ideas and abstract universal essences from them. According to phenomenology, therefore, we perceive universals,

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71 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 174.

72 Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 89.

not particulars. In Husserlian terminology this process is called "eidetic" abstraction, and was to supposedly uncover the very reality of phenomena. Consequently, historical assemblages and culture have a very limited role to play in phenomenology since the phenomenologist is interested in universals. As with all forms of transcendentalism, phenomenology neglects the transformations of history and the particularities of culture.

Terry Eagleton has demonstrated that while phenomenology is supposedly concerned with the concrete, *der Sachen selbst*, everything is going on in the mind.[73] The phenomenologist focuses on structures of "consciousness" since objects are taken to be strictly mental phenomena. In the context of literary and cultural criticism, the phenomenological turn tends to abstract the "essence" of cultural artefacts. Phenomenology focuses on what the artist "intends" and brackets out the world, isolating the work from all external considerations including the mode of production—its actual construction. The ultimate aim is to abstract the artist's "intention" by recreating the artist's inner "consciousness."

Realising that meaning was profoundly historical, Heidegger sought to bring the contemplative abstractions of his mentor down to earth. Thus *Being and Time* was supposed to have radically historicised phenomenology. In his later works, Heidegger, using many of his earlier distinctions and methodologies, asserts that poetry, painting, and language are not spaces for individual expression but rather are sites where historical and existential reality unconceals itself.

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[73] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 55.

> Poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus bring him into dwelling.[74]

Yet by focusing on interpretation phenomenologically, that is, by isolating artefacts from their historical specificity, Heidegger, once again, reduced history to the form of a cultural horizon—a cultural horizon becomes the site of consciousness with limited interactions and exteriority. The boundaries for such cultural horizons are given largely by modern nations and their national languages.[75]

Kuki and Heidegger imply that every culture possesses its own transhistorical properties. Yet if meaning is simply historically contingent on closed ethnic existential conditions, then one can only deal in tautologies. That is, history becomes simple temporality. Herein lies the hermeneutic circle and the circular movement of beings and Being, of the ontic/ontological distinction that informs both Heidegger and Kuki. Culture informs the ethnos, and the ethnos informs culture. Art discloses a particular existential condition, and a particular existential condition discloses art. Language springs from ethnic being yet also informs ethnic being. In this case, meaning is not abstracted from "consciousness" but rather from cultural artefacts, laden with the burden of a national cultural "consciousness." History loses its historicity and becomes a simple unfolding of essences.

The hermeneutic method is thus compatible with the attempt to reimagine a cultural unity lost to modernity. Hermeneutics assures harmony where there is violent displacement or coercive

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[74] Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ...," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 218.

[75] In his discussion of the historical awareness of Kôyama Iwao and Kôsaka Masaaki , two Kyoto School philosophers, during a conference in 1941, Naoki Sakai comments that difference was at most a matter of *international* differences. The horizon of culture is thus equated with the nation. See "Modernity and its Critique," p. 107.

control. The practitioners of hermeneutics posit the organic unity of past and present in order to successfully recuperate historical moments without loss. While the history of modernity in Japan was one of traumatic transformation and discontinuity, hermeneutic strategies made it possible to naturalise the modern nation-state—harmonise it internally— according to a logic of organicism. And yet, as I hope to demonstrate in the following sections, Kuki's acceptance of organicism and synthesis was as much a reaction to European history and Eurocentric strategies as it is a an acceptance of its methodologies.

Synthesis, Organicism

> In Hegelian thought, then, world history is narrated within a fundamental identity, and successive, heterogeneous "worlds" are appropriated into this as "stages." Exteriority or difference gestates and is sublated within interiority, as contradiction. Hegel's spirit is in this sense the unification within a centralised, linear perspective of what had been a network of communication with multiple centres and directions. What made this development possible was the nineteenth century of the West.
>
> Karatani Kôjin
> "One Spirit, Two Nineteenth Centuries"[76]

In this excerpt, Karatani describes the universalising impetus of European modernity and colonial expansion. In nineteenth-century European discourse, Japan was a site to be sublated and internalised within the increasingly unified perspective of linear history and development. Kuki reacts to the spectre of Western assimilation and rejects modernity in Japan. As such, he resists the notion of Japan as a site of sublation. Yet he posits a Japanese modernity, the result of a uniquely Asian synthesis. Whereas in Western terminology Europe's nineteenth-century was the moment of universalisation, for Kuki modern Japan provided a site of resistance and opened up

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[76] Karatani, "One Spirit," p. 260.

the possibility to reimagine a different synthesis, a different historical development—one that would ultimately be grounded in a modern Japan's collective reimagining of an "ideal" Japan.

Thus, in "The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art," Kuki elaborates a tripartite structure to Japanese cultural production. According to Kuki, "it was Indian religion and Chinese philosophy which conditioned the route of... Asiatic civilisation."[77] Kuki informs us that the "ideal" of Buddhism is *nirvâna* which Kuki describes as "that supreme beatitude wherein the world is abolished in emptiness."[78] Similarly, Kuki discloses the Chinese portion of this equation by asserting that the *Tao* is the "essence of things." It is clear that, for Kuki, both *nirvâna* and the *Tao* are questions of "absolute intelligence" and contemplation. Buddhist and Taoist influences are two-thirds responsible for the "inward art" of Japan. They are matters of "consciousness" as interiority.

> Japanese art developed under the influence of this Indian mysticism and this Chinese pantheism. And Bushidô, "the way of the Bushi," was not an obstacle in its development. On the contrary, Bushidô deepened the conception of art.[79]

While Kuki acknowledges the dependence of his objects of analysis on foreign modes, he is able to surpass them, or at least put them to strategic use. It is not surprising that influence turns into assimilation, given that Kuki's writings are contemporaneous with Japanese colonial expansion in East Asia.

A particular historical awareness conditions Kuki's turn to *bushidô* (Japan) in an effort to bring Buddhism and Taoism (India and China) to their full splendour. While Kuki reacts to the threat of Western cultural imperialism, he does not dismantle the notion of development and of

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77 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 51.

78 Ibid., p. 51.

79 Ibid., p. 52.

synthesis. Kuki acknowledges his indebtedness to China and India yet he does not question the historical reception or actual practice and production of modes such as Taoism or Buddhism in Japan.

Yet to set the stage for Kuki's strategic use of poetry and painting in the context of temporalities, spatialities, and subjectivities, it is necessary to momentarily trace our steps back to a figure in Kuki's past. Recall that a certain acquaintance of the Kuki household, Okakura Kakuzô, became involved in an illicit relationship with Kuki's mother after their hasty return from the United States. Kuki would come to know Okakura "*Ojisama*" (Uncle Okakura) during visits to see his mother. Kuki even acknowledged Okakura's influence on him by calling him his "spiritual father," in yet another moment of repression of his biological father, Ryûichi, the figure of Meiji pragmatism.[80]

Okakura guided Kuki into a new landscape of culture and ethnos, and in this organic and ethnic landscape, Kuki discovered a particularly Japanese nature. A generation earlier, Okakura had articulated his own logic of cultural organicism. In his *Ideals of the East*, Okakura asserts that "the Asiatic races form a single web," a continuous development of organic synthesis. Following this logic, "Arabic chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, Indian thought, all speak of a single Asiatic peace."[81] And yet it remained the privilege of Japan to best exemplify this "unity in complexity" and so "mirror the whole of Asiatic consciousness."[82]

"Consciousness" as interiority is the essential agent in an account such as Okakura's because it assures metaphysical validity and temporal stability for national subjectivity and the

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80 Pincus, *The Allure of Difference*, p. 16.

81 Okakura Kakuzô, *The Ideals of the East* (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 3.

82 Ibid., p. 5.

native "ideal." In both Okakura and Kuki, Chinese and Indian modes are not really foreign at all. Or rather, they are no longer foreign because the process of national transformation resides in the ability of Japan as curator of Asian art to sublate the exterior as interiority. Even Okakura, while ranging from Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist origins, had a preference for modes which were somehow pure, and related more to the coming of age of Meiji Japan than to external sources.

> That constant play of colour which distinguishes the religious and artistic life of the nation, as we have described it in the preceding pages—now gleaming in the amber twilight of idealistic Nara, now glowing with the crimson autumn of Fujiwara, again losing itself in the green sea waves of Kamakura, or shimmering in the silver moonshine of Ashikaga—returns upon us here in all its glory, like the fresh verdure of a rain-swept summer.[83]

In this excerpt, Okakura refers to the particular position that Meiji Japan occupies. With the splendour of India destroyed by the colonial powers and the ethicality of China displaced by materiality, modern Japan surpasses these ideals "even where they were long since cast away by the hands that created them."[84]

There is no doubt that in addition to Kuki's academic formation, Okakura played an integral role in providing cultural inspiration. Even Okakura, writing a generation earlier, sounded warnings about the threat originating far to the west. Yet Okakura did not witness the shifting moments between East and West, of dispossession and alienation that the Taishô inheritors of Meiji Japan experienced. Kuki's dedication to culture inspired those who, dispossessed of a past that did not really belong to them, faced a future full of uncertainty. Okakura, writing in English, did not seek to inspire the Japanese, but rather to educate foreigners. Indeed, Okakura firmly held

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[83] Ibid., p. 192.

[84] Ibid., p. 207.

that Japan was full of "idealistic vigour" and in full control of its destiny. Whereas for Okakura this vigour would "refresh the earth,"[85] for Kuki it was in severe peril.

What distinguishes Okakura's reaction from Kuki and many of Kuki's Kyoto school contemporaries is his call for a final revolutionary synthesis, one between the Japan and the West.

> There are to-day two mighty chains of forces which enthral the Japanese mind, entwining dragon-like upon their own coils, each struggling to become sole master of the jewel of life, both lost now and again in an ocean of ferment. One is the Asiatic ideal, replete with grand visions of the universal sweeping through the concrete and particular, and the other European science, with her organised culture, armed in all its array of differentiated knowledge, and keen with the edge of competitive energy.[86]

Okakura called for the next stage. Yet Kuki and most of his Kyoto School accomplices, did not promote a marriage of East and West in which Japan would emerge unified and collected, but rather asserted the possibility, and desirability, for an elimination of the West in Japan. Kuki posited an independent Japanese history in order to oppose the universal claims of Western history. Between, a particularly Asian synthesis had already produced the cultural maturity and idealistic vigour of modern Japan. It was simply a question of reimagining this unity in the wake of the West's modernity and *its* losses. Kuki believed that such a task could be achieved through a particular reading of cultural artefacts such as poetry and painting.

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[85] Ibid., p. 227.

[86] Ibid., p. 193.

VI. Poetry/Painting, Time/Space: Part One

> The most eminent characteristic of Japanese art in general is, from the objective point of view, the expression of the infinite. This characteristic is manifest, as we have seen, above all in the liberation from space found in the plastic arts and in the liberation from time found in poetry and music.
>
> Kuki Shûzô
> "The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art"[87]

> Every area of rest thus becomes an area of motion, and the essence of this form of painting lies in development, in constant temporal change. But since this development can only express itself in space—in a spatial field of action—time is always linked with a generous expanse of space. The intimate association between space and time creates a strong affinity between form and content, i.e. the narrative.
>
> Dietrich Seckel
> *Emakimono*[88]

André Suarès: Interiority, Exteriority, and the Construction of East and West

According to Kuki, the essential characteristic of Japanese painting is the liberation from space because "painting is an art expressing itself in space."[89] Poetry, on the other hand, is a temporal art—its signs occur in sequence—and thus its eminent characteristic is the liberation from time. Kuki immediately sets up a dichotomy between poetry and painting. Poetry is temporal and painting is spatial. Yet why does Kuki expend so much energy distinguishing temporalities from spatialities? Perhaps we may glean the answer from Kuki's use of quotes from André Suarès' *Haikai de l'Occident*:

> But in regard to the depth of such poetry, in regard to the question of all "Japanese art," he [Suarès] affirms that the Japanese only pay attention to the object, to the fugitive instant, affirms that they ignore the aspiration to the infinite, to eternity. He says: "Here we live only so as to live always. Seemingly, our sole desire is to endure always. This desire to be

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87 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 62.

88 Dietrich Seckel, *Emakimono*, trans. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), p. 65.

89 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 62.

> eternal forms one body with our perishable condition. ... Over there, on the contrary, in the Empire of the Rising Sun, such an appetite is unknown. ... The spirit of man is the locus of all space and time. On one condition, however: that it has created a metaphysics from which a mathematics has been able to follow. The Far East remains totally foreign to this. Their art and poetry is, therefore, founded on principles opposed to ours. All is spatial in these spirits. ... Their art never turns inward, even disdains this. The geometric point must be transformed into an instance of thought and must know itself as such: that is the goal of consciousness in the West. All this has no meaning for Orientals (*les hommes jaunes*)."[90]

Suarès evokes a number of familiar associations. He immediately aligns the West with a sense of time marked by a desire for the infinite. Suarès asserts that the West is characterised by a desire to "endure always." Yet for Suarès Japan is not marked by the temporal. Thus Suarès claims that "all is spatial in these spirits." According to Suarès, Japanese art opposes the West's temporality by "pay[ing] attention to the object, the fugitive instant," ignoring the infinite. Thus Suarès asserts that there are no temporal considerations in Japanese poetry and painting. There is no narrative, only the objectification of an eternal present, an external essence.

As discussed earlier in the case of Heidegger, Suarès aligns temporality with a certain use of history. Such a desire is conditioned by the universalising impulse of nineteenth-century historicism. In this way Suarès and others would move effortlessly from temporality to history and align the West with a particular historical development—a dynamic movement of progress—and a transcendental standpoint based on this movement. Suarès evokes this timeless consciousness, this universal subjectivity, as the motor and goal of the West's "inward art." Meanwhile, he associates Japan with exteriority, with static traditions and external essences. For Suarès and many of his European and North American contemporaries, Japan did not possess history. Thus it could not rationalise a truly transcendental historical position. For Suarès, the

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[90] Ibid., p. 63.

historical transformation, or rather, the transformation through a particular appropriation of history, of consciousness as interiority, "has no meaning for *les hommes jaunes*."[91]

While Kuki's mention of Suarès is rather brief, Suarès evokes a series of significant binarisms. He aligns West versus East, time versus space, history versus stasis, and interiority versus exteriority. For Suarès, Japan clearly aligns with exteriority, with external essences and customs unconditioned by temporality and development. In short, Suarès argues for a Japan that is outside of Western time, outside of history. Thus he argues that Japanese art is spatial, devoted to the "object, the fugitive instant," because there is no interiority, no historical consciousness.

Such associations are not the isolated rantings of Suarès. Suarès exemplifies those notions that arise when Europeans and North Americans turn to Asia in order to construct an outside to the West, to its modernity. In fact, this is an integral feature of the formation and self-definition of the West itself. As Naoki Sakai argues in "Modernity and its Critique," there is no reason why the West/non-West binarism should serve to define the geopolitical configuration of the world except that it "definitively serves to establish the putative unity of the West, a nebulous but commanding positivity whose existence we have taken for granted for such a long time."[92] Thus the West and modernity go hand in hand: one could not exist without the other. The West is born the moment modernity establishes the foundations for the universalisation of European history and development.

Sakai asserts that the West incorporates much more than its name seems to imply by refusing its own self-delimitation. The West is not drawn along simple geographic boundaries, but

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91 Of course, Suarès use of "*les hommes jaunes*" discloses the relationship of power involved.

92 Sakai, "Modernity and its Critique," p. 94.

rather "continually seeks itself in the midst of interaction with the Other."[93] It is the historical reference point for all particulars, and is itself the particular which claims it is capable of transcending and subsuming all others. As such, it appears to be the universal point of reference through which all others define themselves. For those it had not encountered, such as pre-Meiji Japan, there could be no universal history, no interiority, no recognition. The result is a set of derivative discourses which it is our task to sort out.

In this way, not only did the West construct an "Orient" as its Other and posit the exteriority of everything Eastern, but those who, like Kuki, succumbed to the allure of Western discourse constructed a Japan from within the confines of Western discourse. Even within Kuki's critique of the West, the assumptions of those who, like Suarès, posit the ontological necessity of the categories East and West and insist on essential differences between them persist, regardless of which is privileged. The West itself is never problematised. Yet the very particular matrix of power inherent in this form of discourse definitively served to establish the supposed inferiority of the East in terms of culture, economic strength, and, of course, military might. Thus, when Suarès insists on the exteriority of Japanese poetry, and when Kuki in turn argues for its interiority, we should be very conscious of the structure of power that Kuki is at once reacting to and enmeshed within. We should seek to comprehend rather than validate the reasons for Kuki's resistance. Thus it is important to call attention to the allure of Western discourse in Kuki's repositioning of Japan.

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[93] Ibid., p. 95.

Kuki and the Positioning of Japan Within Western Discourse

In response to Suarès' racialised dismissal of Japan, and the hegemonic claims of Western discourse, Kuki argues for the interiority of Japanese art, asserting that "all [Japanese] art is impregnated with immateriality, it is in no way an external art."[94] Japan's art is not exteriority, but immateriality and inwardness. Kuki identifies art, specifically poetry and painting, as *the* site at which to contest values. While life in Japan in the 1920's might have been tainted with the influences of Western technology, political structures, and social customs, for Kuki, the artefacts of the past could afford another possibility. It is important to comprehend how aesthetics and geopolitics become intertwined when Kuki invokes cultural heritage as an authority. Kuki the hermeneuticist turns to cultural artefacts in an attempt to extract meaning from the landscape that supposedly constitutes culture. Through these techniques of interpretation, Kuki constructs Japan as a site of interiority—of beings that constitute a particular Being.

Nevertheless, Kuki will insist that the inwardness of Japanese art is not that of European art. Kuki posits Japan as a particular case of interiority. He thus maintains the universal pretensions of interiority while simultaneously creating a gap between Japan's interiority and the West. As a result, there is a certain ambivalence in Kuki's positioning of Japan *vis-à-vis* interiority and exteriority. Kuki's Japan comes to rest somewhere between two poles. It is certainly not the spatiality and exteriority of Suarès' Japan, yet neither is it the temporality and interiority of Suarès' Europe. Kuki brings Japan closer to the West, yet not completely in alignment in order to simultaneously distinguish Japan as a site of difference, and allow for the possibility of favourable comparisons.

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[94] Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinte," p. 63.

Kuki must, therefore, walk a fine line between East and West, between universal pretensions and particular interests.

> Consequently, without knowing something of [Japanese] conceptions of life and world, it becomes almost impossible to understand Japanese art. Its meaning, the idealist expression of the infinite in the finite will go unexplained. Therefore, there are in Europe very few people who truly understand Japanese art.[95]

If Japanese forms open into universal structures why must one possess a particular cultural knowledge of them in order to speak? Kuki's strategy seems to place meaning outside of forms, in the realm of history or culture. This localism or culturalism, however, melds into an ontological difference because of Kuki's construction of temporality and interiority. Kuki opts for a different interiority, one based on ontological difference. For Kuki, these differences manifest themselves through the interpretation and contemplation of cultural artefacts. This different interiority is extracted without loss from the timeless ideals of Japanese poetry and painting.

In a sense, I will ultimately insist on the exteriority of Japanese art. What makes me different from Suarès? Simply stated, I will not speak of exteriority as an "external essence" as Suarès implies by taking the interiority of consciousness as given. As I have discussed earlier, I begin with the assertion that consciousness is saturated with exteriority. It is not internal to the human being, but rather formed within a system of external conventions, constraints, and possibilities that constitute us through and through. I intend to treat forms as exterior, for the discourse on interiority degenerates too neatly with culture as ontology. My use of exteriority thus calls attention to the specificities and particular histories of poetry and painting. For my purposes, exteriority is a historically rigorous term which acknowledges the construction of

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[95] Ibid., p. 52.

cultural artefacts under different modes of production. Ultimately, exteriority forces us to re-evaluate that which we consider to be natural. Kuki's style of interiority, on the other hand, avoids history—it focuses on essences. As such, interiority leads to an aesthetic domain where history has no losses and we are easily swayed by the essence of things and the heartbeat of the nation.

The Elements of Japanese Art for Kuki

In the "Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art," Kuki begins with painting and proceeds to detail the "concrete methods" of Japanese art. He discusses four methods: *perspective, arbitrary composition, line, and ink.*[96] He informs us that whereas "*perspective* played an important role in Western art, at least until very recently," Japanese art has traditionally shunned this tendency, focusing instead on the "essence" which underlies the whole. "Art must force itself to seize the absolute," he writes, "thus it is necessary for it to destroy and break the natural forms decorated with names, in order to create aesthetic and absolute forms." *Arbitrary composition* similarly destroys natural forms because "absolute and aesthetic forms are most often incomplete and empty forms, forms without form." According to Kuki, a tree may be fragmented into its constituent parts, a trunk or several branches used instead of the whole, since the absolute resides in aesthetic suggestion. Kuki then proceeds to an account of the importance of the *line*. A bold dynamic line can move and hold one space within another. Thus Kuki asserts that "the life of the infinite and of the absolute must be rendered visible by the rhythm and expression of the line." Finally, Kuki details a preference for *ink painting* stating that the nuances and tonalities of fluid

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[96] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

black and white shading express the "breath of the void." The role of the spectator, then, is to recreate, in aesthetic contemplation, the "ideal" of these fragmented, incomplete, and subdued manifestations.

> The spectator is, thus, placed in a situation where he must exercise a spontaneity of spirit, in order that he may himself reproduce the natural order of things. It is in this involuntary activity that the spectator finds his happiness. Here could be placed a psychological enjoyment of art.[97]

Kuki's locates meaning in the phenomenological reading of a self-enclosed work. The "eternal beauty" which art expresses becomes manifest through the spectator's "consciousness." This activity ideally creates an ideal realm which becomes a repository for a transhistorical culture. This movement happens as Kuki turns to hermeneutics in order attempt to recuperate history's losses and modernity's rupture. Kuki's hermeneutic turn finds expression in his assertion that although these are timeless universal structures, a knowledge of Japan is necessary in order to truly understand Japanese art.

> It is from this triple source [Indian, Chinese, native Japanese] that the "inward art" of the Yamato is born. It is in this spiritual atmosphere that it attains its full flowering. Consequently, without knowing something of these conceptions of life and world it becomes almost impossible to understand Japanese art. Its meaning, the idealist expression of the infinite in the finite, will go unexplained.[98]

I will closely analyse these movements between universal pretensions and particular claims in later sections. However, it should be clear that Kuki is on his way to an ethnic ontology.

Though he tends to delineate Edo forms, Kuki often speaks of "Japanese art" as the continuous singular expression of ethnic being with no regard for the period or mode of production within which different artistic forms might appear. Kuki conveniently invokes

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97 Ibid., p. 54.

98 Ibid., p. 52.

emakimono (picture-scrolls) and Edo woodblock prints in succession with an occasional reference to Taoism or a Zen patriarch. At other times, he alludes to *haiga* (poem-painting: a hybrid of poetry, painting, and calligraphy) although he does not mention this form by name. Thus, in my review of Kuki's discussion of poetry and painting, I attempt to find specific forms which open Kuki's generalities to historical interrogation.

Composition and Perspective

Arbitrary composition and the *absence of exact perspective* lead to considerations of Western modes of depicting nature and mimetic representation. When Kuki discusses perspective and composition he attempts to contrast classical representation in Europe with Edo styles, especially those of the literati school. He attempts to counter classical perspective and the appropriation of drafting techniques by Romantic painters which opened the vanishing point into landscape painting. These techniques partition the painting in terms of the visual axes of a central perspective (the spectator). When Kuki criticises such conventions he stresses that "art must force itself to seize the absolute.[99] Arguing for an "absolute idealism" in art, Kuki fails to acknowledge that *ukiyoe* (images of the floating world), *emakimono* (picture scrolls), and other arts in Japan also use highly complex systematised techniques of visual representation. Echoing the fascination many Impressionists had with *ukiyoe* and other forms of Edo prints, Kuki constructs a unitary Japanese art as an outside to Western modes of representation. Likewise, he collapses European art into a single mode characterised by classical representation.

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[99] Ibid., p. 53.

Kuki stresses that an artist is more of an artist "if he replaces mathematical perspective with metaphysical perspective" in order to divorce art from its material conditions of production. In classical representation in Europe central perspective and drafting techniques equipped painters with the tools to depict the world with pictorial realism and scientific exactitude, while early Japanese *bunjin* (literati) usually looked down upon visual verisimilitude as merely artisan labour.[100] That is not to say, however, that there was no such thing as a veristic representation of nature or perspective. Such representation is not an objective fact of the painting techniques, but rather a social construct.

Mark Morris, in "Buson and Shiki: Part One," presents an account of *bunjin* practice. Morris asserts that *bunjin* practice developed in a way antagonistic to pre-nineteenth century European realism by emphasising a kind of expressivity.[101] While Morris does discuss different forms of expressivity, his discussion of the expressivity of Buson seems to occlude expression in the Romantic sense. Therefore, although Morris would write, "poetry, calligraphy, and painting all served as means of expression for the cultivated amateur artist,"[102] we should be wary of interpreting *bunjin* expressivity as Kuki does, in terms interiorised subjective and national expression. Morris himself asserts that such a parallel between the Romantic elaboration of imagination and *bunjin* practice "would require a patient reconstruction of Chinese and European concepts of expressivity in art and language and ultimately a retracing of the lineaments of

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100 Mark Morris, "Buson and Shiki: Part One," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 44 (December 1984), p. 396.

101 Ibid., p. 397.

102 Ibid., p. 402.

subjecthood itself."[103] *Bunjin* expressivity differs profoundly from Romantic expression. When Kuki aligns expressivity in *emakimono*, *ukiyoe*, and *sumie* (ink painting) with the workings of an interiorised subject he does so in order to oppose them to Western forms of realism. Kuki approximates *bunjin* expressivity to the European (post)Romantic legacy in order to argue for the interiority of Japanese art. Yet he does not acknowledge that European pictorial realism based on central perspective is but one form of copying nature. What is to be copied—nature—as well as the subjective position of the artist, are social constructs.

The reader may ask, then, what exactly I mean when I assert that nature or veristic representation of nature is a social construct. Just as what we see when we look at our environment is not absolute sense datum, but rather an interaction of perception and matter, so too must an accurate reproduction of what we see be considered a particular construction of reality—a legitimation of a particular nature. Stated simply, I wish to question Kuki's assertion that any painting not displaying the three-dimensional "objectivity" of central perspective does not posses a systematised technique for constructing a real perspective. It may be "realistic" according to a different form of subjectivity, a different spatiality, a different construction of what is to be copied. Therefore, when Morris asserts that verisimilitude was merely artisan labour for *bunjin*, it does not mean that in practice they expressed subjective interiority. It may simply have been a different way of painting the "real," a different nature to be legitimised, a way that did not rely on what *bunjin* practice perceived to be the unskilled labour of reproducing the visually accurate. The art of painting, then, is about producing, concentrating, and controlling meaning.

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[103] Ibid., p. 402.

Morris' discussion of Buson may point us in the direction of a different form of artistic expression. Buson quotes from a Chinese painting manual when advising one of his disciples on how to eliminate the vulgarity in his work. According to Morris, the passage reads: "In painting there is only one way to rid oneself of the vulgar: read much, and the force of volumes will increase within you while the force of commercial vulgarity will decline."[104] Nature and painting are rendered into texts. The composition and arrangement of objects within the painting are readable in terms of cultural convention. Artistic expression is based on a particular type of social learning. Such a mode posits the sociality of "objectivity." There is no way to properly express the "idea" or "essence" of the "real" unless one is well versed in the classics. Presenting nature involves a particular learning, one that defines the way we construct the "real." Subsequently, there is no subjective position which "sees" reality "objectively" without the tools necessary to decode it in a socially meaningful way. I am not arguing that Western realism is relativism and therefore false. Western realism has its truth effects; it is bounded by social considerations and particular subjectivities. We can not, however, label all that is not visually "realist" as lacking perspective.

Dietrich Seckel, in his discussion of *emakimono* perspective, argues that painting techniques based on central perspective privilege a particular subjective position.

> The absence of central perspective or other illusionistic methods means that reality is depicted in its intrinsic sense, that is independent of the anthropocentric and subjective element.[105]

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[104] Ibid., p. 398.

[105] Seckel, p. 62.

Seckel's discussion implies that forms of painterly production not based on this subjective position do not lack a systematised organisation for conveying perspective, but are produced within a different subjective schema. Thomas Keirstead, in "Gardens and Estates: Medievality and Space, " provides an account of the negotiation of depth in Japanese landscape painting in his discussion of how the "medieval" is not marked off by time but rather by a particular organisation of space that is characterised by doubled and contradictory landscapes—multiple possibilites—where the precursor for the unitary nation (modernity) can not be found. According to Keirstead, the space of the painting is divided into "parallel lines with the passages negotiated by rivers or clouds."[106] Furthermore, the composition and organisation of the painting is hardly arbitrary. The use of mountains, trees, and villages evoke nearness or distance through a highly coded system whereby a particular order is legitimised.[107]

A closer investigation of *emakimono* leads to similar conclusions. It is true that there is no central perspective, no subjective position central to viewing *emakimono*. There is, however, subjective organisation. The fixed subjective position characteristic of what Kuki refers to as "exact perspective" (Western realism) creates an arrangement where all objects in the painting are aligned according to the viewer. The artist subjects all the objects within the painting to the visual axes and vanishing points of the viewer, creating illusory relationships between the objects themselves. *Emakimono*, meanwhile, are characterised by a "parallel perspective" which constantly varies the slant of its lines of depth creating a shifting subjective position where the

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106 Tom Keirstead, "Gardens and Estates: Medievality and Space," *Positions* 1.2 (Fall 1993), p. 19.

107 Ibid., p. 19.

arrangement of the painting retains a certain integrity with respect to the relationships between the objects themselves.[108]

Kuki maintains, however, that there is no perspective in "Oriental art."[109] He asserts that a true artist "replaces mathematical perspective with metaphysical perspective."[110] Kuki seems to imply that mathematical perspective is aligned with classical representation, and metaphysical perspective with a kind of Romantic expressivity. Yet Kuki does not seem to grasp that even what he terms "metaphysical perspective" is, nevertheless, a form of perspective. He ignores this obvious error because he chooses to bypass the social. That is to say, Kuki ignores the fact that all forms of representation are produced within external systems of signs and conventions—within particular modes of artistic production. Kuki seems to ignore the fact that central perspective is only one form of what he would simply call "non-metaphysical" perspective. According to Dietrich Seckel in *Emakimono*, parallel perspective, far from leading to a metaphysical or abstract perspective,

> creates a clearly defined pictorial area in which all objects and events find their natural place. At the same time it remains open on all sides, and fits smoothly and without sharp breaks into the picture's continuous notion.[111]

These sharp breaks are occasioned by the subjective element which forces patterns into the service of the central perspective. It is difficult to say whether central perspective would be considered

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108 Seckel, p. 61.

109 Of course, the fact that there is no singular entity we can safely call "Oriental art" should be clear by now.

110 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 53.

111 Seckel, p. 61.

"real" within the discourse of *emakimono* production.[112] Nevertheless, parallel perspective creates a space that is "real" within its particular mode of artistic production.

Seckel's discussion of *emakimono* also leads into a critique of the stable meanings and subjectivities that Kuki posits in the supposed historical unity and singular expression of Japanese art. The changing subjective position characteristic of parallel perspective occasions a dynamic reading of painting. Such movement implies both temporal and spatial considerations. Unlike Kuki's account of the spectator who recreates the "infinite" and is liberated from time and space through aesthetic contemplation, a much more reciprocal reading is possible, one that moves from painting to viewer and back, constantly oscillating and defining potential movements.

> The painter is always at pains to lead our eye in the main direction of the picture, to arouse expectation, produce lively rhythms, and ensure that a spark constantly leaps from figure to figure, shape to shape, colour to colour.[113]

Far from the ideality of Kuki's "inward art," such painting leads to an external dynamic of movement. In short, there coexist both spatial and temporal considerations. The viewer must negotiate the terrain of the painting through a series of coded objects and their associations which lead to (non-linear) connections within the painting. Parallel perspective necessitates a temporal movement, back and forth, since there is no unified subject and no central perspective. Furthermore, *emakimono* are, as their name suggests, scrolls. A viewer must unfold the scroll on a flat surface and view the work as it is unfolded. The length of the scroll varies but usually ranges

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[112] The dissemination of some Western painting, thanks mainly to the Dutch presence at Dejima , a small island in the harbour of Nagasaki, led to a multiplicity of reaction and commentary. At least one commentator in the second century of the Tokugawa period regarded central perspective as an excellent illustrative and pedagogical tool. Please see Shiba Kôkan, "Discussion of Western Painting," trans. Thomas Looser, in *Readings in Tokugawa Thought: Select Papers* volume 9 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 157-164.

[113] Seckel, p. 65.

from nine to twelve metres.[114] Thus there is no one-shot view of the scroll, either for the portion to be viewed or the entire scroll. Oscillating movement accrues between viewer and painting ensuring that the associations are fully negotiated.

Thus Western realism and various forms of composition such as *emakimono* or literati painting are systems of signs, styles and conventions. Western realism is no more real than literati painting, and literati painting no more metaphysical than Western realism. Both are thoroughly wrought, based on particular forms of learning and production. We can read any of Kuki's preferred artistic forms in terms of styles and conventions. Yet Kuki chooses not to because in the standard ideal of "art for art's sake" art must transcend its conventions: it must move the soul. While Kuki enumerates various styles (line, ink, etc.), he subordinates them to meaning and cultural ideality and dismisses the social nature of artistic production. Conventions imply exteriority, and Kuki could not let the external essences of those like Suarès go uncontested.

So composition and perspective are pressed into the service of ideality and organic synthesis. When Kuki asserts that "Oriental art ... wants to destroy the geometric structure of space," he turns inward, asserting that "the spirit alone is absolute."[115] Similarly, Kuki asserts that the techniques of arbitrary composition destroy relative forms and seize absolute ones—that a part of the painting is never really whole but is re-worked organically through the inner workings of "consciousness." Kuki creates a parallel between the techniques of representation in painting and the representation of the nation—Japan. In an organic landscape the whole (nation) is beyond the sum of its parts. However, while it is in a sense beyond representation, the whole can be accessed

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[114] Okudaira Hideo, *Narrative Picture Scrolls*, trans. Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill and Shibundô, 1973), p. 75.

[115] Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 55.

through a kind of hermeneutic access code: through a particular reading of cultural products. Thus the techniques articulated by Kuki lead to the "value of suggestion," to a "spontaneity of spirit."[116] These "involuntary activities" drive home the point of the paintings and of the nation: that it is the ideal manifestation of an ineffable reality, an aestheticised politics.

Line and Ink Painting

> The line is dynamic. It can hold the future within the present; it can hold one space within another; it can move. ... That is why the talent of a painter is often judged by his ability to sketch a powerful and audacious line.
>
> Kuki Shûzô
> "The Expression of the Infinite"[117]

Kuki's considerations on the line and ink painting lead to an expressivity, and not the conventions of calligraphy. Yet such an expressive force is inconsistent with the practice of calligraphy. In fact, there is little room for subjective expression and Romantic imagination in calligraphy. The patterns to be traced are based on external designs. A single dot may be practised innumerable times before the adept has reached a worthy level of discipline and technique. Performance, not the inner workings of the mind's eye determines value. Yet Kuki opts for a kind of interior expressivity in the practice of proper brushwork and the techniques of *sumie*.

> The life of the infinite and of the absolute must be rendered visible by the rhythm and expression of the line.[118]

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116 Ibid., p. 55.
117 Ibid., p. 54.
118 Ibid., p. 54.

According to Kuki, "true artists live in the infinite." The line in its suggestive and dynamic force gives a hint of mind, of the interior. "It can therefore be employed to express the power of the absolute and the *élan* of the infinite."[119] For Kuki, such an expressivity relies on the interior because it hardly seems wrought. It suggests Romantic imagination: it is inner experience that brings it to life.

> The taste for simplicity and for fluidity arises from the nostalgia for the infinite and from the effort to efface differences in space.[120]

It should not be surprising, then, that Kuki turns to *haiku*, especially the work of Bashô (1643-1694). *Haiku* is also a line, a fleeting dash of the brush. Simultaneously visual and verbal, *haiku* is above all brief. This brevity allows Kuki to place its production outside of historical assemblages. Combined with the fluidity of proper brushwork, *haiku* is a spontaneous, instantaneous construction of "mind." One could theoretically paint a poem as quickly as one spoke it. The work would appear on paper as it rolls off the tongue, fleeing as the last syllable is uttered. As an expression of an essence that hardly seems based on convention and particular forms of social learning, *haiku* appears effortlessly from the mind of its creator, at once verbal and visual, at once spoken and written. The brevity and fluidity of the line, ink painting, and *haiku* prove useful in Kuki's project of an inward art.

For Kuki, the elements of Japanese art reveal the power of its aesthetics of suggestion, the mind in its spontaneity. The line, the stroke of the brush, suggests a fleeting essence, a mind that appears and flees. Its brevity stands outside social convention and styles. Hence, Kuki could not possibly engage in a reading of art that was not thoroughly phenomenological. It is the work of

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[119] Ibid., p. 54.
[120] Ibid., p. 54.

art itself that possesses ontological substance. For Kuki, the brevity of the line, of haiku as a poem and as a painting, of the brush's expressivity, transcend social convention and history. For Kuki, its spontaneity arrests time and breaks causal links, always ever appearing the same. Herein lies the power of its reappearance and repetition. Thus Kuki aligns the dash of a fleeting stroke of the brush with the essence of Japanese poetry and painting. Since it is outside of history it can appear anywhere, anytime. Indeed, its power lies in its ability to transcend its own history and stand as signifier for the ever elusive signified which is the nation.

> I have enumerated four characteristics of Japanese painting: *the absence of exact perspective*, *the arbitrary composition*, *the importance of the line*, and *the preference for ink painting*. All are expressions of a pantheist idealism. All are methods for gaining liberation from space.[121]

Haikai, Hokku, Haiku: Histories and Conventions

By focusing on the specific histories and conventions of *haiku* production one might get a better sense of the implications of Kuki's project and of what inward art and poetry might consist of. *Haiku* does not constitute the autonomous form of expression that Kuki posits. Indeed, *haiku* itself is of relatively recent origin, a fact that Kuki himself acknowledged.[122] However, Kuki nevertheless asserts that it represents "the most refined phases of [Japanese] poetry," and can thus subsume all earlier forms.[123] Again the power of its spontaneity and instantaneity manifests itself in this ability for reappearance and repetition.

It would be far more interesting, however, to closely analyse the practice and production of *haiku* and its related forms *haikai* and *hokku*. *Haikai no renga* (linked verse) rose to

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121 Ibid., p. 54.

122 "Of relatively recent origin is the haiku, created in the sixteenth century." Ibid., p. 55.

123 Ibid., p. 55.

prominence during the early Edo period (17th century) and is inextricably bound to the development of an urban culture and the rise of a culturally active mercantile class, especially at Edo and Osaka.[124] This urban culture provided a space where the feudal order and strict Confucian discipline of the Tokugawa Shogunate could be transcended, or at least held in abeyance. The genres that proliferated within this space of cultural production are thus bound to the development of new classes, new wealth, and new modes of circulation. The pleasure quarters that developed along these lines provided a space relatively free of the disciplining activity of the court—they became a space where money and a certain *savoir faire* dominated considerations of caste and social status. Thus cultural production of the floating world (*ukiyo*), as it came to be known, was also highly charged with the erotic as the pleasure quarters became an ideal site for the exchange and consumption of cultural goods and tastes.

Haikai no renga is, as "linked verse," a series of poems. Written in a series of alternating 17 and 14 syllables, *haikai no renga* could be composed of up to 100 verses.[125] These verses were composed and circulated within a *bundan* (literary group) and relied on a very particular social environment. Individual verses would be reworked in consultation with others. Although the initial verse might control the possible movements of later ones, subsequent links would nevertheless put previous ones into new relationships unforeseen by the writers of earlier verses. This form of interaction entails notions of collective composition and occluded the possibility of individual authorship and subjective expression. *Haikai* production was a social activity initiated through a particular relationship with others.

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[124] Ivan Morris, "Introduction," from Ihara Saikaku, *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Ivan Morris (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 16.

[125] Ibid., p. 15.

> One engaged in haikai through a personal relationship to haikai's past embodied in one's teacher. You joined a group or groups, and while book study was an important part of your integration into haikai (that it might better speak to you), much of the learning and enjoyment took place in face to face interaction with your teacher and fellow poets.[126]

Although *haikai* remained popular well into the eighteenth century, the trend was towards the production of individual poems—the *hokku* or initial verse.[127] Poets tended to compose only the initial 5-7-5 verse of a *haikai* sequence since the first verse, the *hokku*, had a prestigious function in determining the direction of a sequence. Even if the entire *bundan* was not involved individual poems would be reworked with members of the same school, leading to particular styles, but not necessarily to individual subjective expression. The demand for such cultural artefacts became pronounced within a rapidly growing bourgeois culture as the urban population actively sought such works out of a desire for consumption and as an outlet for creative energies. The potential for reproduction and circulation was much greater for shorter works, and *hokku* eventually acquired a kind of autonomous status known simply as *haiku*.

Haiku, The Archive, Modernity

> The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organising in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity.
>
> Michel Foucault
> Of Other Spaces[128]

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126 Mark Morris, "Buson and Shiki: Part One," p. 383.

127 Ibid., p. 383.

128 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.

Haiku is born of many moments. It is related to *haikai*, *bundan* social dynamics, urban cultural production, and energies directed towards culture and consumption. But more importantly, *haiku*, as the autonomous form of both national and self-expression that Kuki posits, is born with the advent of the archive and archival modes of dealing with poetry as "texts." It is at this moment that we may glean the importance of Foucault's discussion of the archive. Foucault characterised the archive as a type of heterotopia characteristic of modernity. Heterotopias are places that that are actually outside of all places—an unreal site within the real. They are spaces within which many contradictory sites are juxtaposed. As a heterotopia linked to slices in time, the archive is a heterotopia particularly meaningful for modernity. It can enclose all forms across all epochs and not subject them to the ravages of time. As such, it constructs the illusion of the eternal.

So what, then, is the relationship between *haiku* and the archive? Modern *haiku* is born the moment *haikai* ceases being a disciplined activity and becomes archival, when the production and reading of poetry is no longer guaranteed by sociality and group practice, but rather through individuals and library archives.[129] Kuki himself deals with poetry and painting as archival sources rather than production within a *bundan*. His *haiku* is thoroughly modern in this sense. With the advent of the archive, the particular mode of production and reception characterised by the *bundan* was bypassed. With the institutionalisation of national literature, individuals such as Kuki could corporatise the diverse movements of poetic production and ignore the dynamics involved in producing, circulating, and reading poetry Through archival learning, Kuki reinvented a tradition

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[129] Mark Morris, "Buson and Shiki: Part One," p. 383.

and generated a national lineage at a time when "art is not the pursuit of groups, and beauty beckons one poet at a time."[130]

Since the *bundan* circulated poems between producer and receiver within the school of a master there was a different conception of author and production. Such a dynamic would not conform to modern conceptions of genius and self-expression or to Kuki's phenomenological readings of cultural artefacts as self-contained works. Yet we, like Kuki, invariably deal with archival sources, with texts as closed works. We can, however, take a historically rigorous position allowing for production, transformation, and loss in our analysis of Edo forms of poetry. To deal with Edo poetics through the archival text in a historically rigorous way, one must use a different reading. Mark Morris, in "Buson and Shiki: Part One," suggests a rhetoric of reading in which meaning is negotiated and produced between reader and text along more or less definable patterns. Kuki opts to have meaning inherent in the text, as essences that the reader extracts without loss. Morris, however, allows for negotiation, transformation, and loss: for history, culture, and convention. Kuki negates these, emphasising instead that everything that is meaningful is in the text, and that the reader's task is to recreate and join with that meaning, that essence, and thus compensate for the losses of history. Modernity must suppress its rupture with the past. The nation must erase the losses of history.

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[130] Ibid., p. 383.

VII. Poetry/Painting, Time/Space: Part Two

> If you take any powerful and general theory or notion about capital L Literature as evolved historically in Europe, and other extensions of the mysterious West, and rub it up against the reality of literature as practised in Japan or against the practical experience of reading Japanese literature, you get sparks.
>
> Mark Morris
> "Buson and Shiki: Part One"[131]

Kuki derives the potential for a phenomenological reading from the archive. With the omission of *bundan* dynamics and Edo modes of poetic production and circulation, the archive enables the inward poetry of national and subjective expression. Kuki's ability to read texts phenomenologically is facilitated by the archive. There are, however, other uses of the archive.

In my reading of Bashô I hope to contrast a dynamic negotiation of meaning with Kuki's account of Bashô. Kuki's phenomenological analysis relies on static forms. The object must be self-contained and immobile. Its meaning must be fixed so that its significance can not escape the penetrating gaze of the reader. Of course, the reader must be stable as well—a subjectivity without movement, spatial or temporal, except within the closed confines of the hermeneutic circle. Otherwise we would not be able provide unified accounts of national literatures and histories—we would not be able to repress the losses of modernity and the transformations of history. Nor would we be able to read the interior expression of this infinite and stable mind.

Mobility, Circuits of Exchange, Literary Bodies

Bashô is contemporaneous with the first century of the Tokugawa period. During this time the *Tôkaidô* (Road of the Eastern Sea) is built, creating particular circuits around famous

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131 Ibid., p. 382.

sites and channelling movement to and from centres of market activity that punctuate it. These specific channels of movement and the centres, Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto, to and from which they gravitate, control the wanderings of the old migrant travellers, peddlers, and occupational ritual performers.[132] The rise of an increasingly active mercantile class consolidated these movements and produced fixed circuits of exchange between commercial centres and pilgrimages to shrines, temples, and mountains.[133] By this time Edo established itself as the premier centre as merchants developed their interests along cultural and commercial lines. Transformed from the site of Tokugawa control, Edo provided a cultural space of recoded horizontal relationships and urban energies never before imagined in the constrictive space of the feudal order and Confucian bureaucracy.[134] It is in this flow of commodities, fluidity of identities, transgression of boundaries, and lack of social fixity that certain movements are generated.[135] The mobility that gravitates along these circuits is by no means random. New roads marked the flow of commodities and travellers, and guidebooks and woodblock prints marked important sites and destinations, as did the poetry of special travellers such as Bashô.

Yet I am not necessarily interested in the actual evocations of place and name we attribute to the poetry of Bashô. Rather, I am interested in a reading of poetry which does not fix the meaning of the work textually, either in terms of a unifying "consciousness" or a body of national literature. By taking movement seriously, a different figure emerges in place of the fixed

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[132] Not unlike Paul Virilio's account how the layout of Paris controls the wanderings and movements of the mass of dispossessed in *Vitesse et politique* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1977), p. 13.

[133] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 32.

[134] H.D. Harootunian, "Cultural Politics in Tokugawa Japan," in *Undercurrents in the Floating World: Censorship and Japanese Prints*, eds. Sarah Thompson and H.D. Harootunian (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1991), p. 14.

[135] Ibid., p. 17.

phenomenological subject that Kuki posits for Bashô. Just as Bashô himself was a traveller, poet, and calligrapher, following the lines traced by circuits of exchange and pilgrimage along the *Tôkaidô*, and tracing similar patterns and marking these sites of ritual activity onto paper in calligraphy, the poetry of Bashô may be negotiated and transformed in terms of movement that accrues between writing and reading, along structured or directed lines and flows. The reader needs a familiarity with these for they are thoroughly social—they are based on specific forms of learning and particular devices which act as channels.[136] That the poem itself possessed a certain visual form reaffirms this quality because it is also to be negotiated materially, taking into account the forms that constitute it visually, as opposed the standardised form it assumes in modern textbooks.

Such movements, however, imply specific spatialities and temporalities, and modernity has little patience for such matters. While Kuki spends much of his efforts on distinguishing temporalities, Kuki passes over the losses which mark history, and the transformations which may mark the poem as a text, opting for a static textual body. He ignores such matters because meaning, according to Kuki, is fixed in the text and can be extracted without loss by the reader through a different movement: a hermeneutic circle. Such are the distinctions I would like to trace between a dynamic rhetoric of reading for the poetry of Bashô and Kuki's hermeneutical phenomenology.

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[136] The difference between my assertion that the reader needs a familiarity with the social dynamics of poetic production during Edo and the literary devices that channel readings, and Kuki's insistence that cultural knowledge is necessary in order to grasp the infinite in Japanese poetry lies in our divergent conceptions of culture. For myself, such considerations afford a historically rigorous treatment of poetry and cultural production (exteriority), whereas for Kuki, they afford a reading of cultural artefacts as expressions of a timeless national ethnos (interiority).

Haiku Interpretation: Ontological and Rhetorical Readings

Within five short pages Kuki manages to treat the poetry of Bashô, the *Man'yôshû*, the *Kokinshû*, and the *Shin Kokinshû* (1205) as if there was some continuity of "consciousness" which sought self-same expression over a multitude of modes of production and circulation.[137] Although Kuki reaches into the distant past to Heian poetry, it is clear that he is mainly concerned with Edo period artefacts. One can not criticise Kuki for misreading earlier anthologies because even though he mentions them, he does not use them in his interpretations. Most of the poems he mentions are by Bashô or other Edo poets. And yet, Kuki's claims move beyond the Edo period to include the *Man'yôshû* and *Kokinshû*—and all of Japanese history. But he quotes exclusively from Bashô when pressed for analysis. Kuki strips his Edo sources of their historical specificity in order to construct the eternal "consciousness" that supposedly permeates all Japanese poetry. Thus while Kuki's analysis of poetry may seem like a history, he is really providing an ethnic ontology.

So when Kuki enumerates the characteristics of "inward" poetry in his interpretation of *haiku* we should trace out the implications. Kuki applauds the supposed brevity of "Japanese poetry" in its ability to capture the infinite because "if the infinite is everywhere, then a very small thing contains the infinite just as much as does a thing of great dimensions." Symmetric forms are rigid and finite while the "idea of liberation from measurable time itself is realised" in the alternating heptasyllabic and pentasyllabic forms of Japanese poetry. Suggestive expressions "outstrip time" by constantly deferring the disclosure of meaning in an anticipatory imagination. The pantheism of Japanese poetry expresses the "cosmic sympathy" of all things. The subdued

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[137] Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," pp. 56-60.

black and white tones of subtle verbal sentiment demonstrate that the "infinite is something simple, containing and surpassing multiplicity." The poet employs the negative aspects of life "in order to create a harmonious melody" and express "a mix of detachment of life and a love of nature." Finally, the idea of repetitive time releases the reader "from the order of time" and sets free the "essence of things" awakening us to our "true self."[138]

For Kuki, *haiku* can be analysed strictly in terms of the text itself. Its meaning is eternalised through the universal sentiments expressed by the words themselves. Kuki reads properties as intrinsic to poems and can not deal with the specifics of a poem, whether they be rhetorical, social, or historical. He is interested in the being of a poem: its ontology. By analysing the poetry of Bashô phenomenologically, that is, by enclosing the object unto itself rendering it impossible to deal with transformation and loss between reader and text, or with movement between text and reader except within the hermeneutic circle, Kuki is able to assure a stable subjectivity. Otherwise, how could Kuki posit the continuity of Japanese "consciousness," through Bashô, from Heian to Taishô?

But what if we question this conception of Bashô? Bashô assumes different significance, able to assure neither the stable meanings attributed to him, nor the stable subjectivities posited through him. Just as Bashô was a famous traveller and calligrapher marking famous sites along the way, so too could we consider the movement that accrues between the reader and the text and within the poem itself. Perhaps we could avoid the domestication of poetic forms pressed into service for national ideologies and stable ideals. Perhaps we could provide a reading which would

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[138] Ibid., p. 55-59.

preclude both a linear narrative—a reading would entail back and forth movement—and a strict spatialisation. Such poetry would defy the spatialities and temporalities we attribute to them.

Mark Morris provides a framework for an alternative reading, one that takes the construction of the poem seriously. Rather than locate the authority of poetry in the production of fixed meanings and the expression of stable subjectivities, Morris locates the pleasure of reading in the "dynamic interchange of text and reader."[139] Accordingly, Morris retains negotiation and transformation through a "rhetoric of reading." His readings are rhetorical because they are premised on the assumption that poems are produced with "more or less predictable effects" in mind, and these effects belong to the realm of rhetoric. Furthermore, they are based on social and historical construction, negating the interiority that Kuki would attribute to inward poetry. Morris reads the construction of meaning between producer and receiver—he suggests intersubjectivity by allowing for social construction and avoiding a transcendental viewpoint (phenomenology) from which to read poetry. It is a form of practice that appeals neither to a general theory of poetry nor to the interior expression of a phenomenological subject.[140] While Morris' rhetoric reading remains a form that relies on the archive, it puts the archive to a different use.

With these two very different uses of the archive—Kuki's elaboration of "inward" poetry and Morris' "rhetoric of reading"—let us turn back to Kuki's use of Bashô in order to contrast these interpretations and perhaps offer an alternative reading. Let us consider several poems attributed to Bashô.

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[139] Mark Morris, "Buson and Shiki: Part I," p. 418.

[140] Sakai has also demonstrated the openness of the *haikai* text as subsequent links put previous ones into new unforeseen relationships. "In this sense a writer is never an author as we conventionally understand the term. In *haikai* poetry only readers exist, never authors." Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, pp. 142-143.

(a) *akebono ya shirauwo shiroki koto issun*
A hint of white upon the small white fish and the vast whitening dawn.[141]

Kuki aligns this poem with a taste for simplicity. Through this taste for "white and subdued colours" the poem expresses that "the infinite is something simple, containing and surpassing multiplicity."[142]

> The shirauo is a very small white fish. The sentiment of dawn, the limpidity of a sky growing white, these are rendered by this verse.[143]

Kuki concerns himself strictly with the content of the poem— he deals with words and their significance as intrinsic to the poem—ignoring other considerations. Kuki's phenomenological reading leads to the hermeneutic circle between mind and closed text, allowing Kuki to join with the essence embodied in the words of the poem.

The movement that accrues between reader and text, however, does not reside in the circular motion of the hermeneutic circle but rather through non-ontological rhetorical concerns, oscillating from one end and back, through the poet's strategic use of *kireji* (cutting-words), *kigo* (seasonal words), *kakekotoba* (pivot-words), and other devices. In (a), the break signalled by *ya* places *akebono* (dawn) as the backdrop for the minuscule *shirauwo* (small white fish). Once the poem is negotiated to the end and back, the device makes the fish appear even smaller. A small white fish against a vast whitening sky, a touch of white. The reader thus moves the vast *akebono* from one end of the poem to the other and back, tracing patterns of white from *shirauwo* to

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[141] Poem number 217 as presented in Kon Eizô, ed., *Bashô Kushü* (Tokyo: Shinkôsha, 1982), p. 80. The translation provided is my own. Kuki's version as translated from Kuki's French manuscript, *Propos sur le Temps*, in Light, p. 58, reads: O, dawn White shirauo A touch of white.

[142] Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 58.

[143] Ibid., p. 58.

shiroki koto issun (a touch of white) and back unto itself. Similarly, the post-positioning of the verbal adjective *shiroki* (white) pivots upon itself, creating a motion back and then forward and then back again. It both emphasises the whiteness of the fish—already introduced through *shirauwo*—and forces the reader to negociate *koto issun* on its own—a very small thing. Finally, it moves to the end as *shiroki koto issun*—a hint of white.

(b) *takotsubo ya hakanaki yume wo natsu no tsuki*
The summer moon like an ephemeral dream against the octopus jar.[144]

Kuki reads the above poem in terms of "pantheistic thought," emphasising that such poetry expresses the "essential identity of the whole."[145] Thus Kuki would write:

> An octopus caught in a jar; the octopus dreams of the joys of life, of the heavan above, of the clear moon. The fisherman who has caught the octopus, the octopus sleeping in ignorance of the fate that awaits him, the moon surveying them both with nonchalant omniscience.[146]

For Kuki, this poem, with its octopus dreaming of freedom and moon nonchalantly omniscient, serves to invoke cosmic sympathy and stir the emotions of contemporary readers. Again Kuki creates a space where meaning is strictly located within the boundaries of the words themselves.

Yet an alternative reading of (b) may disclose movements between text and reader similar to (a). *Ya* cuts the poem at *takotsubo* (octopus jar) and the verbal adjective *hakanaki* (transient, ephemeral). The reader pauses for a moment in order to negotiate the strange pairing. The formula X *ya* Y is a common device often read as a relational pattern. Yet the movement to read

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144 Poem number 410 as presented in Kon, p. 148. Kuki's version as it appears in Light, p. 58 reads:
O octopus jar Ephemeral dream The summer moon.

145 Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 58.

146 Ibid., p. 58.

hakanaki yume (ephemeral dream) in one shot must be renegotiated later because *yume* (dream) is marked by a hanging verbless object marker, *wo*, putting *yume* in an uncertain position. The initial relation is renegotiated and reprocessed as movement develops and expands between the poem and the reader. The written line entails a grid of possibilities as the reader goes from one end and back, creating new patterns of intelligibilty and imagination. The *ya* literally cuts the poem, creating a gap to be negotiated by the reader. Movement is initiated through this break as the reader scans the poem, going forward and then backward. Here lies the force of *hokku* dynamics, one that Bashô himself articulated: "The savor of hokku is the feeling of going and coming back again."[147] Our imagination is thus catapulted to *natsu no tsuki* (summer moon), now associated with *hakanaki*, which itself invokes a series of movements as a particularly strong *kigo*. More than express cosmic sympathy and the identity of the whole, *kigo* serve to locate the poem, to communicate the details of place and ritual that mark it.[148] These effects are particularly important considering the earlier discussion of Edo movement. The production of poetry and other literary forms acted as modes of punctuating centres of ritual activity consolidated around the *Tôkaidô* during this period of unprecedented and diffuse cultural production.

(c) *nara nana he shichi daugaran ya he zakura*
Nara of seven hedges and seven temple halls with cherry blossoms of eight[149]

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147 Morris, p. 411. Morris is quoting from the *Sanzôshi* (1703), compiled by Bashô's disciple Hattori Dohô, in Ijichi Tetsuo, et al., eds., *Rengaronshû nôgakuronshû haironshû, Nihon koten bungaku zenshû* (Shôgakkan, 1981) vol. 51: p. 592.

148 Ibid., p. 409.

149 Poem number 951 as presented in Kon, p. 322. Kuki's version as it appears in Light, p. 57 reads:
Nara of seven hedges Temple of seven chapels Cherry blossoms of eight folds.

In (c) Kuki applauds the power of suggestion and economy of words. He informs the reader that this "quintessential characteristic" of poetry is the "fundamental trait of Bashô." How one could possibly be verbose given the brevity of this form and the importance of visuality remains unexplained by Kuki. He does, however, continue to analyse the poem strictly on the basis of its content—of its inherent meaning. Thus Kuki would write:

> Instead of describing the splendour of Nara, the ancient capital, the poet indicates with the words "temple of seven chapels" the grandeur of the Buddhist religion, and then by these words, "cherry blossoms of eight folds," the dazzling beauty and the licentious delights of the court. Nothing but substantives and adjectives, no verbs.[150]

In (c) there are none of the familiar patterns found in (a) and (b). Yet there are other devices which initiate movement. This *hokku* is made up entirely of nouns and is written almost exclusively in *kanji*. The effect in reading the poem is a certain lack of fluidity, preventing the reader to read it once through. Instead, there are places to pause and renegotiate the poem. *Nara nana he* (Nara of seven hedges) is followed by an awkward Sino-Japanese reading of *shichi daugaran* (seven temple halls). *Nana* and *shichi*, different glosses of the character for seven, break the poem, and imply movement back and forth. The seven temples must be thrown back to meet Nara, as will the *ya he zakura* (cherry blossoms of eight). The ordering of *nana* and *ya*, Japanese readings for seven and eight, respectively, around *shichi* and *daugaran*, Sino-Japanese readings for seven and temple hall, respectively, also create a back and forth movement, pivoting on the centre. The fact that *zakura* appears as the only portion of the poem not written in *kanji* may also serve to stir the imagination of the reader. In this poem there is a particularly interesting

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[150] Kuki, "The Expression of the Infinite," p. 57.

mingling of Sino-Japanese forms. *Zakura*, a very Japanese form, is set against the distinctly continental *shichi daugaran*.

Kuki misses the play of *kanji* and *kana*, the juxtaposition of glosses, and visual operations because he pulls poetics into an interiority. He thus refuses any moments of exteriority like the play of *kanji*, the play of the brush, the structure of the *bundan* and the production it enables, or the historical context and all its shifting moments between court and market, between contained and diffuse cultural production. Kuki misses these moments because he is interested in the being of a poem, its ontology. Thus he focuses strictly on content—on the words and meanings inherent in the poem. This ontological turn enables a reading that ignores rhetorical, social, and historical construction.

(c) also demonstrates how Kuki is haunted by the doubled nature of language and writing, and the practice of calligraphy, poetry, and painting. His emphasis on "inward" poetry, on an analysis of content and the phenomenological joining of mind to text, negates the palpable reality of the text, something that may seem contradictory since Kuki pays so much attention to the strength of the line, content, and form. Kuki not only ignores the fact that a text is created within very specific social conditions of production, reception, and circulation, but also that his preferred form, *haiku*, deals with language in a very material way. The use of visual puns and intermingling of calligraphic text with painting negated the possibility of a reading strictly in terms of the meanings conveyed by the sounds emanating from the text. Kuki favours *haiku* because of its spontaneity, of its brevity, of its fleeting essences—it can disrupt Western representations. In short, he prefers *haiku* because it seems to stand outside of history and social convention: just like Kuki's Japan, it can appear anytime, anywhere, hence the importance of repetition. Even though

Kuki arrives at such a conclusion through an emphasis on the line, on the quick play of the brush and the poet's ability to write as quickly as thought comes to mind, he can not deal with this exteriority of language as writing in a way consistent with the play of language and intermingling of calligraphy, painting, and poem that characterises *haikai*, *hokku*, and *haiga*.

Language, Writing, Exteriority

> The ideal profoundly underlying this philosophy of writing [phonocentric writing: writing as self-presence] is therefore the image of a community immediately present to itself, without difference, a community of speech where all the members are within earshot.
>
> Jacques Derrida
> "The Violence of the Letter"[151]

> Our search for the origins of writing will never take us beyond writing, beyond *écriture*.
>
> Karatani Kôjin
> *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*[152]

In the third decade of Meiji (1890's), the government initiated a series of language reforms designed to make the written word conform to speech.[153] Such an initiative is, of course, premised on the notion that we are in possession of our language, that it is interior to us. It implies that there is a subject that precedes language and constructs itself through it. If speech is the truly transparent medium then the inner voice of mind, and hence the phenomenological structures of

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[151] Jacques Derrida, "The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau," in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 136.

[152] Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, p. 20.

[153] Ibid., p. 45.

language, are best conveyed through speech-like writing. It was a question of "making language transparent in order to subordinate it to meaning, and hence suppress its exteriority."[154]

> As the conjecture of everyday life, a sense of wholeness and unity, and a newly reconceived view of the private subject, *genbun itchi* stands inscribed with matters central to a nation-state interested in suppressing heterologies so that it might more effectively consolidate the public.[155]

This phonocentric sublation of the exteriority of writing and of language in general creates a retroactive omission of the historical importance of visuality, of brushwork, and the play of kanji in the production of poetry. Whether it be the linked verse of *haikai*, the initial form of *hokku*, or the graphic richness of *haiga*, the material shape the poem would assume could not reduce it to the sounds and meanings conveyed by the content. Calligraphy, visual puns, the strategic use of different yet homophonic *kana*, the subtle shades conveyed by different yet synonymous *kanji*, and the intermingling of script and pictorial forms all contributed to an unlimited horizon of graphic play. Add to this the extreme intermingling of poem, painting, and calligraphy characteristic of *haiga*, and Kuki's distinction between word-based poetry and image-based art loses all relevance. Calligraphy is at once visual and verbal.[156] One can neither reduce it to its visual quality, nor to the verbal representations of the characters. In this sense, the production of *haikai* and *hokku* exhibits a certain fascination with writing.

Karatani, in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, argues that the status of language undergoes a transformation with the language reforms of *genbun itchi*. In pre-Meiji cultural production the written word is a rhetorical device, consistent with Morris' rhetoric of reading and

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154 Karatani, "One Spirit," p. 262.

155 James A. Fujii, *Complicit Fictions: The Subject in Modern Japanese Prose Narrative* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 9.

156 Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 116.

the importance of calligraphy and visuality. In his critique of phonocentric interiority, Karatani uses Buson to demonstrate that the production of *haikai* was much more related to the exteriority of the written word than the interiority of subjective expression we normally associate with poetic language.[157] While *genbun itchi* neither eliminated *kanji* nor brought writing and speech together in practice, it did manage to suppress visual play and to change the status of language by creating an interiorised phonetic space where national language (both written and spoken) converges with external "reality" and an interiorised subjective position.[158] Ideologically consistent with the standardising impetus of modernity and the newly formed nation-state, *genbun itchi* is yet another manifestation of modernity's repression of a break with the past—and all its histories and heterogeneities—in favour of the unified voice and singular history of continuity and national "consciousness."

> The well-established tendency to view *genbun itchi* as an attempt to create a written style approximating spoken Japanese ignores the politics of standardisation that was perhaps the most important impetus behind the government's appropriation of the movement. Colloquial Japanese, like the spoken language in any other country. is marked by tremendous range and variation. The very formula that defines *genbun itchi* as a written representation of spoken language (as if there were such a monolithic entity) reveals an ideology at work.[159]

Thus the interior sites of cultural and self-expression exemplified by poetry as posited by Kuki belies this complicity of *genbun itchi* with national ideology. Poetry as the coded language of the interior becomes the ideal site for contested values and for the ontological difference between East and West. As content, a poem can mystify, concealing meaning from its readers

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[157] Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, pp. 21-22. Interestingly, Morris uses Buson in a similar way to counter phonocentricism in poetry and the dichotomy of poetry and painting. See Morris, "Buson and Shiki: Part One," pp. 421-425.

[158] See Karatani's "The Discovery of Interiority," in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, pp. 45-75.

[159] Fujii, p. 96.

rather than play with them and construct itself through them. Readers gain access to this repository of timeless ideals only through membership to an intimate circle—a hermeneutic strategy. Poetry becomes the property—an interior site of absolute possession—of Japan and Kuki. Poetics become grounded in ethnic ontology, now aligned with the unitary nation as a national ontology.

VIII. Coda: Poetics and Ethnic Ontology, National Ontology

> We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind.
>
> Walter Benjamin
> The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction[160]

Walter Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," outlines the possibility for a real politicisation of art with the advent of reproducible forms. For Benjamin, such reproducibility emancipates art from its dependence on ritual, whether it be religious, magical, or even political, by negating considerations of authenticity and leading to a greater awareness of the social function of art based on politics. For Benjamin, the goal is a politicisation of the aesthetic that negates the aestheticisation of the political. Such a movement reveals the inadequacy of the conception of art for art's sake, that is, of art simply as expression by exposing the importance of the very materiality of forms of art and their particular modes of production and circulation. Ultimately, such a mode acknowledges the complicity of art and ideology, of aesthetics and geopolitics, in Kuki's exposition of Japanese art and poetry.

In the context of the present paper Benjamin's work seems particularly apposite. Kuki insisted that the work of art suggested a consciousness. Cultural understanding lay beyond the pale of critical judgement and material concerns, but through aesthetics one could catch a glimpse of ethnic expression. As an essence that appears and flees through the spontaneity of the brush or the brevity of the poem, Japanese art could thus escape the universal narratives and rationality imposed by modernity and the West. In an aesthetic leap Kuki posited the inaccessibility of

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[160] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 223.

culture to its "others." For Kuki, culture must constitute a privileged site of purity and homogeneity, accessible only through lived experience. While foreign elements may penetrate into the self-contained sphere of the cultural community (Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Western modernity), there is always an element or core of ethnic reality that remains untouched. Synthesis and organic transformation sublate the foreign in Japan making it not really foreign, or at least transforming it into a superior domestic form tinged with the active principles of the native. In the case of modernity and the West, however, Kuki resists the synthesis that Okakura called for. Hence Kuki aligns the losses of modernity with the West and the possibility for transformation with the interior site of Japan (a Japanese modernity) located hermeneutically at all points in the past.

Kuki can not deal with the heterogeneous within contemporary Japan, with the formation of new classes during Edo and during his own time. He could not possibly incorporate considerations of production and circulation because the ethnic expression found in Kuki's reading of cultural artefacts could not be socially mediated: it had to be beyond history. In a sense, Kuki provides the antithesis to Benjamin's call to politicise the aesthetic by attempting to aestheticise the cultural community identified as the nation by using art as a site for contested values between Japan and the West, and paradoxically implying that the social does not mediate cultural production but that art expresses an intangible and inaccessible ethnic ontology. Ultimately, Kuki is haunted by a familiar problem: the ontic/ontological problem of Heidegger.

Yet in this project I might have obscured the importance of Kuki's reaction by focusing on its shortcomings. Indeed, Kuki provided a necessary critique of the West. He managed to escape Heidegger's universal pretensions by at least focusing on a particular historical moment (Edo),

even if he had a tendency to range across periods. As a result, he had less of Heidegger's universalist impulse. Nonetheless, even though Kuki reacted to Western discourse, he could not properly problematise it. He became trapped within its very confines and adopted some rather dubious methodologies choosing to simply transpose the privileged site from the West to Japan.

In this paper I have also argued that exteriority need not imply the shallow spatial essences of Suarès. I have attempted to demonstrate that, on the contrary, exteriority can imply a historically rigorous treatment of cultural production, circulation, and reception by acknowledging social conditions of construction and relationships of power. For example, I have tried to explicate how the structure of the *bundan* necessitated a different conception of authorship, and how the production and reception of *haikai* could only be based on a relationship between author and reader vastly different from our own. Furthermore, I have tried to explicate how painting techniques must be grounded in social convention and read in a way consistent with the truth effects they produce and the coded relationships they are produced within. I have also tried to emphasise all along that Edo cultural production marks an important shift from court to city, from feudal order to mercantile energy, from elite production to urban circulation, and is based on a series of important recoded relationships which Kuki tends to obscure. Therefore, when I posit the exteriority of cultural production I attempt to deal with the specifics of history, materiality, and social convention.

What then of interiority and "temporal art?" In contrast to exteriority that deals with history and its losses and transformations, interiority evades these considerations by focusing on internal essences. Yet the search for the eternal and the temporal characteristics that Suarès posits in Western "consciousness" is part of an important power relationship that Kuki reacts against.

The construction and polarisation of East and West must be understood in the context of Western imperialism and modern geopolitics. When Suarès discredits Japanese art as being spatial, atemporal, and external we must understand the ideological implications inherent in such discourse. Similarly, when Kuki argues for the temporal and inward qualities of Japanese art, we must seek to comprehend his efforts even if he did not properly problematise the universal expansionist claims of modernity to which he reacted.

Ultimately, Kuki's 'history of Asiatic ideals' missed the point. By attempting to demonstrate how ideals are expressed through art and poetry, Kuki eliminated all material history from his discussion. While Kuki focused on a specific moment in history, his claims generally reached beyond his period of choice (Edo) to include all periods, bringing his object of analysis into modernity and the interiority of the unitary nation. Thus there is little history in Kuki's account and preciously little about social convention and conditions of cultural production. While we should be compelled to admire Kuki's defence of Japan in the wake of Western cultural imperialism, there is little wonder why such a poetico-ontology of the nation can lead to the dangers of an aesthetico-political moment when left unproblematised.[161]

Indeed, the complicity of hermeneutics and the phenomenological subject with this form of aestheticised politics must be understood in relation to the very particular matrix of power that characterises modernity and its possible critiques. The formation of new social classes and the urban upheaval of industrialisation lead both Kuki and Heidegger to react against what they perceived to be cultural debasement by the masses. For both, culture is a selectively recuperable

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[161] The historical complicity of Kuki and many of his colleagues at Kyoto University with the rise of Japanese fascism and Japan's colonial exploits in Asia has been taken up elsewhere. See Sakai, "Modernity and its Critique," and Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," both cited previously.

object—a hermeneutic. While both turn to a phenomenological subject in order to deal with the transformations of history by attempting to restore history's losses through personal aesthetics, Kuki's hermeneutic moment at least displays some historical sense by focusing on Edo, while Heidegger abstracts history altogether. Nevertheless, both succumb to the allure of modernity by implicating the geopolitics of modernity—of transhistorical nations and ontological essences.

And thus we return to a question I alluded to earlier and intentionally left open. Where can resistance occur? Was Kuki doomed to fail the moment he began to contemplate the issue, the moment he even spoke of modernity? Of course, we can not escape the boundaries of our own discourse. We can however, begin to problematise modernity by questioning the conditions of its very possibility. Foucault himself characterised modernity as that moment which represses its very historicity.[162] Even though we could never exhaustively define the modern condition, we can effectively question its inevitability and inherent dangers by questioning the binarisms and logic upon which it thrives. I have attempted to question one such binarism: the distinction and inherent incompatibility of temporal and spatial essences, between poetry and painting. By emphasising the importance of exteriority, social convention, and particular forms of cultural production and reception, I have tried to expose the complicity of Kuki's discussion of poetry and painting with some very dubious power relationships, and demonstrate that such distinctions are anachronistic in the context of Edo period cultural production. I have tried to demonstrate that Kuki's reaction to modernity is characterised by a particular complicity of art and ideology, of aesthetics and geopolitics. These associations rely upon a very modern logic—that of subjectivity as interiority, both as a unified subject and as a self-contained unitary national culture. I hope to have ultimately

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[162] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 12.

demonstrated that Kuki conceives of poetry, painting, and ethnic expression in a way that discloses his very complicity within modernity.

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