

Discussion and Comments on Papers for Part 7: "Confrontation of Inequalities: Border Crossings"

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I am particularly happy to have been given the job of commenting on the papers in this panel because we are in perfect gender balance between presenters and commentators. Perhaps this means I am accepted in the company of feminists, or that Prof. Inaga knows of my work on *The Tale of Genji* in which I detail the ways in which Hikaru Genji can be regarded as a transvestite mother. Indeed, Genji the fictional hero crosses many cultural boundaries on his journey to regain his native rights to kingship, transgresses sexual taboos such as that which forbade sleeping with an Empress, particularly one married to his father, or wedding a young girl hardly out of puberty, on the eve of his official wife's death. And Genji sleeps with boys, the lesser of his many transgressions. It is my view that the writer of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu, in her overriding interest to write the character of Hikaru Genji as a male sex object in the eyes of women, constructs a new type of fiction in which things are definitely not as they must have appeared in the real world. Hikaru Genji is perhaps the first real fictional *ekkyoosha*, transgressor of boundaries, in the history of world fiction. Though male Japanese critics throughout the centuries since *The Tale of Genji* was written have continued to attach Buddhist concepts of karma and retribution, monastic seclusion, et cetera, to this narrative, I believe it is a true work of fiction and that its appeal is its very trans-gressive qualities. It must have been scandalous and wildly popular in its day. It is the best book I know in Japanese for delving into the complexities of relations between the sexes.

Now, having said that, I believe that one of the themes that has emerged from his conference, is whether a Japanese can feel comfortable intervening through his/her anthropological research with the other, whether the transgressive ends justify the inquisitive means. Well, I think that Murasaki Shikibu, once she began to write *The Tale of Genji*, realized that she was on very controversial territory, but that did not stop her from writing anyway, and write she did. And the more the transgressions proceed apace, the better her writing skills become.

I am convinced that yes, the Japanese must touch the wound, yes, must provide succor to those they find in desperate life-threatening conditions. It is expected of Japan to write its own post-colonial history of intervention. When that is done, it is a

requirement for such an important civilization as Japan, as Huntington has termed it in his *The Clash of Civilizations*, or to share the burden of humanistic interventions. But there are always problems that can be blamed on the need to change the model from post-colonial to a new model, which respects the objective 'others' rights to control the framework of the intervenee. But this is like writing the novel and forgetting to write any conclusion. I read in Prof. Inaga's paper a deeply felt intellectual repulsion to physical intervention where blood and death are at hand, a sub text of old fashioned *imi* or *mononoimi*, or *kegare*, including mental wounds. This is disturbing and radical.

I read in Prof. Miyaji's very touching account, on the other hand, a genuine attempt to come to grips with her personal problem of not being able to touch the wound of the child Siyada, near death in Djibouti, resulting in her guilt at not providing the personal attention she knew would bring the child back from the brink, give her a chance. She feels badly about that. She wonders what it is, deep inside her that made her make her choice not to touch the girl. Would you touch her now? I would ask. Have you changed? Do you find some deep-seated antipathy that made you turn your eyes away from death, as Japanese did in the ancient accounts? Did something older than your consciousness and education rise up? I know that Americans and Canadians would rise up and reach out because it would be morally wrong not to do so. I also realize that our cultural constructs maybe altruism, as well as our Judeo-Christian beliefs would propel us, if even not in full sight, toward intervention. Canadians are famous for this, and one of the country's enduring myths among the Anglophones, is that of the image of Canadian men dying in the service of Britain at various battles against the Germans in France during WWI (1914-18). Sacrifice is part of national identity I suppose.

Prof. Miyaji, you use the famous feminist slogan 'the personal is political,' perhaps from Germaine Greer, and add to that by saying a 'the cultural is political.' (Title of section 4.) Would not the logic of your extension lead you to say 'the personal is cultural,' the 'cultural is personal'? Would this lead you to the conclusion that your own personal intervention was in order? Or would it make any difference?

I love it when you say, "respecting the other is not simply to look on." What do you think of Ogata Sadako's task, and the way she performs it? Is there a reason you can give, apart from the political, why Japan is more or less incapable of humanitarian aid in any form other than money? Thank you Prof. Miyaji for a wonderful paper.

I thank Prof. Kawashima for a very thorough going paper about the end of school busing in Boston. Since I have lived in Toronto, Canada for the past 27 years, and not in the U.S., the country of my birth, I don't feel any more qualified to speak about the situation of the black population in Boston than what I know largely from the media. What I understand you to be saying is that while school busing has largely

ameliorated segregation of blacks from white communities in Boston, that racism still persists. I suppose it can never be totally erased. Human beings discriminate, and make decisions distinguishing the characteristics of one group from another. It is tribal. But at least, as you say, blacks themselves have come to believe in quality of education over the quantity of blacks sitting next to whites in classrooms, and that diversity among all races in the Boston area is preferable to complete, or I should say completely impossible, integration. More importantly, you say that segregation and its accompanying evils have been eradicated, and that 'busing' was part of the struggle. You quote a source as saying that the "U.S. has been divided into two separate and unequal societies: mainly white suburbs, and the segmented African American and other minorities' inner cities." I am not sure I can buy this as a simple fact. You go on to state that in Boston, just blocks away from the ghetto areas are elegant mansions owned by upper class African Americans. Who are these people? Have they emerged from the ghetto, transferred themselves from other cities to these houses near the ghetto, or are they the beneficiaries of quality education and 'affirmative action'? Now that affirmative action is as dead as school busing, what is your opinion about blacks maintaining and/or increasing their numbers among the middle class? You say that democracy is not living up to its name if the country leaves economic advancement up to the local people alone. What do you think should be done?

Finally, Prof. Kawashima, so many things have changed in the way Americans who are not black see the African American as an integral part of manageable, desirable, popular, even heroic culture. There are black heroes like Tiger Woods in the formerly white-dominated pro-golf world, there have long been black divas in the opera who have thrilled us all with the power of their voices; Leontyne Price and Jessye Norman; great writers such as Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, and of course James Baldwin who doesn't even figure in the era of integration; white filmmakers like Steven Spielberg who made the wonderfully sympathetic film 'Libertad' about the early black experience in America, as well as my favorite of his films 'The Color Purple' which deals with black life and love in early twentieth century America, and Alex Haley who wrote the history of black America from its beginnings in slavery in his book *Roots*, which became a favorite TV series for white America. In Canadian cities such as Toronto, already, the white population is less than 50 percent, and the rate of trans-racial marriages continues to grow. Soon all of America will be the color of chocolate through racial mixing, and no one is complaining. Mixed race couples are the norm these days.

My final question would be to ask you what is the position of the Japanese scholar who crosses the border into a realm of human rights and racial problems? How

do you deal with the divide? Do you identify? Do you wish to liberate yourself from intolerance embedded in your nation's social structure?

And now, finally, to Prof. Tokita's paper on Australian-Japanese marriages, taking up her marriage as example. I am married to a Japanese person too, so I am sympathetic to all of your attempts to come to grips with terminology and role-playing, but I am not at all able to deal successfully with your arguments. First of all, your list of suffixes which might be useful in naming the game. How about 'trans-' to replace all those other inefficient suffixes? You never seem to settle on any one term that is good enough. You seem to like 'international', but then you use 'intercultural' in the next paragraph. The next chart includes words that I don't know such as 'blackbirding,' and introduce me to people I don't know, Kenneth and Yasuko Myer. Who are they and what do they represent in your scheme? Why not take a stab at the differences between Japanese attitudes and Australian attitudes? After all, you married your husband because he was an informant.

You say that the Western male who marries a Japanese often assumes the worst aspects of Japanese masculinity, that he goes further than his Japanese male counterpart. I know of at least two cases where the Japanese female takes the colonizing role, demasculinizing (emasculating) her mate. So, I need to know in your case, since you mention it, who has the upper hand? In my case, it varies from day to day, from issue to issue. How about an answer?

Now, about marrying someone from the 'target culture.' Do you have statistics about the percentages, or actual numbers of such marriages? I am really taken aback by your statement that one gains a privileged access to knowledge by marrying your informant. This, to me, does not seem like the stuff of longevity in a relationship, and can only be subjugating and invasive. Again, I don't see how this can be very beneficial. Can you explain?

"Marriage deconstructs alterity/otherness." "The exotic becomes the humdrum," you say. I agree with you totally, but later on I become totally baffled by your suggestion that your autonomy is threatened by having to use the requisite *aizuchi* or non-linguistic acknowledgements required by fluent use of Japanese. How?

Finally, in your abstract you say that sexual relations have been a time honored means of bridging gaps between people from differing cultures, and that is that. How actually does it work as a transcultural, crossing-the-boundaries type of activity? I am sorry for so many questions, but there are so many questions in your paper. Thank you.