

A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer

Kuki Shūzō's Version

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The title of my essay obviously refers to the “Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer” which the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) wrote in 1959, and which appears in *On the Way to Language* (*Unterwegs zur Sprache*). The dialogue is a fictional reconstruction of an actual meeting that Heidegger had with Tezuka Tomio (1903–1983), a Japanese scholar of German literature who visited the philosopher in Freiburg at the end of March 1954. The dialogue begins with a reference to the Japanese philosopher Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941), who had met Heidegger in 1927 at the house of Heidegger’s teacher, Edmund Husserl. In November 1927 Kuki attended Heidegger’s lectures on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, as well as his seminar on Schelling’s *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, at the University of Marburg. In the spring of 1928 Kuki audited Heidegger’s lectures on Leibniz’s *Logic* and his seminar on Aristotle’s *Physics*. The Dialogue begins as follows:

Japanese: You know Count Shuzo Kuki. He studied with you for a number of years.

Inquirer: Count Kuki has a lasting place in my memory.

J: He died too early. His teacher Nishida wrote his epitaph—for over a year he worked on this supreme tribute to his pupil.

I: I am happy to have photographs of Kuki's grave and of the grove in which it lies.

J: Yes, I know the temple garden in Kyoto. Many of my friends often join me to visit the tomb there. The garden was established toward the end of the twelfth century by the priest Hōnen, on the eastern hill of what was then the Imperial city of Kyoto, as a place for reflection and deep meditation.

I: And so, that temple grove remains the fitting place for him who died early.

J: All his reflection was devoted to what the Japanese call *iki*. (HEIDEGGER 1971, 1)

The dialogue presents a critique of Kuki, which is actually Heidegger's critique of aesthetics. Heidegger's mistrust of aesthetics is well known: with Kant the work of art had become autonomous but, as a result, it had lost its cognitive power. No work of art could advance any claim to truth once aesthetic judgment had been separated from a critique of pure reason. Heidegger's search for the Being of a work of art was an attempt to give back to the work of art the truth of its existence, thus reshaping the role that art plays in the formation of human existence, or *Dasein*. According to Heidegger, with Kuki things got even more complicated: as a Japanese, Kuki adopted Western categories in order to talk about the Being (*Sein*) dwelling in a house of language which had nothing to do with Western houses. Heidegger questions the validity of Kuki's method in very clear terms, as one can see from the Dialogue:

J: Later, after his return from Europe, Count Kuki gave lectures in Kyoto on the aesthetics of Japanese art and poetry. These lectures have come out as a book. In the book, he attempts to consider the nature of Japanese art with the help of European aesthetics.

I: The name "aesthetics" and what it names grow out of European thinking, out of philosophy. Consequently, aesthetic consideration must ultimately remain alien to Eastasian thinking.

J: Aesthetics furnishes us with the concepts to grasp what is of concern to us as art and poetry.

I: Here you are touching on a controversial question which I often discussed with Count Kuki—the question whether it is necessary and rightful for Eastasians to chase after the European conceptual systems. (HEIDEGGER 1971, 2–3)

Kuki never had a chance to respond to Heidegger’s charge—he had died eighteen years before the publication of the *Dialogue*. However, I believe that it is possible to elicit Kuki’s critique of Heidegger from Kuki’s writings, although he was too polite to confront the venerable master in any direct way. In this paper I will try to elicit this critique using the poetry which Kuki wrote during his extensive stay in Europe from fall 1921 until December 1928. To begin with the conclusion I would argue that, had Kuki written a rebuttal to Heidegger’s *Dialogue*, he would have probably stressed the fact that this is not a dialogue at all. It is a monologue in which, at the end, Heidegger only encounters himself and no one else, as we can see from Heidegger’s use of Kuki’s key aesthetic term, “*iki*,” which Kuki had discussed in his 1930 best-seller *Iki no kōzō* [いきの構造 [The Structure of Iki]. Kuki had defined *iki*—usually translated as “chic,” or “refined”—as the Being of an ethnicity shaped by Shinto rules of “allure” (*bitai* 媚態), Buddhist rules of “renunciation” (*akirame* 諦め) and *bushidō* rules of “pride” (*ikiji* 意気地). The sum of the three qualities is the equivalent of *iki*. On the other hand, for Heidegger, *iki* is “the gracious, the breath of the stillness of luminous delight, the appropriating occurrence of the lightening message of grace, the coming of what has been, the emergence into openness in the sense of unconcealedness, the reality of presence in its essential origin” (HEIDEGGER 1971, 44). In other words, *iki* is Heidegger’s philosophical house.

Does an encounter with the Other take place in Heidegger, and is such an encounter possible? It seems to me that to these questions Kuki gives negative answers. I will try to prove it by comparing Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin’s poem “The Ister” to the poetry that Kuki wrote in Paris in 1925–1926—poems which I recently translated in English (MARRA 2004). Heidegger dedicated the 1942 semester course to a reading of “The Ister,” discussing the role that unhomeliness plays in the

formation of one's homeliness. By unhomeliness I mean the encounter with something that is outside oneself (and, therefore, extremely difficult to know), something other than oneself, foreign to oneself—in one word, the Other. Poetry is an eloquent example of what happens when a poet encounters the Other—an exteriority which poetry determines whether it can be known or not, whether it can be penetrated or not. Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's poem centered on the role that the Other plays in the construction of homeliness, our feeling at home in our natural surroundings. Basically, Heidegger posited the Ister (which is the Greek name of the Donau River) as an enigma which, once it is solved, discloses the truth that an encounter with the Other is possible. My reading of Kuki's poetry leads me to draw exactly the opposite conclusion—a meeting with the Other for Kuki was utterly impossible.¹ If Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's poetry and my reading of Kuki's poetry lead to the conclusion that their approach to the Other was diametrically opposed, this means that the two philosophers actually dealt with different kinds of Others. Let us begin by reading Hölderlin's hymn "The Ister."

Now come, fire!
 We are impatient
 To look upon Day,
 And when the trial
 Has passed through the knees
 One may perceive the cries in the wood.
 But, as for us, we sing from the Indus,
 Arrived from afar, and
 From the Alpheus, long we
 Have sought what is fitting,
 Not without wings may one
 Reach out for that which is nearest

1. I reached this conclusion by looking at Kuki's poetry, which reflects Kuki's isolation in Paris—an isolation that led him to refine the issue in later works such as *Iki no kōzō* and *Gūzensei no mondai* 偶然性の問題 [The Problem of Contingency, 1935]. In these works, the meeting with the Other becomes the basic condition for the realization of a self which is free from the necessity of totality thanks to daily actualizations of chance meetings. See SARTO 2007, 1–3 and chapters five and six of MAYEDA 2006.

Directly
 And get to the other side.
 But here we wish to build.
 For rivers make arable
 The land. For when herbs are growing
 And to the same in summer
 The animals go to drink,
 There too will human kind go.
 This one, however, is called the Ister.
 Beautifully he dwells. The pillars' foliage burns,
 And stirs. Wildly they stand
 Supporting one another; above,
 A second measure, juts out
 The roof of rocks. No wonder, therefore,
 I say, this river
 Invited Hercules,
 Distantly gleaming, down by Olympus,
 When he, to look for shadows,
 Came up from the sultry isthmus,
 For full of courage they were
 In that place, but, because of the spirits,
 There's need of coolness too. That is why that hero
 Preferred to come here to the well-springs and yellow banks,
 Highly fragrant on top, and black
 With fir woods, in whose depths
 A huntsman loves to amble
 At noon, and growth is audible
 In resinous trees of the Ister,
 Yet almost this river seems
 To travel backwards and
 I think it must come from
 The East.
 Much could
 Be said about this. And why does
 It cling to the mountains, straight? The other,
 The Rhine, has gone away
 Sideways. Not for nothing rivers flow

Through dry land. But how? A sign is needed,
 Nothing else, plain and honest, so that
 Sun and moon it may bear in mind, inseparable,
 And go away, day and night no less, and
 The Heavenly feel warm one beside the other....

(HÖLDERLIN 1998, 253–57)

In his discussion of this poem Heidegger sees in the flow of the Donau River an example of encounter with the foreign. Springing from the Swabian Alps the Donau has shaped the culture of the many countries it runs through before entering the Black Sea. In Greece it takes the name of Ister—the name that gives the title to Hölderlin’s poem. Together with the Rhine, the Donau is a landmark of German culture, the provider of a sense of ease and homeliness to the German people. What does homeliness mean? It means that one has reached what is nearest to him. However, Heidegger reminds us that what is nearest to us is actually the most remote from us. One needs wings in order to reach it. In other words, our local prejudices hardly guarantee us a sense of homeliness unless they are confronted by what discloses them as mere prejudices. Men are thrown into a world, but this world is hardly homely unless it is confronted by what is foreign to it, what is unhomely. The foreign brings to the notion of homeliness what is absent from the place in which we have been thrown—an unhomeliness which is an original ingredient of homeliness, and which will eventually make one feel at home. The gods will finally live one beside the other in warmth. Stated differently, homeliness cannot exist aside from unhomeliness and the foreign.

The Ister is foreign to the Donau, although these two names refer to the same river. The Ister flows in the land of the Indus, of the Alpheus, and of Hercules who has been invited as guest to the coolness of the Alps. The poem begins with an invitation to the fire of the sultry isthmus to find its way to the cool land of the Donau. Hercules brings to Germany what Germany lacks: the fire of passion and inebriation, the Dionysian moment that the German land of Apollo—the land of cold rationality and planning—has forgotten. The Ister succeeds in bringing to Germany this forgotten dimension since the calm waters of the river look as if they travel backwards, back to their point of origin. The incor-

poration of fire into this cold rationality gives the German people an ultimate sense of homeliness—a sense that could only be achieved with an encounter with a foreign land. Homeliness is achieved only after passing through the unhomeliness of a foreign Other. Once true homeliness has been reclaimed, the Donau clings to the mountain, the regained origin, rather than going sideways like the Rhine.

For the time being I will leave aside the ominous tone of Heidegger's words which were pronounced one year before Germany would bring its call to to the battlefields of southern, Mediterranean Europe. The question that I want to raise in this essay is what happens when the foreign unhomeliness is utterly Other and the Other is not the source of one's homeliness. Then, the encounter with the Other must be much more dramatic than the one Heidegger described with the word *Stoss* (shock). I will turn to Kuki's poetic work—a work that clearly indicates that Heidegger's dialectics of “homeliness–unhomeliness” is based on a homogeneous type of otherness. If so, how can the unhomely be truly Other? As Kuki's critique points out, Heidegger's unhomeliness is not the result of an encounter with the utterly Other; it is simply an incorporation of the same into the concept of homeliness. Greece was much less foreign to Germany than Germany and France were foreign to Japan. As a matter of fact, Kuki spent nine years studying and writing in Germany and France. His encounter with the Other was truly unhomely. In other words, Kuki's unhomeliness was truly foreign. His level of discomfort in this encounter was much higher than Hercules's discomfort when he left the sultry isthmus for the well-springs and yellow banks of the land of fir woods.

KUKI'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER

How did Kuki experience his encounter with the Other? Kuki's encounter with Europe was quite brutal, although he did not suffer from extended periods of discrimination, due to his aristocratic status and great personal wealth. However, we can easily imagine the amount of tension that Europe was producing with regard to racial matters. The following is an account of Kuki's arrival in Heidelberg in 1921 by Her-

mann Glockner, a student of Heinrich Rickert who used to live in his teacher's house:

One day Rickert surprised me with the news that he had just decided to give private lessons to a Japanese, a fabulously wealthy samurai who had asked him to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with him. This unusually distinguished gentleman looked totally different from the rest of his countrymen. He was tall and slender, with a relatively narrow face, a nose almost like that of Europeans, and unusually delicate hands. His name was Kuki, which meant something like "Nine Devils" (as he himself told us). (quoted in MARRA 2004, 15)

Kuki produced a critique of racism which is humorous and quite incisive in a poem titled "Yellow Face" (*Kiirōi kao*)—a dialogue between a European who presents a racist argument based on the notion of sickness, an Asian positivist thinker who introduces an argument based on the notion of cause and effect, an Asian metaphysician whose argument is based on the notion of God, and a European critical thinker whose argument is based on the notion of value. They all challenge each other in finding the best explanation for the existence of different skin pigmentation. The poem is included in a collection titled *Sleep Talking in Paris* (*Parī no negoto*), and was originally published in the journal *Myōjō* (Morning Star) in October 1926:

The European:

Your face is so yellow
 Inhabitants of the southern countries of Spain
 And Italy,
 Unable to stand strong sunlight,
 Have a brown face but
 Not yellow.
 It might be rude to say but
 The Chinese and the Japanese have contracted
 Something like a chronic jaundice....
 This is what we Europeans
 Actually think.

The Positivist:

This seems a little harsh.

The place where we find skin pigments and
 The layer where the yellow color of jaundice
 Is present are different.
 It seems that our ancestors
 Somehow overate
 Pumpkins and tangerines.
 Maybe they also drank too much
 Of the Yellow River and Yellow Sea.

The Metaphysician:

The distinction between races is inborn.
 In a former life we committed mischief,
 The gods got terribly upset,
 Then the demons came upon us,
 Caught us while we were running away,
 Forced on our heads the filth of urine and feces.
 Our yellow face
 Stands as eternal memorial
 To the merciless curse
 Of just gods.

The Kritik Philosopher:

I am not going to mimic the arguments
 Of the birdcatcher in the Magic Flute, but
 There are yellow persons
 As there are yellow birds.
 The issue of becoming is a different complexity,
 Reality is given as reality.
 In short, we should establish appropriate categories
 For the concept of yellow race
 And look at it from the standpoint of value.
 Well, how can a yellow face become white?
 Let's turn this problem from pure reason
 To the realm of the practical. (MARRA 2004, 55–57)

How did Kuki explain the issue of different skin pigmentation? He did it by developing a philosophy of contingency—the race is determined by the rolling of the dice, a purely contingent act which breaks the chain of necessity. There are three levels in Kuki's structure of contingency:

Categorical contingency (*teigenteki gūzensei* 定言的偶然性), which explains the individuality of race over the generality of being born as a human being rather than as an animal or a tree. However, this contingency is predicated on what Kuki calls “hypothetical necessity,” which is the result of a cause and an effect. I was born Japanese because my parents were Japanese. And yet, this necessity is predicated on a second type of contingency:

Hypothetical contingency (*kasetsuteki gūzen* 假說的偶然). The encounter (*sōgū* 遭遇) between the Japanese parents happened by chance; it was a chance encounter (*kaikō* 邂逅). Again, this is not a pure contingency, since it is based on what Kuki calls “disjunctive necessity.” Although the Japanese parents met by chance, they worked in the same factory. This necessity is, once again, predicated on a third type of contingency:

Disjunctive contingency (*risetsuteki gūzen* 離接的偶然). Although the parents worked in the same factory, they happened to be alive, a fact which includes the possibility of the necessity of death and an opening to the ultimate reality of nothingness.

In other words, human existence is a reality created by a series of contingencies: an individual is characterized by its difference from another for no necessary reason (categorical contingency); it meets by chance with another for no necessary reason (hypothetical contingency); and it eventually fades into nothingness for no necessary reason (disjunctive contingency). Kuki discussed the issue of contingency in a poem titled “*Gūzensei*” (Contingency), which we find in the collection *Fragments from Paris* (*Haben, Parī yori*, 1925).

Could you find a proof to the design
Of parallel straight lines?
That was your aim:
Did you withdraw your fundamental claim?
Did the central issue become
That to the angles of a triangle’s sum
Two right angles are equal?
Or was it less than a 180-degree sequel?
In Alexandria the old book was found,

Principles of Geometry two thousand years ago bound,
 No matter whether the worms ate it or not,
 Euclid is a great man, never forgot,
 Who with lines and points the shape of the universe drew!
 You and I, I and you,
 The secret of a chance encounter I saw,
 Of love the anti-law.
 This is the geometry of life's retribution,
 Won't you bring it for me to some solution?
 At the straight line of cause and effect A we look!
 The straight line of cause and effect B we took!
 The principle that two parallel lines do not intersect,
 To the intersection of parallel lines don't you object?
 With this, contingency is fulfilled,
 With chaos Venus is filled,
 Two people a string of pearls detect
 Brought by the waves of cause and effect.

(MARRA 2004, 51–52)

KUKI'S CRITIQUE OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES OF HOMOGENEITY

The challenge that Kuki's thought presented to the homogeneity of Western constructions of the Other was actually based on a series of deconstructions which were quite in tune with Heidegger's project of dismantling metaphysics. It is paradoxical to notice that, while Kuki was learning from Heidegger the need to deconstruct two thousand years of Western philosophy, he was actually pointing out the limitations of Heidegger's philosophy by critiquing the homogeneous nature of Heidegger's Other. Kuki challenged all the major ingredients of Western metaphysics— notions such as necessity, causality, the primacy of identity, sameness, completion, and the law of non-contradiction. We find in his poem "The Dialectical Method" (*Benshōronteki hōhō*) a sarcastic attack on the Hegelian dialectics of thesis, synthesis, and antithesis. (Kuki wrote two versions of this poem, the second of which was composed in rhyming verse.)

Spirit!
 Hell, paradise
 Sobbing out a counterpoint.
 Glaring at each other are clouds of rain,
 Not even a canon
 is born!
 Living in a field at dawn
 Hornets and red starlilies
 Entwine to make honey,
 Who can explain this?
 God and witch
 Plight their promise and give birth to humanity.
 These are the rules of life,
 Thesis, antithesis, synthesis,
 The tone of logos,
 The singer a priest,
 How good, a triple time
 Dancing the waltz.

Hell, paradise—they disappoint,
 Sobbing out a counterpoint,
 A journey is a fellow traveler's grime,
 Glaring at each other are clouds of rain,
 Even a canon in vain
 Misses the time.
 Hornets and starlilies
 Entwining to make honey with smiles,
 Bless the fields in early summer wild,
 Benevolent god and witch,
 Embrace each other, become one twitch,
 Give birth to a human child!
 The tone of life,
 Thesis, antithesis, synthesis' strife,
 Well now, call the tune,
 Blind priest,
 How grand, a triple feast,
 Dance the waltz soon! (MARRA 2004, 52–53 AND 118)

Basically, Kuki asked the question, how could the contingency of human life be reduced to a mathematical formula? How could the experience of existence be described by any model of pure rationality? The poem “The Geometry of Gray” (*Haiiro no kika*) is an eloquent witness to the futility of such attempts.

A perfect circle wrapping a dream’s tips,
 How many days going round and round,
 The orbit an ellipse,
 A fire burning in the focal point is found.
 Waking up a triangle,
 A theory born of the angle,
 The chart a rectangle,
 How many names for stars dangle?
 A round square
 = contradiction,
 The awakening of the soul’s glare?
 ∞ opposition’s fiction.
 The geometry of gray,
 Is that the spirit solving human play? (MARRA 2006, 114)

Human life is much too complex to be reduced to a law, a method, whether Hegelian dialectics or Kantian categories. The following is a short poem (#128) from the collection *Sonnets from Paris* (*Parī shōkyoku*):

<i>Hanchū ni</i>	How many years have I spent
<i>Toraegatakaru</i>	Lamenting to myself
<i>Onogami o</i>	This body of mine—
<i>Ware to nagekite</i>	As difficult to grasp
<i>Hetsuru ikutose</i>	As a category?

(MARRA 2006, 92)

Rationalism by itself does not explain human life, at least not the rationalism on which logic is based. The un-named, un-articulated, un-expressed are as powerful tools to make sense of life as any fully articulated techniques based on purely technical/technological terms. The negative is as powerful as the positive once it comes to trying to grasp the unnameable reality of existence. This is Kuki’s message in the poem

“The Negative Dimension” (*Fugōryō*, the Japanese translation of Kant’s “*negative Grösse*”).

In a shadow there is the blessing of a shadow,
 It is not just that the shadow is not exposed to sunlight.
 Ice has the taste of ice,
 It is not the same as cooled hot water.
 You can pull out your white hair,
 Black hair won’t grow.
 A eunuch
 Cannot become a lady-in-waiting.
 Plus and minus—both extremes
 Are affirmations second to none.
 The law of contradiction regrettably
 Is an odd pair, a one-eyed man, a man with one arm.
 Glory to yin!
 Glory to yang!
 Good,
 Smell the fragrance!
 Evil,
 Let the flower bloom! (MARRA 2004, 51)

As several Western thinkers had already pointed out—the Frenchman Henri Bergson (1859–1941) first among all—the inability to fully articulate a philosophy of existence was due to the tendency of reducing it to quantitative time (*temps-quantité*), the measurable fixed time of the clock, rather than explaining it in terms of qualitative time (*temps-qualité*) of pure duration that no clock can catch. The latter is heterogeneous, dynamic, and creative. Only the time of pure duration can explain the heterogeneity of human life, catching what falls in the cracks of the time of the clock. Pure duration is the flowing of inner life that no formula can catch. As Kuki argues in the poem “Pure Duration” (*Junsui jizoku*, the Japanese translation of Bergson’s “*durée pure*”), quantitative time is nothing but the reduction of human life to the homogeneity of space.

Falling in love with space
 Time, what a shabby illegitimate child!
 To give birth was a mistake in the first place,

To repent for it, a good-for-nothing goblin,
 The cause of your worries night in and night out.
 Hello tortoise, dear tortoise!
 To lose to a rabbit in a race, isn't that a victory?
 A gull floating on the water says,
 I will not be outrun by a duck!
 You are thirty-something,
 Still studying 31-syllable poems?
 You say it is a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable poem?
 That two stanzas 17/14 is the norm?
 That three stanzas 12/12/7 is the poem's original form?
 Aren't you rewriting the poem since the caesura splitting
 verses is bad?
 Don't mistake "line" for "nine"!
 A stanza is not made of numbers.
 Since homogeneity is the foundation of compromise,
 Respect the tune of pure heterogeneity!
 Recollection of the past as well
 Depends on time:
 To curl your fingers around moldy possibilities
 Is the habit of the loser.
 Shout in your heart!
 A meteor
 A flash of lightning
 A melody
 A color. (MARRA 2004, 53)

KUKI'S OTHER: THE ALLURE OF THE FEMALE

All the poems we have examined to this point are markers of Kuki's attacks on homogeneous time, homogeneous space, and the homogeneity of the dialectical method. Kuki clearly indicates that homogeneity is not the right path to follow when we want to talk about human life. Then, the big question remains, how do we talk about heterogeneity? Is there a way to deal with heterogeneity? Or is heterogeneity just too much to handle? The latter seems to be the conclusion

that one must reach looking at the unsuccessful attempts in Western philosophy to do so. Maybe there is no way to deal with the Other, for the simple reason that the Other is utterly foreign. Maybe the encounter with the Other is just too brutal for man to be able to survive it and talk about it. When one looks at Kuki's poetry, one notices the repeated use of two metaphors indicating the heterogeneity of the Other and, at the same time, the desire that this Other produces: women and food—actually, French women and French food. The topic is appetizing; the conclusion is not. Kuki's obsession for women includes dancers, high class entertainers, as well as very plain streetwalkers. Thanks to his poetry we know all the women's names. We find Yvonne, Denise, Rina, Marianne, Louise, Henriette, Jeannine, Renée, Yvette, and Suzanne.

<i>Tomoshibi no</i>	The smiling profile
<i>Moto ni Ivonnu ga</i>	Of Yvonne
<i>Emu yokogao wa</i>	Under the light
<i>Doga no e yori ya</i>	Seems to come out more starkly
<i>Idete kiniken</i>	Than from a painting by Degas!
	(MARRA 2004, 67)

<i>Yamite yaya</i>	Having fallen ill
<i>Hō no hosoriken</i>	Her cheeks will be slightly thinner—
<i>Donizu ga</i>	When Denise
<i>Emeba koyoi wa</i>	Smiles, how charming
<i>Namamekashikere</i>	This evening will be!
	(MARRA 2004, 69)

<i>Koyoi shi mo</i>	Saying,
<i>Roshia no kouta</i>	Let's sing the little Russian song
<i>Shiyo mōshite</i>	This evening,
<i>Rina ga nuretaru</i>	If only Rina would live
<i>Me ni zo ikimashi</i>	In the damp pupils of my eyes!
	(MARRA 2004, 72)

<i>Torikago ni</i>	A goldfish
<i>Kingyo no oyogi</i>	Swims in the birdcage;
<i>Minazoko ni</i>	A canary chirps
<i>Kanaria no naku</i>	Underwater—
<i>Mariannu ka na</i>	It must be Marianne!
	(MARRA 2004, 73)

<i>Ruizu ga</i>	Louise
<i>Ware o mukaete</i>	Welcomes me
<i>Torokobase</i>	And makes me happy—
<i>Nihon no nui no</i>	She leaves wearing
<i>Kinu tsukete izu</i>	A garment of Japanese embroidery.
	(MARRA 2004, 74)
<i>Pansuchiu to</i>	How hard to forget even
<i>Anrietto ga</i>	Henriette's
<i>Namamekite</i>	Charming
<i>Itsuru kuse mo</i>	Habit of speaking
<i>Wasuregatakari</i>	When she says, "Penses-tu?"
	(MARRA 2004, 74)
<i>Janinu ga</i>	Faintly a light rain
<i>Mune naru bara no</i>	Fall dampening
<i>Kurenai o</i>	The crimson
<i>Kosame honoka ni</i>	Of the rose
<i>Nurashitsutsu furu</i>	On Jeannine's chest.
	(MARRA 2004, 80)
<i>Furusato no</i>	My heart smells
<i>"Iki" ni niru ka o</i>	A fragrance similar to
<i>Haru no yo no</i>	The "stylishness" of my homeland
<i>Rune ga sugata ni</i>	In the figure of Renée
<i>Kagu kokoro ka na</i>	On a spring night.
	(MARRA 2004, 83)
<i>Ivetto ga</i>	Feigning not to know,
<i>Mi no uebanashi</i>	I listen
<i>Ōuso to</i>	To Yvette
<i>Shiredo soshiranu</i>	Boasting about herself,
<i>Kao o shite kiku</i>	Though I know it's a big lie.
	(MARRA 2004, 90)
<i>Yakiguri ga</i>	An evening
<i>Parī no tsuji ni</i>	When roasted chestnuts perfume
<i>Kaoru yoi</i>	The street corners of Paris—
<i>Tachite kuri hamu</i>	Yvonne, Suzanne
<i>Ivonnū, Suzannū</i>	Stand and eat chestnuts.
	(MARRA 2004, 78)

(There is no doubt as to the profession of these women standing in a street corner of Paris, warming themselves up while waiting for customers).

These are all difficult encounters with the foreign Other—over-reaching, impossible to grasp, superficial, unfulfilling encounters. This obsessive search for the alluring West results in painful disillusion— the realization that no encounter will ever take place with the Other. In other words, the encounter with the Other is utterly impossible. Any naïve attempts to believe otherwise would be like throwing pearls to pigs, as Kuki says quoting from the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:6). The encounter with the Other could turn fatally smelly and unpleasant to witness, as we see in the poem “Pig” (*Buta*).

I remember giving the pig the pearls
 Of the fruit of the pearl oyster shell.
 The pig swallows the pearls,
 Grumbling with her muffled
 Creak, squeak, creak,
 And trots along here and there
 In the mud.
 Look in the ordure she dropped!
 The pearl as well is the color of dirt.
 I remember giving the pig the pearls
 Of the fruit of the pearl oyster shell. (MARRA 2004, 60)

It goes without saying that a feminist reading of this poem would turn the tables on Kuki by positing the man as the squeaking pig.

KUKI'S OTHER: CRAVING FOR FOREIGN FOOD

Food is the other example in which the desire for the Other turns into gourmandism with unpleasant consequences. We find many poems on food in Kuki's collections, starting with the long poem “Seafood Restaurant” (*Sakana ryōriya*) from *Paris Mindscapes* (*Parī Shinkei*, 1925).

[Man]

Oh, the sea, the sea
 Born in an island country in the Far East
 I pine for the blue sea,
 The shore scattered with seashells,
 White sand bathing in the morning sun,
 The smell of seaweed, the sound of waves,
 I wonder, you who grew up in Paris,
 Do you understand my feelings?
 Tonight let us go to Prunier
 On Victor Hugo Avenue.

Pillars designed with the pattern of scallops,
 Lamps shaped as sea crabs,
 Watery foam on the walls,
 Fish on the counters,
 The ceiling a light turquoise,
 The rug the crimson color of seaweed,
 A faint floating light,
 A scent more fleeting than a dream,
 Like breathing at the bottom of the sea,
 My favorite seafood restaurant.

[Woman]

What was your favorite dish?
 Salmon roe sandwich,
 Sea urchin in its shell
 Sprinkled with lemon juice,
 The chowder bouillabaisse
 A specialty from Marseilles,
 Lobsters the thermidor style
 Not the American style,
 I too like
 The steamed flatfish Paris style.

For a dress I will choose clothes of black silk.
 Don't you like the way my figure looms over the silver wall,
 One snowy white rose on my breast,
 Pearls for necklace,

A platinum watch on my wrist,
 A white diamond ring,
 A hat the green color of laver
 I will pull down over my eyes coquettishly?
 Let me please make my lipstick heavy.
 Do you still insist I am princess of the sea?

(MARRA 2004, 46-47)

Several *tanka* also deal with food:

<i>Toki to shite</i>	Since, at times,
<i>Koki irodori no</i>	I pine for
<i>Itaria ga</i>	The intense colors
<i>Koishiki yue ni</i>	Of Italy,
<i>Ichijiku o hamu</i>	I end up eating a fig.

(MARRA 2004, 70)

<i>Zensai no</i>	Vinegar dishes
<i>Sunomono mo yoshi</i>	Are good appetizers, too,
<i>Komayaka ni</i>	The finger's gesture
<i>Fōku o toreru</i>	In taking the fork delicately
<i>Yubitsuki mo yoshi</i>	Also is good.

(MARRA 2004, 74)

<i>Maruseru to</i>	Won't I find consolation
<i>Aniesu to kuu</i>	In the seafood
<i>Puriunie no</i>	Of Prunier,
<i>Sakana ryōri ni mo</i>	Where I eat
<i>Nagusamanu ka na</i>	With Marcel and Agnès?

(MARRA 2004, 84)

Or, the first verse of the rhyming poem “Cointreau” (*Koantorō*):

To the streets of Paris I cling,
 A restaurant late at night,
 Small bottle of Cointreau, a bite,
 The blessing of a fleeting spring. (MARRA 2004, 113)

The outcome of the consumption of so much foreign food is quite predictable—an indigestion of unhomeliness that makes the poet vomit,

as we see from Kuki's poem "Vomiting" (*Hedo*) from the collection *Windows of Paris* (*Parī no Mado*, 1925).

At times I vomit.
Working alone,
Sitting in a chair in my study,
Suddenly nausea comes.

I bolt up without knowing what I am doing,
Poke my head out the window onto the street,
Ouch, ouch,
Vomit driven by distress:

Artichokes, asparagus,
Snails, frogs,
Entrails of crabs, jellyfish,
Rabbit's testicles, pigeon's liver.

Divine wrath of gourmandism!
Proof of indigestion!
Ouch, ouch,
It also smells of wine.

Formal wear, pleated skirt, don't get close,
Surplice and priestly robe stay away,
School cap don't come near,
Women, children run!

At times I vomit.
Not a case of appendicitis!
Not a pregnancy!
I must be possessed by an annoying fox. (MARRA 2004, 65)

CONCLUSION

This poem confirms once again that the encounter with the Other is nothing but a simple illusion, or better to say, a painful delusion. What conclusions can we draw from the reading of Kuki's poetry? Kuki points at three different solutions of the enigma of the Other:

the Hegelian approach, the Heideggerian approach, and Kuki's own approach. The annoying fox makes the Hegelian synthesis impossible. Hegel was able to digest the Other after mercilessly feeding on it in a process in which the Other was completely digested, obliterated, and expunged from the body. With Heidegger, the Other is recuperated (the Ister flows back into the Donau), but, as we saw from Kuki's critique, it turned out that Heidegger's Other was not totally other; it was simply the other side of sameness, Germany's local Orient—Greece. This Other turned out to be a homogeneous Other, against Heidegger's own intention to overturn metaphysics and the principle of self-sameness. What we learn from Kuki is that the true Other can only be vomited. It is a rich food, an appetizing food, a tempting food, but it is just too much food to handle. We are back to square one: how do we deal with the truly Other? How does the truly Other inform our feeling of homeliness? This certainly requires some further thought. For the time being, I hope the reader enjoyed at least the poetry.

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