

# Origuchi Shinobu's *Marebitoron* in Global Perspective

## A Preliminary Study

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The concept of *marebito* 稀人<sup>1</sup> is arguably the most striking contribution made by the late *kokugaku* 国学 ethnologist and theorist of literature Origuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 (1872–1953) to the history of Japanese philosophy. Notwithstanding, his contribution has been largely ignored up to the present by historians, and the only conceivable explanation is that the term *marebito* itself is not a proper concept in the strict philosophical sense. As a consequence, the concept has been appreciated by students of classical Japanese literary history, but ignored by philosophers in general.

1. Literally “rare person.” A term found in ancient Japanese literary records for a spirit or god that may visit a village during a festival, the building of a house, or other special occasions. Since Origuchi, the term and the idea it represents has been appreciated not only by scholars of Japanese classical literature and Japanese antiquity and folklore, but also by theorists of Japanese culture and ethnicity at large. On the other hand, it has been largely ignored by international philosophers as too limited in conception and too tightly entangled in Japanese ethnicity. Origuchi Shinobu is an ethnologist and scholar of National Studies or *kokugaku*, who has written of its place in Japanese literary and cultural history. In this paper I discuss Origuchi’s analysis and also attempt to relate the concept of *marebito* to comparable notions in twentieth-century European history of philosophy.

I develop my argument in three phases. First, I discuss the notion of *marebito* according to original sources in the collected works of Origuchi. His work on *marebito* extends from its original inception in 1923 to the finishing touches he made in 1952 and covers the whole of his academic career. The first decade is crucial in the formation of his conception. The first essays especially reveal the primary insights Origuchi draws from his own sources. His analysis traces the development of the belief in *marebito* through Japanese history. I focus my attention on the early construction of his analysis, as the setting in which the *marebito* may be seen as the “other.” So I propose the interpretive notion of *marebito-as-other*. In the second phase, I analyze philosophies of the “other” synchronically on a global scale. When we focus on the moment the *marebitoron* 稀人論 was first conceived, we find that 1923 was a period of transition, in Europe as in Japan. This permits me to attempt a comparative analysis of several philosophies from the perspective of Origuchi’s analysis. The sources examined lead to a transcultural discussion. In the third phase, I set aside the history of the critical literature on the subject, to concentrate on two recent contributions. Discussing these works from a present-day perspective, I would suggest that not only can the *marebito* be seen as the “other” (*marebito-as-other*) but that the “other” of European philosophy can profitably be interpreted as the *marebito* (*other-as-marebito*).

### THE NOTION OF MAREBITO

The term *marebito* first appears in Origuchi’s scholarly writings in Part 2 of his 1923 essay 「国文学の発生」 (The Origins of National Literature). It is a pivotal addition by Origuchi to his own personal appreciation of the question of the origin of Japanese literature, his “theory on ancient Japan” (古代論). This gives us a clue to understanding the concept, which has been discussed by scholars since the early argument by Yanagita Kunio. Although Origuchi originally conceived the *marebito* in terms of his research on ancient Japan, his central concern was the application of his notion to the historical present. He wrote:

The word *marebito* has in fact a deep meaning attached to it. The holy

visitor who comes to the celebration of the building of the new house was seen as an avatar of a *kami* who came only rarely. Perhaps this visitor, after offering an incantation [*mantra*], was entertained at a banquet. Even today, in the countryside of Okinawa, there is the belief that a house is built in the daytime by human labour, but continued by *kami* during the night. On the day the ridge-poles of the roof are raised, *kami* descend into the house and ring bells and beat the pillars. The sound is said to be heard by the inhabitants who lie prostrate on the roof. Of course, it is produced by the *miko* (巫女). (OSZ I: 79)

Two sources provide this interpretation of the *marebito*. On the one hand, Origuchi cites a few examples of “rare visitors” from the *Man'yōshū* and the *Nihongi*. The reference in the text to the celebration of the building of the new house (*murohogi* 壽) appears in volume 2 of the *Man'yōshū*, in what is probably a folk ballad in the style of a *sedōka* (旋頭歌), in which it describes the visit of a holy stranger to the newly built sacred hall. The stranger is referred to as *kimi*, indicating his higher rank. In a second *sedōka*, the visitor is offered the body of a sacred dancer, a custom originally referred to in the *Nihongi* (reign of emperor Ingyō).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, though Origuchi submits that even in pre-Meiji Japan the presence of *marebito*-associated local festivities was drastically reduced, in peripheral areas like Okinawa (Ryūkyū), or inland Japan, festivals were still being carried out in a recognizable manner. Among the variety of *marebito*-figures found in Japanese folklore, those in coastal areas are popularly believed to come from beyond the sea, from the Pure Land of Amida. In many cases the role of *marebito* is performed at festivals by men who wear masks and clothes that identify them as *kami*. The main role of the *marebito* (literary or performative) is to recite magical words of blessing for the inhabitants of a dwelling, or the protection of new crops, usually at the time of the *setsubun* (節分) festivities. The nature of the *marebito* differs; he may be a *kami* visiting from faraway,

2. “At that time it was the custom at a banquet for the dancer, when the dance was ended, to turn to the person who occupied the highest place, and say, ‘I offer thee a woman’” (ASTON 1896, I,318). Origuchi does not quote it, but in the *Nihongi* there is another very explicit reference to a “dedication celebration for a new house” (壽, *nimurohogi*) in the second year of the reign of Emperor Seinei, which included a “house-blessing formula” (*murohogi*). See PHILIPPI 1990, 13–14, 80.

the spirit of an ancestor coming from the nether world, or a shaman-type performer who incarnates a *marebito* at a festival. In this way Origuchi posits a *kami*-prototype stating that the references found in classical literature and the festivals actually held in peripheral areas of Japan are connected: the latter being remnants of the former, the former being earlier archetypes of the latter.

In connection with the *Man'yōshū* quotations referred to above and the *Hitachi no kuni fūdoki*, Origuchi finds a secondary source for *marebito* in the Ōtono festival (大殿祭). Here the priests Inbe and Nakatomi “visit” the Yin and Yang Gates of the Palace and enact a “*marebito*” ritual which originates in the folk customs represented in the *Man'yōshū* and *Fūdoki*. To quote:

The original meaning of the *marebito* refers to a *kami*. It is a *kami* who comes at appointed times. It is a *kami* believed by villagers to come from the sky and from beyond the seas to certain villages, where it brings about bounteous things, wealth, and good fortune. This *kami* was not the product of a religious imagination. The villagers of antiquity had actually heard the “noisy” visit of the *marebito* pushing against the doors of houses.<sup>3</sup>

For Origuchi then *marebito* is a primitive notion of a *kami*-type spirit, but of a peculiar character that belongs neither to the *amatsukami* (天津神) nor to the *kunitsukami* (国津神) groups found in the old texts. According to Origuchi's explanations, the original *marebito* was neither a *kami* (god) of the sky (高天原, Takamagahara) nor one of the land, but was, instead, a being from an “outer world,” a place beyond the sea called *tokoyo no kuni* (常世の国). This kind of religious belief predated the appearance of the centralised Shinto system of the Takamagahara pantheon, and situates the *marebito*-type *kami* in the position of ancestors of the great *kami* of the Yamato court pantheon. Here Origuchi is clearly looking for nothing less than the *arché* of Japanese culture. The popular association of the *marebito* with the ancestor spirits of families is also

3. OSZ 2: 35. Translation from HAROOTUNIAN 1988, 429, modified to better fit the original.

derivative. Finally, a striking point in the text analyzed here is that, as spiritual entities, *marebito* are heard and not seen.

In 「叙景詩の発生」 (Origins of the Narrative Poem, 1925), Origuchi cites a narrative poem from the *Nihongi*, reign of emperor Kenzō, that includes a “blessing formula for a (new) building” (室詞, *muroyogoto*).<sup>4</sup> Commenting a second similar instance, Origuchi explains as follows:

The way of attending the new building by the one who performs as *kami*, holds the rank of *kami*, and so believes himself to be one, was gradually forgotten, and in the Yamato area during the Asuka period, a person who was regarded as of a higher rank than the household in question was hosted as a *marebito*, and as such watched the dance of the *maibito* (舞人), naturally listened to the chant recitation, and was expected to take the maiden dancer as a wife for one night stay at the house. This is seen in the *Nihongi*, reign of emperor Ingyō. (OSZ I: 43I)

The formulas in “praise of the *marebito*” that are found in among other sources the *Manyōshū* quotations, also seemed to be a part of the old tradition, which later became obsolete and developed into the common *uchiage* (打ち上げ) or *naorai*. The point here, according to Origuchi, is that the inhabitants of old Japan were mentally open to the “exterior” (外界), the “non-human” (人事以外), and were *not prone* to the deviations of subjectivity (純客観態度). These ancients (古代) are not the Japanese of the classical era however, and though they share the psychological characteristics of people of the Nara period, such as the *masurao* (益荒男) type represented by Kamo no Mabuchi, they are even older. And the only access we have to their actual appearance is through the oldest extant fragmentary pieces of classical literature of the type found in the previously mentioned *Manyōshū* (vol. II) and the narrative poems in the *Nihongi*.

Origuchi develops extensively for the first time his *marebitoron* in part 3 of the series of essays under the collective title “The Origins of National Literature,” (Part 3, 1926, 3–62). Under the heading of “The Meaning

4. See *Nihongi* I: 380–1. The corresponding passage in the *Kojiki* includes a different poem, with no character of *muro-yogoto* (see Aston, 1897, 370–1).

of *Marebito*,” he explains the meaning of the term in relation to other words or notions like “visitor” (客) or *tokoyo*, and generally situates the figure of *marebito* in the context of Japanese religious festivals in which it shows its potential for signification.

Interpreting *kyaku* as *marebito* is something which dates from the beginning of our country’s literature. In the etymological interpretation, up to the present day, *marebito* was used to mean “someone who comes rarely,” including the sense of a welcome guest (珍客); *marahito*/*marōdo* are thought to be phonetical variations. From the formal point of view, this is certainly correct. However, the content, its lexical use by the ancients, cannot be discerned unless the implication of its etymology is expanded. (OSZ I: 3)

Certainly, from the viewpoint of the Shinto perception of the material manifestation of an invisible spiritual power (靈威), the word *mare* designates one of the unequivocal signs of the numinous: the “rare.” From the many examples found in Shinto literature and shrine worship, we may conclude that any natural object, human or non-human, which shows a trace of distinctiveness possesses the attributes of *kami*-nature. Origuchi finds in the *marebito* or “rare visitor,” the unmistakable manifestation of a *kami* presence. This is why the “rare visitor” becomes a “unique” presence and is received as a welcome guest by the household. Origuchi finds evidence for this use of *marebito* in a *Kokinshū* expression which compares the visit of a lover to the cherry tree, which blossoms only once a year.<sup>5</sup> Here the presence of the visitor is not just rare but “unique,” and hence highly “esteemed,” according to Origuchi’s reading of the poem. In the same sense, other examples of using the variants *maro* or *mari* are found in the *Nihongi* (OSZ I: 4). In all, the keywords for *marebito* are “honor,” “rare,” and “novel.” Origuchi moreover argues that *hito* in old times referred not only to humans but also to “kami.” In conclusion, he states that according to its archaic occurrence, *marebito* refers to a *kami* who comes from the *tokoyo* (OSZ I:5).

5. *Kokinshū*, nr. 62: あだなりと名にこそたてれ / 桜花 / 年にまれなる人もまちけり. “These cherry blossoms, whom men call evanescent, flighty patiently (sic), they’ve awaited one who comes, but rarely in each year” (trans. by RODD and HENKENIUS 1996).

In this way the *marebito* is received as an “honored” guest and occupies a special place at ancient banquet ceremonies held at shrines. At homes, as the archaic meaning of the term *aruji* (主) indicates, the term originally referred to the custom of “entertaining someone as one’s guest” was a respectful expression for the guest and not the host. He was treated in special ways that were taboo to other people. According to Origuchi, the people incarnating the *marebito* belonged to three classes: people with the appearance of *kami* (神人, *shinjin*), performers, and beggars. They might perform, for instance, like Heian practitioners of yin-yang, uttering powerful words of blessing for the household and stamping the ground to counter any resistance to their magical word-binding on the part of the spirits of the soil.

The special appointed time for their appearance was the New Year’s prelude to spring, though during the Nara period, they were expected to return in the autumn to take part in the new harvest offering (新嘗), on which occasion the *marebito* were required to bless the new buildings (*niimurohokai*); this served as the original model for the auspicious purification ritual (吉事祓え) performed for the coming year. They also acted as heralds of the new season. In Okinawa the belief in the visit of mountain spirits during the rites of spring is of the *marebito* type. As interpreted by Origuchi, this also served as the basis for the *bon* festival, when the ancestor spirits came from somewhere beyond the sea, namely the *tokoyo*, a sacred place where all types of visitors possess spiritual power (靈力). The belief that the *marebito* came from the mountains or the heavens is derivative. But the belief in the *marebito* as a spiritual force (玉, *tama*) belongs to the domain of the sacred source of energy, whose power may be beneficial, but whose maliciousness (邪氣) must be averted in connection with the practice of *harae* in the liminal time of seasonal change (see DAVIS 1975). For the “visitor” (訪れ人) could turn into a “blessing spirit” (寿ぐ神, *kotohogu kami*), or just as well into a “cursing spirit” (誘る神, *soshiru kami*). In all cases the *marebito* belief was associated with the premodern custom of hospitality (OSZ I: 7–62).

In the sequel to “The Origins of National Literature” written in the same year (1926), the notion of *marebito* is again linked to that of the *tokoyo* and the magic of words. Origuchi states:

The incantatory formulas performed by the *marebito* coming from the *tokoyo* evolved gradually, and an incantation from heaven, which is a celestial *norito*, came to be performed. (OSZ vol. I, 135).

The point in this brief passage is in the contrast between the “incantatory formulas” and the *norito*, and between the *tokoyo* and heaven. As is known, orthodox Shinto theology discards the old magical formulas in favor of the kind of ritual prayers called *norito* (祝詞). From the nineteen thirties on, the governmental Shinto establishment started restricting the magical practices performed at mountain villages in northern Japan. Several years earlier Origuchi had already shown a lucid understanding of the coming conflict, and proposed the preeminence, from the point of view of an archeology of knowledge, of the magical power of the world of the *marebito*, over the diluted nature of the politically sanctioned ritual practices of the *norito*. This caused an inversion in the understanding of both *norito* and the Takamagahara, and placed the numinous strength derived from the *tokoyo* in a deeper position.

The year 1927 shows a change of tone in Origuchi’s theories on *marebito*. In two related essays, his sources for evidence are not so much literature as folklore, with a notable reference to his master Yanagita Kunio. In the first essay, 「翁の発生」 (The Origins of the *Okina*, 1927), Origuchi traces the roots of *dengaku* (田楽) to the primordial presence of the *marebito* in the specific ritual context of the festivals for the change of season. The *marebito* takes the shape of an old man or woman, and the *kami*, who visit the community only on these festivals, are seen by Origuchi as representations of *marebito*.

The *marebitogami* who visit rarely or frequently, originally appeared only at the point of seasonal transitions during the year. (OSZ 2: 374)

In Origuchi’s understanding, the *marebito* is not defined so much as a prototype with recognizable features, as from the special place it occupies in the symbolic topology from where it originates, which is to say, the special place of intersection between two worlds, and the special time when this intersection is possible. The one aspect that is clear about the figure the *marebito* reveals is its heteromorphism, which is concomitant with a special type of spiritual power (*mono*). For this reason, the *marebito* cannot be ascribed to any particular religious body, it is external to

any organized religious system, whether Shintoist, Buddhist, or Shinto-Buddhist syncretism.<sup>6</sup>

In the same vein, in 「村々の祭り・祭りの発生」 (Village Festivals: The Origin of Festivals), Origuchi notes:

The *marebito* who come to the spring festival can be understood as *kami*, but they can also be understood as invisible spiritual entities (霊). (OSZ 2: 458)

Later they are seen as ancestor spirits, demons, or mountain creatures, which appear in diverse guises, but their original shape is that of the numinous *marebito*. In this way Origuchi finds evidence for his *marebitoron* not only in the classics of literature, but also in religious folklore, as befits his apprenticeship with Yanagita.

An occasional reference to *marebito* in 「歌の話」 (Talks on Poetry, 1929) brings to a close the first seven years in Origuchi's writings on the subject. Here he refers to the nativists Kamo no Mabuchi and Ueda Akinari to argue an important point concerning the perception of *marebito* as it appears in poetry.

*Marebito* refers to a guest of ours, but in the older sense is rather an unusual person who visits rarely. The wild goose is seen as a bird of passage, a rare visitor. But this is not in an allegorical sense, since the goose directly incarnates a *marebito*, thus eliminating any impression of vagueness. (OSZ II: 112)

This quote shows again the heteromorphic nature of the notion of *marebito*. Its numinous essence can also be manifested in a proto-human or a zoomorphic form rather than a central *kami* in the imperial (Takamagahara) pantheon or a Buddha-like *hotoke* (仏) or demon. This is because of the main topological reference for the *marebito*: the goose comes from the *tokoyo*, which makes it a *marebito*. The *kami* abiding in the Takamagahara region or the *kami* of the land (Japan) cannot be *marebito*, nor can the bodhisattvas arriving from Buddhist paradises, the demons emanating from the infernal regions, or the souls of ancestors

6. For the allusion to the *marebito* as the “original buddha,” under the historical figures of Buddhist masters of esoteric arts, see OSZ 2: 403.

visiting from the land of the dead. These are taken to be *marebito* by villagers, but this is in a derivative sense.

In sum, from the point of view of our interest in the notion of *marebito* as the ground for a possible philosophical conception of certain originality, the description offered so far provides us with several clues. First, more than anything else, *marebito* is a “meaningful word.” Second, the meaningful reality to which it points is transcendental. But the connection of this realm to our present world is essential to the very survival of this world. Essence is separated from being. Third, our knowledge of this reality is a legacy from the past. This implies a second-degree separation from the source. Fourth, as a consequence, the utopian character of the notion is reinforced. This is shown by popular imagery associated with utopian lands. Fifth, in a symbolic topology of inversion, periphery is meaningful here. Or to put it in another way, meaning comes from the exterior. In this sense, we have the complementary opposition between the domestic realm and its externality. The main feature of this exterior is its non-domestic wildness. Liminality plays an important role in this topology. Sixth, the oldest *marebito* appears as a performer. The way to meaning is mediated through social interplay. Seventh, the *marebito*-spirit is primordial. Eighth, it is invisible, but it is a distinct presence. Ninth, the ritual originally associated with the *marebito* is related to architecture. This places *marebito* in the group of “guardian spirits” of the family and the community. Tenth, subjectivity in a sense that identifies the modern is excluded. Instead, we find a kind of objectivity understood as absolute transparency. Eleventh, the context for the apparition of the *marebito* is celebratory.

## PHILOSOPHIES OF THE “OTHER”

The year of Origuchi’s first attempt to formulate a *marebitoron* (1923), was also the year when notions regarding the essence of Japanese people were published. Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875–1962), Origuchi’s senior in folklore studies, offered an early version of his notion of *jōmin* (常民) as an alternative to the former, through the publication of his 『郷土試論』 (Ethnography of the Countryside, 1923). The term presents

a striking contrast to *marebito*, in that Yanagita's *jō* ("usual") is the exact opposite to *mare* ("unusual"). Quest for nativism may be explained by his personal failure as a member of the Mandate Administration Committee of the League of Nations which met at Geneva between 1921 and 1923. By the time he returned to Japan, the seed for Yanagita's ideas on nativism had already been planted (INOUE 2007, 72). The result was the gradual formation of a new image of the Japanese through the notion of *jōmin*. In this Yanagita fled from his former attachment to the fantastic, an approach perhaps more akin to Origuchi's work. The Great Kanto Earthquake that same year no doubt added a sense of urgency. However, Yanagita's aspiration to a conception of Japan as a national community would not be self-evident at a time when social ruptures between company entrepreneurs and urban labourers lingered from the Taishō era.<sup>7</sup> Proof of this was the mass killing of Koreans and leftist activists in the aftermath of the earthquake.<sup>8</sup> In all, 1923 displayed a marked contrast between the new urban living as the model for a modern Japan, and the nostalgic reaction for a premodern sense of a kind of identity that was already lost.<sup>9</sup>

In 1926 we find an unexpected turn in Origuchi's ideas on the etymology of *marebito*: the opposition between *tsune* and *mara*, which he draws from an old song (OSZ 1: 4), in which *tsune* is interpreted as "permanent residence" or "continuity." If we look at his comments from the point of view of Yanagita's theory of *jōmin*, the contrast between the two notions is striking. Certainly the "ordinary folk" represent that part of Japanese society which has not changed. The continuity of tradition is the safeguard of a national essence, and it is this that *jōmin* means. Against this, *mare/mara* is merely the occasional. In the text here referred, Origuchi

7. See A. Gordon's reference to the diary of one such laborer in relation to the "communal feeling" in VLASTOS 1998.

8. It is not irrelevant that the same year saw the publication of Kita Ikki's *An Outline Plan for the Reorganization of Japan* (『日本改造法案大綱』), which was soon banned). The publication of G. Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) would also be noted in Japan. See the chronology in FUJITA 1997.

9. A detailed description of this new modern lifestyle thriving in the Tokyo of 1923 is found in HAROOTUNIAN 2000.

does not draw from Yanagita's work, but if he did, the result would be the revelation of complementary opposites.

For Yanagita, the search for a prototype in Japanese culture of a similar foundational nature as Origuchi's "Japanese of antiquity" (*kodai-jin*), leads him to turn his original interest in the remote dwellers of the mountain villages (山人, *yamabito*) to the "ordinary people" (FIGAL 199, 140). Moreover, during the thirties, Yanagita defines the *jōmin* as "rice farmers" (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1999). In fact, we can easily discern the symbolic complementarity between the figures of the *marebito* and the *jōmin* in that, in a ritual context, the former typically visits the latter from the outside boundary of the space occupied by the farming village. Yanagita's *jōmin*, however, is not what is represented by present day Japanese farmers. Modernity has affected even rural areas. For this model Yanagita turned to Edo period rice-farming villages (MIYATA 1996).

We should note that by the time Yanagita developed his theory, Origuchi had spent more than a decade developing his own *marebitoron*; this notwithstanding, Yanagita ignored the possible relation between his ideas on *jōmin* and Origuchi's *marebito*. Yanagita himself eventually dismissed Origuchi's notion as too conceptual. Just as Yanagita failed to show any interest for the other categories of the Japanese not included in the main category of *jōmin*, such as the non-*jōmin*, the *hinin* (非人), the *eta*, or the socially discriminated dealers in the business of blood and death, as well as upper class families with hereditary names,<sup>10</sup> we must also count the *marebito* as "rare people" (異人, *ijin*), even though Origuchi explains that this is not a human but a *kami*. The relevant issue here is that from Origuchi's heterogeneous logic, the very possibility of formulating a theory of *jōmin* calls for the complementary role of the *marebito*. Yanagita, in his turn, is centred on the quest for a homogeneous notion of Japaneseness.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, if *marebito* is indeed a contrived intellectual artifact, at least the word belongs to the Japanese lexicon, whereas Yanagita's *jōmin* is simply a word he made up. In his ideas on

10. See the criticism on this point from Japanese ethnology, as summed up by MIYATA 1996, 64–71.

11. For a criticism of the homogeneous character of *jōmin* from the point of view of gender studies in sociology, see HAROOTUNIAN 2000.

*jōmin*, we can perceive Yanagita's excessive "normalizing" drive. For the latter Yanagita could not identify the term clearly with any given social class in his own day.

Yanagita did not perceive the lexical opposition between "ordinary people" and "rare visitor" as mutually reinforcing. And in this perception the difference in each *kokugaku* scholar's project reveals its main contrast. For while Origuchi was trying to ground national existence in the exchange with the "other," Yanagita was trying to exclude otherness.<sup>12</sup>

Thus far, we have identified Origuchi's *marebitoron* as other-centred, in opposition to "sameness" in Yanagita's *jōmin*. By coincidence, the year that Origuchi's *marebitoron* was conceived, was itself crucial in the field of the new hermeneutics of culture in Europe. Among the works now considered classics in the ground-breaking philosophy of the "other," M. Buber's *Ich und Du* (1923) occupies a special place.

But before analyzing Buber's work, we should first establish the contextual limits of our discussion: 1923 was a moment in Europe when the question of identity was perceived very sharply. The twenties were a period for reconstruction in every sense of the word; the need for a new start was direly felt. And the great danger was none other than exclusionism in the guise of various nationalistic agendas. At the same time Europeans were questioning what it meant to be European. In Japan, Origuchi was asking the question of what it meant to be Japanese. For the former, it was the problem of citizenship, for the latter, the problem of ethnicity.<sup>13</sup> Europe is posed as a problem directly, or is always felt in the background in Buber and the other authors whom we propose to

12. A possible way of looking at both concepts within a single framework would have been to apply the *ke* (気) "common" / (晴, *hare*) reinvigoration theory, in which *jōmin* would function as *ke* and *marebito* as *hare*. The framework has been posited by Yanagita. In *The Monkey as Mirror*, OHNUKI-TIERNEY (1939, 129) discusses the opposition "profane" (*ke*) vs. "sacred" (*hare*) as basic in the formation of Japanese identity since the Edo period, through the formation of "self" (*ke*) vs. "other," being the *marebito* a representative of the latter.

13. See with respect to the relevance of the problem of "European citizenship" a recent updating in *Pliegos de Yuste* no. 9–10, 2009. Digital edition in English at [www.pliegosdeyuste.eu](http://www.pliegosdeyuste.eu).

analyse here. For Origuchi Japan is the problem, the stimulus in this case being the disillusion with modernization that was acutely felt by many intellectuals of the epoch. The context is perceived in both cases as a crisis of the model of modernization. Hospitality will eventually be discovered in the roots of the formation of Europe as a cultural project with a given identity, in much the way hospitality becomes the basic semiotics of exchange between the community and the *marebito*. There is finally the problem of the dichotomy national-immigrant. Just as nations are formed by national members who aspire to ethnical purity, Europe as a transnational entity is formed to an extent by immigrants. What would be the role of the *marebito* if it came to be seen as an immigrant from the *tokoyo*? Of course, the *marebito* is a visitor, and in this sense it does not become integrated with the community. But if we consider the periodicity of his visits, his relationship with the community acquires permanence and the right to be considered a “foreign” part of the community itself. We propose to analyze the dichotomy of national-immigrant in its proper context as a tension inside the community which belongs to its own identity as community, in the culturally different conditions of Europe and Japan during this historically critical period.

Buber’s *I and Thou*<sup>14</sup> (*Ich und Du*, 1923), is generally considered the foundational grammar for the so-called “philosophy of dialogue.” From the point of view of the context we have just outlined, the character of the text as an answer to the danger of stagnating solipsism in the European intellectual world becomes apparent. If Origuchi resorts to the language of Yamato as restated through the tool of hermeneutics and etymology, Buber resorts to language in its primary character as the linguistic foundation of existence. The crisis of material culture as the consequence of a problematic process in modernity leads both authors to language as the basis of consciousness and identity. Buber finds that the exit from solipsism is already given in the dialogic structure of our linguistic consciousness. Solipsism can never be a point of departure, as in the rational

14. One may object to the use of “you” instead of “Thou” to translate *du* (as does Cl. Martin in DREYFUS and WRATHALL 2009, 200). From the author’s point of view, the problem is that the English title anticipates what we will find after an analysis of the work. But the hierarchical relation between the “I” and “Thou” helps us to connect it with the “culture of hospitality” to which it properly belongs.

edifice inherited from Descartes; it can be nothing but a dislocation. The discovery of the “I” through its interplay with the “you” is not arbitrary. The identity of the “you” is always veiled. The “you” becomes completely different from the “I.” In “you,” the “I” makes the discovery of “the other.” This implies that the “you” unveils itself as transcendence. In the dialogic relationship between the “I” and “you” some other traits come to the surface, like anticipation. For the “you” is autonomous from the “I.” The only way open for development in the dialogical relationship is the “acceptance of otherness.”<sup>15</sup> The “I’s” (subject) existential structure is rooted in its “openness to otherness.” This otherness reveals itself as unrecognizable in the previous I-experience; it is a “strange otherness” on which the recognition of otherness as “different-ness” is based. The “you” as other is then a non-I. But in its negation, it becomes to be essentially bound to the most primary act of cognition. From this existential acknowledgement springs a sense of “respect for otherness.”<sup>16</sup> It is here that the “you” is revealed as a “Thou.” For “Thou” becomes a meta-subjective space pointing to the transcendent ground of the world to which the “I” belongs. In every “you,” there is a “Thou.” This discovery leads us to “celebrate otherness.”<sup>17</sup>

This line of reflection in Buber’s more theological vein was later developed by G. Marcel, who contributed the notion of “‘receptivity’ to the ‘Other’” (COOPER, 2003, 28). The notion of “receptivity” in the sense of “receiving” the other as “guest” will certainly strike the reader for its similarity with the basic relational attitude we find in the context of “receiving” the *marebito* as “guest.” We are exploring whether we can understand the *marebito* figure through the notion of otherness; that is, whether we can appropriate the presence of the *marebito* through its difference from us, as an “other.” Origuchi senses the character of that presence in the way the “I” = “community” relates with the *marebito*. Proper relational context, that of the ritual mode of relation, gives us a definite pattern, whereby the “I” = community, represented in the person of the

15. An expression incorporated later by Buber, in 1965. See CISSNA and ANDERSON 2002.

16. For this expression see PEARCE 1993. For the expressions “openness to otherness,” “strange otherness,” and “differentness” see CISSNA and ANDERSON 2002.

17. Cited in CISSNA and ANDERSON 2002, 93.

head of the household, the head of the village, or the head-priest at the sanctuary, “receives” the *marebito* as a stranger, honors it as a “guest,” and treats him/her as “Thou.” From this basic relational pattern, Origuchi concludes that the *marebito* can be none other than a *kami*, just as Buber finds the sacred dimension supporting the relational bond.

In the same year, Max Scheler claimed in *The Nature of Sympathy* (*Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, 1923) that he had found the solution to the problem of the *ego* and solipsism. For Scheler, sympathy and love are faculties in the human experience which serve as bridges between the self and others. Contrary to the radical polarization of self vs. other, or inner self vs. external world, Scheler shows the artificial and derivative character in the rise of the self as opposed to its exterior. The enclosure of the *ego* in itself is a basic error of self-perception. Both self and other emerge from a common stream of vital experience. Inner self and exterior world are identified in the original experience. It is here that the possibility of raising the perception of the existence of the “other” as a value to the self is grounded. And through this realization all forms of ego-centeredness are overcome. Scheler’s analysis will lead us later to the phenomenological approach of the Freiburg school of thought, in Husserl and Heidegger. But we must not fail first to notice that in Origuchi’s analysis of the dualism of community-as-self and *marebito*-as-other, precisely what the latter contributes to the scheme is the permanent possibility of overcoming any form of self-centeredness, isolationist drive, or solipsistic self-deterioration as fancies of an immature and morally deficient social self.

Contrary to Buber’s stance towards a philosophy of the “absolute other,”<sup>18</sup> Scheler propounded a “relative other.” What then, of the *marebito*-as-other? We would dare to ascribe *marebito*’s difference to radicality rather than to proximity, for according to the original shape of Origuchi’s *marebitoron*, there is no common ground to be shared between the community-as-self and the *marebito*, who is a total stranger, in appear-

18. I am aware that the full development of such a theoretical position is not found in Buber’s classic, but for that we have to wait until the emergence of Buber’s disciple, Lévinas, who proposed a theory of the “absolute Other” in 1948 in his *Time and the Other*.

ance (異形人, *ikeijin*) as well as in substance (*kami*). Moreover, the *marebito*'s place of origin, the *tokoyo*, remarks radical exteriority in the *marebito*. We have argued that originally, the *marebito* was exclusively associated with the *tokoyo*, not to the heavens or the mountains, which later led to the image of the *marebito* as an ancestor spirit, or *kami* in the Shinto pantheon's style. In contrast, the *tokoyo* represents a place of "absolute" alterity. We are talking then about the meeting of two different planes at one point in space and time, and not of a common sphere which includes two poles that revolve around each other. This is why we find the "absolute" otherness in Buber more akin to Origuchi's position than the "relative" view proposed by Scheler. This difference will also reflect itself in the ethical problem. For according to Scheler, it is the primary identity of the opposites of self and other which makes possible an ethics of otherness. But from the point of view of Buber and Origuchi, what precisely makes valuable the contact with the other, be it dialogical or ritual, is its radical irreducibility to the sphere of the self. This we may call the transcendent moment in the relational bound self-other. In all cases, however, an ethics of the other is necessarily raised.

The ethical moment is also present in E. Husserl. Here, too, we discover that 1923 turns out to be a very significant year. The need to return to the foundational moment of Europe as an intellectual culture<sup>19</sup> is urgently felt in the first volume of his *First Philosophy* (*Erste Philosophie*, 1923). The book was written as a response to the deep sense of crisis of values in World War I in German intellectual circles.<sup>20</sup> Just as Origuchi went back to archaic Japan, Husserl went back to ancient Europe to rewrite the history of ideas. Origuchi, an anti-modernist, believed the clue was hidden in the creases of time, and was only partially revealed in ancient texts, while the enlightened Husserl aspired to take a new step

19. *Philosophischen Kultur*. Today we have an increasing literature about the myth of the foundation of European philosophy by ancient Greece, a romantic invention, but to bring this issue to our discussion would be completely anachronistic. See the author's position in [www.plataformadepensamientoglobal.blogspot.com](http://www.plataformadepensamientoglobal.blogspot.com).

20. Perhaps the epitome came with the release of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, just completed in 1922. On the other hand, *Krisis* was a key concept in Husserl's thinking from this period until his last writings, as is evidenced in the title of his famous work of 1936, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.

in the intellectual history of mankind. Moreover, Husserl relies entirely on consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> Against a closed understanding of the ego, Husserl propounds a “transcendental ego,” wherein a basis exists which will take us to the genesis of meaning, and in this way he negated the identification of “transcendental” with “transcendent.” In the search for a pure ego, the process towards the constitution of universal meaning starts from “methodological solipsism” through self-analysis, in the Cartesian tradition. But the self immediately reveals its complete immersion on its environment. The structure of the self is open. As a result the self is only constituted in the realm of intersubjectivity.<sup>22</sup> This is the space where the self encounters others, and through this encounter the ethical autonomy of man is itself constituted. The constitution of the community of men includes a plurality of worlds, among them the worlds of strangers, *Fremdwelten*. But universal communication is guaranteed. In this manner, a “common factual world” (*Erfahrungswelt*) reveals itself as the unified place of intersubjectivity.

At the same time that Husserl undertook the reformulation of the edifice of European philosophy, he had the chance to appeal to a wider readership, when he was invited to contribute *Five Essays on Renewal* (1922–23) to the Japanese journal 『改造』. The term “renewal” becomes then a transcultural term, and the desire for renewal is universally felt. Husserl has the chance to address both audiences, as he sincerely believes that mankind as a whole can aspire to create a universal moral order that goes beyond cultural differences. Renewal means above all to situate mankind in ethical life. The universal community is possible thanks to the dialogic nature of individuals. But in fact, Husserl’s project is Eurocentric. Universal reason is at the opposite pole of Origuchi’s hermeneutic endeavour in that the Japanese language, the language of Yamato, is an irreducible source of meaning and cannot be translated into the language of universal reason. It is only through linguistic analysis that Origuchi made the discovery of the *marebito*-as-other. Therefore, the

21. In *First Philosophy*, Husserl propounds “a philosophy of beginnings that institutes itself in the most radical philosophical self-consciousness.” Quoted in MORAN et al. 2007, 135.

22. Defined in *First Philosophy* as “subjectivity in community with others.”

encounter with the *marebito*-as-other is not the result of transcendental analysis, but of a context of transcendence. The *marebito*-as-stranger does not belong to the universal community of intellects. Its otherness is radical and its character falls beyond the reach of phenomenological analysis.

In this sense, Heidegger's stance as thinker of post-metaphysics is closer to our point. Compared to Husserl's rationalism, Heidegger's intent to overcome Husserl through ontological analysis is detectable since the same period. Curiously enough the lecture course written by Heidegger that year bears the name of *Ontology* (*Ontologie*, 1923). There are two points in which the intellectual world of Heidegger approaches that of Origuchi. First, Heidegger operates fully the linguistic turn in the field of phenomenology by introducing the hermeneutical method. In this Heidegger goes beyond Husserl's rationalism. Also, in textual analysis, the notion of progress wanes. Origuchi similarly chooses hermeneutics, in the nativist tradition, and relies almost entirely on textual linguistic analysis. Second, contrary to progressiveness in Husserl, who tried to move forward, both Heidegger and Origuchi turned their intellectual gaze backwards and believed that meaning could not be construed but was already given. Moreover, Heidegger thought that meaning (or truth) was veiled, and remained in its purity only in the origin. Because of this, Heidegger wrote about the "forgiveness of Being" (= meaning). Methodologically he returned to the origin of European philosophy and negated history. For him the pre-Socratics, especially Parmenides, represented the pristine moment of the revelation of meaning.

We have seen that Origuchi tried to establish a similar agenda. As anti-modern as Heidegger was postmodern, he did not rely on history either: for Origuchi meaning was to be recovered from the fragments pointing to the origin, just as Parmenides' *Poem* was fragmentary. For both Origuchi and Heidegger, meaning was preserved in words, in ancient words, and the task was to extract meaning from etymology, the etymology that revealed the original meaning of otherness in the word *marebito*, the etymology that revealed the original meaning of both identity and difference in the Greek word *to on*. Meaning was in both cases a foundational semiotic act.

The 1923 text of *Ontology* consists of a basic outline of the topics that

Heidegger developed more systematically in *Being and Time*. Here, too, we find the early shape of the basic tenets of several decisive problems that later raised Heidegger to critical acclaim. In relation to our query, we find a definite philosophy of others already present. The first point we will underline (Heidegger's stress) is that meaning is mediated by others.<sup>23</sup> Quoting Aristotle, he writes that meaning is attached to "authentic being" in the world.<sup>24</sup> In hermeneutics the linguistic turn is fully operational. Meaning has to do with language in a communicative setting. In this context "the other" makes full appearance. In an early analysis of *Dasein*, "the other" shows the aspect of "other beings-which-are-there with him in the mode of life." In this way the analytics of *Dasein*, from the beginning, accounts for it in the necessary communal context of "being-with-each-other" (HEIDEGGER 1923, 23-4).<sup>25</sup> The *Dasein* encounters others in the everyday experience of encountering the world.<sup>26</sup> The *Dasein* is never isolated. But, needless to say, the *Dasein* does not always easily identify any experience with other *Dasein* in a common world. There is room for the strange. However, here Heidegger does not develop an argument concerning the other as a "stranger." He limits his analysis to a phenomenological account of the experience of the "strange" itself from the point of view of the nature of the encounter of *Dasein* with his world. The characteristics of the "strange" are unpredictability and incalculability. They unveil this world as con-

23. Heidegger reviews the history of hermeneutics in the first chapter, in which he quotes the use of the word in the *Sophist*: "Apheroméneue, 'shall report about': making known what the others mean." (1923, 6). Heidegger takes a further step in emphasizing that meaning is given in a linguistic community.

24. The quote goes: "Addressing and discussing something with others (conversation about something) exists in order to safeguard the authentic being of living beings (as they live in their world and by means of it)." (HEIDEGGER, 1923, 7).

25. This shows, on the other hand, how unfair is the criticism of individualism in the notion of *Dasein* in Heidegger, as interpreted by Heidegger's Japanese critics since Watsuji Tetsurō.

26. "The others one has something to do with are also there in the everyday things being encountered" (HEIDEGGER 1923, 75).

27. "The strange is only... inexplicit familiarity insofar as it has been shaken up and awakened and is now being encountered in the character of unfamiliarity.... Through the disturbability of inexplicit familiarity, what is being encountered is there in its *unpredictability*, its *incalculability*. The there encountered has the peculiar rigidity

tingent.<sup>27</sup> In sum, in an ontology of encounter, the self-as-*Dasein* finds itself already in an intersubjective space of other selves. In this sense, Heidegger shows his debt to the notion of intersubjectivity in Husserl. The difference is procedural. Whereas Husserl takes the individual self as the unit of analysis, Heidegger starts from the community of selves from where he strives to arrive at the “authentic” individual self. In both cases, the analysis of individual being is mediated by the intersubjective field. With Husserl, this field is universal and not limited by cultural differences. With Heidegger, this field is eminently cultural. In *Ontology*, as is the case with Husserl, there is no reference to alterity beyond the problem of being-with-other. We should also call this analysis of the other “relative otherness.” This leads to a field of analysis of the self-as-other, and conversely, the-other-as-self. The mediation of self and other is the key point here.

In Origuchi, we have seen that the source of being is in otherness, a statement that can be traced back to his *marebitoron* of 1923. So far, in our comparative analysis we have been able to discern two types of discourse regarding alterity. On the one hand, we have a kind of theoretical elaboration regarding the relation between the self and the “others,” who are recognized as other selves, in the unified realm called intersubjectivity, which is the material from which the community is made. We have called this type of approach “relative otherness,” but we might also call it “immanent otherness,” in the sense that the whole display of self and other is confined to the sphere of the community-as-world. But there is another type of discourse on alterity which we have called “absolute otherness,” or “transcendent otherness.” Here the problem is not about the “others” but about the “Other.” And the place of exchange is not within the community, but in the liminal space where this world gets connected with other worlds.

While the first type leads to social discourse, the second is clearly religious. The first type emphasizes interiority, the second exteriority. The first, subjectivity and time-perception, the second objectivity and the

of something oppressive, contingent” (HEIDEGGER 1923, 77). Needless to say, it is precisely this contingent character that makes the world an open structure where *événement* can take place, as Heidegger’s French disciples have explained.

importance of place. In the Judeo-Christian tradition about otherness we can discern a mixed type. For the “absolute Other” becomes a conversational partner, a “Thou.” In this sense it retains the dialogical structure of the first type, which is projected into the transcendent field of exteriority. We might say that exteriority and immanence coalesce into one single vision. In the second type, the perception of place and time, in any case, creates sacredness. We have seen that the visit of the *marebito*, which is occasional and unexpected in the beginning, tends to accommodate to festival time. The context of the religious festival moves our frame of mind beyond the requirements of dialogue and rationality. The exchange with otherness is then meta-linguistic, in the sense that ritual poetry, in which the *marebito* is directly addressed, is not of the dialogical type, and the ritual formulas uttered by the *marebito*-performer in festivals are magical and not communicative.<sup>28</sup> Now, magical language involves irrationality.

This is precisely what is remarked in another classical work published in 1923, Rudolf Otto’s *Das Heilige*. Here we enter common ground. There are numerous references to characteristics of religious discourse that correspond to our analysis of the *marebitoron*. We must mention the notion of the “numinous” (das *Numinose*) and its several moments, starting from “Power” (*Übermächtig*), “Energy” (*Energisch*), and above all “the moment of mysterium (the “absolute Other,” *das “Ganz Andere”*). “Absolute otherness” awakens in us the primordial religious experience of entering a different dimension,<sup>29</sup> in a word “emotion” (*stupor*). The feeling of “absolute otherness” is attached to impressive objects that pertain to the natural, animal, or human order, objects “unfathomable” and “beyond conception.” Add to this the element of the “fascinating”

28. We might express this in John L. Austin’s terminology, saying that language in the *marebito* exchange with the community is of the “performative utterance” type, while its meaning in its use as a common “locutionary act” is subordinated to its character as “illocutionary act” (see AUSTIN 1962).

29. See the following sentence: “Diese selber aber, nämlich das *religiös* Mysteriöse, das echte *Mirum*, ist, um es vielleicht am treffendsten auszudrücken, das ‘*Ganz andere*’, das *thäteron*, das *anyad*, das *alienum*, das *aliud valde*, das Fremde und Befremdende, das aus dem Bereiche des Gewohnten Verstandenen un Vertrauten und darum ‘Heimlichen’ überhaupt Herausfallende und zu ihm in Gegensatz sich Setzende und *darum* das Gemüt mit starrem Staunen Erfüllende” (OTTO 1923, 31).

and we have Otto's complete characterizations of the numinous, which is equivalent to Origuchi's description of the figure of the *marebito*.<sup>30</sup> All the elements listed above are applicable to the *marebito*. Certainly, in *marebito* we discern the features of "uncommon power" (*reii*), "vital primary energy," "otherness," "strangeness," "religious emotion," "dissimilarity" (*ikei*) and "fascination," and just as in Otto's analysis, the comprehensive word that encompasses all these features is "divine" (*das Heilige = kami*).<sup>31</sup>

The notion of heterogeneity applied to Origuchi's *marebitoron* presents two poles: heteromorphy and heterotopy. Heteromorphy refers to the way the presence of the *marebito* is acknowledged by the community, that is, as a strange visitor (*ikeijin*), and heterotopy refers to the way the community imagines the place of origin of the *marebito*. Thus far, in our comparative analysis we have been able to trace possible transcultural points of reference in relation to the otherness of the *marebito*, but the only reference to the contextual topology attached to this figure appears as transcendence, and depends on Judeo-Christian theology, or secondarily as the nothing, no-place attached to Buddhist philosophy. The *tokoyo* can be analyzed both as a place of transcendence, comparable to *Takamagahara*, and as a no-place, inasmuch as there is no imagery about its shape or topology. It is just another place. But in 1923 there already exists the possibility of looking at it from another theoretical framework, that is perhaps more adequate. In this year, following a visit by Einstein to Japan, the journal *Kaizō* edited an article covering the theory of relativity. The article had a strong influence on intellectual circles. Poets and artists started contributing their private imagery to the

30. Of course, there are other elements in Otto's description of the numinous which are bracketed here, not just to evade the problem of dissonance between both discourses, but because methodologically we are focusing on defining a possible theoretical ground common to both authors regarding the perception of otherness.

31. We cannot overlook the fact that there is a striking coincidence between many features characteristic of Kokugaku's traditional emphasis on a theological hermeneutics of the irrational in *kami* discourse and Otto's phenomenology of the divine. Comparative studies in Kokugaku circles of the twentieth century have been discouraged nonetheless. An exception is the line of research followed by Nakano Yūzō's (2002) comparative perspective in his study of Motoori Norinaga and the notion of the *kami* in the nineteenth-century nativist Tachibana Moribe.

topic of other worlds and their connection to ours, among them, the utopian poet and writer Miyazawa Kenji. Miyazawa's world view recalls some features we have discerned so far in our analysis of the *marebito*-as-other. Already, in his most expressive pieces of free verse, Miyazawa gives way to his bizarre self-perception. Looking for a full integration of all dimensions of existence, he calls into a single line of thought a wide variety of heterogeneous elements. By so doing, he positions himself at a liminal point where different lines of space and time cross freely. This he calls the "fourth-dimensional extension."<sup>32</sup>

The introduction of a fourth extension has the consequence of opening up the world of common experience to the experience of alterity. Fantasy and imagination are not opposed to reality and objectivity. Then life becomes art.<sup>33</sup> In *The Spring and Asura*, Miyazawa places heterogeneity right in the centre. He presents himself as other than human, identifying with an Asura, a demonic entity in Buddhist cosmology who defends Buddhist law.<sup>34</sup> In sum, Miyazawa's poetic world also presents itself through the features of heterogeneity. The poet-as-Asura becomes a heterogeneous being from a heterogeneous place. The effect is transience.<sup>35</sup> In Miyazawa's poetry, landscape is presented as a place of transformation, through the eye of heterogeneity. Doubtless, Miyazawa's world and

32. He writes in the "Preface" to *Spring and Asura* (「春と修羅」, 1923): "All of these propositions/Are asserted within a fourth-dimensional extension/As mental images and the nature of time itself" (translation by T. Kaneko in GLICK 1987, 365–7) He also uses the expression "four dimensional structure" in the original manuscript, which he later discarded. For the discussion on whether Miyazawa is following an Einsteinian scheme or a Bergsonian appreciation of time as *durée*, see the argument which follows the quotation offered above.

33. Consider Miyazawa's sentence: "Should we not make all of our fields and all of our life into one huge four-dimensional art?" (1926, in KATŌ 1979, 252). Nishida' Kitarō's notion of "absolute free will" (1923) may be compared to Miyazawa's notion of freedom in artistic expression.

34. The following poem is well known in this respect:

The bitterness and the lividness of rage  
Spits to the depths of April's atmospheric strata  
Goes to and back, teeth gnashing  
I... am... an... Asura. (KATŌ 1979, 252)

35. This is what the poet Gary Snyder (1967) calls the "savage" wisdom he sees in Miyazawa.

Origuchi's intersect at one point, but they should not be confused. For one thing, whereas Origuchi rejects modernity, Miyazawa incorporates the lexicon of modern science together with local expressions of tradition in a non-discriminative outlook. However, from the point of view of a philosophy of heterogeneity, in Miyazawa we find the most conspicuous example of an intellectual contemporary of Origuchi in whom we also find the features of "heteromorphy" and "heterotopy."<sup>36</sup> In relation to the "other," the main difference is perhaps that while in Origuchi the "other" appears as a foreign presence towards the I-community, in *Spring and Asura* the "other" is "I."

### RECENT THEORIES OF THE "OTHER"

In the field of critical literature on *marebito*, E. Ohnuki-Tierney stands out for proposing a model for understanding *marebito* in the guise of a stranger as well as a foreigner.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, rather than seeing it as a feature of ancient Japanese beliefs, Ohnuki-Tierney sees *marebito* as an expression of a primordial psychological trait that underlies Japanese cultural history. Her interpretation opens up the possibility of understanding *marebito* as the other. It is of particular interest in that it permits us to take a step further from Origuchi's *marebitoron*. By bringing forth the symbolic potentials contained in the figure of the *marebito*-as-other, Ohnuki-Tierney rescues its powerful appeal from the arcana of classical literature and remote mountain rituals, and uses it as an instrument to

36. There is a great difference between Miyazawa's Buddhist monistic outlook and Origuchi's traditionalistic Shinto outlook, but as a poet, Miyazawa's Buddhism does not function in opposition to the *kami* world, for it is comprehensive. Miyazawa expresses "emotion" in front of "The Dancers of Haratai Village," "strangely dressed beneath a crescent moon" (KATŌ 1979, 252). At the same time, in *Spring and Asura*, heterotopy points to the liminal space where the poet situates himself between worlds, and not to a utopic distant world like the *tokoyo*.

37. Ohnuki-Tierney states: "I propose that from the perspective of reflexivity, the *marebito*, or stranger-outsider deities who come from outside a settlement or outside of Japan, constitute the semiotic *other* for the Japanese, which is symbolically equivalent to their transcendental self, that is, the *self* perceived at a higher level of abstraction than a reflective self" (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1993/1994, 54).

reassess the capacity of Japanese culture to relate as an island civilization to its exterior. In an updated context of mutual exchange, Ohnuki-Tierney has recently turned Origuchi's *marebitoron* into a major contribution to the semiotics of culture.

The postmodern philosopher Nakazawa Shin'ichi (1950–) has published a monograph on the intellectual personality of Origuchi. In an interview published earlier in France (2006), he acknowledged Origuchi to be an inspirational figure for his own philosophical endeavours. He also declared that although Origuchi has remained marginal because his thinking does not fit into any great system of thought, his way of thinking presented a unique and irreducible character. As a “philosopher of difference,” Origuchi is nothing less than vindicated by Nakazawa (cf. KASSILE 2006, 41).

In his book Nakazawa offers an original insight about the persistence of the symbolic role of the notion of *marebito* in the present, and stresses the mediation that the *marebito* performs between the other world and our world. For Nakazawa, *marebito* incarnates the exterior in our world, and brings with him spiritual heterogeneity. His idea of the *marebito* represents a formal and conceptual way of expressing the need to host the incursion of the infinitely distant. It is not just a literary metaphor, but a primary source for the possibility of “opening a passage to a heterogeneous world.”

Concerning the *tokoyo*, Nakazawa points to Origuchi's expression, “the home of the soul” (魂のふるさと), as a nostalgia for a paradise lost and the desire to regain it.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, the notion of *marebito* in Origuchi goes beyond academic query to become a vital matter. In a second sense, the *tokoyo* points to “the other world” (あの世), whose passage to “this world” is made by the *marebito*. In this sense, the *marebito* are identified with the “spirits of the dead” (精霊), who appear in festivals held in many small islands of southern Japan, and who by wearing masks and covering themselves with vegetation, open a passage to the other world in

38. NAKAZAWA 2008A, 30–52. Nakazawa also situates the *marebito* type of *kami* within the broader framework of a theory of images, stressing the interface functionality of these *kami*, connecting the world of things seen with the realm of things unseen (2008B, 166).

people's minds. The belief in *marebito* sustained in many different forms throughout the Japanese archipelago is evidence in favour of a kind of realism in Origuchi's thinking that went beyond his poetical intuition. In short, the notion of *marebito* is testimony to Origuchi's originality.

We have seen that the notion of *marebito* can be taken in a variety of meanings, and that several interpretations are possible. From the conceptual viewpoint this might lead some critics to discard the term as not apt for a genuine philosophical discussion, but from the semiotic point of view, its partial ambiguity has the advantage of a symbolic richness that is absent in more abstract philosophical vocabulary. What I propose in this essay is to consider whether it is possible to translate this symbolic notion into a coherent philosophical discourse. Of course, this requires interpretation, that is, an application of the symbolic richness of the concept to a definite setting of argumentation. I have explored the possibility of interpreting *marebito* as a notion about "the other," and I have checked all possible elements that can be found there regarding heterogeneity, like heteromorphy and heterotopy, and this in a global context.

Discourses about the other are varied, and belong to different fields of knowledge. Our interpretation of *marebito*-as-other proves to be original within the context of the general conceptions of otherness. It is not possible to subsume it into any of the discourses on the other analyzed in this essay. In my opinion the *marebito* remains an outstanding contribution by Origuchi to a key problem in today's philosophical debates. It cannot be reduced to a simple mechanism of projection of the self into its exterior: it is exteriority itself. It cannot be reduced to the interplay between self and other within the context of intersubjectivity. Nor is it reducible to the limits of theological discourse, for the *marebito*-as-*kami* does not fit well into any given pantheon. It has not been proved, I believe, that it can simply be identified with the cult of ancestors. *Marebito* is a much more radical concept. Its utopian component, its radical heterogeneity, impels us to treat this notion in its own proper context, that is to say the liminality of space and the suggestion of a multidimensional conception of reality.

Origuchi was not a philosopher: rather he passed on to posterity a half-poetic, half-intuitive notion associated with a suggestive word from antiquity. It is our task to draw out the potentiality of this notion and

to transform it into a valid concept for today's philosophical discourse. If my interpretation of the *marebito*-as-other is correct, then we may take a further step and with a simple grammar of transitivity, postulate the notion of the other-as-*marebito* and explore the consequences. For instance, might we not transpose “total otherness” into the realm of intersubjectivity? This is what Origuchi seems to suggest. *Marebito* seems to have such a potential. It requires an expectation, a protocol, a treatment, a celebration, all driven by the nostalgic desire for the “other.” It also involves an “ethics of hospitality” in a general framework of a theory of exchange.<sup>39</sup>

\* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Albert and Teruko Craig for their stylistic improvements to this essay.

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39. It is worth considering a series of recent hermeneutical theories of “hospitality” inspired by Augustine such as those elaborated by Heidegger, Lévinas, Sartre, Ricoeur, and Derrida. See OGLETREE 1985.

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