NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

LETTERS, HOME

(Re)Constructing *My Place* in Language Teaching

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Education
University of Prince Edward Island

Accepted as Conforming
to the Required Standards

by
Dr Sean WIEBE

&
Dr Miles TURNBULL

Craig M[ac]DONALD
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
March 2010

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-64463-8
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-64463-8

Abstract

Where are you from? The question lies at the heart of the Japan-based practice in language teaching that has determined my profession to teach. My autoethnographic enquiry has (re)constructed a way of life in the *furusato*, the *uchi* where my practice finds its proper context. Having once left Canada as *EFL instructor*, I return as *eikaiwa no sensei—master of English conversation*. I've sketched out the methodological characteristics of enquiry in *eikaiwa*, offering a sequence of conversations through epistolary enquiry undertaken with students and colleagues in Japan. Personal essays and narratives emerged as I dwelt poetically and hermeneutically on the conversations. Enacting pedagogical relationship through *eikaiwa*, an activity set in *kyōshitsu*, defines *kokoro* for pedagogy: it can be site for *ikiru chikara*, the goal in recent transitions of Japanese post-historical curriculum. Coming, continually arriving, from far away is what drives me *in* to the *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* for the praxis of freedom in the heart of things, the *kyōshitsu* as *uchi*, an irreducible interior setting for pedagogical experience. Just as *eikaiwa* is *gakugai*, becoming *eikaiwa no sensei* depends on the nature and potential of being *gaijin*. That *eikaiwa no sensei* should be regarded as master of something bought and sold as a way of the soul and pursuit of nobility—this points out the unique and complex position of *eikaiwa no sensei*. Considering the *dō* of kendo, judo, *sadō*, *kadō* and so on, I look at *sensei*: one of earlier birth to life and practice in a particular way. The status whereby *sensei* retains the nobility of the samurai is, after all, a matter of her own way of being as nobly human as it is possible to be. If cultural context is for adaptation (implying a movement towards an interior), then it is perfectly natural and also perfectly human to adapt every cultural form, to internalize and *japan* it. Dwelling in journey describes my *hosomichi*, and it takes place in an *oku* of the heart.

Contents

Home

Acknowledgement

The present work would not have been possible without learning from the living I've found in the presence of my *seito*.

The possible work could not have been present without the *dokyō*, the *kokoro* I've found in the midst of my family and my friends.

The present work would not have been possible without living from the learning I've found in the absence of my *sensei*.

Finally, without a reader—ah, but what am I saying?

"Then, now that it's been decided," Eryximachus continued,
"that drinking is to be as each desires and not compulsory,
the next thing I propose is that we dismiss the flute-girl who just came in.
Let her play for herself, or if she prefers, for the women inside.
We can entertain each other today with speeches, and if you are willing,
I'd also like to offer you a proposal about the topic for the speeches."
(Plato, *Symposium*, 176e; 1993, Cobb)[i]

These several years out on the sea have made me empty, cold, and clear. Pour yourself into me.
(Sheff, 2007)

---

[i] This epigraph came as a late addition before I submitted my thesis for reviewers, internal and external. I'd just finished my Epilogue in a hasty run-through which had reminded me of *The Symposium*, a dialogue shared amongst men gathered to drink and talk and tell stories—about *love*. I looked it up and simply supplied the words by which the talk turned to the stories being told. In a way, it seemed a suitable introduction for my own tending, conversationally, to a constructed identity.

It's come to light, thanks to the talk around my thesis defence, that these words are likely to stand out, to refer in some way to a whole *western* and masculine perspective which could be seen as troublesome. What I find interesting, now that I see this epigraph for all its problematic discourse, is that *right here*, apparently just at the moment of transition from *front matter* to *main event*, the text seems to have deconstructed itself, especially for the reader who, after reading all the way through the work, as I did, returns to this moment, of an undeniable turn for the *dead, white and masculine*. I could offer, for perspective in context, that Socrates' speech, reserved until the end of the party, consists for the most part of a detailed account of a conversation he once had with Diotima—and his regard for *her* wisdom, really giving her the final word, if we take him as an honest man relating the story of this conversation. But of course it's a slippery slope and in any case Diotima herself is no more present to address the reader, as the author of the text or any part of it, than was Socrates—and it is this absent master, this call to recollection, that I most appreciate about Plato these days.

I would ask the members of my committee to let the epigraph stand with only this note to acknowledge it for the aporia it essentially is, early though it may seem.

Partial Annotated Glossary of Japanese Terms (Including a List of Japanese Islands)[1]

ai **(愛)**

love,
whether *maternal*,
conjugal,
neighbourly;
doting,
affection,
something we fall into or out of;
the spirit of a happy home;
something we accept or reject;
something we hold *for nature*,
for learning . . .
see also ***yūai***, *friendship-love*

aidoru **(アイドル)**

idol, as in *pop idol* or *icon*

Akage no An **(赤毛のアン)**

Red-Haired Anne, as in the works of L.M. Montgomery;
a popular 20th century heroine,
especially, for those about my age, in a 50-episode television series,
the first several of which were the work of Hayao Miyazaki

amae **(甘え)**

emotional dependence;
~ru **(甘える)**

pretending "that one is less mature, more dependent, more spoiled than one really is" (Rheingold, 1988, p. 76)

barisuta **(バリスタ)**

barista

boku **(僕、ぼく)**

a boyish way of referring to oneself
(see ***uchi***)

---

[1] Since many of my key terms have emerged in Japanese, I've offered a glossary of sorts, here where the reader isn't likely to miss it; I feel it may hint by way of a few surprises at what's to follow, much like the family tree at the beginning of Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor*.

bunka (文化)

cultural form(s)

bushidō (武士道)

way of the warrior in samurai society

cha (茶)

tea

chashitsu (茶室)

tea-room
(see ***kyōshitsu***)

cherii bōi (チェリーボーイ)

cherry-boy;
a sensitive youth, perhaps . . .

daigaku (大学)

university (note the ***gakkō*** kanji)

Dejima (出島)

(***deru***'s *de*:
going-out island)
an artificial island in the bay at Nagasaki, a Dutch trading-post during ***sakoku***

deru (出る)

going out,
sticking out

dokodemo doa (どこでもドア)

wherever-you-like door:
a kind of teleportation device used by ***Doraemon*** and friends[2]

dokyō (度胸)

courage, heart;
guts

---

[2] Doraemon carries such gadgets, called *dōgu* (道具), in his fourth-dimensional pocket. Thousands of *dōgu* appeared on the show.

Doraemon (ドラえもん)

a long-running popular animated series,
named after a round blue-and-white cat-robot from the future,
who brings access to such wish-fulfilling technologies such as the
dokodemodoa

-dō, michi (道)

Tao
way
art, discipline
road, street, path

Edo (江戸)

an old name for Tokyo,
then seat to the Tokugawa Shogunate in its rule through the ***Edo*** *period*
(1603-1868)

eibun (英文)

English literature;
see ***bunka*** for same *bun*

Eigo (英語)

English language[3]

eikaiwa no sensei (英会話の先生)

ei—English[4]
kaiwa—meeting and speaking, conversing
no—a genitive mark
sen—previous
sei—living;
master/teacher of English conversation

Eiken (英検)

a system for testing English skills

emoji (絵文字)

(fascinatingly, my dictionary says *heiroglyphics*)
emoticons, in the sense of *picture* (see ***ukiyo-e***) and *character* or *letter*

---

3 英 (*ei*), *as in* 英国 (*Eikoku—England—*) fits with 語 (*go—language—*) as in 日本語 (*Nihongo*—Japanese language, as opposed for instance to Japanese person—日本人—*Nihonjin*—).

4 英国 (*Eikoku*, or *Igirisu*) means England, the *English land*, whilst 英人 (pronounced *Igirisujin*) refers to a person from England; see also ***Eibun***, ***Eigo*** and ***Eiken***.

enka (演歌)

a popular form of song in Japan,
roughly equivalent to *show tunes*

furusato (古里)

the old country,[5] especially *the country where we were born;*
the old village; perhaps nuanced differently in the simple hiragana (ふるさと)

(the place where I am when I am *at home*;
where I belong, where my love grows)
most often translated as *hometown*[6]

Gaigo (外語)

outside (*gai*) *language* (*go*) *(college)*;
short for *Gaikokugo no Senmon Gakkō*:
"Vocational School of Outside-/Foreign-Country-Languages"

gaijin (外人)

foreigner;
outside (外, ***gai***) *person* (人, ***jin***);

considered a somewhat delicate term in polite conversation[7]

gairaigo (外来語)

loanwords;
borrowed language

gakkō (学校)

school;
see also ***daigaku***, ***Gaigo***, ***gakugai*** and ***gakusei***

gakugai (学外)

extracurricular;
outside of school (same *gai* as in ***gaijin*** and ***Gaigo***)

gakusei (学生)

student living the school life (note the *sei* as in ***sensei*** and ***seito***);
schoolboy, schoolgirl

---

5 古い, *furui*, means *old* without speaking of age measured in years.

6 *I went back to my hometown last weekend; I played with my high-school days' friends and ate my mother's cooking.*

7 外国人 (*gaikokujin, outside/foreign-country-person*) is supposed to be more politically correct. For same kanji see ***Eigo*** (note) and ***sakoku***. I use *gaijin* because, really, it seems most frequently-used in the every-day life I lived in Tōhoku, and so much more to-the-point.

Ganbatte kudasai! (がんばって下さい！)

Go for it!
Give it your best!
Bon courage!
Give er!
Git er done, baui!

genkan (玄関)

entrance to a home or temple, for instance;
a space, usually with a floor surface lower than that for the rest of the building;
a place in which to leave your shoes as you enter

Genki desu-ka? (元気ですか。)

equivalent to the English *How are you?*
Literally, *Are you:*
sanguine?
energetic, enthusiastic?
vigorous, as the Bushi themselves put it when meeting me for the first time?[8]

giri choko (義理チョコ)

obligatory chocolate;
duty chocolate

gurande (グランデ)

grande

haafu (ハーフ)

half-Japanese, if you please

haafu ando haafu (ハーフ　アンド　ハーフ)

half dark beer,
half pale beer

Hai! (はい！)

Yes!
Ok!
Got it!

---

8 *Good morning! We are very vigorous! And you?*

hanami (花見)

flower-viewing:
time of year around April,
when the beloved cherry trees of Japan are blossoming;[9]
a time for *awaré*[10]

hibakusha (被爆者)

explosion-affected,
referring to a survivor of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

hinan-goya (避難小屋)

a shelter, usually a kind of cottage, built for travellers on a mountainside

hoikuen (保育園)

(public) child care centre

Honshū (本州)

the biggest island in the Japanese archipelago

ichi, ni, san . . . (一、二、三 . . .)

one, two, three . . .

ichioku sōchu ryū (一億総中流)

a nation of middle-class people

ikebana (生け花)

living flowers (*bana* here is the same as *hana* in ***hanami***;
the *ike/sei* kanji is the same in *sen**sei***, ***sei**to*, *shudan **sei**katsu* and ***iki**ru chikara*)
often understood as *flower arrangement*

ikiru chikara (生きる力)

(same 生 as ***sensei***, ***seito*** and ***shudan seikatsu***, each referring to *life*)

living power;
passion for life, as Asanuma renders it;
remarkably similar to *soul* in the Aristotelian sense of *entelechy*;
important concept as linked with ***seito***

---

9 The cherry trees open their *hana*, flowers.

10 I've modified the spelling, as the basic representation would only look like the English word *aware*. This appears in a dictionary of the untranslatable as an awareness "brought on by that ephemeral, fragile beauty of, say, a cherry blossom as it floats to the ground" (Rheingold, 1988, p. 77). Such a blossom, more usually a single petal, is never returning to the tree overhead, may indeed have originated in the next tree over, before being carried on a gust in the breeze, . . . to where, in an image as from an ***enka*** lyric, it comes to rest in the cup of *saké* that lies under your nose.

inaka (田舎)

commonly represented in translation as *countryside*;
a place for attitudes and dispositions as well as crops in fields
(note the kanji on the left and its relation to that on the right of 古里, ***furusato***:

an ideographic representation of rice-fields, perhaps?
(See ***tanbo*** below, revealing the same pronunciation as in 秋田, Akita,

as it happens . . . .)

inakunaru (居なくなる)

leave;
disappear;
cease to exist;
pass away;
become not-there, not-present

inseki jisatsu (引責自殺)

suicide driven by *responsibility*;
seen by practitioners as ritual atonement

ippon (一本)

one full point,
counted as something having *length*;
compare with *nihongo* in my note to ***Eigo***

Izanagi (イザナギ)

he who invites;
mythical forefather, in his union with Izanami, of islands, deities, mortals

Izanami (イザナミ)

she who invites;
sister of Izanagi;
similar figure to Eurydice, in her death and botched revival

jinsei (人生)

life, understood as *human life*,
the life of a person;
see ***sensei***, ***seito***, ***ikiru chikara***, ***shūdan seikatsu*** and ***gaijin***

jiyū (自由)

freedom, in the sense of *Liberté*

***Jōmon* (縄文)**

cord-patterned, after a technique evident in the pottery by which we know them;
between about 14,000 and 400 BC, what began as a Neolithic population;
possible ancestors of Ainu and/or aboriginal peoples of the Americas

***juken* (受験)**

test;
examination

***juku* (塾)**

cram-school;
an important privately-run supplement to ordinary schooling;
the kind of school which a good half of all school-aged kids will attend,
especially for the sake of improving their scores in university entrance exams

***kachigumi* or *makegumi* (勝ち組か負け組)**

winners or *losers*

***kadō* (華道)**

way of flowers;
ikebana

***kahe o re* (カフェオレ)**

café au lait

***kami* (神)**

god(s);
spirit(s) in the sense of *numen*

***karahafu* (唐破風)**

a kind of curving-topped gable lending its name to a building style;
popular during Kamakura and Muromachi periods;
especially typical in temples, shrines, gateways and castles

***karaoke* (カラオケ)**

empty orchestra (see ***ōkesutora***)

***kasa* (笠)**

a kind of wide-cone-shaped hat

***kata* (型)**

form(s);
choreographic patterns of movement incorporated in practice of *dō*,
especially, *but not exclusively*, in such martial arts as *karatedō*, *kendō*, *aikidō* and *judō*

kawaii (可愛い)

cute;
from a sense of *shyness* or *embarrassment*,
appealing in the sense of *pathetic/vulnerable/darling/loveable/small*;
a genuinely ubiquitous value in contemporary Japanese life

kawaru (変わる)

to (ex)change

kawatta (変わった)

(ex)changed;
different

kocha (紅茶)

dark tea as opposed to green tea

kōhii (コーヒー)

coffee (probably from the Dutch *koffie*)

kokoro (心)

heart;
the heart of things;
feeling

kokugo (国語)

national language;
see ***sakoku***, ***gaikoku***, and ***Eigo***

Konnichiwa. (こんにちは。)

Good day.
(How about today?)

Kureigu Sensei (クレイグ先生)

a name by which many of my students would refer to me,
using my given name (most of those I worked with would seem to prefer this)
rather than the family name that would ordinarily go with the title ***sensei***

kyaku, o-kyaku-san, o-kyaku-sama (客、お客さん、お客様)

customer

kyōiku (教育)

education

kyōshi (教師)

teacher,
with same *kyō* as ***kyōiku***

kyōshitsu (教室)

classroom

manshon (マンション)

(the borrowed English *mansion*)
Japanese word for *condo*

matsuri (祭り)

festival;
carnival

Matsushima (松島)

Pine Islands;
an area on the coast of Miyagi north of Sendai,
where there is a bay and a great many rocky little islands with twisted pines

Meiji (明治)

The Brilliant Reign;
a revolutionary period (latter 1900s) that saw the restoration of imperial power,
following the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate throughout the ***Edo*** period

Monbukagakushō (文部科学書)

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology;
pillar of the centralized bureaucracy of education

nani (何)

what

nattō (納豆)

viscous fermented soybeans:
the cheese of the fields,
as I've heard it called

nijiriguchi (にじり口)

narrow door to a ***chashitsu***

Nomimasu-ka? **(飲みますか。)**

Will you drink?
Would you like (to drink)?
Do you like (to drink)?
Are you drinking?
Have you been drinking?
Do you drink?
Shall we drink?

o-cha **(お茶)**

(green) tea

oishii **(美味しい)**

(especially of food and drink) pleasurable, delightful, delicious

ōkesutora **(オーケストラ)**

orchestra

Okinawa **(沖縄)**

a group, numbered in the hundreds, of islands lying between ***Honshū*** and Taiwan;
the central largest of these islands, site of the prefectural capital city, Naha

Oku no Hosomichi **(奥の細道)**

oku—beyond, deep
no—of, into
hoso(i)—narrow, skinny
michi—road, way;
seminal travelogue of haiku master Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694)

onigiri **(おにぎり)**

rice ball doesn't really give much of a picture unless you've seen one

onsen **(温泉)**

hot spring(s);
an ideal resort for domestic tourism in a bathing culture

ore **(おれ)**

a casual way of referring to oneself

oshieru **(教える)**

tell,
teach;
note the common kanji with ***kyōshi***

otaku (オタク)

devotee;
enthusiast;
computer-geek, music-geek;
amateur photographer, amateur astronomer;
wine-snob, music-snob . . .

Otsukare sama desu! (お疲れ様です！)

an acknowledgement of personal exertion,
appropriate for exchange, for instance, at the end of a working day

pan (パン)

bread

rate (ラテ)

caffè latte;
latte

Rebun Tō (礼文島)

Japan's northernmost island;
a place with a view of the Russian island of Sakhalin

Rishiri Tō (利尻島)

a small island off the coast of Hokkaido;
part of Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park

roji (露地)

dewey ground

rōmaji (ローマ字)

Roman-alphabetical characters as used to represent Japanese language

Sado ga Shima (佐渡島)

an island off the coast of Niigata prefecture;
a place of political exile between the 8th and 18th centuries,
then a place where the homeless were sent to work in the gold-mine (until 1989)

sadō, chadō (茶道)

the way of tea;
(especially in *chakai* or *chaji*) *the tea ceremony*

sakoku (鎖国)

secluded/closed country;
national isolation:
Japanese policy throughout most of the ***Edo*** period,
during which only Chinese and Dutch ships were allowed in Japanese waters;
note *koku* (国) as in ***gaikokujin*** or ***gaikokugo*** (see ***Gaigo*** and ***gaijin***)

sarariiman (サラリーマン)

salaryman, in Japanese English;
lifetime employee, typically of one company

seito (生徒)

(note the *sei* as in ***sensei***)
students, understood as the living, the growing;
those undergoing learning experiences in life

senpai (先輩)

elder;
superior;
mentor

sensei (先生)

sen—previous
sei—living;
master;
teacher

shimaguni (島国)

island nation,
or the spirit of insularity that may hold together an archipelago

Shinkansen (新幹線)

literally, *New Trunk Line*;
the bullet train(s) running on such lines

Shitsureishimasu. (失礼します。)

Excuse me. Pardon me. I beg your pardon. I'm sorry.
Goodbye.

shodō (書道)

Zen calligraphy

shūdan seikatsu **(集団生活)**

group life
(same *sei* as in ***sensei*** and ***seito***)

shumi **(趣味)**

a matter of *interest*;
something a person can *get in to*

sonnō jōi **(尊皇攘夷)**

revere the emperor, expel the barbarians;
a kind of political philosophy raised to slogan status in the days before the ***Meiji***;
replaced after the restoration with *fukoku kyōhei—rich country, strong military*

Surippii da! **(スリッピイだ！)**

She's slippy, bauice!
It's slippery!

tanbo **(田んぼ)**

rice paddy/paddies[11]

Tōkyō ni iku. **(東京に行く。)**

[I/you/he/she/it/we/they] [go/goes/are/is going/will go] to Tokyo.

uchi **(家, 内 or うち)**

my place;
room, dwelling;
house, home;
the place of a home life
(in the latter kanji or as hiragana, a girlish way of referring to oneself)

Uchi ni kaeru. **(家に帰る。)**

[I/you/he/she/it/we/they] [go/goes/are/is going/will go] (back) home.

ukiyo-e **(浮世絵)**

pictures of the (fleeting, evanescent) floating world;
woodblock prints of the 17th to 20th centuries,
especially representing ***Edo*** city life,
more especially representing the world of entertainers:
courtesans, sumo wrestlers and actors

---

11 See ***inaka*** above.

wabi sabi (侘び寂び)

austere refinement and quiet simplicity;
a buddhist aesthetic of impermanence, transience, imperfection

Wakkanai (稚内)

northernmost city in Japan;
port town from which to catch a ferry to Rishiri or Rebun Island;
a place where the signs are written in Japanese and Russian;
note the kanji which may be read as ***uchi***,
here represented in the Ainu language from which the name comes

waraji (草鞋)

sandals woven from straw rope

watashi, watakushi (私)

a first-person marker
(*watakushi* is considered more formal),
joining with *tachi* to become plural,
thus taken as singular on its own

waza-ari (技あり)

half-point,
awarded for success with a particular *move*

yakisoba (焼きそば)

fried noodles

yakyū (野球)

baseball, as introduced during the ***Meiji***;
literally, *field ball*
(note commonality in 1st kanji w/ those found in ***inaka***, ***tanbo*** and ***furusato***)

yamabushi (山伏)

the kanji for *mountain* is an old friend;
mountain monk—one who lies or hides in a mountain;
ascetic practitioners of esoteric Buddhism,
practising in holy mountains,
such as Fuji San, Chōkai San, Gas San

Yayoi (弥生)

a neighborhood in Tokyo where artifacts were first discovered,
of a period reaching from about 500 to about 300 BC,
during which ***Jōmon*** pottery styles found competition in the potter's wheel,
and ***tanbo*** farming and metallurgic technologies intensified

Yomenai. **(読めない。)**

I/you/he/she/it/we/they don't/can't read (this/that).

yosomono **(よそ者)**

"other" people, from other places

yōchien **(幼稚園)**

usually referred to in (Japanese) English as *kindergarten*[12]
preschool, run either privately or as part of the public system of education

Yubin Kyoku **(郵便局)**

Post Office

Yutori Kyōiku **(ゆとり教育)**

Relaxing Education;
Relaxed Education

yūai **(友愛)**

friendship;
fellowship;
fraternity:
a key concept in new foreign policy,
arising by a fascinating historical provenance

Zenmai **(薇)**

Japanese royal fern;
Japanese flowering fern

---

12 (Bearing even *kōen no en*, for instance—*en as in garden*, for *garten*.)

Introductions (1)

Landscape With Home and Figures

Furusato.

In a recent conversation, Daisen asked me about the word *home* as it appears in the pages that follow. He asked me whether this were like the feeling of being in one's *hometown*. I asked him if he had in mind the Japanese word *furusato*, which we then paused to agree could refer to *the society in which one was brought up.* This was indeed what he had intended, so we established that it would probably serve as a useful reference. I think it's striking, however, that *furusato*, when I simply hear the word, still doesn't necessarily evoke the same warmth (fuzzily half-ironic though it may be) as, say, the English phrase *hearth and home* in my imagination. Away, if possible, from the sense of society in *furusato*, there is an everyday *uchi*, but here I think it's good to remember that *a house is not a home.*[13] In the present thesis this is nevertheless my aim: to set before the reader a record of my search for the *home(town)* element in my language teaching, an activity which has thus far been temporally coextensive with what I like to call *my Japanese life.*

In this Japanese life, as much as it may seem customary to ask me where I am from, home is a place I've habitually spoken of as far away. I have thus dwelt at all times more or less explicitly *away* from home. Yet Japan was also a particular kind of place, a kind of place that, over time, I could begin to understand as *furusato*. I now mean to do philosophy, "to look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world" (Greene, 1973, p. 267), and the movement in which I will do so is "like returning home after a long stay in some other place" (Greene, 1973, p. 267). It is as teacher and as stranger that I find "returning home again unchanged is impossible" (Block, 1998, p. 19), but I must stress that returning home is also leaving home, if being at home in conversation with my students depends on having left home and become a stranger—in a place where the fact that I am not Japanese, am *native speaker of English*, which is to say *gaijin*, is paradoxically essential. I arrived in Japan as a language teacher with a certain amount of instruction in Applied Linguistics; I came to understand my task as *eikaiwa no sensei.* Echoes of my training and the specific practices I may have shared with other teachers fill the whole canvas of this work, but I guess it's clear already that my classroom is not a one-way street, not an English-only atmosphere. Thus, although I am offering an autoethnographic account of language teaching, I find I must add the phrase *in Japan.* That has made all the difference, you might say.

---

[13] An interesting take on *uchi* shows up at some length in Morley's (1985) *Pictures from the Water Trade: An Englishman in Japan.*

This qualitative study, an autobiographic enquiry, based in a number of auto-ethnographic conversations, tends to and cultivates a way of life, (re)constructs a sense of home, as found in my practice of language teaching. It follows experiences I've had over the seven-odd-year period in which I have lived in Japan and worked as *eikaiwa no sensei*. This I understood, at first, as *teacher of English as Foreign Language*—but what is the sense of *conversation* (*kaiwa*) by which *eikaiwa* differs from the *language* (*go*) of *eigo* (*English*) taught, very much as *foreign language*, in schools across the country? My account is of my own life as both *gaijin* and *sensei*. As I delve into this life in my continued correspondence with students and colleagues back in Japan, I believe I can embody the conversation involved in becoming a teacher and, always, a learner (at home as *gaijin*) in *eikaiwa*. Approaching the present thesis, I continued to wonder, as I always had, about the value system on which a Japanese educational system, including *eikaiwa* amongst other pursuits, rests. And what, especially, does (my) experience of *eikaiwa* say about (my) (Japanese) life? How may I "accept the position of stranger and use it as a method to achieve freedom, [. . .] to live with it and to wrest from it the knowledge and healing that dialectically exist within it" (Block, 1998, p. 26)?

As this understanding unfolded, I raised different concerns at different points, but I began with one central question. In its concern with curriculum, this question seems now to run throughout the enquiry. *What is eikaiwa?* So far as it represents a unique form of learning and instruction, what are its origins, its purposes, its history? How does it have life? Who does it? What does it look like? By what discursive, conversational mode did my new *furusato*, my sense of living *here*, as *eikaiwa no sensei*, emerge? What quality of relationship did I experience with my students over time, and what did I learn, both as *gaijin* and as *sensei*, in our discourse? What space does this radically existential teaching experience open for curriculum theory? What are the pedagogical possibilities of this language, of *(gaijin no) eikaiwa no sensei*? (As *gaijin*, what were my landmark adjustments in becoming *sensei*? In what sense did *sensei* apply to me? What would it mean to be called *sensei* in the noble tradition which this word seems to embody?) How much bearing do I feel such relationships (or adjustments) had on my understanding of *eikaiwa*, and vice-versa?

Kaiwa.

This study has been undertaken in the spirit of *what comes up along the way*. I've found this suitable to the phenomenological bent in my own thought, but I don't mean here to use big words to mask any of the eccentricities which may arise with what I mean by them. A word or two would perhaps suffice on this point. The questions kept coming up as I went along, and this seemed entirely natural within the scope of the study's conversational nature. There is a spontaneity, a sense of play that comes out quite often in my explorations of language, and this seems entirely in keeping with my practice as a language teacher. I'm not shy of suggesting that the point of view from which I write is thus a shifting, *slippy* sort of thing (as some P-E-Islanders would say, along with the Japanese amongst whom I've ridden my bicycle over muddy mountain

trails, calling behind them for others bombing along, *surippii da!*). As the focus of an emerging work, I believe it's the identity from which the work is written that's really bound to shift. Here I am, testing the limits, taking measure of all conditions for continuity in my life as I feel it. My review of literature, broad and deep in its way, runs throughout this search: the libraries through which I swim have seemed to have no trouble supporting my weight. I found this dispersion quite natural, as the work's emergence depended (in some sense, entirely) on my encounters with new readings. My autoethnographic genre has most generously allowed and encouraged the naturalist in me to sort things out in all of these aspects.

In letters to my colleague Zenmai, I have expanded my understanding of *eikaiwa*, and of EFL: not always the same kind of thing, and anyway always changing in my mind. *Eikaiwa* is, to borrow a phrase from the painterly arts, the *sacra conversazione* of the figures in my representation but, however interpretative it is when understood in its own dynamic, it would not be fully intelligible if I did not discerningly mark the iconographic concreteness of my roles as *sensei* and *gaijin*. Fittingly, perhaps, this conversation takes as its starting point the beauty of the *hanami* season during which I arrived in Akita. The wonders of a park filled with cherries blossoming, or of a river lined with blossoming trees, carry with them a great overhanging silence, however exuberant the crowds beneath the blossoms, gathered for their annual *flower-viewing* with a sort of mass picnic and saké. The conversation itself began right around the same time of year, and it occurs to me now that the letters didn't reflect what had happened to the Japanese cherry in the gardens here on the farm: this year, I believe it was a late frost that set in, sometime after the tree had shown signs of its spring growth, and caused the blossoms not to open. In any case, Zenmai and I discussed *eikaiwa*, trying first to outline, I suppose, what it does or for whom. We took it up as mystery, carried it through some account of its origins, along with our own: if I was a *cherii-bōi* English teacher at a time I can describe, Zenmai can also mark out similar origins for himself in *eikaiwa*. What comes before our experience of *eikaiwa* if we are in the first place *eikaiwa no sensei*? Where *do* we come from if *eikaiwa*, like everything, flows between Japan and the rest of the world? Do Zenmai and I come from somewhere beneath the ground of Japan? Could we have the same origins as Japanese people, going by the Shinto creation myths? We find ourselves on a path of sorts—starting with *eikaiwa*, pure and simple, as *hobby*. How, we ask, is it work? We connect a passing interest with *hobbies*, an abiding concern with *shumi* and a passionate desire with *dō*. We suggest *eikaiwa* may then be a window on a way of the soul, or a doorway to the beyond or simply the way itself—a way beyond, a way through. This we imagine as a move away from the sense of *eikaiwa* as a cultural commodity, a product for consumption.

In conversation with Hello NY, one who works in a place between *sensei* and *seito*, I've explored images of *sensei* as teacher in a special sense, *master* in a certain sense, but certainly both Zen and Confucian. The *previously born*; also the samurai in a long-held tradition of Japanese pedagogy—in their relations to the later-born, the now living and growing *seito* or *gakusei*, and to the curriculum (in relation to which *eikaiwa* too, in part, finds its place). I've compared my own experience with that of other common images of *sensei*, working with a couple of articles to help fill in gaps. Whilst basically keeping myself outside of the schoolteacher's experience, I consider as carefully as I can what we might all hold in common, being equally called *sensei* in a society where, I am aware, the

term can be applied in so many ways. There arises, I think, a question of *form* in its first glimmerings. I note a sub-theme of conjecture in this piece. In part I feel that I was, like those American scholars to whom I refer, reaching a bit, going beyond the ken of my own life-experience and simply trying to recall as many different images as I'd formed, in my life to date, around the term *sensei*. It is part of the autoethnographer's task to consider and more or less claim or reject each of the names she's gone by. This calls on me to say a fair bit more than I would normally want to say about any imagined *Japanese society*—this remains somewhat beyond me, if I am honest. The reader may trace, as I do, the length and tautness of the reins on that urge, to say *I've come back to tell you all. I will tell you all.*

In letters to my student Daisen, I've explored my experience, as *native-speaker* (read: *gaijin*) teacher of *eikaiwa* and as learner of Japanese, to give place to my particular way of life as one of those who engage in *eikaiwa*. This intention arises from an ongoing conversation of mine, internally and amongst students and colleagues (in Japan and Canada), but one which is often read as *silence*. I plan to embody this way of life, this *English conversation*—and what is the interest of this tale?[14] The reader may or may not be a teacher of English in Japan but, I think, may yet reflect on the qualities of experience in general, as I mean to do in these pages. There is also in my letters to Daisen an image of identity as web, which keeps me thinking about Alexandre Kojève's vision for post-historical human production, that at the end of history *homo sapiens* constructs "edifices and works of art as birds build their nests and spiders spin their webs" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). Here is my dwelling. As I get down to dimensions of curriculum, especially the Japanese curriculum to which *eikaiwa* must somehow relate itself, I find the formal *silence* as of the samurai, the ghost evoked by a small old suit of armour standing in the Zuihoden museum in Sendai, for instance—at the site of the mausoleum of Date Masamune, on the hilltop overlooking the Hirose river, just at the foot of which I lived for awhile, in a neighbourhood called Otamayashita, *beneath the spirit's resting-place*. I observe this silence in relation to questions of modernism and post-modernism as dominating the forum in which curriculum is situated. Indeed, I should point out that my thinking on curriculum, by the time I reached this chapter, was informed and infused with notions drawn from my conversation with Zenmai, of *dō* as way or path. I find this much more satisfying, in fact, than an etymological consideration of the English word *curriculum*, leading as it does to something like a racetrack, something on which one can imagine going round and round.

With my long-time student S I've dwelt on the *snobbery* by which Kojève (1947/1969, p. 161) characterized what he called the post-historical society of Japan since the Edo period. I've considered this snobbery in comparison with the mark applied to its several disciplines today, which may as a starting-point be summed up in the Japanese word so often translated as *hobby*: *shumi*. *Eikaiwa*, somewhat analogously, seems to have been *shumi* to many of my students. This way of spending one's time when not working is important, I think, for the spirit in which it seems to approach the *dō* in kendo, judo, *sadō* (*tea ceremony*), *kadō* (*ikebana*) and so on. An idea came up, by the way—something going back to a comment of Zenmai's, about a *community of individuals*. As a phrase I suppose it's one thing, and I didn't dwell on it so much when it first came up; I'm glad to see

---

14 What is the name of the essence that lies contentedly between you and me?

it given its due as S and I move from Kojève to Coudenhove-Kalergi, another thinker elsewhere in the movement for a unified Europe (and a unified Asia)—and one who, it turns out, has returned to a kind of currency in Japanese policy. We must conclude, honestly, that it's much too early to tell if the scenarios at hand, in this conversation, are even accurate, but I wanted to ask S about her sense of how work is to be done for a public good, from her viewpoint in relation to Japanese society.

Uchi.

I've looked, then, for a metaphorical *furusato*, *uchi*, to (re)construct, partly in the writings of those who have left home and gone away. The word *away* is of unique importance, I believe, in the English spoken around my hometown, to the point where we find that the name *Come-From-Away* applies universally to those who were born *over acrost*, on the other side of any of the waters surrounding The Gentle Island (as, in most parts of Japan, we find the term *yosomono* applied to those who have originated outside of any given group's *furusato*). This sense, of a defining elsewhere, yet contrasts with a Japanese way of speaking in that it is easy to speak, in English, of a state of *being/going away* from somewhere—whereas in Japanese, it seems to me, we either go to a named place (*Tokyo ni iku*), go home (*uchi ni kaeru*), or leave, disappear, cease to exist, pass away (*inakunaru*). In the place where I now live, the hometown to which I have returned, I may also be what they call a *CFA*. Strangely, perhaps, they seem to use the same term in Newfoundland, where I was born—but, having grown up on PEI from the age of two—well this leaves me out of a purist's definition for Islander (that Islanders are born and not made; even *Newfies*, or *Capers*, though from islands, not so far from here, yet are not supposed to be the same kind of people). Indeed, I'm getting to an age where pretty much half of my life has been lived out at off-Island addresses. And I think I've been living like this, all this time, in part because I'd never felt that I could understand my place in the world by pretending to be an Islander. It would be possible for me to envy those who live as Islanders (whether by choice or by birth).

I've explored my themes as I'd often ask my students to go after ideas that mattered to them, and in precisely the same way I found would often be exercised amongst *gaijin no sensei*, wherever we met: I find my way by granting these themes central focus as I tell and hear stories and other accounts. I've composed essays and narratives in the midst of my letters back to those amongst whom I've felt at home. It's been my intention to develop a kind of *imaginative construction*, a personal account, by way of what in my Gmail account are called conversations, amongst those students and colleagues of mine with whom I've kept in touch. In this work I've meant to document especially a kind of new home, in shared language, which I have learnt to build with my students and colleagues, as we have come to establish our own languages and our own practices.

The letters are grouped so that my side of each conversation is present in its entirety. I don't mean in this way to be speaking for both parties in a conversation; this merely seemed the least complicated way to proceed in the construction of what is, after all, only intended as my utterance. I look forward to sending it out to each of my inter-

locutors in its wider entirety. The essays and narratives I was writing as I went along are all included separately, though grouped to match the conversations. I should stress that my interlocutor in each conversation has read the passages corresponding to the conversation's central theme. All of this happened along the way. At length, however, my more private reflections have taken a turn for the deeply interior sense of *uchi*, the interior to which I write my way. After discussing, with others, so many topics around being at home and away from home, I bring my thesis to rest under the stars.

The talk.

I am pleased to offer this autoethnographic thesis as a somewhat performative representation of the potential in *eikaiwa* as a mode of inquiry. Whilst my references to the field of Applied Linguistics have been rather sparse, I'd like it to be clear that I've also actively pursued, with my colleagues and teachers, all of the understandings I've been able to report *in conversation, in dialogue.* Whilst *dialogue*, taken as a countable noun, can summon images of drills and rote rehearsals in the context of EFL practice, I'd like to look at the uncountable sort of dialogue—that which lies at the heart of Freire's (1970, for instance) pedagogy.

As a further note on curriculum, I believe my position as *gaijin* and *sensei* (*gaijin*, no *sensei*/*gaijin* non*sensei*) may bear particular attention, especially in its depictions of language teaching and learning. The story of EFL, its history, as a kind of global project in education, depends, in part, on the EFL teacher as one who goes forth from an English-speaking country and into countries where English is not readily a part of everyday life. If this is a vital movement, this historical *praxis* in EFL, then perhaps an interesting question is what kind of teacher returns from an EFL assignment: if I left Canada, years ago, as a certified EFL teacher, what is the difference that makes me now return to Canada as *eikaiwa no sensei*? In Japan, it is true, there is a home for the EFL teacher, a welcome granted, a privilege, for a time and with reference to the terms of a work visa. For the EFL teacher, no doubt, this home is not the *uchi*, the *my place*, of a home life—not at first, hence not for most (where relatively few seem to stay for more than two or three years). As space for enquiry, my *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* is, in some ways, a place where silence surrounds the EFL teacher (note, especially, Bueno & Caesar's 2003 title: *I Wouldn't Want Anybody to Know*—a self-proclaimed first foray into gathering stories of *eikaiwa no sensei*). Yet for me it became the place in which to begin the praxis, the doing, the action which would correspond to me, my place, my efforts in this place and my visa provisions, my salary and so on. This is how, for me, it became possible to find a home in this praxis of becoming as a teacher, my home in the *eikaiwa* classroom.

Perhaps a few further questions are yet in order, since at any rate I'd like to keep them in mind. In the pages that are to follow, and at face-value, are my stories believable? Are my data reasonable? Do my results have bearing in your way of understanding? Am I showing a persuasive complex of triangulations in the letter-writing by which I plan to develop my themes? Am I really demonstrating the consistency of what each of

my correspondents says about *eikaiwa* over time? Am I able to compare perspectives from amongst those who have had experience with *eikaiwa*?

Ellis and Bochner (2000) maintain that it will be important "to figure out how to introduce personal ethnography into the practical contexts of everyday life, to people whose work would be enhanced by it, like . . . teachers" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 760). "Good teaching," they say, "involves ethnography too." "Over time," they say,

> you try to work your way through the barriers of unfamiliarity, distance, and difference toward a spirit of collaboration, understanding, and openness to experience and participation. . . . . I like to think of this as working toward an ethnographic consciousness in the classroom that is personal, intimate, and empathetic. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 760)

"What about reliability?" asks Ellis and Bochner's student, Sylvia.

Their answer is that "there's no such thing as orthodox reliability in autoethnographic research. However, we can do reliability checks," particularly by conferring with others who find their way in to our stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751).

"Generalizability?" asks Sylvia, "Is that a concern?"

Again, "not in the usual sense." However, "a story's generalizability is constantly being tested by readers as they determine if it speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751).

The walk.

No actual names of people I've known or of places where I've worked are here included. It has not been my object to portray people or places or times, by name or by specific episode, and I've taken pains to ensure that any name more specific than of a city or neighbourhood or landmark, as found in these pages, any interpersonal turn of events that I may relate, should be approached as pure fiction. I nevertheless anticipate that anyone who knows my geographical co-ordinates well enough could easily determine something about the particulars of my CV—and yet I'm sure this determination, however possible, could never be attributed to the fact that I had written of such people, places or events by any inherently recognizable name. This is a thesis and not a CV.

The places of which I've written, then, aren't intended to represent actual environments: they're more like composites, each of them elected, erected and shaped *only* as settings for what, at bottom, are only my own rock-bottom and sky's-the-limit moments. The same, again, goes for all characters I've portrayed throughout this thesis. It hasn't been my project to write of just any aspect in my experience over the past eight or nine years: only that pertinent to my life as *(gaijin no) eikaiwa no sensei*. For that, however, the flood-gates might as well be opened wide. Naturally, this river will take its own course through the landscape, given constraints on time and length. Here and there it may overflow its banks.

I'll be walking along beside it, walking down from my place in the hills outside of town. It will be a fine June day and I will be filled with wonder at the sunshine and the warmth, and the coolness of the waters of the river. There will be cherries growing on the trees, as I walk along the river at the edge of the next town of hills and temples. At dusk I'll take a train home to *my place*.

Introductions (2)

Methods in Place (1): Learning to Listen [15]

> At times I have the feeling someone else is working on this with me.
> I read a passage I haven't looked at in weeks and I don't remember much of it,
> or only dimly, and I say to myself, Well, that's not bad.
> (Davis, 1995, p. 51)

The homeward journey.

Listen. Attend. Respond. "The author," says Schwandt (2001, p. 13) in his *Dictionary* entry on *autoethnography*, "invites readers into the text to relive the experience rather than to interpret or analyze what the author is saying." What we mean to present is a kind of story, and it arises like any story, we suppose—in shared experience. We ask ourselves what we mean by *shared experience*, and find that it need not be a *something/nothing in common* that is supposed to consist between two persons in their respective given bodies of experience. *Habemus corpus*: here's what *we've* got. Can't be sure if it's living or dying. The last we heard was *it is finished.* You may decide what to do with it; analysis of our words can never yield your choice, in this or any matter. We know what it is like to look at another person and ask what we have in common, as if it were either there or not there—to be found, or not, as the case may be; to be remembered, reconstructed—or not. But this would imply that my experience, or yours, were somehow fixed, definite, finished, and could then be compared, examined, analysed. It would even imply that my experience and yours were both explicitly ordered, filed, categorized under thoroughly common headings. No: for us it is a matter of deliberately *sharing* (meant here in the most earnest of senses), even though our experiences may be quite different. What we share, what we may then find a way of saying we have in common, is chosen at

---

[15] The following passage has been elaborated, from its context within an older Introduction, into a somewhat wider preamble to a first-person narrative, of *becoming an author*, written by Dr Sean Wiebe, my thesis advisor at UPEI. In the resulting work, a first-person narrative of my own follows Dr Wiebe's. In conversation with Wiebe Sensei, himself a kind of English teacher, I have made of this new work a co-written paper (to be published in 2010). Though the stories are not included here, this wide-ranging consideration of possibilities in autoethnographic methods remains thoroughly permeated and illuminated in ways impossible without Wiebe Sensei. I've retained it as the first of two meditations on autoethnographic modes in writing. I've also, playfully, retained the first-person-plural point of view as it developed in the co-written piece. This is not to be taken as a "royal *we*" but it's also, obviously, not the simplest possible *I*.

every moment from the first; it is edited, deliberate and (de)liberated. We begin and end with the invitation. Welcome.

A story of shared experience, becoming in its telling a shared past, arises in *conversation*. Any conversation, we venture, arises in a kind of struggle (of *agōn*, as in *protagonist* or *antagonist* or, yes, *agony*); struggle arises in life; and life, in consciousness. Our stories, our consciousness, arise as we go back to where our flesh (the flesh of our heads, our hands, our hearts; our bodies' and souls' flesh) has come to be in a time that was before *now*. This is our *furusato*, our *uchi*. We were born, and grew up here. We come home from school to this place. We study here, and do our homework at the kitchen table, on the living-room floor, at desks in our rooms. As students, (re)searchers, we experience *furusato*, or look for it, in our classrooms. As English teachers, as *eikaiwa no sensei*, we experience our classrooms in the stories we and our students share. This is the English conversation to which we mean to invite: the more, the merrier.

Whether once or many times, by birth or by boat; by plane, bicycle or car, we have arrived here, and the stories of this place, these stories which are always becoming our own, are the stories that give this place to us. They are the stories by which this place gives itself to us. Our stories preexist our selves, just as our place preexists us. Always already *there* ("before reflection begins—an inalienable presence"—Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1989, p. vii), home awaits us. We pay attention, and find ourselves *here*. Being in the flesh, breathing in the air, standing on the ground.

Before we were able to say anything, our *furusato* had something to say. Coming to be here, we have come to hear—and then to say that we hear, to tell that we are here. By paying attention to what our place tells us, we become responsible, are in a position to respond to the way things have been and how that emerges in who we are; and then "human experience, identity, and culture," as Gruenewald (2003, p. 627) says, "are intimate with and inseparable from our relationship with places." This place is alive with stories, alive with us. We learn to listen as our *furusato* speaks us into becoming, tells us like a story, tells us what happened next. We remember ourselves, being here, the last time.

Interrogatory introspections.

Autoethnography, where we now mean to find our place, the place in which it is appropriate to write what we are writing, may be distinguished from *ethnography* in "self-awareness about and reporting of one's own experiences and introspections as a primary data source," in order to *construct a way of living* (Patton, 2002, p. 86; see Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This sense of introspection lending to construction, as we tend to our place, as we "mind the time" (Ledwell, 2004, p. 12)—this is what finally qualifies us as storytellers. Telling stories, we *look in* and find ourselves in the presence of a spectre, in the spectacle of human events, in the species of being in the mirror. We're here on spec. We expectorate (see Kierkegaard, 1843/1983, pp. 27-53), expel from our breast, what may well be sputum. Ahem. *Were we expecting this?*

This could be the *Magic Mountain* of a last-century novel (Mann, 1924/1969). But it isn't. We're just getting a few things off our chest.

Ahem. We may well dispute, and *that's life*, we say. In and from the living body we cast words, spell words, cast spells: this sense of construction lends agency and autonomy, opportunity, to (re)make our world, to bring forth past events, to (re)live, (re)think, (re)claim them, as something that we are making, new; we are tied to the past but not knotted up in it.[16] It is well known that *the Tao that can be described is not the true Tao* (Lao Tzu, 1963); a way, if it is of life, of living in the here and now, is perhaps found, not described; as a way to live, it is the way that we are already on when we look to take our bearings. Our representation of life is different from the experience itself, as a map is not coextensive—nor, really, alike in any but a way of analogy—with the ground it may nevertheless chart. (This difference shows most importantly in the specific order, the discreet integrity, the sense, the necessity, a representation appears to have.) But what does the ground itself chart? By representing our experiences, we mean to explore our own sense of living in these experiences, and to do so in a way that carries meaning to our reader.

Here, perhaps, is new ground, uncharted territory, in the field. Eisner says an artistic contribution's main criterion is the question: of the "number and quality of the questions that the work raises" (quoted in Patton, 2002, p. 87). We're not offering knowledge on the platter, as if the hunt were finished. We bring questions instead, which we imagine as fare for the ears, fit to lodge there, if not between the eyes. *What, for instance, is the value, the qualitative difference, of the statement "based on a true story"?* Not stuck between the teeth; not lying prone on a platter. *What is a true story, after all?* We look away from the platter, for some other vessel. *Is it not in the true nature of a story to be fiction?* Hear our questions, here—if not on a platter, then where? *Well, is fiction only possible in the absence of truth?* Hear our questions issuing lively from a horn: but is this the voice as of a trumpet, or rather of the horn of plenty? *Isn't truth, essence, always at risk as we imagine and assert the coherence we always desire and never have?*

Oh, we have plenty of questions. We make them up as we go along, because with questions begins quest—and vice versa. Hunter-posers, we? Poser-poets? Questions are calls as of a horn: to the hunt; to battle; to aid. Questions are calls to remembrance. But now, remembering this, we already hear the Last Post. We are remembering the lost past, listening to the silence (. . .), then hearing the Reveille. The poet speaks: "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:/Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn" (Binyon, 1917, p. 40). But perhaps this is the last thing we need to hear, right now. Let it suffice to say that life, even the good life, is like our memories of others: we understand life as struggle, not as positive consumption with a comment to the effect that *it was delicious*. Nevertheless, and given the choice, it is the horn of plenty we take up. We're going wide. We can go deep.

The power to tell the truth about ourselves, to shoot it down and to bring it on our shoulders home, to order everything into one great story, a narrative feast, is never ours. Our stories, though we really need them, begin and end as fictions, inventions,

---

16 Or we are like the resourceful hostages in television drama, freeing ourselves or each other. Or our past is like the boat we moor in its place down at the harbour, once we've mastered the knots by which to do so. Our boat may be moored without keeping us from going free.

contrivances. The stories we tell are, Watson reminds us, "attempts to cover our nothingness with something that says 'this is what it's all about'" (Watson, personal communication, 19 March, 2009).

Sartre once said, on "The Purpose of Writing" (1974), that

> everyone wants to write because everyone has a need to be *meaningful*—to signify what they *experience*. Otherwise it all slips away . . . . Every single person feels, perhaps only unconsciously, the need to be a witness of his time, his life.

Writing down a story, a history, if its prime goal is to be true to life in a unique way, can even be seen as a life-or-death struggle. "Human history," said Kojève (1947/1969, p. 6) for his part, "is the history of desired Desires." The struggle in life enacts itself in the constant confrontation of our many hearts' desires. We want what you want. We want you to want us. We want your want, your *recognition* of our want. (To want is to know; having is remembering.) Or, if semantics really aren't out of place here, we seek *remembrance* in humanity, not merely *re*activation of *cog*s as in an ig*nition*. We want *Anerkennung*.[17] We want you to remember our history, the story of our actions, our doings and makings. These stories in our lives are the work of our human becoming. We do not live, as human beings, without stories.

Leading the story.

Ahem. This text began in conversations we've been having since we met, and no doubt in some we were having before that. Sooner or later there were words on pages, and those pages formed, for one thing, part of an approach to the question of *methods* in an autoethnographic Master's thesis. The larger work seeks its own *furusato*, its *uchi* or *dwelling*, in conversation with others who have had to do with *eikaiwa*, with *English conversation*, in Japan.

These stories are for our fellow-teachers, our fellow-students; they are for all to hear, all who are here in our *furusato*, the English classroom. Our point of view is of the English teacher in us, the place for our *praxis*. Did you ever ask someone, *what English do you want to learn*? Or, *what do you want to do in English? What does English have to do with you*? In the English conversation that we now find ourselves having, the teacher directs the student to stories of place, wherein both may reclaim a past, may remember freely (see Chambers, 2008); if this is the curriculum, we hope that a unique emotional response

---

17 *Anerkennung* means *acknowledgement, recognition*; see Kojève's definition of humanity: "The man who desires a thing humanly acts not so much to possess the *thing* as to make another *recognize* his *right* . . . to that thing, to make another recognize him as the *owner* of the thing. And he does this—in the final analysis—in order to make the other recognize his *superiority* over the other. It is only Desire of such a *Recognition (Anerkennung)*, it is only Action that flows from such a Desire, that creates, realizes, and reveals a *human*, non-biological I" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 40).

arises, such that everyone's relationship to *this place*, this classroom, this home to our becoming, can make itself heard, can (re)position itself freely.

Furusato is a place where there are both home and school. It is where we seek and define our belonging, our becoming, our safety, our stories. It is the gut feeling behind this thesis that the *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu*, the classroom of English conversation, is always home to a language of its own, in any sort of what in the field of Applied Linguistics may be called *interlanguage*. This may be true of any classroom, and may be quite true of *furusato* as well, but it is here that this thing is born, and grows, called the *language ego*; it is the place where all participants may be explicitly aware of the *inter-* nature of the expressions by which they come together, at times neither specifically *English* nor specifically *Japanese*. This often surprising new language by which we speak our new selves into being, get to know each other, swap stories—this is the language that will bring us to a new understanding of where we are from, a new understanding of the *furusato* to which we so often find ourselves returning, the home to which we refer, the place to which we tend, as we use this language and tell our stories, hear each other's stories. This is the ground we tend. Every *eikaiwa* teacher could grow tired of the question, *where are you from?* So what if we began, instead, by asking *who are you from?*[18]

We invite you to relive, not to analyse. Welcome. Not to analyse, at any rate, so much as to appreciate. If you find yourself analysing, we salute you and affirm that what you do is natural; nevertheless we remind you to beware the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

(Is there an echo here, a *post horn ergo propter horn*? Listen. Attend. Respond. There are forests, ponds, streams, winters, waters freezing over in the kind of place we describe. It is not a metropolitan kind of place, but remains cosmopolitan, carrying for instance gendered expectations. It is not historical places, makes no appeal to historicity of place. It is metaphorical and existential and phenomenological. Here are metaphorical and existential and phenomenological truths, perhaps; or perhaps *accuracies* would be the better word here. Here, above all, is *entelechy*: the form of the living body; that by which we have understanding. An *end*, a *telos*—cause—aim—realization—perfection—accomplishment—and so on. Tell us. Spill it. Spell it out.)

---

[18] We invite you to read this as an account of the present thesis, in which, perhaps, the *teacher* of *English as Foreign Language* finds himself refusing or resisting a kind of curriculum that locates learning as a business transaction, comes to feel more like moving in the direction of becoming as *eikaiwa no sensei*. There is what we call *Business English*, the stuff in which you want to invest, hoping to enrich your human capital, to increase your marketability. But in *eikaiwa* we increase our *home*, our *furusato*, our *flourishing*.

Introductions (3)

Methods in Place (2): Living to Tell [19]

Following the story.

> If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again—if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk.
> (Thoreau, 1862/1980, p. 94)

Discussing autoethnography, the kind of writing to which and through which I look for *furusato*, Patton highlights Eisner's "new frontier in qualitative research methodology" (1996; quoted in Patton, 2002, p. 87). Here, perhaps, is new ground, uncharted territory, in my field of qualitative enquiry. My autoethnographic thesis will bear out that *the representation of life, as far as I understand it, is different from the experience itself, as a map is not coextensive—nor, really, alike in any but a way of analogy—with the ground it may nevertheless chart.* This difference shows most importantly in the specific order, the discreet integrity, the sense, the necessity, a representation appears to have. *But what,* I ask, *does the ground itself chart?* To find out, I'm going out—to walk the land for awhile, to walk the walk, to go my way and so go about the business of the present study. By representing my experiences, I mean to explore my own sense of living in these experiences, and to do so in a way that allows me to carry meaning home to my reader.

As *teacher* and as *sensei (first-living)*, seeking different ways of spelling myself out, I will be peripatetic about charting my territory. I go forth mindful of my relationship to my *students*, my *epigoni* (as *later-born*). My *seito*, *the living*. In autoethnography, after all, it is important to know *whose* work it is, how the researcher can be identified or by what names I may be known. I go forth, then, not as I did go, years ago; I go forth as what I have become in the meantime—*eikaiwa no sensei*. In this journey, though alone in some way, I can't be without *seito* (*students, understood as the living, the growing; those undergoing learning experiences in life*). What does it mean, I begin by asking, to be both *sensei* and *seito*? What will I make of this?

---

[19] The following passage has been reconstructed from paragraphs that were originally candidates for "Learning to Listen" (above). As such it's a further exploration, switching back to first-person, of the ground on which I mean to build my thesis. I return to my earlier question, *what does the ground itself chart?* and proceed to consider the space provided for autoethnography in *living poetically*. I profess to be peripatetic as I survey the land.

Seeking to tell one story, I often find that I am telling another. One story demands, deserves, follows another. The scene isn't set until I've told a story. But *whose* stories am I then telling? Whose stories can I tell, and to whom? If I tell stories that are only my own, will anybody hear them? Of the stories I can tell, the many stories I might tell, those I choose to tell are of ethical concern. At the heart of ethics is a concern with *ethos*: character, nature, customs—a web of sorts, through which some things may pass and others, . . . not so easily. So the real question comes to be *how I choose* to tell my stories, the *mode* (the manners, if you will) in which I mean to *relate* my stories. The more stories I tell (the more they become enmeshed in the web before me, or the more they slip through unhindered), the more a constructed identity can be seen but the more I myself go free, live undetected, find my own way.

Reading the story.

So let's say finding a way through experience, mapping out the new ground I cover on my way, is in a way an ethical concern; there is also a question of that other approach to my territory, aesthetics—the concern with what may be perceived. "'Beauty is truth,'" said the ancient Greek urn to the passing generations, and "'truth beauty,'—that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (Keats, 1820/1990, p. 210). I tell my stories in part following a long tradition, to please and to instruct. This I learnt, or perhaps feel that I began, as student to a well-remembered professor in English Literature. Like English Literature or, I suppose, like English Conversation, the representations I make of my life may yet be *useful*. A map, charting the ground, is useful. As a teacher I've struggled with what it would mean to *cover a lot of ground* in class. They say Aristotle used to walk around so much whilst teaching that he can be remembered as the epitome of peripateticism—not in the sense of being especially Aristotelian but of moving around a lot, walking and talking. Taking a walk. Nothing could be more natural, more human, I think; Kierkegaard, often caricatured in his day as walking about Copenhagen on these great long skinny legs, once joked that he could say he was more human than most, *as long as legs were the criterion*. As I cover the ground, now, I ask *what does the ground itself cover?* If the town I live in covers any ground, it leaves the ground obscured.

Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 739) describe autoethnographers as revealing "multiple layers of consciousness": "as they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition." They note that David Hayano (1979) is usually seen as the term's originator, where he determined it as "cultural-level studies by anthropologists of their 'own people', in which the researcher is a full insider by virtue of being 'native'" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). But in order to offer some representation of my own consciousness as it acts to arrange a few categories and begin to tell a story, I must be aware of myself in an autobiographic process.

Leggo asserts that "to write autobiographically is to write holes in our lives, to compose and attend to surface discontinuities, these holes that are connected to the ex-

pansive and abundant space of the world" (Leggo, 2005b, p. 197). Such holes in life as we know it mark the places where we don't know, the knowledge that we must write. As I seek a sense of home in my lived experience as a teacher, and as my narrative takes shape, I am more surprised at how few particular stories I'll be able to relate than at the overwhelming number of other lines my enquiry could take. I do this because I believe it makes me a wiser person, a better teacher; I believe that, writing and ruminating and interpreting my experience, I am motivated by hope in the struggle to continue becoming what I profess. Here am I in a place of imaginative, creative, poetic living.

Life writing, teacher narratives.

Here am I, writing the present pages towards constructing my teaching experience as *eikaiwa no sensei*. My experience speaks its own language, and this language marks the space in which I may continue each experience. By embodying something of this life, letting it speak itself in these pages, I give shape, a shape that can be given, to this body of raw data, of things that happen—I show it as a way that can be described. My language is the filter (the strands in the web) by which I manage, if I manage, to make sense. To make sense matters to me because, for me, this is the challenge and the *sense* in *sensei*. "Teachers," rejoins Leggo,

> live in the tangled messiness of complex experiences. Too often our hope is to tame the wildness with strategies and processes of control. But the effort to exert control is often futile and fruitless, leading frequently to frustration and failure. (Leggo, 2005a, p. 444)

These alliterative lessons, in classroom management as well as curriculum negotiation, apply deeply to every effort I make, teach me to emphasize the effort, rather than the need, to make sense.

Ultimately,

> by telling my stories, sometimes simple but often complex stories, I invite others to enter into conversation, not necessarily with me personally, but with friends and colleagues and students, the people who comprise the network of relationships that shape our unique experiences. (Leggo, 2005a)

By telling stories, I build a place, a dwelling, in *conversation*, for such relationships and experiences.

In language education, says Jill Bell (2002), ethnographers may tend to produce valuable stories of language use, while learner autobiographies such as that of Mori (1997) or diary studies such as that of Lvovich (1997), in terms of interest, may be second only to language teachers' accounts of their own language learning (Belcher & Connor, 2001; Casanave & Schechter, 1997). This, I feel, is a place for me to proceed, a way that can be described. I mean to walk the land, marking its shoreline, exchanging letters with my students and colleagues across the waters, exploring the shift in basic vo-

cabulary that took place in my practice during the seven-and-a-half years I spent teaching and learning in Japan.

The following story.

In the second part of *Either/Or* (Kierkegaard, 1843/1959), A the Poet suggests to B the Judge that if in a certain sense poetry *doesn't* represent an inner life history, the immediate aesthetic experience of that life may yet itself be represented—by *living* it. This kind of life-writing is difficult. For instance, a popular tool in the construction of narratives in general is the past-present-future continuum by which we may imagine time passing. As events take place in the here and now, as we move about in this place, these events give place to our stories, our stories find a meeting place in which to tell and be told, where the telling is of *what happened next.* But I can't find a way of telling stories so that they become *future* events. I don't have a story until the events are already, radically, past. As each word of a story is voiced or otherwise marked, as it enters and exits the flow of time, and as, so doing, it slips away forever from the world between us, we may observe the story growing in our memory. In this way, stories are like music. This is true to some extent when we read but especially, even paradoxically, when we write. The absent past, the slipped-away, something just out of reach, is what reaches and teaches us in stories, leads us in and to the telling.

The past I remember is absent from the present. As I observe this, I can also see a future which, in the very same respect, is the coming absence of the present. Every action belongs to a present moment; it is only in the present that I am ever able to act, to provide for a coming present moment to be *thus* in the moment before it, too, passes. Present to and in the here and now, I make and describe the shape, the contours of this absence, this passing. I go out and beat a path, find myself beating a path right back, to the heart of things; and as I leave a trail, I am beginning to teach, *in absentia*, those who come along behind me. I'll be gone by the time you get here. I won't be there. Here instead. Then here. On the move. Out for a walk. And what am I doing? What am I *making*? What trace or trail am I leaving? A snail-trail, perhaps, or crab-tracks, at the shore?

How will the autobiographic point of view, the space around me, take shape as the place from which and in which I'm writing? Is this the place where, like Leggo (2003, p. 13), I "love to revel in the possibilities of language"? Of course, as long as I'm *writing*, I must be aware that my language, as any language, is "uncommunicative of anything other than itself" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1989, p. 188). I must also be aware, at least to begin with, of voicing a kind of *silence*. I wonder if, for Leggo, this is the poetry, the *making—the enthusiasm of the muses*—by which he means to lead his students in thinking about "how creativity is the heart of everything they do as teachers" (Leggo, 2003, p. 13). A former student relates that whilst he may not be writing poetry since he took Leggo's course, he is now *living poetically*. "What does it mean," asks Leggo, "to live poetically, to live with the spirit of creativity, to call the Muses into our daily experiences of living and learning" (Leggo, 2003, p. 14)?

Silence.

The beginning of an autoethnography, an autobiographic representation in which I write of myself, make of myself *eikaiwa no sensei*, may indeed be in silence, in mystery. "Instruction begins," according to Kierkegaard (1855/1962, p. 30), "when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place." Every learner brings a whole new world to the teacher, a world never to be exhausted in conversation, a world at first of mystery and instructive silence. This is the shape of the lived experience from which I write, as *eikaiwa no sensei*; and this is where, I note, Leggo places school subjects (such as *Eikaiwa* or Language Arts) not as things to be learnt, fixed and defined, but as unfinished doings and makings (in *eikaiwa*, for instance, the making must be in having English Conversation—whatever that is). Indeed, it is precisely by merit of our linguistic ability that I'm able, if I'm able, to find a way, to bring forth meaning, in and from my raw experience; and if I can do so, as writer, as maker of a discursive utterance (Bakhtin, 1979/1986, p. 95), as doer of philosophy (Greene, 1973, p. 7), then my readers also have the power to make their own experiences of my text, find their own way, discursively and conceptually.

I have beaten a path, a way that I can describe and inscribe into the heart of things. I've found my way, and made of my methods and questions a home and final resting place for this thesis. I believe I have been *a kind of poet*: I have constructed a way of life, here, in the *furusato* of living as *eikaiwa no sensei*.

Such, then, is my measure of the framework in which I have meant to construct a sense of home and, before that, a sense of the way home and, along the way, a sense of being away from home. All roads lead, have led *here*, as our experience will naturally prove. But I have been out here, on my way, all this time. I have gone out, have been away from home: from here, perhaps, my reader may follow the story of *Maku Donarudo Sensei*, who, being *eikaiwa no sensei*, may also be known as *gaijin*; the same story may tell of the way of the soul arising in partaking with students of life and learning in the Japanese context where I have known them.

Letters (1)

"I know *everything* about England," crowed one particularly cocky little horror
who had shoved the polite girl out of the way.
"Oh yes? Well, what's the capital?"
"Don't know, but I can speak English conversation."
"Go on then."
"Yes no yes no yes no yes no."
(Booth, 1997, p. 164)

Zenmai: Oku no Hosomichi [20]

International man of mystery . . . with miracle filter.

24 April

Many thanks, Zenmai,

for your thoughtful response. I read much in your letter that will most likely guide our discussion by the light of saying *eikaiwa* is like anything, really: like anything that may be bought or sold as educational content, educational product, in today's marketplace. (The word *commodity* has found heavy use in such contexts, I note since returning to Canada—where, for example, our prime minister speaks of *natural commodities*. I wonder when we'll begin speaking, frankly as perhaps we could, of *human commodities*.) Yet teaching and learning, you seem to say, may go on despite commercial appeal. So, *at least* as long as there's money to be made in education *of whatever kind*, in Japan, there will be those teaching and learning in *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu*.

---

[20] The conversation I'm about to relate was the first to get going. I presented what had thus far transpired in this conversation at a Research Forum held at UPEI in 2009, and have more recently worked Zenmai's letters in, for co-publication through the university where I'd once become a colleague of sorts to him—by agreeing to take on the courses he would normally teach, for the year during which he was going on sabbatical. I taught at this university throughout the last two or three years before returning to Charlottetown. Zenmai has spent more than half his life in Japan.

As this thesis prepares for binding and formal publication, *Tōhoku Gakuin University College of Liberal Arts Review* has published, in its 155th edition, Zenmai and me under the title "English Conversation: *Oku no Hosomichi*."

It is interesting, I think, that you use the expression "two sides of one coin" to describe teaching and learning: two (opposite?) signs of the value of what is exchanged. I think you're right, at any rate, to equate the exchange of teaching and learning in *eikaiwa* with the expressed and explicit value of being *international.*

I remember a student of mine, herself *yōchien no sensei*, using a turn of phrase that surprised me. She suggested that I (who, when asked about my travels before reaching Japan, was relating that I had spent a year and a bit in France and Germany as a younger person, and was now, obviously, in Japan, and also representing Canada in some way) was really *international.* Images of Austin Powers came to mind: *International Man of Mystery.* Or of Stuyvesant cigarettes: *International Passport to Smoking Pleasure . . . With Miracle Filter!* Was I being seen as elegant, sophisticated, worldly? Monied, perhaps, educated, eligible? A citizen of the world, bringing all these qualities with me to those aspiring Japanese who would one day—what? See me on the street and offer directions? Come to learn from me in class? In some ways I feel that by virtue of a proposed international citizenship, an imaginary would come around us, or surround me, travel with me, like a kind of bubble. Was I like a walking doorway in my Japanese life, or at any rate a window? People would walk by on the street and seem to take notice, as often seemed to be happening in conversations in class everyday—to take notice of the view or experience of the world *beyond* Japanese shores, the view to which they might have supposed I could bring them; something which, just by the looks of me, of me there, being *gaijin*, I could easily afford.[21]

A sense of the international, of the ability to speak English and to make connections and even friendships in other countries,[22] is also more or less explicitly behind the JET Programme. This is the biggest teaching-exchange programme in the world today, developed in Japan during the years of the economic bubble, when the Japanese curriculum was attracting international attention. Andorf's "Half In, Half Out" reflections, in a book on JET called *Getting Both Feet Wet*, summarize the programme's mandate. This lies, she says, with the assertion "that Japan will become more outward-looking with time" and that Japanese people might become less "ignorant of people and cultures outside Japan." Andorf makes the very good point, at length of her reckoning of what it means to be international, that "prejudice is not only a Japanese vice"—though it may seem to be so, at face value, in the discourse of those who go to teach in Japan and who may at times feel so much like *gaijin* that they will commit the fallacy of concluding that a group whom we may identify as *the Japanese* are ethnocentric. The terms of Andorf's analysis surprise me most of all in the candour with which they acknowledge everyday concerns in her professional discourse.

---

21 A little dialogue for discussion in class:
A: So you're teaching English in Japan, eh? What's that like?
B: Well, it beats working!

22 This has perhaps been rendered in more current English as *cosmopolitan*—see, notably, Pinar's recent book, *The Worldliness of a Cosmopolitan Education*, and its reception in the field of curriculum studies.

Such an address to the problem of prejudice may well be the full reach of the touted international perspective in a Japanese cultural context, and yet, you're right, it is a key selling-point for *eikaiwa*. The teacher, being *native speaker*, may encounter the sense of being set aside for a particular vocation in really existential terms. For some there is even a missionary zeal about teaching EFL which I think springs from such an emotional reserve. I also think it's worth noting that, where I came in as a Specialist in Humanities, there were many who'd arrived on Missionary visas. You know, I was surprised to find that I could count on being greeted in the street, in English, by young members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, always recognizable with their young and close-shaven faces, their white bicycle helmets and of course the white shirts and ties. Apparently they, too, would offer *eikaiwa* sessions, at no cost to those who didn't mind discussing religion. But I felt that this, like the JET experience, was really beyond my ken as *eikaiwa* teacher: I'd be more like the guy who officiates at "Western-style" weddings, the ones in the chapels you find everywhere in Japan, with their fanciful decorations. Given enough proficiency to handle the parts of the service that were in Japanese, a man could make a good bit of extra cash in this way. I've heard rumours of aspiring novelists who would do only this sort of work for a day job, filling up their weekends with wedding gigs, and making enough to keep themselves going through the writing week. I wonder if anyone has yet written a novel that deals with that experience. Anyway, this wouldn't be for me, anymore than the modelling I was once asked if I'd like to do (*what a laugh*, I thought, as awkwardly as possible saying I'd think about it), since it would take up my precious weekends. Learning to speak Japanese and learning to love the weekends became one and the same change in my consciousness: if this was a difficult change, then it was difficult because such a majority of my time was spent in the context of my English-speaking apartment or my English-speaking offices. Again, here is the bubble, the doorway, the window and the *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu.*

Origins.

26 April

I've just watched *The Barbarian and the Geisha*, the John Huston movie you mentioned, starring John Wayne. I am aware, by the way, of the *sonnō jōi* drive behind the Meiji Restoration, which envisaged, in reaction to the advent of (John Wayne as) Townsend Harris and others, not only *revering the emperor* but also *expelling the barbarians*; I wonder if this talk would have directly informed the choice of title for this movie.

I smiled when Harris looked at the rundown house he'd been given as first Consul General, on behalf of the US, at Shimoda—he looked around and said *home; sweet home.* Later in the movie, his appeal to the shogunate, reaching out a neighbourly hand and stressing the common good, is practically a comical image to bear in mind as I also accept your invitation to see in it "America the new colonial power." Such, perhaps, is the kind of *Americanization* portrayed as the way of progress for Japan; I stress that this movie was made in 1958, at length of an American-led occupation under M[ac]Arthur—the first

foreign occupation in Japanese history, and one during which the emperor himself had been forced to renounce the divine status into which mythography had borne him and all of his ancestors, all the way back to Amaterasu the sun-goddess and thence to the divine siblings/parents Izanami and Izanagi). At length, furthermore, of a Korean War in which Japan had been used as a strategic launching-pad.

Let's go back to somewhere near your own origins, shall, we? Those you describe may be some of your earliest recollections of names associated with a (pre)history of *eikaiwa.* You begin with the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, in New York. There is also a community in Queen's, apparently, called Astoria; like the hotel, it owes its name to the Astor family.

Old John Jacob Astor himself, America's first multi-millionaire, trading in furs, land and opium, established a fort in Oregon in 1810, a few years after Lewis and Clark had spent a winter waiting near the same place, hoping that a ship would come and bring them back to the east.

Fort Astoria was then, you say, the birthplace of Ranald M[ac]Donald (yes, a retrospective namesake), who is now remembered as the first teacher of English in Japan. Born of a Scottish fur-trader with Hudson Bay and of a member of the Chinook people, the boy M[ac]Donald chanced to meet the shipwrecked Otokichi and a couple of other Japanese sailors, who seem to have left with him the impression that the aboriginal side of his heritage had its own origin and heritage, going way back, possibly to Japan. In 1848, M[ac]Donald got dropped off by an American whaling ship, pretended to be shipwrecked on the small island of Rishiri, off Hokkaido, was captured by the Ainu people, handed over to the Daimyo, and remanded to the Dutch of Dejima, near Nagasaki, who were at that time the only permitted operators of western trade with Japan;[23] he stayed for some ten months, and taught English to fourteen samurai, including Einosuke Moriyama, the renowned student of the Dutch and English languages who would go on to negotiate, with others including Admiral Perry, the opening of Japan to the western world.

---

23 You know, there's a great passage in *Gulliver's Travels*, near the end of the third voyage (to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib—*and Japan*). Arriving in Japan on the way home to England, he claims that he's Dutch but refuses to trample the crucifix in what would be taken as token of a non-Christian faith. The Emperor to whom Gulliver claims to have been speaking

> seemed a little surprised; and said, he believed I was the first of my Countrymen who ever made any Scruple in this Point; and that he began to doubt whether I was a real *Hollander*, or no, but rather suspected I must be a Christian. (Swift, 1726/1970, p. 186)

Perhaps it's no wonder the protestant Dutch should have been the only western nationality tolerated as trading partners (apparently in numbers limited to the dozens, and only on Dejima) during the era of *sakoku* (*secluded country*) policy. Apparently the English could also have been contenders (other countries capable of this trade, like Portugal, being as Roman Catholic as the Jesuits who had been expelled at the beginning of *sakoku*), but the Dutch had apparently convinced the shogunate that England was indeed a catholic country.

Jump just a couple of years from that "forced opening" by the black warships in Perry's command, and we're back at the arrival of Townsend Harris, the barbarian whose geisha, Okichi, is also much storied. If you go to Shimoda today, apparently you can find a temple-museum commemorating her times with Harris. Of course the movie told me nothing of this, but the story goes that Okichi's true love lived between her and a man named Tsurumatsu, that she was separated from him *for the good of Japan* when Harris arrived in need of a maid (as the stories go), that the lovers were reunited after his departure and until Tsurumatsu's untimely death, which preceded Okichi's by just a few years (they say that in her last days she was pretty much overtaken with the drink, and that she finally drowned herself in a river).

The rest, I suppose we may say, is history: a history of *eikaiwa*. Looking forward to your next letter,

—CM.

Eikaiwa (1).

20 April 2009

Thank you, Dear Zenmai,

for agreeing to take up this conversation. Let me begin by asking you whether you'd say that *eikaiwa* is a way of life, or a way of living in Japan—or would you say that it's just a Japanese way of distinguishing communicative (*kaiwa*-based) language instruction from the grammar-translation method which has prevailed for so long in the teaching of English (understood as *Eigo*, *English Language*) in Japan?

A sense of mystification about *eikaiwa* is really my starting-point in this study. After working in it for over seven years, the first question I've raised for myself is *what is this stuff called eikaiwa?* Perhaps my question belies some sense of an ineffable, or unspeakable, mystery, since, if we can't say what *eikaiwa* really means, then how can we teach it? Conversely, also, if we feel we know just what *eikaiwa* is, then where will we find the sense of mystery which also guides us? If it weren't an unspeakable *secret* to some teachers, that fundamentally, perhaps, their work as teachers is only meant, in the words of my American-born boss at the franchised Poplar Centre, to consist in *conversating*[24] with Japanese people in English, then I suppose I shouldn't be surprised to look back and find that I've almost never had a really frank conversation with another teacher on this subject.

---

[24] (Whatever he meant by that, it came with his table-thumping insistence that *even a monkey could do it*—demonstrating a rationalization for the wage at which he would pay those who were emphatically in his *employ*.)

So it was about this time of year that I first arrived in Akita (and now eight years have passed). I understand that the *hanami* season has come and gone already in Sendai for this year, but here in the farm's old orchard the lone little Japanese cherry tree is still only budding, those buds just now taking on a reddish hue, distinguishing themselves from the rest of the early growth. Looking forward to the blossoms, then, as also to your next letter, I remain,

sincerely,

—CM.

Hosomichi: kokoro and community of individuals.

2 May 2009

Thanks for putting it so well, Zenmai:

these letters and narratives will hopefully build an *eikaiwa* community, if only for the purposes of representing the conversational quality of what *eikaiwa* is, or how it's experienced.

You've related the hypothesis that Ranald M[ac]Donald was an American spy, sent, more than drawn, on his adventure into the unknown. I suppose there is something dashing and adventurous about how he turns up on Rishiri Island,[25] calls himself a shipwreck, and gets passed along, clear across Hokkaido and down the greater part of Honshu's length to Dejima. He must have been quite aware (as I'm sure 007 himself would have been, were he there) of risking his life on this voyage.

Okichi, meanwhile, you're quite right, seems to have been immortalized repeatedly in Japanese drama, and *Tōjin Okichi* (*Okichi the Concubine*) is indeed one such title—of a 1935 movie starring Sessue Hayakawa.

So *dō* goes beyond *shumi* as *shumi* goes beyond *hobby*. You say your yoga practice, for example, goes beyond hobby, in your daily pursuit of the discipline's benefits. This seems well beyond the habits of your classmates, whom you join only occasionally, and yet, you're right, in order to retain your *veteran* status in their eyes, you'd need to be amongst them every week. This is what you've given up, as you've gone the *kawatta* route (as one who is *changed* or, to borrow a popular adjective from my part of the world, *different*). I'm

---

25 Rishiri is a remote place, even today—part of a national park, off the coast of a wide farmland that stretches more than a hundred kilometers along the roadside before you get to the port of Wakkanai, with the neighboring Rebun Island included as well; I've seen Rishiri's peak, one of those they call a *ko (little) Fuji*, from the boat to Rebun Tō—escorted the entire way by grey seagulls, tenacious as anything on a day too windy for their feeders, the passengers, to be out on the deck in large numbers.

glad you've put your finger on this hang-up, as it may indeed be the very thing that keeps a hobbyist's interest in check. Some will no doubt practise yoga only when they're wearing the right clothes for it, only when they've met for a yoga class; to practise at home, for instance, would be *kawatta* in the *crazy* sense to such practitioners.

Let's call them the hobbyists, and say that for you it's more of a *shumi*—or is it rather *dō* to you? Would the *shumi* praxis have as its goal that you should become *sensei*, just as others have asked you whether you'd become *yoga no sensei*? Perhaps you've left that behind as well. Is the practice of speaking English in Japan one which leads to becoming *eikaiwa no sensei*? I remember hearing about a yoga class, somewhere in Sendai, that would conduct itself in English. For those to whom *eikaiwa* is more than a hobby, I guess.

5 May

So, indeed, yoga is like religion or anything else (even the *zenmai* from which you take your name: *osmunda japonica*, as it's known scientifically): plant it in one place and it must adapt. I have no doubt that yoga in Japan differs from yoga in India, that American Zen and Japanese Zen are two different things, as also Christmas in England, Italy—Japan, for that matter, with its feast of chicken and birthday-style cake. I agree that the same goes for EFL classrooms, and this is exactly why I choose to dwell on *eikaiwa*—as a unique area of praxis in EFL.

To those of us who live as *gaijin* anyway, and thus tend to notice life in Japan from a bit of a seeming distance, fear appears strong, or somehow differently pronounced, compared to expressions of which we've been aware in the places from which we've come, of deviation from what we might call a bourgeois mentality; you suggest that yoga, as also EFL, must adapt to that mentality. Certain practices will be preferred or expected.

A student may often say, plain as day and fully confident that this is the natural way of having *eikaiwa*, *I want you to give me an equal portion of class-time in which to speak to you in turn, as everyone else will also speak to you—directly (we don't want to speak to each other as much as we want to speak to you)—and I want you to simply correct my mistakes as I go.* Similarly your son and his baseball coach have said to you that you may put anything you want in the two *onigiri* which must be in his lunch, but there must be two of them and they must be *onigiri* and not, for instance, sandwiches. It's like on the plane: *Pork or chicken? Spaghetti or yaki-soba?* (I once overheard an attendant on an Air Canada flight asking a Japanese passenger the literal translation of such a question: *Kōhii ka cha?* then *Ocha ka kocha?*—same rising intonation she'd use in the English phrasing, no trace of the *nomimasu-ka* which would ordinarily be required, so far as I know, for intelligible conversation in an imagined typical Japanese idiom.) There are the permissible deviations in the way we practise *eikaiwa*, and they follow a set of unwritten rules in whose composition I, as *gaijin*, have certainly never had a part. Of course I've had no part in deciding what Communicative Language Teaching should be, either.

The question remains, I suppose: can *eikaiwa* be of *dō*, or need it be, if the sense of *shumi* may match it for some, and that of hobby for many? As you say, anything may become a

way, a path, for the soul to tread. As *we* give our lives to it, especially as teachers, let's hope that it becomes a way of life.

The purpose, I would say, may be to experience *truth*, whether understood as actuality or a beyond, in *enquiry*—interrogating that truth spoken in our lives, as we carry out what we understand as teaching and learning. Life seeking knowledge. The root and purpose of anything, you say, the meaning of every utterance, is *life*. If this meaning is unsayable by means of any particular word (other than *life*), and when words work to say the unsayable (as *life*, for example), poetry is possible: I understand that this is how you try to direct your courses at the university. This is your own *dō* into the language classroom, the *kyōshitsu*, and it's really not far from mine—at heart.

To speak of achievements, I'm glad that you list those students who've graduated from your courses and with whom you've maintained contact over the years. Each little summary you provide gives a picture of someone who continues to learn from you, and no doubt someone who teaches you as well. To me also, such lines of contact are precious, and it is really a recognition of *heart* (*kokoro*) that I guess we're talking about here: not just the heart that they put into their English lessons but the heart that they showed you as well; the heart of things that you and they were able to go on into or towards. Of course this is what we remember as teachers. And so a *community of individuals* evolves, based in mutual *recognition* and shared interest, shared concern, shared intention, shared desire.

Others may show interest but it must be categorized as ambition; we forget them. This doesn't mean that they're not also outstanding students in some way, but only that we tend to forget ourselves as stepping-stones for those who chase ambitions which we may not even understand. But to be simply human with each other—to me as to you, this must be the root meaning of a course-title like *English Communication*, which in the end is just another way to say *eikaiwa*, after we've pretty much decided that, in the English spoken outside of Japan, the phrase *English conversation* may not have any specific content.

For now, signing off with itchy eyes and contacts in them, I remain

sincerely yours,

—CM.

Master and veteran, culture and form.

28 April

Dear Zenmai,

you bring up your yoga classes, as something you used to do, and I guess I hadn't realized that you'd already parted with this activity. I remember, some time ago, you reported your disgust at the fact that the instructor was driving a Mercedes or

something—a testament, as you saw it, to the money-grubbing which seems to go along with so much teaching and learning, even in yoga. In any case, I think you're quite right to highlight the once-weekly basis of the classes—it is, of course, basically the same with most *eikaiwa* classes, and the attendant problem is naturally the same as well: nobody is likely to become a master of any kind by practising an hour or so in a week.

Rather than *master*, then, we must say *veteran* when we speak of *shumi*, though I am aware that in ikebana or calligraphy certificates and licenses are issued, whereby, after years of practice and in recognition of mastery, a student may become a teacher. Yet whether this is also a path of personal transformation, a way of the soul, seems unlikely in your view. And actually, I'm a little surprised at this.

There may be, in any class of the sort we are discussing, the few who would respond with something more than mere perseverance. You, for example, took up yoga and seem to have pressed on beyond the weekly classes, to mostly dispense with the classes themselves and, pressing on towards benefits like the increased energy to which you attest, you didn't just become a veteran, you became a vegetarian. This, to you, is the *praxis* of yoga beyond the four walls, the fenced-in space, of an hour-long meeting. It is *the disciplined search in which you engage freely with the terms of your own existence.* To the relentlessly bourgeois neighbour who rode with you to the classes, the possibility of such thorough praxis wouldn't matter a bit—at this rate, her (rather narrow, as you seem to represent it) mindset was under no threat whatsoever, and whatever concern she may have expressed for the practice of yoga could no doubt have been reduced at a moment's notice to a passing interest, a commodified object, fit to her needs as a consumer—a toy, really, a hobby(horse).

Perhaps, then, I'm concerned with the few to whom *eikaiwa* is that more complete praxis: a concern tending to desire; an intention, a *dō* that leads out from the limits of concern for mere *shumi*. Here you seem to emphasize that the *eikaiwa* classroom is, perhaps for most who enter it, simply the kind of place in which to spend free time, being interested in something, the kind of place I think we tend to mean when we say, in English, that *everyone needs a hobby*.

To put what we do as somehow, hopefully (or at least according to what we could call our best intentions, given perhaps the relative sanity of a university setting), over against this essentially thoughtless, passive, even unintentional consumption of cultural commodities, of commodified culture, there are the good points on which you and I, as *eikaiwa no sensei*, agree: *eikaiwa* is, for some at least, a way of friendship, a way of seeing and knowing others as actual human beings and not just as other holders of accounts to which you and I, according to Freire's well-known banking analogy, are supposed to transfer the funds of English—to "deliver the product," as my Poplar training phrased it.[26] Perhaps it's telling that Andorf, the *haafu* JET to whom I referred in my letter of last

---

26 For more language in a similar vein and a detailed account of her experience in the language and culture of what she calls Blitz teaching, see Eva P. Bueno's "A Leading Language School" (2003).

Friday,[27] had to look outside of her public-school classroom in order to see her students as members of the community, to feel herself a member of the same community.

As you know, one of my teaching engagements in Sendai, and one of the places where I felt most at home as *eikaiwa no sensei*, working always with just a few people (maximum of six to a group, just a couple of groups in a week), was at the Uncle-building community centre operated by a company that actually called itself Bunka, Inc.

The usual sense of *culture* as used amongst Japanese learners of English seems to refer (imagined in the inter-language of many as, in English, a countable noun) first of all to the specific actions which may be taken as appropriate to a (general) societal context. You might hear that a student wants to know more about American *cultures* like shaking hands, eating junk food or wearing sunglasses a lot.[28] I suppose these actions would be referred to as *bunka* in Japanese, but in English I feel they are more specifically like what Peter McLaren defines (in his *Life in Schools*) as *cultural forms*, stressing that they're all about the economy, desire, values, power/knowledge, ideologies and relations. At any rate, somewhere in there, I had a deal with a company called Bunka, Inc. (I smile to remember this one.)

Meanwhile, the more general idea of *culture* in English, going back to Middle English, refers to a cultivated piece of land. In the Latin root, identified as the verb *colere*, we find a sense of cultivation, of tending, of inhabiting.

The first culture-centre in which I'd gone to work was referred to in the office at Jessamine as *the bunka centre*. It was operated by a local branch of the public broadcaster NHK. The centre offered art classes and other educational events at a low rate for the community. When I got there I found that the operating class model (from how far back I couldn't tell) was simply to go round the table and have each member of the class relate a story or raise a talking point. If we didn't get all the way round the table one week, we'd hear from the rest in turn the next week, all sitting in the same places week after week at the table in that long narrow room. Perhaps it is significant that this pure *eikaiwa* model (if I may call it that) was the habit of a class hosted by NHK, whose airwaves carried several popular *eikaiwa* programmes—an opportunity for practice and learning which I often found had helped many of my more advanced students (particularly those who claimed to have never travelled outside of Japan yet had a serious command of English). I wonder, indeed, if it was NHK that coined the term *eikaiwa* back in 1945 when, as you've related elsewhere, it appeared in the name of a radio show, first *Eigo Kaiwa* and then *Eikaiwa*.

---

27 Can you imagine referring to someone, in matter-of-fact, everyday current English, as *a half*, let alone meaning that you will allow her to be imagined as a *half-blood*? Well I just narrowly avoided doing so. I guess the going term in our language would be *biracial*, but the only difference I see is that one is subtractive, where the other is additive. Who came up with the units?

28 Similarly, some might want to know what you think about *Japanese cultures* like eating with chopsticks. A favorite question of this sort, in my part of the country, was *can you eat nattō?*

Some years later, as *sensei* in the Bunka-centre bastion of the many *shumi* (a place where you could take lessons in printmaking, karaoke, tap-dancing, belly-dancing, yoga, cooking, ikebana, basic computer use, even smiling and of course English), I had been teaching in the English school for a couple of years when I was invited to plan and introduce a new course. It was to be carried out in English, yet to be something that wouldn't only be another class; not actually offered through the existing *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu*, but part of an arrangement with the wider Bunka centre, promoted as a new course of a new kind, with my smiling face in a flyer advertising the centre's activities. It seemed, in my conversations with the school manager, that the easiest way to imagine such a thing was by looking at the construct of four skills in language teaching—reading, writing, speaking, listening: *eikaiwa*, as a form of conversation, would then ideally be limited to practice in the latter two, and a course of reading or writing in English would be considered, in a certain sense, something else entirely. Yet, despite the advertised uniqueness of this class with *Kureigu Sensei*,[29] even because of it, this experience remained always always always mediated in conversation.

To me it seemed natural to open a workshop for English-language creative writing. This is the class to which I invited you, one evening, to discuss writing poetry in English, and your own work, especially as a translator of Bashō and Santōka.

Eventually I also started a kind of readers' circle in literature originally composed in English, where the members would take turns leading each other, in English, through critical readings of selections from the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Melville, Conrad and others. Here, for certain, I thought I'd found *eikaiwa* in its purest form. Not that I really imagine it would work for everyone, but such were the ways I could think of, ways of opening conversation, with my students, to something beyond merely getting together every week or so in order just to speak to each other in English (potentially about the same things week after week, seldom correcting errors made in the production of English to speak about those things—overall, a phenomenon all too familiar to *eikaiwa no sensei*, and one especially, sadly, prevalent in the "salon" model for these class-

29 *(Sensei Craig)*

rooms, wherein students gather with a teacher—and chat around a sort of coffee-table set-up).[30]

Most important in these experiences, I think, was the sort of community I was able to take part in, small though it may have been: a community of people who could accomplish so much, attending the ordinary *eikaiwa* classes at first, then moving into places in either or both of the more literary groups. They became the people with whom I'd celebrate Christmas, for example, inviting them to my home for eggnog, music, readings and stories.

In the Bunka centre, I felt that the possibilities for bringing English conversation to bear in praxis upon specific cultural forms were practically limitless, and the opportunities as varied as the facilities. In an eight-storey building, there was of course a kitchen; there was at least one art studio and there were other studios for dance and exercise (I remember Friday evenings, three floors up, there would be a tap-dancing practice during my class, pounding the floor and clattering out a wonderful pattern that would ring off the building across the street and straight in the the windows we'd open on a summer evening, Shichiko and Maki and I); there was also a karaoke room, though I never heard it in use. There was even a *chashitsu*, for tea ceremonies, made up with the little *nijiriguchi* door and everything, all wallpapered on the outside (which is all I ever saw) as if it were in a garden somewhere, with a path leading to it, across the *roji*, the dewy ground. Small, simple, quiet. Any of these, I felt, could be a unique sort of space for *eikaiwa*. For my part, I was doing what I could with my readers and writers. Well, really I suppose I was just getting started.

I guess that although I'd been asked to imagine something other than *eikaiwa*, I naturally carried *eikaiwa* into these projects of reading and writing. It is everywhere I go, I'm sure, being in the first place *eikaiwa no sensei*.

You question whether the middle-class lifestyle, being no doubt a way of life of some kind, can be considered a *dō*. You're right, I feel, finally to insist that *dō* must be something that can bring us deeper, beyond, "something fecund that will be our living a life that is genuine" and, as I think you would also say, getting away from the false comforts

---

30 So far as it's redolent of 17th- or 18th-century France, the salon is also a model for pure *eikaiwa*. The trouble with most *eikaiwa* salons is that they take place in a kind of *fishbowl* or lobby setting, with the teacher-host (in all his celebrity, verve and charm) navigating some kind of passage through what could indeed be a floating world—far removed, really, from his own home and smack-dab in the middle of an office with phones ringing here and there, a general buzz of activity setting the tone for what must pass for conversation.

The best salons I've seen gather a core of more or less the same members week by week, so that there won't be too many introductions going round (an overemphasized theme in *eikaiwa*, it seems to me) and the group can maintain some continuity of feeling as people come and go, before and after the classes that they really came for. Gradually, themes emerge, and we run with them as far as we like. I would like it if there were more than one conversation going on round a table, if the table were large enough. Then I would feel we were really doing what we could do, in what would rightly be identified as a process of *enlightenment*.

of an imagined middle-class way of life. I wonder what you see as the potential for a sense of *dō* in *eikaiwa*.

I guess you'll be reading this as Golden Week begins. Do you have any special plans for the holidays?

Enjoying the weather and riding my bike more, now that the weather's getting warmer,

—CM.

Oku, uchi (1).

10 May (Mothers' Day) 2009

Well, dear Zenmai,

today was a day for lobster with Mom. The much-celebrated season has just begun here. If nothing else, it's a good way to enjoy life on this Island, coming none too soon after such a long winter.

You've asked a bit more about what was going on in the class I've referred to as a kind of readers' circle. My thinking was that it should be treated as a first sally for my students into reading literature in English, emphasizing important elements of theory and criticism. For convenience in gathering material, I selected something called *A Beginner's Guide to Critical Reading*, which did, I felt, an exemplary job of collecting notable texts, presenting them in a simple historical order, and highlighting some of the critical points of view to which these works may be exposed. So we read of "Framing the Outsiders" in a scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, of "Colonialism and the Loss of Eden" in a selection from *Gulliver's Travels*, of "Sex and Politics" in Wilde's fairy tale of *The Happy Prince*, and so forth. Perhaps the input could have been wider in its scope—but it was, because every Friday afternoon there were half a dozen people gathered in the room to bring their worlds to bear on these works. In any case, it seemed like a good place to start. Members of the group would take turns presenting chapters, would take turns as teachers concerned with the works they'd chosen (each chose her own text in turn), each for at least four consecutive weeks' discussions, from amongst these pages.

I wonder if such classes, in which you have indicated that you would look for a kind of *liberatory* experience such as bell hooks might advocate, really differ in this potential from *eikaiwa*. Certainly the goal (of finding ourselves on a path towards enlightenment, mastery, freedom, happiness) would be the same.

I guess this could be read as a sense of *dō* in education generally, where, as you say, opposed to the standard academic classroom fare of students who are educated and of

professors who are educating into a microphone,[31] the *kaiwa* classroom can be almost wholly based on experiential knowledge, on members' desires and intentions and sense of (changeable, always changeable, contingent) historical context. As hooks says in *Teaching to Transgress*, the standard fare is rooted in fear: "fear that leads to collective professorial investment in bourgeois decorum as a means of maintaining a fixed notion of order." The *kaiwa* classroom can indeed be *about* its members, their lives, their thoughts, their feelings, their experiences.

This *kaiwa* classroom could be set forth as a liberatory pedagogical model for the rest of the university—a site for freely exploring the relationships that exist between theory and society, unencumbered by or at any rate distanced from the dominant language of the surrounding society, talking a new society into existence, using a new language. This is very much what I'm driving at in my own sense of what *eikaiwa* offers, as a way of teaching and learning in which students and teachers alike are free to manage themselves, to

---

31 I never understood why, at the university, there would always be a microphone on the lectern in a room built to accommodate no more than 60. I remember one classroom in particular, which I shared with a group of history majors (I'll always remember the *banana* dialogues and skits they made for me, using nothing but the words *no*, *not*, *my*, *your* and *banana*). I'd walk in on a day which I knew was brilliant and sunny and mild, and I'd find the curtains drawn and the windows shut behind them, the air-conditioning on, that silly chair lodged inexplicably under the lectern (if I were to sit on it I'd be hidden behind the cavernous lectern), and a microphone on top. Still on.

(As if the last teacher had simply disappeared at the end of her class-time, leaving behind this empty space directly behind the podium, just so, and everything else centered around that absence, even the students sitting in the same places they'd been sitting for that last lecture, the same places where they always sat; perhaps she'd thought she'd leave things just so for the next teacher, so I could slip in unnoticed; *perhaps she was still there*, I would almost think.) "In a classroom in which all is prescribed and known," Block (1998, p. 15) reminds us, "we would be not strangers but unseen."

I made it a ritual to change things around, wake everybody up if I could, smile and chat away with my students and always leave the microphone perched precariously on the sill of the open window, overlooking (as it did) a part of the wooded hillside which set the campus apart from the rest of the community on three sides. The sound of birdsong, of cicadas in the summertime, would fill the room as we got talking. I remember one unusually clear day beginning class by calling everybody over to the window and help me identify what great mountain we could just make out, way off in the distance. I think we decided, rightly perhaps, that it was Mt Chōkai.

actively engage each other through questions, dialogue, stories of personal experience grounded in the community setting.[32]

11 May

I feel it is in part the *dō* of *eikaiwa*, this kind of Japanized EFL, to give place first of all to the members of a group who have gathered for the otherwise simple purpose of practising English—but to really give place to the members themselves, their lives. *How was your weekend?* would be a commonplace in how to begin a typical EFL lesson, but I don't imagine EFL teachers as the sort to "allow" such "chit-chat" to endure more than five minutes—just until the teacher has taken attendance, you know. However, it seems to me that the more I felt like an *eikaiwa* teacher, the less I would be trying to segue my way into "today's lesson."

I remember one particular class at the Bunka centre, with whom I worked for a good couple of years before starting at the university, whose members generally knew that when they all seemed to have stopped talking for a moment, I would probably introduce some kind of teaching point. I was always amused at how deftly, amongst themselves, they would maintain the lively sort of conversation, especially on topics that arose in their accounts of their weekends, most of the time to the utter frustration of any real drive I might have had, to actually do any of the busy work of being an *EFL teacher*.

The hour would go by, and things would wrap up politely, and that would have been it for a week. But the things they would talk about. One of them took an interest in Dante (and this was probably what sparked my whole readers' circle), and would sometimes turn everyone's attention to big ideas in mediaeval European mythologies, as she read through the *Inferno* in Japanese and English. She would later spend three months as head reader in the circle, dwelling on a series of heartbreaking passages from *Paradise Lost*. She also enjoyed hiking and fishing and generally getting out into the mountains, so had plenty to talk about. Another member, married to an established local doctor with his own practice, liked to consider the sorts of stories you might hear in the news (and to read and discuss newspaper articles in English). Another was an avid traveller and sportsman (and businessman, especially restaurateur), with plenty of reports on skiing in the European alps or of scuba-diving in Okinawa. Another always had stories about looking after her ageing mother. All kinds of people came through this class (member-

---

32 I think it's worth noting, here, that an important aspect of the experience of *gaijin* as *eikaiwa no sensei* has to do with the dialogue that may be built in class—a unique forum for engagement with the sometimes strange new community setting of this life in Japan. At the level of concern for community, beyond interest in hobby-culture, a student may find the opportunity to take part in the teacher's sometimes fundamental questions as to what the immediate community consensus, such as there may be, appears to value.

To me as *gaijin no sensei*, "everything is always suspect . . . . It is the process of inquiry—the production of doubt—that creates the educational environment. The rest is silence" (Block, 1998, p. 15). I am free to envy those who know what is supposed to make up a course in *eikaiwa*. Wondering what that would even be like, I begin, continue, end. This is me professing love for Sophia.

ship was never fixed, as students were free to join any class geared to the right level), but such was perhaps the hard core of members I'd see every week. With each of these personalities came a unique presence about the class, and I was often overjoyed at the house on fire we all were, together.

I wonder if this (to me) *eikaiwa* purity—this forum for enquiry using English as a new mode in conversation—a new medium for *you and me*, for the dialogue (sometimes internal) that we would undertake—to deliberately and concertedly (self-consciously) become explicitly aware of and cultivate (transform, negate) in our desire (beyond concern) for a newly shared citizenship—I wonder whether this process, that meant something concrete to each of us, wherein, as Freire said, "the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges" ("teacher-student with students-teachers"), would answer well to your sense of learning integrated with learners' lives.

To keep with Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for just a moment, I want to pay attention to his *logos*, the level of consciousness at which "true knowledge" (discursive, dialogic) may appear—*logos* as opposed to *doxa*. I want to take this binary and ask it whether, if *eikaiwa* were *logos*, *Eigo* as taught in the middle and secondary levels would be the *doxa* from which a liberation were called for? Or would that position be better suited to EFL as imagined in "international-best-selling" textbooks in Communicative (English) Language Teaching? In either case, I want to look at *eikaiwa* as *logos*, hear it expressed as *dialogue*, in which Freire would recommend recognizing our intentions, critiquing them and eventually realizing our humanity, our liberty in the world of our actions, our existence.

The garden path.

13 May

You lament the fact that the university has fixed all of its windows so that they won't open more than ten centimetres—these windows which you used to enjoy throwing wide open so that your students could look out from off that hillside, where you would ask them to survey and look for some example of what they were then speaking of—rules, in your example. I remember coming in to a class one day and finding that the windows had these new warning labels and weren't opening as they'd done before. Perhaps this was during your sabbatical year. I was told the same story, of how a student, somewhere, had jumped to some kind of death out a university window; it's certainly true that we can only speculate as to this student's reason for doing so. The story of vandalism I didn't gather at the time.

Elsewhere, you've imagined your classroom as a place like a tea-hut in a garden. A place to learn, you say, learning itself, refers to something other than its own formation, the same way a garden in Japan opens to—lets in—what's outside and beyond. Even a distant mountain, framed in foregrounding leaves and lifted by a passing breeze, can be

part of such a garden, can be *in* it. The beyond—with a sense of mystery—comes into making this garden how it is.

You and I seem to agree that this experience of *eikaiwa* is practically the opposite of *EFL*, if EFL is often characterized as instrumental, as a link in a chain of world-economic expediencies, a kind of social leverage for those who have the means and leisure to pursue English, those who often say they want to learn "business English." Did you realize, by the way, that the term *pidgin* seems to derive from rendering in a Chinese-speaking context something about how we may *talk business*? It goes back quite a ways.

The yoga practice that is about looking better naked isn't easily seen as a path to enlightenment, yet some would say *any reason is a good one, as long as it gets people in the door.* Perhaps there's something to this, and the teacher needs to allow for many who will begin when few will seem to follow through. The Yoga Works studios now catching on in the US have been called the Starbucks of their industry, and certainly there have been some powerful examples of such marketing amongst *eikaiwa* schools like Telos or Super or, for a really international example, Poplar. Yet I find that there is always room (perhaps not so much in those schools but more easily, for the relatively few teachers who venture out into them, in other places like culture centres) for the other kind of practice that you and I are now able to talk about, where *eikaiwa* is whatever the participants' (yes, including the teacher's) imagination lets it be. We let it be what it will, we let it grow, and we don't try to force it to be something someone says it's supposed to be, in which case, as you say, we are all—learners and teachers—slaves.

It's a beautiful day here (25°) and I'm writing from a hammock in the corner of an apple orchard that's (still) about to blossom. Life is good. Keeping in touch,

—CM.

Letters (2)

Hello NY: Sensei [33]

Yutori kyōiku mama.

6 June 2009

Many thanks, my dear Hello NY,

for bearing with me in getting this conversation started. Your comments since I sent you samples of my notes concerning the term *sensei* have been really helpful, and I'd like now to explore some of those comments. In particular, you've referred to several key terms relevant to an argument such as Gordon's "Crumbling Pedestal."

The first of these is *Yutori Kyōiku*, by which I understand *the new attitude* in Japanese education. It seems to me Japanese schoolteachers and kids have a long week, and I quickly learned it was a week of long days, for both students and teachers, as (at least in high-school) the students would be attending *juku* or *eikaiwa* schools, perhaps also participating in sports or other club activities at the school, well after their classes were over, and the teachers would be working with their students in many of the same activities. Six days a week, basically, though with some important shifts under *Yutori Kyōiku.*

I wonder what effect the *Yutori Kyōiku* policy has really had on the intended structure and focus of education in Japan—if, as you say, the intention was to lessen the focus on *juken.* I don't see how the attitude has changed, since the prevailing narrative still seems to be that everyone studies hard to get in to a good high-school whence they have an edge on getting in to a good university or junior college, and from there a good job and that's the good life.

The arcs which intersect with this story line the most, other than those of the kids or their teachers, would seem to be of the parents (like the *kyōiku mama*—whom I've heard represented as the Japanese version of a *soccer mom*) and of the schools' representatives (administrators and teachers). The parents will make their kids study in a highly-regimented schedule, focussing as often as not on the name-value of a particular private school or the standards of a particular public school; the administrators and teachers,

---

33 The next conversation to get going was with another colleague, a member of the staff (not to say faculty) at a school in Sendai; she was a member in one of my literary classes at the Bunka centre. Having addressed the *eikaiwa* side of being *eikaiwa no sensei*, I decided to go after *sensei.*

from school to school, will vie amongst each other for educational value (especially measured in terms of placement records, which in turn rely, again, on *juken* results) in the increasingly competitive market that becomes tougher and tougher as the number of children continues to shrink.

Now, if this is the story of how *juken* became so all-important in the first place, I think it's remarkable to see that it has continued uninterrupted except by one common complaint I've heard from colleagues. They say that the standards for entrance to most universities —that is to say *juken* contents—have been getting "dumbed down" for some years already. You'll hear, for example, that the students arriving at a certain university can handle much less English, in general, than students entering the same school ten years ago. This is sometimes attributed to the need to draw on what are imagined as inherently dimmer lights in order to fill the halls, given the dwindling population-base; at other times, *Yutori Kyōiku* gets the blame.

From a certain point of view, in any case, a school is a place *from* which to *graduate*, to *level up*, as my students would often put it in expressing their aims with *eikaiwa—to* your station in life and, perhaps, happiness. What about the school as site for learning, especially learning to live as a free or good human being, or whatever kind of person would be most favoured in the Japanese context made imagined and explicit in the national curriculum? This bears directly on a consideration of what it means to be *sensei*, where the word itself is conveyed to us in English as not only *teacher* but also *master* (and I acknowledge your mention of Master Yoda as an example of the great *sensei*). There is a Confucian element at work in the kanji, as you have noted in your approach to the term: *sensei* are understood not only as masters of skills but also as *senpai* (elders) in life generally, exerting a good influence on their students (in this sort of discourse I want to write *pupils* or even *apprentices* or something).

Going back to the good old days, this image of the teacher has involved a kind of absolute trustworthiness. It may not have been so long ago that teachers exerted an authority unlikely to be challenged by the less educated parents of schoolchildren in their towns and villages. The teacher, the master, knew best. This was, as I've often been told, the context in which corporal punishment continued as a form of school discipline until quite recently.

Now, these good old days remain, if only in living memory—and what has changed? The *kyōiku mama*, perhaps like a soccer mom,[34] will herself have graduated from some form of post-secondary education, and will have strong opinions on how her child is to be educated, and for what purpose. She may, after all, be the central figure in our entire story. Compared to her, and perhaps in her eyes, *sensei* is just another white-collar worker, a perfectly ordinary human being (I hear much about being perfectly ordinary) performing a certain function in society. In this sense, the good old days are gone.

---

34 This does bear some cross-cultural comparison, as you'll see, in terms of snobbery, the bourgeois lifestyle, and the internationalization in which, if the world is now more like Japan than ever, is it because Japan too is more like America in its lifestyle?

Many thanks, once again, for your outline of terms in which to frame this narrative. I look forward to continuing this conversation, but must not miss my chance to get out and enjoy today's sunny weather for a bit. Going looking for a new trail today, I remain sincerely yours,

—CM.

Gakkō no sensei (1).

7 May 2009

Thank you, Dear Hello NY,

for agreeing to write to me for awhile in the discussion which I mean to open by considering the sorts of people you've grown up calling *sensei*, as well as those you see on a daily basis around your office. I wonder if you remember them at all as clerks, as bureaucrats, *civil servants*, ushers in this kind of paper-chase which leaves nobody, not a man, woman or child, free until they and all their family members have made it through school—and if it's the right school . . . . That's when the real paper-chase of office life begins for many though not for all, or so go the usual stories you'll hear about life in Japan. All of this I see as an available understanding of the Japanese education system, though perhaps *Monbukagakushō* would set forth the principles of its curriculum in different terms than these.

Outside of the Japanese education system there are also *sensei* of other sorts, doctors, teachers in the various *dō* disciplines, as well as those of what may be lighter *shumi*. There are also *gaijin no sensei*. For me in my practice there has been no given curriculum with which to work, and I think this makes a big difference between me and a (pre)schoolteacher, imagined as an education-functionary.

An interesting question to consider is what the education-functionary's basic functions would be. Gordon highlights the link in the social chain embodied by *sensei* in the post-war Japan, Inc. The national deal that once said employment is for life put teachers in the position of usher[35] in the house not only of learning but also of status and power.

The number of 20-year-olds celebrating the national Coming-Of-Age day in January is at a record low with each new year. Attracting new teachers to the profession has been difficult recently, and quickly worsening economic conditions have perhaps strengthened the sense of crisis.

An interesting development in the Japanese government's turn to robotics (aiming, apparently, to have a robot in every household by the year 2015) is Saya, the android

---

35 *Usher*, by the way, can mean *assistant teacher*, if read in a British-archaic context.

teacher, who has just joined the teaching staff at an elementary school in Tokyo as I write. First introduced to the workforce a few years ago, Saya has been a receptionist at Tokyo University until now.

What, you may ask, are her functions? She can call the roll, set simple classroom tasks, show a range of emotions (and notably anger, according to reports), and speak a number of languages.

Now you know.

Looking forward to reading your letter in turn,

—CM.

Daigaku no sensei.

22 June

Dear Hello NY,

I really enjoyed reading your letter. You set the scene for me, recalling the many lessons in life from those you call the good *sensei* you've known—some of whom you say would hit you or others in your classes (and I must remark that where I come from, these memories would seldom be conjured by the term *good teacher*), some of whom seem to have said things that were as disappointing to you as others' words were encouraging.

You say that you remember these *sensei* along with what you learnt from each of them. These are the ones whom you respect, as collaborators in your own life and experiences. You seem really thankful to them for conveying these lessons in morals and good manners. The actual classroom lessons, however, may have slipped away into a seemingly forgotten past by now (and I think many people could relate to you here), as have the bad *sensei*, the ones with whom you couldn't enjoy learning.

Now, you were asking about Saya. I think you're right to point out that there hasn't been much talk in everyday Sendai situations about the progress of robotics in Japan. Every so often it seems, however, that I come across a story written up in the English-language media: a couple of years ago a think-tank was in the news for recommending robots as the answer to an ageing society, seeing as it was too late to look for any adequate long-term changes in immigration policy—the Philippine nurses who rotate through on short-term visas will soon need the help of robots in caring for the aged, or some such argument. The Saya story, with its reference to a project you haven't even heard of, for robots in every household in a few years' time, seems to me to fit into this narrative.

Well perhaps I'll keep it this short for now. Getting back to it this evening,

—CM.

Letters (3)

Daisen: Gaijin [36]

> We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself;
> we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us
> by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths.
> Without one's own questions one cannot understand anything other or foreign
> (but, of course, the questions must be serious and sincere).
> Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing.
> Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched.
> (Bakhtin, 1970/1986, p. 7)

Islands, nations.

6 October

Thank you, dear Daisen,

for asking whether my understanding of Japanese culture may arise from my own experience as an Islander. I would have to say it does, and always has. I think the notion of insularity has always been pretty explicit to me, you could say since my birth in St John's, Newfoundland—prominent information on my *gaijin* card. I am accustomed to being surrounded by water. Indeed, by the strictest definitions available here in Atlantic Canada, I am a Newfoundlander and not an Islander—it is a matter of *birth*, you see, and thus an existential statement reaching beyond the fact that I grew up in PEI from the age of two. In the community near Charlottetown where I was a child, my father may have been an Islander but, coming from *up west*, he wasn't *from* that particular community anymore than my mother, born in Ontario, was. The same certainly seemed to go for me in my classes at school.

I've enjoyed reading your account of deciding to start *eikaiwa* lessons. It is another refreshing story of adaptation, and one whose details I'm happy to share since I can so well recall meeting you for the first time at Samson Eikaiwa. You asked me then whether

---

36 With my last remaining student in Japan, whom I meet via Skype on a weekly basis (often to discuss elements of the work he, as a scientific researcher, does to prepare papers and other presentations for an international audience of peers), I struck up this conversation in due course.

I were interested in Japanese history, and all I could really profess was a general interest—but I have learnt quite a lot in conversation with you.

The sense you convey, of *panic by English shower*, is a familiar sentiment though your account is probably the best I've seen for this experience of English in a Japanese context. People so often speak of their fear of the language, their fear of being stopped in the street by a foreigner who needs directions to the train station. It's a much less comfortable moment than, say, *bathing in Japanese* might be. For some, I assure you, this is itself a motivation (amongst others, of course) in coming to *eikaiwa* class, in saying what it's for. I think it's striking, too, that you can say you remember your first contact with a foreigner—at the age of 15! To be fair, though, I can remember being told that the conversation I'd just had was the first my interlocutor had ever had with a foreigner, or rounding a street-corner and so surprising the woman I found approaching that she literally jumped backwards, bug-eyed, and then asked in her best English and with great excitement where I was from. This was in Akita city, though actually I learnt that she'd come in to the city on that day from a smaller place in the deeper *inaka* of the surrounding prefecture. I think that was the only time I found myself in that particular neighbourhood; I was just out taking a walk, as I often used to do in Akita, trying to take in as much as I could with my eyes, to spite the new challenges that had set in as I arrived a stranger to Japanese language. In any case I'd say there's nothing wrong with such reactions, especially when they only serve to show that *gaijin* remain quite rare in some parts of Japan. Mind you, there are probably more *gaijin* in Japan now than when you were 15 years old.

In any case, your experience with English before meeting me may have been limited for the most part to the kinds of book learning we often hear about when the conversation is concerned with how the schools have taught English. You began in middle school and continued in some form through university, studying the grammar and doing exercises in reading and writing for the most part. Many say that it is regret for this education that brings them to *eikaiwa*, or that it is a reason for *eikaiwa* to exist as it does, in a private industry beyond the ken of a national curriculum. This is key for me, as I certainly identify with what you say, here. We say, for instance, that *eikaiwa no sensei*, those teaching at *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu*, work with *seito* for students rather than with *gakusei* (*schoolchildren*, if you will). The classroom in which I relate as *sensei* to *seito*, the *kyōshitsu*, is the place for enquiry in *eikaiwa*. This place we call *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* is, strictly speaking, *gakugai* (off school grounds, perhaps, or *extracurricular*). Here is another argument for the importance of being *gaijin no sensei*.

Of course you're not alone in saying that you felt hindered, throughout your graduate work and on further into your career, by a need to speak *accurately*. I'm not so different myself, at heart, and have at times thought my shy hesitation to speak arose from too much thinking things through, planning what I want to say, looking for the words I want to speak. It's not so easy to reach automaticity, as they say, but I think the greater hindrance on those who feel this need, to express themselves without making mistakes, without saying the wrong thing—the greater hindrance, I think, is not the hesitation but the lack of opportunity to simply practice taking part in some discourse in the target

language. I imagine anybody might want to take part in the conversation, the dialogue beyond that found on a page in a textbook, once she's decided that she wants to find a chance to practice the language. I imagine, too, that it's supposed to be easier in a small group gathered, in a safe place, for the practice.

So before you started practising *eikaiwa*, you had occasion to work with students and scholars from Indonesia, France, Sweden, Germany and the US, but those you soon found easiest to understand came from China and Korea. You say you had to find the *dokyō* (courage, heart) to practise speaking English, and I think you made an excellent choice in looking beyond what help you could get with this or that paper you were working on. Your writing has been a joy to work with, of course; what I mean is that I really appreciate having a chance to speak to you week by week even when you're not working on a paper. I'm glad we can talk about other things at times—for instance, about my own research at the moment. I'm honoured that you've agreed to pursue our conversation in these pages.

So we've been discussing *gairaigo* (*outside-coming-language*) and you point out that as Japanese seems to pick up ever more and more loan-words, some stick after sliding a bit, and others never seem to take hold in the same way. I've always found it fascinating that, as you point out, there was so much less katakana being used in Japanese until the post-war era. Throughout the Meiji era, in any case, baseball was given kanji and read as *yakyū* (as it is to this day), a new postal system became known as the *Yubin Kyoku* (an invented word, but a Japanese word, to indicate what sort of service it could provide); *pan*, meanwhile (borrowed from Portuguese way way back), used to be written with kanji as a rule—now, not so much.

I remember the most delightful conversation I ever overheard on the Sendai subway, once I'd begun catching bits of conversations in public. A young couple was quietly and bemusedly trying to sort out the origin of words like *rate* (*latte*), *gurande* (*grande*), *barisuta* (*barista*). *English? Don't think so.* Well, we know *kahe o re* (*café au lait*) is French, but that doesn't sound much like any of these—and Starbucks is American, right?

When it's all there in katakana (which is, after all, a Japanese form of language), it still seems less intelligible than it should be. By the script we may gather that the word may not have originated in Japan—but where it actually comes from, what particular other language or country, can be a mystery, too.

Now, of course, this atmosphere will make it difficult to represent terms specific to your field of dendrochronology (and I know there are many such terms), as you continue to write of your research in an emerging international academic climate. I want to ask you, though, about the *cultural crisis* you find in this and, as you say, every aspect in Japan. How would you characterize such a crisis, in one paragraph or less?

Your letters are a tremendous help. Looking forward to the next, feeling that we may be almost ready to wrap this conversation up, I remain

sincerely yours, —CM.

18 November

Many thanks, dear Daisen,
for another thought-provoking letter in turn. I'd like to thank you, first off, for calling me on the *closed* or *narrow* views associated with the term *insular*, as I used it in my last letter. The Japanese word you refer to, I note, is *shimaguni*, which translates as *insular*, or *island nation*. I only meant to associate it, in my letter, with *being surrounded by water*, as an island is; of course you're right to point out that there's something about this image that is discontinuous, disjointed, cut off from other lands. Indeed, that is an important element in the culture of islands, is it not, and the experience of those who live on islands? Insularity comes between us and an outside world, however broadly we may define it; *insulation*, meanwhile, may prevent the flow (especially the unwanted flow) of electricity; I think that those who choose an *island way of life* want to welcome the protection it affords.

For an example, I want to share a story from yesterday's local news. Somewhere up in the quite rural western reaches of Prince Edward Island, where you'd half expect everybody to know everybody else, perhaps the night before last, there was an accident involving four men on an All-Terrain Vehicle. *Four men.* Two of the men fall off the ATV and into a ditch or something; they wind up in hospital. The other two men, meanwhile, have taken off and left the fallen where they lay. At some point the police, no doubt concerned with laws governing the safe operation of ATVs, were talking to the injured, and the story that arose was that the injured *didn't know* who the other two had been. Hearing this on the radio last evening, my father, himself from that part of the Island, laughed and said *as if there were all that many strangers up in Prince County at this time of year!*

On the one hand he was only stating the obvious, pointing out that all four of these men probably *did* know each other, despite their story. On the other hand, I found it interesting that he would imagine the strangers as coming and going but always only additional to, extra to, an abiding and underlying society.

I wonder if such a story could have been told anywhere but here. In any case, I believe there is, as you say, an insularity of places, always understood as smaller places than the world at large, which seems vital to those places, expresses *life* as lived uniquely in those places and may indeed challenge many of the projects commonly associated with globalization. I find a sense of my own vitality as I examine this insularity and think of it every time I call myself an Islander. If indeed something comes between Japan, for instance, and the world at large, is it not this very thing that, historically at least, has allowed us to analyse Japanese culture as a process of adaptation, of realizing the potential found in what will often be, fundamentally and even by documentary evidence, identified as coming from *outside*, from *beyond*?

Now, you say there is a proverb you know, to the effect that it's better to adapt than to learn. You've phrased it with a sense of *adapting to*, which would be something different from this japanning that I've been reaching for throughout our conversation. I'd like to see this in the Japanese, actually, and compare these senses of adaptation in the language from which I feel they're coming.

After all, this history of Japan, this process yielding a post-historical society, a *Japanese way*, compared to an *American way*, demonstrates to our understanding (yours and mine) some kind of adaptation, an engagement with, a fitting of, culture at large for the purposes of its own purest form. If culture is essentially a matter of adaptation (implying internalization, a movement towards an interior), then it is perfectly natural and also perfectly human to adapt every available cultural form, to cover it over with that lacquer which, after all, is meant to protect and preserve, as well as decorate, whatever it covers.

Several years ago, a good friend of mine moved away from Sendai and wound up for some time in China. He wrote to me one day about ideas of starting a Japanese-style ramen shop. In particular, he said, the way these noodles had become japanned, always a popular form for a quick meal in any Japanese town, had a certain kind of gourmet appeal in a Chinese context. I sometimes hear that Japan has relatively few truly *original* cultural forms, that everything is a kind of *imitation* of something that existed first, exists more richly, comes from, elsewhere. But what could be more original than to show such an adaptive capacity, with room for anything at all? I find it funny, citing another popular food example, to imagine somebody actually thinking *well, this curry stuff brought over from India is really good, but what I think it needs is some good beef.* If I may speak for those cultures which house cults of originality, and if I may link these cultures with an American way of life, I would suggest that it may be more Western to ask what *real* curry should be like, as if that existed, originated, exclusively in India. But what exactly, after all, is inauthentic or derivative about Japanese curry? Does it matter that curry was actually introduced by *British* merchants, way back, or that the Japanese army and navy used it extensively, or that it remains the Friday menu for the Maritime Self-Defense Force, or that a number of ships in the fleet have their own unique curry recipes? Not that the ramen I was just thinking of would ever be instant ramen, but what is inauthentic, after all, about instant ramen? Ah, I could go on all day about such Japanese inventions. Witness, also, the Yagi-Uda antenna, as invented at Tōhoku Imperial University by Shintaro Uda, assistant to Hidetsugu Yagi, in 1926. This technology caught on quickly amongst Allied forces in WWII airborne radar and was thus used to guide the bombing of Hiroshima. To be sure, Japanese inventions have covered the world at large, have informed so much of what we produce and consume. But as to the culture itself, the relation to Japan as ground to tend, these products may be rather oblique representations.

After all, it is this adaptation, better than learning, that you hold up as a special challenge to the *deeper inaka* of Japan. You would challenge this less changing, more insular, more protected element at the *interior* of a Japanese way. Your challenge is that there should be more and more engagement with, a deeper adaptation of (or adaptation to) the way of life posed in globalization. You point out that *eikaiwa* presents a key opportunity, in every city, town and village across Japan today, by which to know of a global citizenship shared, importantly, in English language. To be aware of an improvement, a learning, and to *take heart*, as we experience this *dokyō* to which you again refer as essential to your own experience in *eikaiwa*. To express ourselves and to be content in the world. Perhaps this is the loftiest aim I've yet encountered for *eikaiwa*, and whilst I'd like to say that it comes back round to *freedom*, to *liberty*, I wonder now if such a vision of *yūai* (as I believe it could be identified in today's new Japanese policy) is not somehow *beyond*

liberty, beyond any kind of *equality* in the usual sense—which I've all too often seen measured out in terms of equivalencies anyway, a kind of quantifying comparison.

Your account of the *cultural crisis* you'd mentioned in your last letter seems analogous to what are called the *Culture Wars* of American life. In particular, you mention something that reminds me of the *Great Books* debate in American education—a proposed return to pre-WWII-style curriculum in the Japanese Language Arts, on which you find yourself reluctantly in line with the Free Democratic Party's right wing. But the problem you identify is, as you say, a matter of accelerating changes in the language. Not only is *gairaigo* increasingly difficult to keep up with, as it adds and subtracts words from everyday presence in a kind of dazzling effect, but even the kanji that remain an important part of communication seem to slip and slide more than we might say they used to, and it may indeed seem to you (as it seems to me, when I take a look at the same phenomenon in English-speaking societies) that most people go most of their lives (as you say) *illiterate to deep etymology*. Kanji, a Chinese system, has been adapted, along with so much else, as a vehicle for Japanese meaning. In China, loan-words can be incorporated by assigning kanji, for instance the name M(a)cDonald can be represented in kanji that yield roughly the right sound and also say something about *wheat* and *beef. We get the picture.* But in Japan we use a script to represent the sounds of the name, and the etymology available through kanji, regardless its tenuous relationship with a word's native etymology, is ruled out.

To be sure, English shows all kinds of influence in this way, from other, often older, languages. To be sure, knowledge of etymologies seems lacking in the way those around us seem to use their words most of the time. To be sure, new words come to us from all over the place, as others fall out of use, depending where our collective attention falls—and, sad to say or otherwise, the words themselves are perhaps too rarely the focus of that attention. Even the word *etymology* might not figure too prominently in any of the corpora of current English now being compiled in studies of what is known as *corpus linguistics*—measuring, for instance, in databases constructed from texts of all kinds, the frequency of any word within the language as captured in the database (apparently the most frequent word overall, in English, is *I*; I wonder what it would be in Japanese, knowing that even as personal pronouns aren't always used, there are also a number of them which could be used—*watashi*, *watakushi*, *ore*, *boku* or, especially in Tōhoku, perhaps, *uchi*). In any case, there is a sense in which the language carries on without us, isn't there? Some experience it as a generational thing, but again, it's also geographic and needs to be considered, if possible, from a global perspective.

I recently had a conversation with a young woman, visiting Charlottetown for a weekend funeral. She spoke as an Islander who's been living for a year or so in Toronto, with lots of stories about how her way of speaking had come into conflict with the way English is spoken in the city some of us like to call *the centre of the universe*. She'd obviously developed a very specific and self-conscious sense of how her Island vowels may sound exotic to many she meets, how people would sometimes wonder what had happened to a consonant like the *t* in *hat* or *light* as she spoke. But the sense that she could be ridiculed because her English *wasn't very good* seems far from fair, if you ask me. I mentioned the

centre of the universe idea a moment ago because I'm reminded of Bakhtin's ideas on centripetal and centrifugal forces that run through our use of language (I'm thinking especially of his "Discourse in the Novel," as found in *The Dialogic Imagination*). If any given language were truly one complete system, without variance in its application from one utterance to another, then the only orientation to learning or speaking that language would be a matter of gathering more and more knowledge in a world where objects never change, everything is fixed and meaning is never to be negotiated or addressed but only sent and received as so many data. The language teacher becomes one who *describes* the language in question, depending on the learner to appropriate it in some other medium than straightforward practice and negotiation of meaning. I find that I appreciate the way in which *eikaiwa* seems to differentiate itself on this point, as I believe conversation is always a two-way street, unless this *street* is too simple a metaphor. But Bakhtin shows us that any utterance, whilst it may be directed at such a fixed, dead-centre, bullseye kind of meaning, may just as well intend to move away from the centre, to go its own way (it could be in any direction) or to communicate something in a completely unique fashion, or as may be appropriate to a particular time and place in which I am speaking. Perhaps this centripetal intention can be confusing, especially when each particular time and place in which I am speaking can differ radically from *every* other. I believe we switch codes as we speak, always depending on whom we mean to speak to, and in that moment we are either tending to life and its abundance or tending to death and starvation, at least with respect to the creative voice by which our humanity abides. As you and I have discussed, the foregoing naturally has its perspective on regional dialects as found in Japan. Here I think I'll only point out that the curriculum includes something called *kokugo*, *national language*. Stories abound in this area, I think, such as those of old Okinawan dialects being chased into very dark corners by *kokugo*-minded educational programmes.

In any case, how shall we look at this movement in language, understood globally, as expressive of life in a global village? I suppose it may be a matter of *power* or a matter of *influence*. Let me dwell for a moment on each of these by way of a metaphor.

To think that the changes we observe, in how our respective mother-tongues continue in use and continue changing—to think that all these changes are accelerating, I suppose there could be lots to link in here but I'd like to highlight technology. We certainly tend to look at media of communication as changing more and more rapidly, and it may be that we can see our languages affected in their interaction via the machinery, especially of electronic communications. New words pop up, new forms of shorthand, new emoticons (and somehow, by the way, always more *emoji* as a perfected range of emoticons), all with a sense of acceleration. I've just heard, by the way, that the Oxford Word of the Year for 2009 is *unfriend*, a verb made possible by social networking technology such as that represented in Facebook.

Way back when, Coudenhove-Kalergi, himself the son of a Japanese woman, put forth a well-known phrase associated with the rise of European economic union. *Vorsprung durch Technik*. His envisioned *fraternal revolution*, beyond the French revolution for *liberty* and the Russian revolution for *equality*, would see the gap between rich and poor dis-

solved in a classless society which nevertheless carried along a bourgeoisie and a working class. The difference he imagined would be that both classes would be free from distress: the bourgeoisie, in its functions, from the distress of *underwork*, and the working class, in its functions, from the distress of *overwork*. This revolution, he said, would be mediated by technology, the instrumental power to build homes enough for all, and to bring about an age of *gentlemanliness* (and gentlemen from all over the world, he would say, speak English), an age in which he amusingly promised that there would be no difference between the *washed* and the *unwashed* because now everyone would have the power to take a bath every day—*as do*, he said, *the Japanese of all classes*.

This brings me to the question of *influence* rather than *power*. Waters flow together without visibly mixing, just as do our languages. This may be understood as a kind of system, but gives us lots of room for interaction that doesn't have to involve machinery. Streams flow from mountain sources, mix with other streams and flow as rivers, widening in an ever greater flow. Again I am reminded of the *great flow* in Endo's "And You, Too." The rivers flow into lakes and sometimes out again, on towards the seas, the oceans, the waters covering the earth. The waters mix with the heavens, cooking up and raining down, sometimes on the mountaintops. We describe this as a system of sorts. We describe it as lots of systems, too. Neither you nor I can do much to change the way the waters move, but that doesn't keep us from going *down to the water*; and what do we learn there? If we can't change the way a river flows or the way the sea moves at the shore, do we not at least find a way to follow the waters, to draw from them, to bathe in them or to cross them if we need to? There is a river to which I am constantly drawn, down which I have floated but whose source I've never seen. I feel alive when the waters wash over my feet and when they pull at my toes, inviting me downstream.

Well perhaps I'll conclude here. It has indeed been a lot of fun to write these letters to you; like you, I've sometimes surprised myself at an unexpected thought. Your letters have contributed greatly to my thesis, and I hope also to the *dokyō* with which you speak as an international gentleman and scholar! Wishing you the very best, I remain

your teacher,

—CM.

Global issues.

15 June 2009

Dear Daisen,

Let me begin by projecting a little montage of terms, in three parts. Many of these I'm sure you'll recognize.

The global village. The United Nations. International development. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Radical/neo-liberalism. Privatization. The Free Trade Agreement. The North American Free Trade Agreement. The World Trade Organization. (Neo)colonialism. The Business Council on National Issues. The Business Roundtable. The Trilateral Commission. The International Monetary Fund. The World Bank.

The Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education. The Pembina Institute. The clash of civilizations.

Community. Mutuality. Commons. Peace. Discipline. Learning. Home. Conversation. Hope.

What is the meaning of globalization? Is it imposed from above or developed from below? When it forms the context for education, what forms of education are possible? In particular, what is the role of Teaching English as Foreign Language in empire's cultural hegemony, at the global level—is it, primarily, an enabling homogenizer for global capital? What is the place of the EFL teacher, or of the researcher, in today's global context, and how much is their knowledge worth collectively? These concerns seem especially relevant when I think of myself as your teacher, helping you to participate as a scientist in the international research of your field.

There are, in part, what some might call the challenges of cross-cultural exchanges, but I feel that the idea we have of culture takes many forms. Although social scientists seem to agree on the reality of societies, on the respective boundaries and fuller reaches of cultures, there is always seemingly new activity, in struggle and alliance, in conversation, amongst speakers of different languages and citizens of different countries, countries otherwise imagined as divided not only by language but by politics and in particular by whatever sense of empire may have crept in historically. I believe that these ideas bear personal relevance to a researcher like you, communicating professionally with (for example) American and German as well as Korean and Chinese colleagues. To what extent, I wonder, do these historical and colonial hierarchies, these stratifications of dialogue, these constellations of feeling, shape your sense of meaning as you pursue your research in Japan?

Especially in these times, dominated according to some, for example, by an American Military-Industrial Complex and the economic empire following from its imagined propagation of democracy and the free market, it seems crucial to me that we attend to our personal memories of culture, of place, and that we tend the land of the place, mind the time that we call home. I wonder how much of the debate around these issues might seem to you to reflect basically *Western* preoccupations, carried out as they perhaps most often are: in English, that language of today's internationalized researcher, who may very well use English and at the same time be Japanese.

I think the *great flow* (to borrow a phrase from Endo) of Japanese culture is clear enough when you look at it as full of its own adapting traditions, yet home also to the world's second-largest national economy. This Japanese economy, since WWII, has been built on so many familiar and important exports. Meanwhile, imported food, for instance, is

packaged at the *Meidi-Ya* supermarket in bags advertising the chain's "Foods from the World"—as if this world were somehow one place, and as if the stores were known for importing these foods to another place altogether. East and West dissolve in the montage, the bricolage, of ancient ways with high technology—yet to say this much would seem to imply that what is East and what is West, what is pre-industrial and what is high-tech, what is a wind-up tin monkey on wheels and what is a Lexus—ultimately, what is Japanese and what is not—could really be identified, teased out, isolated or triaged in some way. English language, too, mingles with Japanese language in everyday ways of speaking, supplying literally hundreds of high-frequency loan-words, and I wonder which examples of *gairaigo* would be your favourites. Though we might strain, in English, for words like tsunami, hibachi, futon or rickshaw, the heteroglossia of current Japanese bears, to me, much stronger witness than English as to what this global village of ours might be like as a whole. But this is already a statement of comparison with my own sense of English in the global context. I don't really mean to compare; but if I did, I would have to remind myself that more than half of the world's billion or so speakers of English are said to have learnt it as a second or foreign language, and that most of the world's English teachers are supposed to be "non-native speakers."

Hoping you'll excuse so many general remarks in this first letter, and looking forward to reading of your perspective, I am

sincerely yours,

—CM.

Japanning.

25 August

Many thanks, Dear Daisen,

for your first letter in this conversation. You've given me much to think about, in particular this view of history in which waves have been forever rolling across the waters and bringing one culture after another with them to Japanese shores—where those cultures pile up, one on top of another, each new one supported by all the others and adapted by the culture that is already there, having adapted the previous new layer also.

If the Jōmon people arrived in this way, we don't know where they came from but it must have been, as you say, some 13,000 years ago—our first evidence of them comes with their pottery vessels, the oldest in the world, dating back to around this time. Then came the Yayoi, roughly 10,000 years later, with their wet rice farming (by then practised also in China and Korea)—and you say the Jōmon culture was *covered with* the Yayoi. Successive great waves would bring one culture after another. After the first great wave of Yayoi rice-farming and related technique, you identify Buddhism (from Korea, about 100 years after kanji) as the second wave; greatly accelerated Western influence

starting in the 19th century could then be a third great wave. Layer after layer of culture becomes Japanese. Layer after layer, culture comes from across the waters, and something especially in what you call *high-society people* looks offshore for the cultural forms by which to continue identifying with the high cultures already practising those forms—appropriating, perhaps, the highest possible status by adapting all the world's highest culture. You might laugh, but I want to point out the high-tech toilets of Japan as a truly remarkable example of the elevation and perfection of a foreign idea. Beginning with the warmed seat beneath a motion-sensor-activated automatic-lift seat-cover, everything about this machine shouts *comfort*, in ways old Thomas Crapper certainly never imagined. Ah, the rush of the mighty waters, the soothing music issuing from somewhere in the works—give me a good book and I could stay here all day.

To be sure, shores and beaches are places where we find things—driftwood or bits of shell or glass with the edges worn off, things we may wish to collect, often so that we can remember the day we found them. Perhaps Japanese culture, in this way, is a collection of found things, and Japanese history the accompanying story of when and where each thing was found and how it fits into the collection. I think this would only be a fitting conversation between an island nation and its surrounding waters.

Like you I find it interesting that, as you put it, Japanese peoples have taken on *various newly updated cultures*, never accepting a new culture as it was, always adapting it to the culture already (or at any rate most recently) present on Japanese shores. What I am sensing in your language is the tendency of the Japanese term *bunka*, which refers to what we might imagine as countable *cultural forms* although we usually translate *bunka* simply as *culture*. The thing is that in English, *culture* isn't usually considered a countable noun in the same sense. Nevertheless, I appreciate this image of layer upon layer of culture, of culture upon culture, arriving on the shores of this remote island nation.

Consider, for example, your phrase *the Western culture*. I can see you assigning the article, as we've often discussed, where you find yourself referring to what is imagined as unique, singular, therefore definite; in fact, we tend to apply this *Western* adjective to a more general idea of culture, an idea perhaps of cultivation which could take any form whatsoever—Western or Japanese, to cite an exemplary binary from everyday conversation in Japan.

You point out that the term *globalization* is commonly associated, in Japan, with speaking English—and I might add that "American English" is often preferred in classrooms. This is where you and I find ourselves, situated in an historical context characterized, on one side, in an ongoing Japanese adaptation, not so much *to* cultural influence as *of* cultural forms arriving from an outside world. This Japanization of the world is exactly what makes of me something called *eikaiwa no sensei*, requiring also that I be *gaijin* in order to become *sensei*. On the other side, I think you're right, there is more of an *ex nihilo* development, a *progress* of modern science towards perfect, concrete understanding and mastery in discursive knowledge. It is certainly not a bad thing that researchers all over the world may read and address each other in a common language, to the extent that they are each able. To be sure, the English languages spoken throughout the world can

tend to foster a global sense of community, of learning shared, of peace and understanding in a world where progress is at the very least an objective for our disciplined hoping.

Thank you for pointing out that the dominance of English as scholarly language for the natural sciences arises with American achievements of the 20th century, which notably have their own place in American national and educational history. The standards and precedents of these achievements command your field today by way of such terms as *citation index* and *impact factor*, both of which no doubt strike fear in the heart of many Japanese researchers, as they compete with each other to make their careers. This struggle seems tied to the English language which informs the medium in which they need to achieve the greatest possible volume of citations and impact.

I certainly recognize the extra time and effort, not to mention the expense, you put into your English, always for the sake of reporting your research, and for taking part in discussions at international conferences. No doubt you yourself feel keenly that English is the wall confronting so many researchers in your field: the wall on which you may at times feel you're writing, aware that these words will be just as difficult to speak out loud when you're given the chance to have a real-time conversation. To be honest, I don't feel so differently about it myself, in my way and to some extent.

In any case, I certainly agree that the many loan-words which current Japanese has accrued have also been adapted and Japanized—and this, too, is a function of globalization, of German in the medical sciences as first adopted in Japan, of the Latin taxonomic language which remains current—even with *cryptomeria japonica*, to take an example from your own written work. Away from the sciences for a moment, you mention the term *aidoru*, referring specifically to a kind of formal recognition that may be given to a young and winsome, wholesome teenage singer and dancer. It is a remarkable transformation, in its way, especially when it can refer to this and not to the worship of graven images (which was, and thank you for reminding me, a crisis in Endo's *Silence*).

Now, to see Japanization and globalization on two sides in this discussion, I actually begin to wonder if they aren't essentially the same thing, in some sense. You say, summing up, that not only does Japanese culture seem always oriented to what lies beyond the waters attending its shores, but it also believes its own culture and customs "are peculiar because they were cultivated in marginal islands for a long time by a relatively homogeneous people"—one after another, at any rate, each covering over the last. I wonder, in fact, whether in some sense this latter unity doesn't lend itself to images of a global village, a brotherhood of man here on planet earth.

To sum up for today, then, I offer you the English word *japan* (note the little *j*): having to do with that hard, dark varnish, applied often to pottery though perhaps not to Jōmon pottery. I've been thinking of how lacquer is applied in layer upon layer. I find it interesting that a thing covered in japan is said, in English, to have been *japanned*; the process is called *japanning*. It's like the formation of a pearl, is it not? Lacquer. Lustre. Two very fine English words, I think. Layer upon layer.

Well I will sign off for the time being. Looking forward to your next letter, I remain

your teacher,

—CM.

Letters (4)

S: Snobbery [37]

The form of totalitarian man arises anew out of the chaos of our age.
The blackest cloud which has overshadowed the history of humanity is beginning to pass away.
(Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1937/1938, p.196)

Ippon, Nippon.

3 December

Well, dear S,

I'm glad now to look over what you and I have accomplished in this series of letters. Throughout the years in which I know my understanding and practice have continued to grow into *eikaiwa*, you've been there, also just doing *eikaiwa*, first of all showing tremendous motivation and sense of purpose in every lesson, but beyond that, always curious about the big ideas that would come up, or about the sweets we were having with our tea, or something I'd changed about the room. Thank you, always, for this attentive practice.

Thank you, also, for carrying on writing. I've been working on a final version of my thesis, quite furiously, through about an extra week now, compared to what I'd planned. As I do so, it's lovely of you to take the time to send a new letter. This one goes back, as you say, to the theme of snobbery as pursuit of nobility—and the *dō*-based disciplines as ways for that overall pursuit. Connections I've drawn between *dō* and *eikaiwa* (with reference to *shumi*) have led me to this conversation, as you'll see in the wider work of my thesis, as soon as I can get a copy to you. For now, let me just remark that we've been dis-

---

[37] I've been overjoyed to keep in touch with S, my student for the longest time, from when I met her at Jessamine and leading right up to my departure from Japan, now more than a year ago. I think, after all, she and I could have wished for an easier sort of topic, but this was all that I'd felt remaining from the ideas which had been informing this work from the get-go. It stems from a text which a friend recommended to me, perhaps as one of the most interesting things he'd ever read about Japanese society. I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to make of this text, but felt it was important enough for some rumination and, when I had the chance to strike up a conversation with S, sent her some notes I'd prepared on the reading of Kojève. I don't think she's had access to the text in Japanese.

cussing some of those ways in which an imagined Japanese sociolinguistic context can answer to globalizing trends—precisely, for instance, by offering *eikaiwa* as a kind of localized experience in English as Foreign Language. It's a meandering path we've taken, but I'm particularly pleased with this as a kind of *in vivo* demonstration of *eikaiwa.*

With *dō*, then, you've taken judo as an example. I can't help noting, by the way, that media accounts of a likely struggle between Lindsay Ann Hawker and Tatsuyaa Ichihashi revolve around judo: both reportedly had training; Tatsuya Ichihashi, however, reportedly has a black belt. It's certainly been obvious to me, the few times I've seen international judo competitions (like those at the Olympics) on TV, how differently Japanese competitors take part. You point out that the difference seems to consist in Japanese competitors tending to win by taking *ippon*—as you say, a major count, a full point. It's not so much about sparring or doing just anything to see if you'll win (*waza-ari*, as you say—half-points), but more a case of "winning overwhelmingly or winning with high quality." Thank you for reminding me of this.

The contrast, as you say, leaves most non-Japanese competitors looking like for them judo is first of all a sport, a competition, and I suppose this is not the same as taking judo as a way of discipline or of "improving their self-restraint." I especially appreciate your appraisal that for these competitors it would appear that "winning seems to be more important than how to win." This *how* is the study, is it not, in any formalized, noble, *dō*? I wonder if you identify with this kind of discipline, specifically in your practice of *eikaiwa.* As I was saying above, the potential for *eikaiwa* to be a way of mastery, in the land of these many disciplines, has been a major theme for me.

Well you've written that you'll be sending another letter soon. For now I must thank you for the illustration you've provided here, and carry on with my final revisions. Hoping December's off to a pleasanter start there than here, I remain sincerely yours,

—CM.

You and I (1).

27 November

Well, dear S,

Here we are, the day after I'd originally planned to finish up a final copy of my thesis, but I'm still writing. A few days ago it became clear that I'd have the chance to take a little extra time with it. I'm glad to do so, not only because the kinds of revisions I've been making have turned out quite demanding, but also because it's so easy for me to simply enjoy the process. In any case, your latest letter has arrived in the meantime and I'm especially glad to have the chance to write back to you now. I'll make this an open-ended yet concluding sort of letter, perhaps leaving you with a question or two (I have

one important question in mind) because I'd like to look forward to keeping in touch with you and would be happiest if this line of conversation between us could turn out as one moment in a continuing process of correspondence.

So we've taken a pretty close look at Kojève's footnote on the end of history, post-historical humanity and Japan. Bringing things up to date, as it were, or casting it in the light of broad representations of the Japanese culture in which we continue our English conversation, you've pointed out the text, much like those you and I have so often discussed in our lessons, which Prime Minister Hatoyama has released to the press this month. I'm looking on the *Japan Times* website, which has a full English-language version of what I take to be the same text, here entitled "My Political Philosophy." I do note, however, that your translation of the Japanese title includes the word *path*: "My Political Path for Japan." I wonder, actually, if this path is indicated with the kanji 道, for *michi*.

In any case, you've read through the text and come to dwell on the question of means and ends. It's quite true that Coudenhove-Kalergi opened *The Totalitarian State Against Man* with the comments, under the chapter-heading "Man and the State,"

> Man is a creature of God. The state is a creature of man. It follows that the state exists for the sake of man and not man for the sake of the state. Men without states are conceivable—states without men are inconceivable.

Then come the words with which Hatoyama wants to begin: "Man is an end and not a means. The state is a means and not an end." And he goes on: "The value of the state is exactly the value of its services to human beings; in so much as it serves to develop man it is good—so soon as it hinders the development of man it is evil." And so the path opens.

I find it interesting to note, as Hatoyama does, that his grandfather's translation of this work (under the title *Jiyū to Jinsei, Freedom and Life*) came about during a period of "enforced leisure," an exile from politics which had been imposed just as the older Hatoyama had been making his first approach to becoming prime minister. So it was during the period of delay, before he founded the LDP and became prime minister, that Ichirō Hatoyama had dwelt on this work.

Now, the younger Hatoyama puts this vision, of the priority of the individual, at the centre of his account of the history of *yūai* in Japanese politics since his grandfather's time. I think his phrasing of a *self-independence* matched with *coexistence* is also quite noteworthy, referring as it may to a similar attitude compared to that Kojève summed up in the post-historical humanity which could be the relation of the subject, not so much to external objects but first of all to the general and explicit abstraction of form which ultimately could be called a formalized subjectivity, a formalized humanity, a reduction of human activity to *what is noble in the natural world.* Only a human being, says Kojève, can have the self-consciousness, can show the snobbery, to seek identification with that nobility. I'm reminded of the value of the imperfect symmetry possible when something like a

cup is shaped by the human hand (a machine wouldn't form each cup individually, much less idiosyncratically). This, I am told, is evidence of a *wabi sabi* aesthetic. I find it fairly easy, now, to regard such humanity as explicitly present in the Mushanokoji quote you highlight from within Hatoyama's text: "I am me, you are you, yet we are good friends." So here we are, with that vision of fraternity tempering the liberty and equality of past revolutions. It remains a revolutionary idea, I think.

Ah, I'm reminded of so much in this argument. In fact, I should relate to you that I struggled for a time, in my recent studies, with notions of society. As social science, of course, my field of Education often seems to assume the reality of society. This I can live with, but there are views, held by such prominent thinkers in the field of Education as John Dewey, which seem to suggest that *society* is the general condition for which children need to be prepared in the course of their education. If it thus becomes the goal of education, I found myself thinking, we'd better be really clear on what it is that we imagine as society: is it a given reality of some kind, as Dewey seems to suggest, or is it rather something that happens, and may then be described, as a function of complex and diverse relationships lived out amongst individuals (who may or may not have undergone anything like the explicit education which Dewey had envisioned)? Well I need to go on thinking about this matter, but I've noted with interest that Kierkegaard spoke of *the press* and *the public* as equal reflections of a life which is never real to the individual, never essential to his existence. Indeed, I'd rather follow Kierkegaard's notion that *there is no society—only individuals.*

This seems to be where you speak up, and I enjoy the critical edge with which you mention the individual imagined as part of a society; this society takes the form of a *machine* in your view, the individual like a cog in a machine. I think this could be a worthy word of caution regarding Coudenhove-Kalergi's projected *Vorsprung durch Technik.* After all, perhaps the political ideal of *yūai* stands as ideal only in the sense of *the least of three evils*; I mean, there will always be an individual who rails against society in general, every kind of society. I believe there is a kind of individual who, when asked, would rather simply reject all forms of society as determining his existence (or the action that has to do with that existence). This could be the kind of *self-differentiation* in which Freud placed his concept of the *death wish* (see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), a drive equal to the lust for life by which he'd earlier characterized all human activity. But I believe *yūai* corrects such a drive—without denying its inherent claims to radical individuality. Well, perhaps I digress.

In any case you're right to observe that the point of any talk of *yūai*, the question that arises when we hear it, is of *how* Hatoyama means to achieve it, how he wants to work it out in Japanese policy. *Yūai* boats are of considerable interest, both geopolitically and metaphorically (and I'm always pleased when these concerns lie together), but what further news can we expect? What further news do we want? I see today that Hatoyama is approaching the disastrous birth-rate (lying below "replacement level" since the 1970s) through the significant issue of women's experience, especially in the workplace. That is, his government will finally address the way of thinking that has until now maintained that a woman's career and her childbearing years must be lived out as distinct stages in

life, asserting, more strongly this time, that it doesn't have to be an either-or proposition in this regard.

So perhaps we're at the beginning of things as far as *Yūai* policy goes. I want to ask *you*, though, considering your place in any imagined Japanese society and the concerns with which you've lived out your successful career to date, what *you* would do if you were prime minister today—to the extent that you find potential in Hatoyama's policy.

Whilst we're on about stories in the news, you're absolutely right to point out the importance of another item of this past week or so. Naturally, to me as *gaijin* in my Japanese life, this is a story of the saddest concern. Some two years ago I remember reading (for what would be the first of several times) of the tremendously emotional appeals of a British family whose daughter, a 22-year-old woman who had worked as *eikaiwa no sensei* in what was then the biggest national chain of schools (I've called it Super in my writings), had been killed. Lindsay Ann Hawker's naked body, with serious injuries to her face and arms, had been found, buried in a sandy mixture of potting-soil, in a bathtub on a balcony belonging to the apartment rented by a 28-year-old man named Tatsuya Ichihashi. Her father, present in Tokyo to identify the body, said that Lindsay Ann Hawker had probably gone to Tatsuya Ichihashi's apartment as a private teacher. Tatsuya Ichihashi, meanwhile, had fled his apartment barefoot during the first police response, two days after Lindsay Ann Hawker's disappearance. It looked like he'd somehow got away for good.

Two and a half years later, Tatsuya Ichihashi has turned up. The stories of the intervening times have been deeply troubling, starting with the fact that he'd got several bits of plastic surgery done, bit by bit, in order to disguise himself. The warrant for his arrest had remained open as he went undetected but for a few reported sightings in Kabukicho. Police had issued posters showing Tatsuya Ichihashi disguised in drag. There have been reports that one of his lifelines during this time was probably the network of all-night Internet cafés, these places where it's possible to, quite anonymously, spend the night in a semiprivate room with access to such amenities as showers on-site. The anonymity of these places has come under serious scrutiny, as they've been seen as sites for all kinds of worrisome practices. Anyway, now he's in custody awaiting trial on these same charges under which the warrant was originally issued—and I can't help thinking he should have been wanted, all this time, for murder and not for *abandoning a body*. But this is a police concern. In custody for almost three weeks now, apparently he hasn't taken anything more than green tea for sustenance, though the police have been giving him nutritional supplements through shots in the arm. He's not talking, in any case, according to the stories I've come across.

So, since we're also talking politics, here is a very serious case. It has been linked, at least in the media coverage intended to set the story in context, to the death in 2000 (just before my own arrival in Japan) of Lucie Blackman, another young British woman, drugged, raped and killed by Joji Obara. Joji Obara, it turned out, had also killed the Australian Carita Ridgeway in 1992. Lucie Blackman and Carita Ridgeway had both worked as hostesses. Now, of course the stories may be constructed so as to show any

number of tendencies in an imagined Japanese society, but perhaps the one you mention is most worthy of examination.

You observe that the death of Lindsay Ann Hawker shows us something about the rise of crime in Japanese society. Amongst reasons most often given for this rise in crime has been the kind of globalization that brings *gaijin* to work in Japan. Coming at this from another angle, you see, it would seem that relatively low crime-rates in Japan have been taken as significant, not of relative economic security or any other single cause so much as of an underlying Japanese attitude towards the law and towards other human individuals and their property. This comes out most prominently, I think, in discussion around immigration: those who oppose any expanded programmes for immigration (and there seem to be large numbers of them, at least amongst lawmakers) tend to cite crime as the main concern. We often hear that more *gaijin* means more crime. I don't know if this is borne out in studies of any kind, but have always found it strange that this topic gets any serious discussion *as grounded in the moral life of individuals representing any society at all.* What I mean is that before we start saying that Japanese people have stronger morals proven in their relatively low crime-rates (and, the consequence—that people from other countries are more generally murderous or otherwise destructive), we might explore another angle, obvious enough to me: that the material base enjoyed by Japanese, *in general*, has been sufficient to deter crime to some extent. I think that this position, which I've never really heard argued, would yield a lot of really pertinent questions concerning the state of today's Japanese economy, wherein so many of Tatsuya Ichihashi's generation have found themselves quite outside of the grand narrative of the *sarariiman*. This is a major change in the Japanese society that I can see, bringing out evidence of typical measures taken in globalizing economies the world over: replacing stable jobs with part-time contract work, which is not the same kind of thing at all. I like to think that this is the globalizing tendency which Hatoyama now means to temper. I like to think that this is also the area in which Kojève's words, on *persistent economic and political inequalities*, apply most readily to life in Japan today. But perhaps I'm getting this all wrong.

I thus conclude, with you, apologizing in case my point of view seems out of place. The weather you mention was getting colder for awhile there but I was reminded the other day that this time last year we'd already had a major snowstorm: 20cm of snow had fallen and the overnight temperature was around -15°. As I recall, this was the snow that stayed on the ground, without interruption, until spring. This year, by contrast, has brought an unusually mild month of November, with rain instead of snow. Not even a very cold rain, as I'm pleased to report: the temperature outside the kitchen in which I sit at the table and write this letter to you is a balmy 12°. In any case I'm sure I've gone on long enough and will leave you with the conclusion of my notes on Kojève's footnote. Looking forward to our continued correspondence, and wishing you all the very best, I remain

your teacher,

—CM.

Yūai (1).

19 November

Well, dear S,

My revisions have brought me back at last to where I can write another letter to you. In fact I have just a couple of notes to make on some recent bits of news from Japan, especially concerning the foreign policy emerging in Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's recent activities.

Perhaps you have access to *Newsweek* magazine. In the 16 November issue, you'll find a story concerning Hatoyama's notion of *yūai*. I find the point of departure, where it seems the *Sankei Shinbun* has caricatured Hatoyama as *Robespierre without the guillotine*, quite germane to our conversation.

According to *Newsweek*, then, Hatoyama's vision of revolutionary fellowship has been seen as *mushy like ice-cream*, yet may have more to say than his predecessor's affirmation of Japan as *Asia's thought leader*. For this fellowship does indeed seem to have its roots in the kind of fraternity proclaimed as a revolutionary principle, along with liberty and equality, since the days of the French Revolution.

I found it fascinating to follow the last national election in Japan. For the first time since 1955 (but for an 11-month blip in 1993-1994), the Liberal Democratic Party lost its control of the lower house. As stories emerged in anticipation of such seemingly big events, I found myself reflecting on how little had changed in some of the circles of Japanese government, even at the time of the introduction of the *Peace Constitution*: not only had the same party ruled, despite or even because of its many factions, throughout the better part of the postwar era, but indeed some of the same families, father to son, had been maintaining elected offices—and perhaps a good number of these rather literally aristocratic families were of samurai background. Hatoyama himself is of such a family, despite the "grassroots" appeal of his party—a party which he and his brother, I note, founded in 1996.

Indeed, Yukio Hatoyama is the grandson of the founding president of the LDP, Ichirō Hatoyama. It was Ichirō Hatoyama who, before becoming prime minister in the 1950s, translated the book from which his grandson's policy is said to stem. *The Totalitarian State Against Man*, a book written by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi in 1937, presented a view of the future in which the excesses of liberty (anarchy) and the excesses of equality (tyranny) would be tempered in fraternity. In this coming age, the third revolution (following the French, for liberty, and the Russian, for equality) would bring about a new state governed by a brotherhood of *totalitarian man*. This community of individuals, of gentlemanly regard and a brotherhood of individual nations, was perhaps not unlike the kind of post-historical society described in Hegel's *universal homogeneous state*, especially that reflected in Kojève's thought. For Coudenhove-Kalergi (whose mother, by the way, was Japanese; he says at the beginning of his preface to *The Totalitarian State Against Man*

that being born of a European father and a Japanese mother, he has always taken a personal interest in "questions which transcend all differences of civilization and race and move men and humanity"), the struggle for this revolutionary fellowship would find focus as he developed the Pan-European Union along with Archduke Otto V^{on}Habsburg.

It's entirely fitting, of course, that all of this comes to bear on our discussion of Kojève's views. Kojève himself is regarded as another leader towards the kind of unified fellowship of nations which Coudenhove-Kalergi had sought. Indeed, Kojève's lectures at the École Pratique des Hautes Études ended as WWII began; his postwar efforts may have begun with the publication of notes from those lectures in the form of his book, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel*, but by this time he was much more concerned with his position in the French Ministry of Economic Affairs, where he worked as a chief planner for the European Economic Community. I find it greatly illuminating to observe the passage of time during the footnote which you and I are discussing: as a note to the second edition of his work, and in its reflection on the times that were passing even as he wrote, it is a fascinating document. As he speaks of his travels in the footnote, to the US and the USSR and eventually to Japan, I keep seeing him as this sort of super-civil servant.

Well I wonder if there's much for you to relate to in this letter. I'll wrap it up now and send it off in the hopes that it won't be too difficult for you to write back before I pass in my final manuscript a week from now!

Wishing you all the best, and fondly remembering the *kotatsu* at which you and I would always sit, during our dusky Saturday hours, in my apartment, at this time of year, I remain

your teacher in earnest,

—CM.

Art, love, play et cetera (1).

19 October

Thank you, dear S,

for getting back to me. You know, I was especially glad to read that you could remember having seen Kandinsky's works—in the art museums of Miyagi and Yamagata. I recall my own surprise at finding a couple of these in the permanent collection displayed at the Miyagi Museum of Art, during my first visit to Sendai: Golden Week 2001. I remember seeing one or two of his earlier paintings, with recognizable figures and a kind of narrative quality, and I also remember one or two of his later abstract works. Somehow I remember a sunset in particular, a small piece which I quite enjoyed. I suppose these are the same that you've seen in Sendai; have you perhaps taken in a larger exhibition of his paintings when you saw them in Yamagata?

Now, you may be wondering at my approach to the topic of snobbery, especially as I've invited you to take part in this conversation by saying we'd consider *the post-historical society of Japan since the Edo period.* Please bear with me, since I find it very difficult to present Kojève's argument without taking it step by step.

You say you're confused over the kind of ending we're discussing. I think I can't blame you. It seems to me that we might naturally think of *history* as *the past*, or as a record of the past or the study of the past. So in the first place maybe you and I should decide what definition can work for what we mean. If history is the past in general, then I guess it would be a kind of contradiction to speak of a history which *will end*, with an emphasis on the future tense. If we say that history in this sense *has ended*, I think we must next ask how it is that we know ourselves to be having this conversation as citizens of the natural world: doesn't our present conversation become part of a remembered past, a history? This history, the past, could *be ending* at this present moment (I suppose this is true at every moment and renewed with every moment), but it is precisely according to our historical experience that we might imagine that there will be a rather long succession of moments following this one, all of which will be remembered in some way and thus will go on forming this kind of history, a past. Perhaps, then, it's easier to speak of the more *human* senses of history, as a record which we keep or as a study which we undertake—*discursive knowledge that we have.* Perhaps it's easier to imagine that *these* will or have come to an end.

Let's take the easy way, then, and follow Kojève's definition, which owes so much to Marx. Here, history is a process, a struggle, towards an end, even a goal. When the struggle is over, history as such has come to an end. History as process simply becomes part of history as past. I suppose this is Kojève's harmonization of Marx with Hegel, or his harmonization with Marx and Hegel, considering that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is itself a kind of history: of the *I*, of the *Geist*, the *Spirit*, the *mind*, the consciousness: a history which ends in a kind of dialogic, explicit understanding of the contents of consciousness, a kind of self-conscious understanding of the total experience of consciousness. Of course, this is only a general point of view. So is Kojève's, but he apparently lectured, for as long as he did, on Hegel, because Hegel was to him *the system* in all its perfection; after the war, however, he became more of a civil servant, working on very much the same vision as that on which he had lectured.

Perhaps it's good for us to dwell on this sense of the past, as a process, as a working towards an end. If it is something we can experience and (re)present in our arts and in our love and in our play (each so full of stories, of history which we share), then is history, the past, *necessarily, only* a process of struggle in which we are caught up and fighting to keep our lives, working as subjects on given natural conditions and objects, to transform them and turn them into things that we need? I wonder if you'd agree, actually, that we find *harmony* with nature as we transform it: isn't it all too common for human beings to *consume* nature in this process of transformation? How can it be considered harmonious for us to have consumed all of nature's *commodities*? I think it would be good to hear your ecologically-minded questions on this point. I mean, don't we tend to think of biological

catastrophe as the most likely force by which human history, this human *progress*, could be brought to an end?

Well I hope the present thoughts answer well to your own, and again I welcome any and all questions you may have. Don't hesitate to let me know if I've misunderstood you! Looking forward to your next letter, I am

sincerely yours,

—CM.

PS: The leaves here are beginning to fall in larger numbers now. It seems like it's been a rather long and slow autumn, beginning early in September with the first noticeable changes in the colours of the leaves. I've done lots of hiking and biking over trails lit with sunshine that comes through brilliant yellows and reds, but the frost is already taking hold. Enjoy the turn of the season over there: I'm sure it's coming up soon!

The end of history (1).

24 September 2009

Dear S,

Silver week 2009 has passed quickly, no doubt, but I'm glad if it helped you find the time to grapple with the rather vague account (of how this conversation might come together) that you'll have found in my last bit of e-mail to you. It would be both a pleasure and an honour for me to discuss—with you, who have really been my student for the longest time—the rather tricky theme of *snobbery* in Japanese society. I've found it mentioned in a text that's often been on my mind during the year or so since a friend directed me to it. Basically, I've been thinking this over, wondering at it, since I began writing my first notes towards the thesis of which these letters will be a part. If there is a sense in which *only now* it can come under consideration, I'm glad that it's with you I am able to bring it this way, glad that it can be a part of our ongoing conversation.

I'm concerned with *snobbery*, specifically as Alexandre Kojève used the term to describe the activities by which the essentially Japanese nobility of Japan had practised their humanity, without war or fights to the death, for centuries before he'd come to consider the post-historical state of human beings, the *eternal present* beyond all struggle. With a visit to Japan from his place in the French civil service and the construction of the European Common Market, Kojève proclaimed that the *dō* which formed the proper activities of the Japanese nobility, the essentially noble Japanese arts of life, were the mark of pure snobbery. Now, as I've already explored *eikaiwa* in terms of *dō*, it is of interest to me that Kojève should make of this snobbery the very thing by which a *Japanese way*, diametrically opposed to the *American way* which amounts to a kind of post-humanity, could lead instead to a kind of post-historical humanity, with an emphasis remaining on the hu-

manity. Kojève thus describes the *fellows* in the fellowship of man, those who live in a time and place for peace (and here I would remark that Japan is, since WWII, explicitly a pacifist nation—by its very constitution). His explanation of Japanese activities during the war is outstanding in its sheer reduction of the meaning of a torpedo when it really only amounts to the same thing as the sword by which a samurai might be more likely to kill himself in a ritual than to kill another in a fight. This, says Kojève, is also a practice of snobbery, of identification with the noble, of honouring the code, practising the *dō*, even at the expense of any particular human content we might find in ourselves.

As a matter of fact, I had thought that the notion of snobbery would help me to reach some understanding of the image of *eikaiwa no sensei*, supposing that were something distinct from *EFL teacher*; but given the chance to liberate it from that other conversation, I feel much better about addressing Japanese snobbery on its own. It is, after all, a theme arising in what you might find a surprising sort of political-philosophical statement. For the purposes of this conversation, I won't say very much directly about *eikaiwa* as distinct from EFL, but I'll be thinking of EFL as representative of the kind of American way which Kojève said is enjoyed most of all in the USA but also (at that time) in the USSR, China, and so on; this, on the one hand, is a world in which command of English is instrumental, that is, a skill, a tool with regard to power in general. This is power we may have over each other, in a world where we're consumed with *positives* and *negatives*. On the other hand, I think, *eikaiwa* expresses the value of the Japanese way Kojève described.

I want to explore Kojève's overall statement in a general way, and will share it with you piece by piece. The first piece, then, is included with this letter. Perhaps our conversation should continue next time by checking our understanding of what Alexandre Kojève was talking about when he came to discuss snobbery and Japanese society.

The following text shows, aside from a few introductory remarks, my best summary, which means my closest reading, of where Kojève's discussion is situated for our purposes here at the beginning of our conversation. It will probably take some time before we've reached those observations, of Japanese society, by which he declares "a radical change of opinion." For now, let's say you're free to read what's below, and to ask me, in your first letter, any questions you may have towards understanding the language I'm using.

Hoping, for now, that our purpose is clear enough to you, and anxious to see your response, I remain, sincerely,

your teacher,

—CM.

PS: You too, please take care not to catch the flu; let Mame San keep in good health as well!

Home (1)

Hobby-Snobbery [38]

---

[38] **snobbery**
exaggerated respect for status or wealth;
identification of oneself with any perceived superiors;
belief that one's own taste (*in music*, for instance, or *in wine*) is really refined

elitism
dominance, real or promoted, of *the best kind of people* within a society

If, in North America, we hear of the elements or effects of ikebana, does *Martha Stewart Living* come to mind? It's said that most in our societies like to think of themselves as *normal*, as *middle class*, and so forth, even as they consume images of homes or lifestyles of *the rich and famous*. If indeed it is in *those* homes that we expect to find ikebana, I believe this wouldn't be so far off from expressing the cultural form's place in what may begin as snobbery but more likely follows all the way through in elitism.

Note that, in the pages to follow, the kind of snobbery I'm discussing is meant as the imagined snobbery *of an entire society* that doesn't have to then separate *haves* and *have-nots* within that society. I think we're looking at the possibility of a positive identification, on the part of every individual, with what is held to be a higher form *of individuality*. This is not meant as a call for stratified societies, for the kind of *respect for your betters* which leaves them as your betters: finally, rather, this vision is of a world in which there are essentially no betters because, in a way, we're all just trying to be better—not better than each other but better, if possible, than ourselves as we are. And this, I assert, is to be more, not less, ourselves.

If, then, there is any *snob-value* to be obtained in assuming the identity of *sensei*, it is only in having found a formal expression of the profession in teaching—to which any and all teachers are free to draw near. If I'm getting it right at all, I feel that this is an opening for further constructions in the sort of *praxis* I've essayed to indicate, idiosyncratic as it may be.

If the conversation sustained around these notes has been somewhat different from those that went before, it is only because it reaches somewhat further from its place on the ground of those earlier conversations. Of course each conversation has been unique because of the personalities involved as well; this one, too, I consider uniquely representative, in its own way, of *eikaiwa* itself. This exchange has been a really straightforward *just doing* of *eikaiwa*, rolling along just as the many Saturday-afternoon hours S and I have spent together over the years, in my apartment by the river. However casual, we've never been careless about an idea. We've never been shy of any topics at all, have always been able to gather some points together, reach a perspective of some kind.

Whilst arguably more theoretical or speculative than other passages in this thesis, then, this chapter asks to be read as pulling together the loosest of all loose ends. If in the end it doesn't tie everything together, I think it is fair to say that the struggle has been evident—and this is entirely of the essence for me, exactly because I answer to *eikaiwa no sensei*. Naturally, this measure of the struggle is also a kind of movement towards the finish in terms of the present overall representation of *eikaiwa*.

The end of history (2).

There is a remarkable footnote in Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1947/1969). Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968) was a remarkable figure in his own right: a Russian-born, German-educated official in the French Ministry of Economic Affairs and one of the chief planners of the European Common Market; nephew, by the way, of the painter Wassily Kandinsky; lecturer in Paris to such thinkers as Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, André Breton, Jacques Lacan, Raymond Aron; cited as an influence by such other theorists as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida; friend of the American thinker Leo Strauss, whose students Allan Bloom and Stanley Rosen had also studied under Kojève. Introducing the first English translation of any of Kojève's work in 1963, Bloom wrote that Kojève

> alone dared to contend that the properly understood Hegelian system is the true and final philosophic teaching at a time when there was practically universal agreement that Hegel's system had been refuted by Schelling, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, to say nothing of natural science and history. (Bloom, 1963, vi)

The footnote on which I now come to dwell is indeed a lengthy one, written, in three parts, over a fourteen-year period (1946-1959). I mean to follow this footnote's argument from its beginning, and this will, perhaps suitably, involve some time spent on the background before we get to a view on *eikaiwa*. But for an overall summary at the outset, let's say that Kojève can offer an understanding of a noble (read: samurai) Japanese culture whose definitive practices, from judo to ikebana (and, according to the potential I mean to measure, *eikaiwa*), cause it to be a different kind of post-historical culture compared with that he can find in the USA. These arts, these ways of ritualizing or formalizing elegance or nobility or the simplicity of a moment passed, ritualized, in conversation, may also correspond to a more general way of life: a snobbery by which all are free, so far as they mean to identify with Japanese culture, to choose a way of doing so, a discipline and practice of learning. But, as I was saying, and although it's a lengthy footnote—it is, after all, only a footnote and as such I want to consider it as a whole, beginning as it begins.

The note begins, then, by way of expansion on one point in Kojève's lecture on the closing argument of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Kojève the reader is concerned with the text's assertion that *humankind disappears at the end of history.* He reasons that this disappearance is to be understood as neither a cosmic nor a biological catastrophe: it is not the end of the world. He says it is, in general, the negation of the subject *opposed* to the object, of the self opposed to the world; it is "the end of human Time or History—that is, the definitive annihilation of the free and historical individual" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). This means, he ventures, "the cessation of Action in the full sense of the term" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). It is the end of war and revolution, and the end of philosophy, but the indefinite preservation of "art, love, play, etc., etc.; in short, everything that makes Man *happy*" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). There is, then, some kind of world which Kojève imagines beyond the end of the ultimate historical period

per se. Some human *activities* continue, and continue to have meaning, but those *actions* essentially linked to human *history* do not.

Kojève cites Marx's treatment, in which *history* is understood as the process of class struggle—a struggle amongst human beings for recognition and a "fight against Nature by work" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). History, understood as the history of struggle,

> is called in Marx 'Realm of necessity' (*Reich der Notwendigkeit*); *beyond* (*jenseits*) is situated the 'Realm of freedom' (*Reich der Freiheit*), in which men (mutually recognizing one another without reservation), no longer fight, and work as little as possible (Nature having been definitively mastered—that is, harmonized with Man). (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159)

At the end of history, the human being returns to nature, returns to harmony with nature. It is not the end of the world. So far, so good.

Art, love, play et cetera (2).

To bear with the background somewhat longer, I report that it is twelve years later, preparing a second edition of his work, when Kojève returns to this footnote. He calls himself in to question on the preservation he had foreseen, of "art, love, play, etc.," beyond the end of history (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). He claims that if man is to become an animal again, then these human activities "must all become purely 'natural' again" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). He provides examples.

> Men would construct their edifices and works of art as birds build their nests and spiders spin their webs, would perform musical concerts after the fashion of frogs and cicadas, would play like young animals, and would indulge in love like adult beasts. (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159)

He must deny, however, that these beings will be happy (*heureux*): rather, he says, "post-historical animals of the species *Homo sapiens* will be *content* as a result of their artistic, erotic and playful behavior, inasmuch as, by definition, they will be contented with it" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159). Further, he removes human discourse (*Logos*) from post-history, and asserts that "*Homo sapiens* would react by conditioned reflexes to vocal signals or sign 'language,' and thus their so-called 'discourses' would be like what is supposed to be the 'language' of bees" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 160). No philosophy, no search for discursive wisdom—and no wisdom either, as there could be no *discursive* "*understanding* of the World and of self" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 160). A flow of consciousness, perhaps, from which we never emerge as examiners.

This is certainly a speculation in what is today the usual sense, a look as at a kind of future in which, let's say, emotional sympathy alone were sufficient as content for conversation, that it wouldn't matter whether I spoke Japanese, for instance. If this were the *beyond* of *eikaiwa* practice, I think, of *eikaiwa* as grouped with *dō* activities, it's hard to

imagine teaching *eikaiwa* as if it really mattered how *authentic* a student's accent sounded.[39]

Here Kojève recounts how, in the two intervening years, he has come to understand "that the Hegelian-Marxist end of History was not yet to come, but was already a present, here and now" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 160). In these post-war years, reflecting on what had happened since the Battle of Jena, he says,

> I understood that Hegel was right to see in this battle the end of History properly so-called. In and by this battle the vanguard of humanity virtually attained the limit and the aim, that is, the *end*, of Man's historical evolution" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 160)

Kojève the reader (and philosopher) is willing to go along with Hegel the writer (and *Wise Man*), who is said to have finished writing the *Phenomenology*, sitting at his desk in Jena, as the battle raged outside. The only proviso he requires is this image of a *vanguard*: the clear understanding that Hegel wrote as one who knew, one who was there, at the vanguard. Why else would Kojève read him? How else could he be read?

Every human action after that, he says, is "but an extension in space of the universal revolutionary force actualized in France by Robespierre-Napoleon." The two world wars and their many revolutions, the establishment of Soviet and communist states in Russia and China, the independence of Togoland and Papua, can all be summarized as the accelerated elimination of "more or less anachronistic sequels" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 160) to post-Napoleonic Europe's pre-revolutionary past. This is especially evident, he says, in "the North American extensions of Europe" (Kojève, 1947/1969, pp. 160-161). The United States, he argues, has reached the goal of Marxist communism: "practically, all the members of a 'classless society'" may dream that dream and "can from now on appropriate for themselves everything that seems good to them, without thereby working any more than their heart dictates" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 161). Eventually, no more change is necessary in any regime in the world, and humankind enters a future that is also an "eternal present" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 161). With some reminder that all of this is the background and setting for Kojève's analysis of Japanese snobbery, I want to turn now to that analysis.

---

[39] What would that mean, after all? What standard would make sense? Well, of course there is a comment to be made here on the general preference for *American English*. Fair enough. How am I to apply it, when my students know they can listen to podcasts on their way to school or work, bringing accents to their ears of any sort they might choose? My accent can be strange, too, but as long as we're able to understand each other, my students and I can talk about anything we want—and I believe that alone is the highest point of *eikaiwa* as such, as *conversation* above all.

Yūai (2).

It is a year later. 1959: fifty years ago as I write. Kojève resumes his footnote to report on a recent trip to Japan, "a Society that is one of a kind, because it alone has for almost three centuries experienced life at the 'end of history'—that is, in the absence of all civil or external war" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 161). He remarks especially that from the beginning of the Edo period "the existence of Japanese nobles, who ceased to risk their lives (even in duel) and yet did not for that begin to work, was anything but animal" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 161). Kojève already understands the *American Way* (followed equally in the USA, the USSR and China) as "the type of life specific to the post-historical period" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 161). He now says that

> "post-historical" Japanese civilization undertook ways diametrically opposed to the "American Way." No doubt, there were no longer in Japan any Religion, Morals, or Politics in the 'European' or 'historical' sense of these words. But *Snobbery* in its pure form created disciplines negating the "natural" or "animal" given which in effectiveness far surpassed those that arose, in Japan or elsewhere, from "historical" Action—that is, from warlike and revolutionary Fights or from forced Work. To be sure, the peaks (equalled nowhere else) of specifically Japanese snobbery—the Noh Theater, the ceremony of tea, and the art of bouquets of flowers—were and still remain the exclusive prerogative of the nobles and the rich. But in spite of persistent economic and political inequalities, all Japanese without exception are currently in a position to live according to totally *formalized* values—that is, values completely empty of all "human" content in the "historical" sense. Thus, in the extreme, every Japanese is in principle capable of committing, from pure snobbery, a perfectly "gratuitous" *suicide* (the classical épée of the samurai can be replaced by an airplane or a torpedo), which has nothing to do with the *risk* of life in a Fight for the sake of "historical" values that have social or political content. This seems to allow one to believe that the recently begun interaction between Japan and the Western World will finally lead not to a rebarbarization of the Japanese but to a "Japanization" of the Westerners (including the Russians). (Kojève, 1947/1969, pp. 161-162)

There is war, for instance, and then there is kendo—or any of the *dō*. Kendo is a way, a discipline, practised in what are called *kata*, or *forms*; forms of the nobility in war. As a form of this particular quality in nobility, it may be a particular way of life, that of the individual who chooses it; it also relates to this general way of life, this snobbery which means the identification of each individual with the nobility—of all humanity, if you will. We do not practise the tea ceremony because we are thirsty, but perhaps we celebrate or at least contemplate, fill ourselves with, know ourselves content with what is noble in thirst *and* refreshment. Similarly, I feel that *eikaiwa* may find its raison d'être, not so much as a practice in *something I need for work* compared to a practice in *something I need for contentment.*

The nobles whom Kojève claims to have observed in Japan are distinguished from the animals by function of their snobbery alone, their identification with a stabilized Japanese nobility. In the post-historical Japanese society, being "animals of the species *homo sapiens*" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 162) would mean simply being in harmony

with nature, living as beings yet not being human in Kojève's historical definition, the definition in conjunction with which he will offer comments like *humanity is self-consciousness* and, equally, *humanity is error*. Nevertheless, says Kojève, Japanese snobbery—by which I suppose we are to imagine an entire society identifying with the values of one class, one high society, one society, after all, one given humanity—allows humanity to persist. The human individual of this kind remains opposed to a natural given, to an object, to a world, since, "while henceforth speaking in an *adequate* [read: *Japanese*?] fashion of everything that is given to him, post-historical man must continue to detach 'form' from 'content'" (Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 162). Kojève identifies this individual as form opposed to its own content, where others are, equally, content opposed to the same given form. Transformation, transition between a higher and lower order, becomes a thing of the past when the individual realizes and recognizes that self and others are equally contents of the same form.

Considering the *dō* in this way, I want to also look at *sensei*: one of earlier birth, an elder in life, especially as practised in a particular way. The status whereby *sensei* retains the nobility and authority of samurai is, after all, the length of time and the progress he's made in life, on his own way of being as human as it is possible to be. The orientation implied in a *sensei-seito* relationship is fairly clear: both face, not each other so much as this all-continuous becoming in which both are engaged; both walk along the path, towards the same all-too natural end. If it's ever less simple than this, it could only be so because we have forgotten what is most important in life.

You and I (2).

If the reception of Nō, the tea ceremony, or ikebana in our North-American civilization is any like-to-like sort of sign, we might well imagine these activities as inherently snobbish in the aesthetic sense, seeming to lend themselves to bourgeois sensibilities of what is pleasant and refined and thus a healthy part of the project to *accentuate the positive*, to *eliminate the negative* on the one hand, or to *ape your betters* on the other.[40]

Smile. Show your teeth when I show mine. Know when it's appropriate, and bow. Be civilized with me and I will be civilized with you. As so clearly spelled out in *Belle du Seigneur* (a memorable read from my early days in Sendai, as passed on by my colleague Anyta), "When one homuncule smiles at another, he is signalling that he comes in peace and will not bite, and to prove it he bares his teeth inoffensively for him to see" (Cohen, 1968/1995, p. 346).

Well perhaps there are both sides to an expression of snobbery, but where everybody seems to bow to everybody else in relatively elaborate social rituals, enacted in every kind of situation, the sheer formality of what is happening whispers to you that it

---

40 **snob**

one who acts to be identified amongst the upper class in a classed society, or looks with disdain upon the values and activities of a perceived lower class, for instance the post-revolutionary *bourgeois*, now free to identify with the aristocracy

would not be possible without a pretty complex set of shared understandings. That a society would have such understandings can be no surprise, but again, there is a sheer formality that says it doesn't really matter what you think—now is the time to say *otsukare sama desu!* The range of set expressions which leapt out at me as I began to learn Japanese, these formalities and greetings, caught my attention so repeatedly that they became many of the first expressions I learnt.[41] In a kind of dance these expressions, seemingly by themselves, could become the agreed-upon form for friendly chit-chat. All kinds of combinations might be possible, often offered humorously or ironically, and this way of passing the time of day might easily evoke whole worlds of feeling that never seemed to *be expressed.* Didn't need to, really, as feelings are the more essential content, the *more than words*, if you will, of conversation—or are they not?

In a later essay (though, as I've noted above, translated into English earlier), on "Tyranny and Wisdom" (1963), Kojève defines *tyranny* as "government in general" (Kojève, 1963, p. 144) and then asks what tyranny has to do with wisdom. Before going to the heart of things, he refers to one kind of tyranny which seems to offer a view of a kind of snobbery. He observes that there are "tyrannies exercised for the advantage of an already established social class, or for the sake of personal or familial ambitions, or with the vague idea of doing better than any others, though wanting the same thing as they did" (Kojève, 1963, p. 147). This he contrasts with "'tyrannies' exercised in the service of truly revolutionary political, social, or economic ideas (in the service, that is, of rational objectives, radically different from anything already existing) with a national, racial, imperial, or humanitarian grounding" (Kojève, 1963, p. 147).

So there is a kind of before and after in tyranny as it arranges itself around revolution; but if one of the tyrannies he describes is pre-revolutionary and another is post-revolutionary, I suppose the one that he introduces with inverted commas (the second) is the *before* and the other is the *after*; it is after the revolution that the bourgeoisie is free to identify with the noblesse—and this is the essence of chapter after chapter in *Belle du Seigneur*, as quoted above, in which Cohen allows his hero to repeatedly strike out at snobbery in all its forms, to expose it—and in so doing, to seduce the woman who hears him speak. She is the wife of one of his underlings in the League of Nations, and hardly speaks a word in these chapters, as if to prove him right. This will change their lives but is a revolution as old as the hills and all the homuncules who've ever inhabited them.

In particular, this sense of doing better than others, though wanting the same thing, seems to offer a summary of what Kojève meant by saying it is snobbery that sets the Japanese way apart from the American way. The explicit knowledge of formalities

---

41 Even early on I found I could get by rather well with little more than these kinds of expressions to go by, as I passed through the streets of my little neighbourhood by the river. Once I had a grasp of numbers, I was all set for the run to the 7-11, any time of day. It took awhile, though, to know what to say when, arriving at the 7-11 (or Circle K, or Lawson, or Family-Mart—they're everywhere, and everywhere the greeting is the same) and hearing the man working there, calling out his greeting. Anytime I walked in to a 7-11 with a *gaijin* friend, it seems to me we'd look at each other, then at the man calling out to us from across the store, then back at each other. Would one of us say something? Would a *konnichiwa* be too friendly? Would it be foolish to answer at all? The many occasions and corresponding ways for exchanging thanks could also be observed in these transactions, but that may be another story.

evidenced, spoken and shared in so many social interactions around my neighbourhoods, by the park or by the river, could indeed be a really comfortable and human way of interacting.

Everyone is free to excel at something, to master something, to master herself in relation to the skill that is to be mastered; everyone is encouraged to try hard, in the society I'm thinking of. So you get your mountain-biking fanatics dressing in spandex and all the proper gear for their Sunday morning training rides, your *otaku* of anything, from music and comic-books to spectator sports and computers, et cetera. I've long said, no matter what it is, somebody's really into it in Japan. This goes for *eikaiwa* as well. There are ways of mastery which have run right through this society.

Some of the news of Japan's recent economic distress, going back a year as I finish writing this thesis, has revealed the new *temping* underclass. This underclass, always the prime locus for heavy layoffs being made as a function of economic recession—this underclass created in recent years as a means of competing in global markets, post-bubble—this underclass arising, in principle, as an exception to the rule of Japanese life (life-long employment for the salary-man—the *sarariiman*) had in fact come to represent roughly 30% of the current workforce. This is the place of *eikaiwa no sensei*, as well, whose wages are often set at or slightly above the poverty line, and well below the average for a beginning *sarariiman*. I don't think it can be argued that stratification is not a problem in any possible understanding of contemporary Japanese society.

That, on the other hand, *eikaiwa no sensei* should also be regarded as master, of some kind, in what may be bought and sold but is bought and sold as if it were equivalent to a way of the soul practised amongst the rich and leisured—this points out the unique position, the home that is provided, for *eikaiwa no sensei*. This is the recognition, the satisfaction which Kojève would assign to every individual person in a post-historical society; it is the *contentedness* of the post-historical individual, the self-mastery implicit in working to express a formal relationship to natural fact, to natural material, including the appetites experienced in the body. I've heard somewhere, as one of these groupings of great things in threes (a popular way of speaking, it seems to me, in Japan), that the three great appetites best satisfied in the company of others are for *play*, for *food* and for *sex*. Far be it from me to add a fourth to this list; instead I want to say that I can see *conversation* as an element in each of these occupations, and perhaps the very element which sets them apart as *human* values. This is the conversation possible when we realize our self-independence and coexistence, and if Coudenhove-Kalergi asserts that the gentleman's language, throughout a wide world ready for such humanity, is English—well, fair enough. Let there be English conversation.

Home (2)

Gaijin no Sensei

Self-introduction.

I might not look so different in the street, if I ever walk along the street, now that I've returned to my Island home in Canada. The Japanese I see in the streets around here can't tell by looking at me that I speak and understand everyday usages in their native language. I couldn't tell until he asked me *Genki desu ka?* that a new colleague of mine had spent time in Hokkaido during his undergrad years. I hail from islands, both as citizen of Canada and as citizen of the globe.

Now, if I am *writing home*, what does this mean? Am I writing towards home or away from home? Do I write only when I am gone away? What does it mean for me to go *away*? Perhaps I've been out for more than a walk. Perhaps I should go back and see how many shorelines I've crossed in my journey, in how wide an area of the globe (and yet how few particular places, in the big picture and considering the span of the years) I've found my way.

"As for me," says Ishmael, narrating in *Moby Dick* of why he wishes to go whaling,

> I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts. Not ignoring what is good, I am quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it—would they let me—since it is but well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in. (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 16)

When Ishmael presents himself to Captain Peleg, the gatekeeper aboard the *Pequod*, and says that he wants to see what whaling is, and to see the world, Peleg sends him to the docked ship's weather-bow and asks him what he can see from there. "Not much," replies Ishmael, "nothing but water; considerable horizon, though, and there's a squall coming up, I think" (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 70). "Well," replies Peleg, "what dost thou think then of seeing the world? Do ye wish to go round Cape Horn to see any more of it, eh? Can't ye see the world where ye stand?" (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 70).

As for me, then, I no sooner come to one place than I want to dwell in it long enough to understand something about it, beyond the impressions, for instance, of a week's tourism in Tokyo and into at least a year's cycle of settling in, obvious in most cases where you might find someone undergoing such a cycle; I want to get beyond these impressions and into more of a perspective of understanding. I can stay, thus, in one place for quite a long time, actually, always looking forward to that understanding, work-

ing on it. *If you live here, learn the language.* I am learning. This is the world as I know it, the place where I find myself in the here and now, and perhaps I am never any nearer to the world beyond my native shores, never any further from those shores, than Ishmael at his native shore, more on the dry-land side, looking off the weather-bow of a docked ship.

Led out from his home next to the Atlantic, Ishmael will by several adventures and reflections reach the peace-making of the Pacific, where he finds "one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea, whose gently awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath" (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 399). This is "that Japanese sea," where sometimes

> the days of summer are as freshets of effulgences. That unblinkingly vivid Japanese sun seems the blazing focus of the glassy ocean's immeasurable burning-glass. The sky looks lacquered; clouds there are none; the horizon floats; and this nakedness of unrelieved radiance is as the insufferable splendors of God's throne. (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 411)

The sea is filled, before the land is flooded, with rising sun. The waters about Japan are "as a crucible of molten gold, that bubblingly leaps with light and heat" (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 423), and I see and murmur with Starbuck, "loveliness unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride's eye!—Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal ways. Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and do believe" (Melville, 1851/1967, p. 406).

This account is of the waters surrounding my place as *gaijin no sensei*, the island nation in which I mean, now, to expand my sense of home. The letters I am writing must be imagined as crossing all such waters, braving encounters of every kind with what comes from the depths, floating perhaps in bottles near the surface, carried by those who cross the waters, even rising from the waters to find a place, for a time, in the clouds, before raining down again. One by one they issue from where I am, and go to have to do with the waters around my island, home—and if with the waters then also with all who are of the waters (and the waters are our better part, if we pass from bodies of water to *body water*, some 60% of the weight of the human physique).

In July of my first year *away—in Japan*, a used books fair came through Akita city, downstairs in the Atorion building, bringing the first selection of English-language books, *intelligible* books, for sale, that I'd seen since arriving book-less some months before. I bought some Shakespeare, some Joyce, some Conrad, some Bellow, but most significantly, I think, Ralph Ellison's (1952/1995) *Invisible Man*. This was the one that, over time, I would come to recommend most often to those who would ask me, one *gaijin* to another, what might be a good read, something relevant to how they may have felt in their daily lives.

I recently re-read the opening and closing pages, which sing in another register over and above most of the episodes included between them, and am again impressed with the image of this man living, finally, rent-free in a forgotten, ignored, unknown space, off the grid of Monopolated Light & Power, off the grid of life in New York city, not in Harlem "but in a border area" (Ellison, 1952/1995, p. xv), tapping electricity into thousands of bulbs lining the ceiling and the walls of his underground abode, planning to line the floor with them as well. He sees the light, he sees by the light, but not another

living soul ever sees him, and he's content to have only Louis Armstrong, another invisible man, via phonograph, for company.

The real invisibility, however, is not only the obscuring effect of lenses of colour used by others, a "disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact" (Ellison, 1952/1995, p. 3) (though it is that); it is also, ultimately, what sets him apart, that by which he becomes the unique narrator and protagonist in this particular story, a task for which he must be qualified as an individual human subject. As Bakhtin (1970/1986, p. 7) said, "in order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object;" this *outsideness* is crucial, he says, because "one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help" (Bakhtin, 1970/1986, p. 7). I came to the present study with this invisibility, this absence from the fabric of a common (if local) humanity, in mind. It is, to me, both a personal and a professional matter; it could even be conceived as one side of my experience. I engage personally in my profession, I try from one side to determine how *I* can be identified as teacher, I send images out and some stick in the web in front of me; or students engage in class and determine from their own sides what passes through and what sticks, but I like this idea because it helps me think of identity—as a webbing, even a tangled web, as it may sometimes appear.

This is where Daisen and I were looking first at a global context for English as Foreign Language, for the English teacher abroad. This was my chance to learn something more of the world as he sees it, perhaps to see how he would understand my thinking in the world, and of the world—perhaps from my experience as *gaijin*.

EFL.

As a teacher of English as Foreign Language, in Japan, for a sabbath of years, I was very much aware of embodying a kind of *industry* from the moment I arrived,[42] and only later, slowly, awakened to membership in a kind of community. There is an impossible question that haunted and plagued me from the start, in my conversation with those I met. *Why did you come to Japan?* This would be the cue, I was quick to notice in the discourse of those other *gaijin* I met, for a well-rehearsed presentation of some personal interest in a Japanese cultural form, for instance manga or karate—it could be anything, really, but it should be something that the *gaijin* in question can say she wanted to learn about. Or to eat, or see. This is an example of what I would consider good form in a Japanese conversation, but as such it could accommodate almost any observation of something that is interesting—and such are the forms of discourse which we internalize as we have English conversation. I would sometimes answer that I'd always wondered why Japanese women were fascinated with Anne of Green Gables, or that I'd always wanted to see the bright lights of a big city falling on the tiled *karahafu* of a temple and

---

42 **industry**
a form of production of commodities;
domain of activity and field of labour to *significant* numbers of people

its gardens. But I certainly don't think I would have gone to Japan if it hadn't seemed a reasonable way to find some interesting work to do.

I felt it should be something that would call on my education up to that point (a multidisciplinary affair having had mostly to do with language and literature), and after a couple of years' worth of looking for anything of that description in my native Canada, piled upon so many other sorts of ennui—to be quite honest, I felt that I'd much rather hit the road, enjoy the rich and surprisingly quotidian challenges that I already knew were to be found in life abroad, having had opportunities to go and live in European homes as a twentysomething.[43] Imagining that I might well visit a number of countries as an EFL teacher (the help-wanted ads said, after all, *Travel: Teach English*), it's probably most true, compared to any other explanation I've given over the years, that I was attracted to Japan because I understood Japan as having a similar way of life to that I'd known in my previous travels. This was to be a first step beyond making visits and studies in North America (well, Canada, really) and sometimes Europe—though only a first step, I arrived thinking; from here, who knows where I might go? In one way or another, then, it's true that I only wound up in Japan for the job, as disappointing or boring an answer as that seemed to be for those students who would ask me such a question.

My *Certificate of Alien Registration*,[44] according to the visa with which Japan had endowed me, stated that I was permitted to stay for a period of three years at a time, as a *Specialist in Humanities*, like I'd been assigned a mission of sorts, in an agreement between Canada and my new home country. But it was private industry, specifically the industry known as *eikaiwa*, that had brought me, and the first thing I had to learn about teaching under such conditions was dealing with the construct of *satisfaction* where, I was told, the customer is addressed as a god (*o kyaku sama*) and thus, of course, *always* right.[45] We run in to this everywhere, of course, as long as we're *working*. But it seemed to complicate my sense of what it was to *teach*. Certainly nothing in my passage through provincial public schools, back in Canada, had prepared me to think of myself as *student customer*, although I'd run across moments in university where others would directly link the money they spent on tuition with some sense of their education being more or less *worth it* in specific instances or in the long run (as an *investment*).

So it was that from my Halifax bathtub one sad February morning in 2001, where Kawashima San's phone-call reached me, I took my first contract with a place called, in English, Shamisen English School. Arriving at the end of April, I worked for

---

43 Imagine, I thought: rather than ride the bus around Halifax hearing the person talking on the phone behind me (*Hi. How are you? I'm on the bus. What are you doing?*) and have no choice but to be obliged to listen, to feel at once an unwilling and an uninvited party to that conversation, I could be in Japan, where I didn't know if people even use the phone when on the bus, but if they did, I wouldn't understand a word they were talking about—what bliss!

44 This is also called the *gaijin card*, a photographic matter of identification one is obliged to carry on one's person at all times, bearing comments on birthplace and country of origin, nature of activities in Japan, length of stay, birth date, and of course the address which must be registered at the local offices of municipal administration.

45 Watson (personal communication, April 6 2009) reminds me of the expression which underscores this way of speaking: *kyaku wa kami* (*customer as god*).

one year in the Akita branch, where students would pay a bit of a premium for learning that was more serious than up the street at Super or Telos. Thinking back, I find it remarkable how much homework I was assigning my students at that school. They were all good for it, too. The better, I should hope, as it's certainly true that one hour per week in class and next to no time at all outside of class is poor exposure to any language you would actually want to master. The school had some textbook resources available. As a new teacher, I was content to try as many ideas as my three full-time colleagues (all, like me, hired from Halifax: a couple called Jeff and Julienne, and the more aloof Kurt) might speak to me of, to see what would work most effectively in my classes. I remember finding, early on, that I was glad I could remember so many different language teachers from various courses I'd taken up to the end of my BA. They all had something new to teach me now, though you might say I'd already learnt plenty from their classes in the way of how poorly I'd always responded to the kind of rote exercises which were meant to accelerate language learning and bring test-proven results in the course of a year or so. Even if there were a talent, a knack for learning languages, which could supplement or coincide with or otherwise shine through such forms of learning, I'd have to say that such talent remains beyond me to this day; even as I find I can prove tremendous passion for learning language, this doesn't necessarily translate to any great command of particular languages, and I do indeed have much to learn before I can even say I've mastered English. Meanwhile, the language by which I speak and dream, day in and day out, grows as a kind of hybrid, presenting all kinds of idiosyncrasies.

For my next contract year I moved to Jessamine Eikaiwa, in Sendai, city of a million people and the largest in the Tōhoku region; there I met with a whole new scene, a diverse crew of teacher-personalities, and heard a fair bit of talk about *edutainment.* This was supposed to be the fun and interesting given in my practice, the place where it was up to me to fill in a little something else, something I could allow to become a kind of trademark, along with my English input: for my colleague Marianne, it might be some art; for Patrick, some fun and games; for Jim, song and dance—anything goes. To me, I think it became a matter of question and answer.[46]

The dramatic seemed ingrained in the life of this workplace: it was roughly four times the size of Shamisen in Akita and allowed for goings-on amongst members of the staff to explicitly, even self-consciously, take on the qualities of melodrama. No doubt these events and their attendant feedback-loop of gossip, the petty politics and pressures of the office-life, coloured my continued becoming as a teacher. *There's no business like show business*, I'd sometimes find myself singing to myself, as if joining in on some kind of leitmotiv in the air. Out on the street, Patrick would make reference to Beatlemania as we walked towards the train station on our way to the next company class. Not that I disapprove of the performing arts as such—on the contrary I thoroughly enjoy, can be entirely engrossed in a good show as in little else—but wouldn't want to go to work there. In any case, enter, over the course of a couple of years, basically a whole new crew and a new *gaijin* manager to make sure they were all up to the task, and it was, fortunately I think, none too soon that the fat lady started singing on the Jessamine-

---

46 I reckon we learn most of the origins of enquiry in Socratic dialogue, properly so-called, through the basically *dramatic* structure of a Platonic dialogue. We don't necessarily think of it as theatre, though we might read it as literature.

sponsored stage that was then my life. If I'd wanted to stay on at Jessamine as it came to be, I think I would have been simply sticking around for too long in one place. It's not so much the done thing, I must conclude.

Teaching, I thought, is one thing, and it's already complicated enough without pressing or pouring it into this mould, this notion of controllable, quantifiable *quality* that seemed to come howling after me from the *customer care production floor* of the call-centre in which I'd worked whilst putting myself through my EFL training. In many ways, through the weeks leading up to the end of that little phase, my concern with becoming a teacher had been explicitly bound up with *getting away* from that kind of place, and I'm certainly glad that the miserable experience of being reduced to a script-speaking telephonic automaton (really not what *I'd prefer* to do) was so fresh in my mind as I came to Japan. In its way, of course, Jessamine was a deeply comical place. But after awhile I think I'd pretty much seen it all.

Moving on to Poplar, I came up over depths I really couldn't plumb. Poplar Sendai was a shaky ship on a stormy sea; suffice to say I came to shore eventually, unsure whether I were doing so as if amongst so many other rats who'd jumped ship in a panic, whether we'd all been tossed off with the ballast and left to our own devices, whether we'd been taken for a mutinous element with regard to a skeleton crew which would somehow appear on the decks we'd been forced off . . . or what. The story was that the school couldn't afford to keep *any* of its full-time contracts in the New Year coming up. In the way of local competition, the Japanese-run Jessamine had such a big market-share of the lucrative contracts with local companies who wanted to provide *eikaiwa* for their employees, it was really hard to compete in tough times, etc. etc. Merry Christmas. *We* think *we're in our legal rights*. Others were there at the time, and I've found speaking to them of the events has only obscured them, or left them obscured. The light that falls from such conversation, now, falls on a totally different place. The place itself, viewed from here, looks quite different to me now, though I recognize the smell of my own when I look back or when I hear what my mates, or old Captain Dale himself, were thinking at the time. Tough times or not, we'd all been running ourselves pretty ragged, learning as we went along that we'd replaced another crew, cleared out wholesale before we'd all come on the scene. "I Pity the Poor Immigrant" (Dylan, 1967) was a favourite song of mine at the time.

Burnt out, used up, angry after my experience with Poplar Sendai, I couldn't see any way of going on working as a teacher but also *working for the man*. I'd come to *prefer not to*, especially not on one-year contracts handled as capriciously as I'd seen and even (I shudder) been in some way party to. The only *professional* choice, as long as I was determined to stay in Sendai, had become the arm's-length arrangement of working part-time in a combination of different places. I took some time to recover my strength and clear my head, slowly building up a routine of different places I'd go round to in the course of a week (the English Service Station, Samson, Trivium, Aoba). I found myself gravitating to the home-base feeling of working, some of the time, for a post-secondary institution, as I continued to take on other bits and bobs.

Gaijin.

After belonging to Shamisen Eikaiwa for a year, then Jessamine Eikaiwa for a year and a half, then a Poplar franchise for another couple of years—with no time for anything but the grind of one lesson after another (which his instructors, each engaged for more or less the course of a 13-hour day, were meant to *turn*, as Dale, the CEO/franchisee, used to put it), I was completely burnt out, used up, and angry. I could see how the doors to these places just kept on revolving, guaranteeing novelty, if nothing else, for customers as *gaijin* came and went through teaching positions. I could see that the contracts had been written for those who would only sign one, complete their year, then be on their way without anyone having learnt any better. Every full-time job whereby to work for one company looked like the same dead end, so I figured there was no way I could just take a job with another *eikaiwa* school if I really wanted to stay in Japan indefinitely. That was what I wanted (*well, I could return to Canada—but what would I do way the heck over there?*) so I went on to spend the better part of a year hungry, going somewhat Quixotically freelance, training as a hill-climber, riding my bicycle as often as I could up the nearest mountain of any size and, as careful as possible not to get mixed up in the wrong places, piecing together a timetable from little jigsaw bits I'd find here and there.

I was able, during that year, to build up a schedule that I could call my own, working part-time in one place and another, but also teaching so-called private lessons, wherein there's no middle man and the student and teacher are entirely free to negotiate everything about their contract, their project. This was a much more truly professional stance, it seemed to me, than that I'd had held up for me, emphatically labelled "professionalism," as the model and measure for an all-important "quality" in the work of all teachers at places like Jessamine or Poplar—a quality that, by itself, held no significance in my life or the work I did, didn't seem to mean anything in particular. I'd tried to respond to the talk of *best practices*, of *good teacher/bad teacher*, but never really found that there was much about it I could address.

Going freelance, then, was much more stimulating work than any nebulous form of *added value*—to "the external customer" or to "the internal customer," as my Poplar training would have me think of the two imagined kinds of people. As I went freelance, I was able to take a comfortably small part in the office life of several schools at once: Trivium Eikaiwa; the English Service Station; a culture centre where I joined staff just as the entire operation was being turned over from the Uncle Company to Bunka, Inc. I'd much rather dash from one office to another, let each be but a passing parenthesis on my way in to or out of a class, than be cooped up in close quarters (always these close quarters—*what am I supposed to be doing, here? I feel like I'm supposed to be doing something*) in these offices. At the same time, I felt I was taking a much bigger part in life as I found it amongst my students, in my classrooms. Eventually, I was moving on to increasing commitments at a language college and a university, spending a majority of my time there for the last few years before returning to my Island home. Yet, by this time, I was also really starting to feel at home with what I was doing in Japan. I was learning what it would mean for my students to call me *eikaiwa no sensei*. I finally had the space in which to breathe and to *think* about what it was that I was doing.

Eikaiwa (2).

The language college where I taught, then, for a couple of years, offered separate classes in *Eigo* (English language) and *Eikaiwa* (English conversation), along with those in other languages (notably Chinese, Korean and German) and in areas like Hotel Management or Early-Childhood Education; I taught only *eikaiwa* there. Many or most of my students had signed up enthusiastically for the opportunity to study languages for a couple of years and then hopefully find a job-placement which would call on them to use such skill. Their choice of this particular college may have had to do with its proven success in preparing students for the *Eiken*, a kind of standardized test, yielding results ranked in different degrees (a system like the degrees of black-belt recognition in karate) designed to evaluate English-language book-learning. The teachers were Japanese and *gaijin*, full-time and part-time, irrespective. The crowded staff-room would sometimes be a bit much to negotiate, with at least two languages and all kinds of personalities on the go at once, and rather little chance at preparing for class (no matter how clear an idea I'd arrived at before leaving home, there was always more to think about in the time just before a class should start), so I got into spending more time in the classroom, arriving a half-hour or so before the session should begin, greeting students as they arrived.

The freedom to determine my own profession made all the difference in my continued practice.

The university at which I later took a job, in addition to *Eigo*, also had a department of *Eibun* (English literature), still not to be confused with *Eikaiwa*. I taught in practically every faculty of the university, from Engineering to Liberal Arts, but I never taught in the English department. Each of these faculties required all of its students, at the behest of standards issued from the *Monbukagakushō* to follow a basic course in *Eikaiwa*. I, for my part, was (ever more and more, generally) free to explore the culture of each department and form my courses as I went—and that's just what I did.

This series of school experiences was enacted over just a relatively few years. I think I was very much aware of what I'd always been told about a global economy. This economy would dictate, I'd heard at school, that I should simply expect to change jobs and move often from one place to another, garnering something like an average of seven or eight different careers over a lifetime. Again, the newspaper-advertisement call I'd answered was *Travel: Teach English*. Was I a member of the new highly-mobile contract-based labour force, spending some time here, some here, some here? I might have wondered what had happened to the glamour by the time I arrived (hearing stories of a golden age, a bubble economy in which *eikaiwa* had been a kind of Klondike, a real Wild West), but after all, this life *was* much more *interesting* than that I'd left behind.

I described myself to those I'd meet as an English teacher, but the question would often be, *Where do you teach?* To reply that I taught in a private language school or culture-centre would usually bring the interpretation, *so you're an eikaiwa teacher*. Even members of the JET Programme, who were for the most part working in public schools as Assistant Language Teachers in varying forms of team-teaching alongside Japanese teachers of English, would respond in this way. Though both JET teachers and *eikaiwa* teachers were basically *gaijin*, I often sensed that these were nevertheless separate worlds.

My basic status as *eikaiwa* teacher rests in my situation outside of the school system proper, being thus an unknown kind of teacher as far as quantifiable educational standards are concerned, beyond whatever may exist in a particular school. For this profession, it is widely known, no specific training is really necessary: for a work visa, granted, I would need a university degree, but any degree would do; for the job, I would need to be a native speaker of English, preferably white, originating in an English-speaking country.[47] Besides all of this, *eikaiwa* is supposed to boil down, definitively, to *just talking*, Japanese student to *gaijin* teacher, on topics which might be as banal as you can imagine. This may have little to do with what most people would call *real teaching*.

The students at *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* usually seem to have had enough of tests throughout their previous education and especially their English education. I learnt to never mention tests, to never assign homework except in answer to the question (which I'd hear pretty often), *how can I improve my English?*—and then, perhaps, best to propose an ongoing project by which to incorporate more English at home (like taking a disciplined approach to the enjoyment of DVDs, to cite a popular example). Attendance was certainly never mandatory, though an absent student was likely losing money somewhere in her contract with the school. Indeed, in the basic model applied at Jessamine there were no specific beginnings or endings, no given rhythm in terms of a semester cycle or anything of the kind, to how a class would meet, say, every Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 7:50. A new student would sign up now and then, another would stop coming, on no particular schedule—except, in most cases, with reference to the monthly basis of a contract for lessons. Once in awhile there would be a change of teacher, but for the most part, this would always be the Wednesday 6:30 class. Backstage in the office, teachers would come and go, and some would say, before leaving, that this was *not really teaching*, and those left to carry on would say they did *not feel like teachers* at all, when they looked at what their students seemed to be learning or intending. One by one they'd vow to be the next to leave.

But there I was, becoming a teacher. Block (1998, p. 14) notes much the same thing when he makes the profession *I am a teacher* a matter of confession: "Where I come from that statement has been consistently followed by 'Oh, my sister (or my daughter or my wife) is a teacher.'" "The intent," he says, "was always one of condescension." For my own part, what I think I most wanted to do was to partake in life with my students, to seek, with them, the conditions for learning that would be really meaningful for us all. That I was a foreigner teaching of my native language made for a really deeply charged relationship at times, and this kind of relationship was often what made the miserable times worthwhile. *Let's forget, for a moment* (I would want to say), *that I have come to teach the group of you, in your car-parts factory's dismal meeting room out here in Yokote; what are your lives really like? Let's just talk, because I'd love to know something about how other people live, in this country or anywhere—and see if I can't do the same!* It is only by such playful labour, oriented to the value of my practice from the viewpoint of curiosity rather than that of speculation, that I have to date taken any part in the globalizing project called EFL.

---

[47] Some school-managers would tell me they preferred Canadians because of the reputed clarity of their speech, and some I knew of wouldn't hire those from Ireland because of the challenges of a brogue as it met with Japanese ears trained in listening especially to "American" pronunciations.

The apartment I settled into after leaving Jessamine was in a small building on the banks of the Hirose River. On the other side of the river was an escarpment on which were perched some of the ageing condominiums of Yagiyama. On a summer evening you could go down to the river's edge, kept as municipal parkland, sit on a bench, look up and across the river, and see how many rooms were still lit up. From those still burning bright come dark (and viewed from down there amongst the fireflies, if it was the right time of year), there would often be issuing voices, resonating perhaps off the stone of their perch, calling out to others in neighbouring rooms of the same *manshon*, perhaps, or raising themselves at each other for the sake of argument. Every once in awhile such a voice would come tumbling out one of the windows above and mix with the many voices of the waters in the river, run along with them for a moment and then disappear. It didn't matter to me if I understood what they were saying, as I imagined each one to be speaking its own language, even as each seemed to speak at last to the river. This was the river on which you could pass in a kayak, straight across the edge of the downtown core, and see it lined with so many houses on its rocky banks. You could walk along the bank in the moonlit park, this close to the open windows of people you'd never met, whose language you might not speak. The river would flow on, from its source in the mountains, through the countryside and into the city; and here it would swell with the voices of a million people, and flow on.

My discourse is never finished, so far as I know. I have, I don't have, a home in this world.

Teacher as gaijin.

In my most recent readings on curriculum research in Japan, I am thinking of industrialization and Japan as a post-industrial society, of the samurai curriculum that may be said in the meantime to have adapted the modernist American curriculum brought in with much else during the Meiji period. I am reading of the move towards a realization, through the current Japanese curriculum, of the postmodern or at any rate post-historical: "modernism and postmodernism," concludes Asanuma (2003, p. 441), "have to be mixed in their curriculum practices. It is conceivable that Japan's curriculum practices for integration are in the midst of the transition from modern curriculum to postmodern." I am tempted to see, here, a unique position held by the current Japanese curriculum and its main stated goal: to bring out *ikiru chikara.* I want to return, later, to other comments in this vein. For instance, if it is clear that modernization in Japanese curriculum was first effected as an active adaptation, a Japanizing or, as I will call it, japanning, of modern (especially) American curriculum, then is the postmodern Japanese curriculum to be imagined as the realization and concrete perfection of modernized (i.e. uniform, national in its tendency) American curriculum *for* a post-historical Japanese society? But for now, let me dwell on Asanuma's closing words: "there is no distinctive boundary in this transition. It is chaotic, but creative. It is not a type of activity of establishing order, but of deconstructing the traditional structures of the curriculum at first" (Asanuma, 2003, p. 441). This is where I, coming from my own experience with the

Japanese curriculum, meet Block (1998) and his comment on the modern age in which he understands Maxine Greene's philosophy. This is also where Block's postmodern *Teacher as Jew* meets Greene's *Teacher as Stranger*. This, then, is where I wish to stop and discuss what it can mean to be *gaijin no sensei*, to be practitioner in this way of *eikaiwa*.

Describing his view of "the transition of Japan's school curriculum from modernism to postmodernism," Asanuma (2003, p. 440) summarizes the *before* moment of this transition: "the first pillar of modern Japanese curriculum consists of self-discipline, punctuality, regularity, autonomy, structural consistency, standardized forms, individuality, and utilitarian value orientation." I believe it is to such a pillar, of given curriculum standards, that Block responds with doubt as he wonders at the discourse of preparing students or himself for any situation in which his students are likely to find themselves. Block agrees with Greene. "Everything," he says, "is always suspect. Her charge to the teacher is to remain in doubt. Maxine Greene urges the teacher to be a stranger" (Block, 1998, p. 15). Block and Greene seem to share a view of what we might call a Cartesian tradition in modern European thought: that it is the production of doubt (which Block equates with the *process of enquiry*) that creates the educational environment; "the rest," he says, "is silence" (Block, 1998, p. 15). Is this the silence of the samurai, I wonder, the silent harmony of form and function, the negation of function in the abstraction of form, the self-conscious concretion of abstract essence? Is this the silence of the samurai whose traces you'll hear in karaoke (*kara* meaning *empty* and *oke* being short for *ōkesutora*, or *orchestra*), when you really listen? I don't mean to be trivial, but what if the sound of a *karaoke* machine playing by itself is, by itself, the sound of the third man? He only sings as a kind of distant, ghostly backup, wherever you need harmony as you sing your way through. He may be the only one in the room who knows what notes you mean to hit, and he'll help you along.

Perhaps it is the *Silence* (from one side of the mirror, as it were) in Endo's (1966/1969) novel. Hashimoto (2003, p. 422) claims for instance that "in the era of Samurai culture, body is an entity in the individual's self-regulation. Silence and static physical movement are their common aesthetic virtues." Even more astonishing: "they were concerned with impression rather than expression" (Hashimoto, 2003, p. 422). Is it, I wonder, that they meant to impress and not to express, or is it that they focussed on their impressions rather than on their expressions? Perhaps both would hold true, and I can think of all kinds of examples that I've seen. It could almost be argued (well it probably has been argued) that impressions are an explicit principle in Japanese literature generally. Consider, also, the impact of *Japonisme*, referring especially to ukiyo-e (*pictures of the fleeting world*), on *impressionist* artists up to and including V^{an}Gogh. In everyday speech it's easy to observe a complex system of rather rigidly set expressions, corresponding to situations in which we may often find ourselves. In English we might struggle to be clever and find our own words for something as simple as *hello*, for instance (*hallo*, *howdy*, *hey*, *hi*); but it's always struck me that in Japanese our ways of saying *hello* differ most of all by time of day, not by our choice or command of the language except as that is also the command of our selves. But perhaps I digress.

In EFL there is a concept known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, a popular pursuit amongst applied linguists around the middle of the last century (see Brown, 2007). I am reminded of an extraordinary claim like that of Lado's elegant

> assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. (Lado, 1957, p. vii)

—and I am reminded of this sort of very modernist idea when I read of Block's reaction to those who "always seem to know where they are and where they are going. They are never strangers" (Block, 1998, p. 16). He quotes a Grateful Dead song to say "*If* I knew the way, I would take you home" (Garcia & Hunter, 1970).

As japanned EFL teacher, as *(gaijin no) eikaiwa no sensei*, I was constantly aware of the process of enquiry by which I needed and was able to come to some knowledge of the kind of place which my students called home. I came to hear more of their stories, more of their lives in this place. I believe it was in this way that I came to feel so much more at home: away from the EFL talk of an office like that at Jessamine, with its complaints about the annoying or amusing "mistakes" their students would persistently, even stubbornly, seem to make; away from the never-satisfied pressures of "sales" and unsatisfactory talk of "customers," I could really begin to feel like I was part of a learning experience, as I found a home in my classrooms and began to learn of the wider social context that was my new country. This enquiry, this dialogue, was perhaps only possible from the point of view of the stranger, the foreigner, the outsider; I, like Block, therefore take comfort in Greene's call to do the philosophy that begins with wondering. This, exactly, is my felt *praxis*, my existential métier.

Block says that as Jew he's never found the designation *stranger* to be all that strange. This is where he diverges somewhat from Greene's philosophy, which stressed the *effort* to extricate oneself into a critical point of view on one's home culture in order to teach freely within that culture. Especially as *gaijin*, I follow Block and agree that the designation *stranger* may gradually become familiar for those who in any way find themselves in a strange land. The trick is to realize the good in being the outsider, but this is a trick which perhaps also only comes with time, with the understanding that your face and frame, your gaze, your gait, your touch (perhaps even your smell, as some would have it), carry the sensible mark of *not* ever being *from around here*, no matter where you go, the mark of always representing, to others, that *other world* of which you will constantly hear. Talk, and especially language, of this other world, beyond Japanese shores, seems to surround you, to follow you around, usually in marked contrast to the Japanese place in which you find yourself, looking out. This is the place of the japanned era, of refined and formalized American cultural forms (and those of many other countries, side by side rather than one on top of another), the post-historical era which arguably pre-existed whatever process of "modernization" we may describe Japan as having gone through beginning in the late 19th century. If all of this is so, there comes a moment wherein I think you have to ask yourself a question. You might say to yourself *well in some ways I do live in a world apart; and so, what are the consequences as I can see them, and how will I live those out?* This is the moment where Block and I meet with Greene, but I want to point out that we're approaching the moment's essential *agency* from the opposite side to Greene's: for us, outsideness is a given condition, something for which we did not ask; that this must be true at some level for Greene as well is clear, but the effort she stresses, the philosophical rigour that she needs in order to *become stranger* within one's practice, is

to some extent foreshortened, I think, in the experience of the foreigner (or, I suppose, the Jew) as teacher.

So what is the good of being an outsider? Well, there is a grand freedom in the agency I describe. For instance, *gaijin* who've been in the country any number of years will often find that their Japanese hosts assume they can't converse in Japanese at all, that they're as fresh off the boat as I suppose stereotypes and perhaps statistics dictate that they're likely to be. Imagine, in the first place, feeling like you were above all a *guest* nearly everywhere you went, welcomed with an emphasis on the welcoming, year after year and day after day. But the sense that your interlocutor doesn't expect of you any of the same behaviour, verbal or otherwise, which she might expect of most of the other people she meets—this can bring a great sense of freedom. Freedom, at any rate, from virtually all obligation aside from what you will choose for yourself, how you will manage to express yourself. Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus put it nicely in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, writing in the preface of this outsider's position:

> a passer-by who laughs at you does not place you under obligation; rather he becomes your debtor, in so far as he owes to you the opportunity for a laugh. Here each remains free to pursue his own way, unhampered by binding and intrusive friendships. (Kierkegaard, 1846/1964, p. 5).[48]

In a place where people often speak of the many burdens of obligation (there is even what they explicitly call *giri-choko*, *obligatory chocolate*, distributed by a woman to each man in her office, or by all the girls at school to all the boys, on Valentine's Day—reciprocated, by the way, on *White Day*, 14 March), the outsider's freedom is often explicitly respected, envied: *because you're not Japanese, you don't have to bring the usual certain amount of money as a wedding gift—don't worry about it—ah, lucky gaijin!—there are amounts appropriate as gifts from family members and from friends and so on, but no such amount is dictated for gaijin.* This is perhaps the freedom, carried so far as the *impossibility* to speak for a majority or from a general point of view, with which Block asserts himself as the "quintessential postmodern" (Block, 1998, p. 21). This is a condition in and with and through which to work creatively.

Where Block provides a people's history, I merely point to an ocean and a continent on the map, a function of geography; where he remembers a historical slavery in Mitzrayim (Egypt, *the narrow place*), I am confronted with *hosomichi* (*the narrow road*). The fact of having always been Jewish refers to time, perhaps, as the fact of always being *gaijin* depends on space for its removal from, its opposition to, any spectre of a public. This is what drives me home, to the *eikaiwa* classroom; this is why I find *furusato*, beginning in the *kyōshitsu*, as I become aware of my own desire for the praxis of freedom. What, beyond this making of freedom, is a more appealing invitation for *sensei* to give, initiating the *English conversation*, the dialogue, the enquiry for which we've gathered? However full of conflict, and struggle and desire for *respect* so often quantified and indexed in notions of *professionalism*, the EFL teacher's office life (an English-based discourse which is, after all, quite optional in the schools I went on to enjoy most), with its talk of wanting to be

---

[48] Note, in relation to my comments on "Living to Tell" (above), that Kierkegaard's point of view is here *out walking*.

more than an *eikaiwa* teacher, to be a *real* teacher, or another kind of something else—however distressing it might be, at times, this office life; however confounding the manifold and conflicting demands implicit in feedback sessions like those I ran into after *every* class I taught at Trivium Eikaiwa, during the one month when I tried that place out (*Tanaka San thinks you speak too softly. Suzuki San thinks you speak too quickly when you are excited. I heard you yawned during class last week. Tomorrow night's beginner students probably won't understand you, so please try to use simple English.*)—however bad it might get *out there, in here,* in the *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu,* I am *gaijin* and *sensei,* and that is exactly what I need to be for as long as I am here: we can talk about whatever we like, my students and I. Here we are at the heart of things, at the *kyōshitsu* as *uchi.*[49]

Is this the escapism phenomenon by which many like to account for the popularity of *eikaiwa*? Some like to go out on a Saturday afternoon to play pachinko where the lights are always flashing, the Casiotone music coruscating along with them, and the allure of the unknown (beginning with the question of whether or not the money they put into the machines is actually going to North Korea) as thick in the air as the cigarette smoke. It's a place where nothing really matters, a place where we can forget about the pressures of the job or the home-life. Then there's karaoke, where you can rent a room all to yourself and those you're with, and just sing your heart out if you want, and it won't be a burden to anyone who hears it, since it's all in good fun and well beyond the ken of what can be addressed in polite conversation. It doesn't challenge polite conversation in any specific way: it's simply not that form of address, is it? Karaoke is the performance of expression without the expression itself, yet none the less cathartic; a performative art of formal self-expression—as formal as a song ever is.

Sometimes I wonder if these popular sorts of getaways (along with all the hot-spring resorts people rush out to on holidays—especially New Year's but really on any of these mass holidays, that fall on the same dates for most, across the country) might all reflect some deep-running escapism—for only then would I be able to accept the argument that *eikaiwa* is a matter of escape from a Japanese life, even from the Japaneseness of life. Yet I would not deny that *eikaiwa* pure and simple, the exchange of conversation (always implicitly a process of enquiry, even if only understood as a kind of Socratic dialogue) given an English form—this is best practised when all concerned are looking for something different, something else, something *beyond* and not just *away from* whatever it is about everyday life that makes it less bearable than we would like. Can it then be a way of making life more bearable, like an act of compassion? What, after all, is more compassionate than conversation?[50]

---

49 Note my further comments on *uchi* in "Stead of a Conclusion."

50 Perhaps this compassion is, to me, a proper use for the freedom I seek with my students, a disposition whose exercise brings a shared knowledge of freedom. I remember that the *Book of Five Rings* (Miyamoto, 1645/1974) placed respect next to compassion, in a sort of grand samurai style: in combat you are giving your enemy his due when you deal what may even be a mortal blow *without hesitating.* Perhaps this respect, on the order of a Hellenistic definition of justice (giving every man his due), is itself something to escape, or at any rate a starting-point in the exercise of an inner freedom, even a starting-point quite distant from the realization of that freedom.

Home (3)

Sensei, Sensei no Sensei

Nani no sensei.

It was in my contract with Shamisen that I'd have the chance to take lessons in Japanese language. There was a subsidy (available through the office, in cash) and an introduction to a local teacher. I never took advantage of this set-up.

At Jessamine, in Sendai, they had a resident teacher, Ōkubo Sensei, an old friend of the school's founder, Kawashima San.[51] My schedule didn't seem to permit that we meet more than once a month, and I can't say I felt overly engaged in a learning process, although she probably gave an excellent example of the kind of practice in *kaiwa* that I would go on to take up. I'd lose track of time between lessons, as measured in chances to learn new bits of language. I mean, those chances kept popping up everywhere, whether I wanted to study or not.

---

[51] Kawashima San had a lot of interesting stories about him, though I must stress that none of these came to me *straight from the horse's mouth*. The school's name had apparently derived, for instance, from the name of the first teacher Kawashima San had hired, some 20 years previously. This Jessamine, in turn, and all of Kawashima San's first wave of English teachers in Sendai, had apparently come from Hawaii. Kawashima San had his hiring practices. I, for one, had met with him in Halifax for an interview, on one of his twice-or-so-yearly passes through that city. He would base these recruiting runs at the TEFL training centre which he now owned, having bought it from a woman I'd later meet on his teaching staff in Sendai. I believe she, in her turn, has just recently returned to Halifax.

Apparently Kawashima San had got his start in the *eikaiwa* industry by going from door to door selling audio-tapes, then a popular and perhaps more important sort of medium for the oral/aural experience of English language. He was known to be a big fan of Hank Williams and Elvis Presley, perhaps also of James Bond. It was even said that as a babe in arms he had survived the events of August 1945 in Hiroshima. Come to think of it, this would make him *hibakusha*, as formally defined (for purposes of the existing monthly allowance and specialized health care) in Japanese law and also as described in Ibuse's *Black Rain*: a new kind of outcast in a society entirely unprepared for the implications of radiation poisoning, whose sickness might be catching, or might become congenital—who could tell, in those early days after the war, what the consequences really had been? But it seems to me that there were also stories of polio as something that Kawashima San had confronted.

Stories are things we can hear as well as tell. These are stories that I can remember, of a constructed man whom I can't really say that I *knew*. Sometimes I wonder at a case like this, finding myself recalling and relating stories *of* what I haven't first related myself *to*.

There is one thing she told me, which I'm now remembering as best I can. The trouble is that I don't remember which word she was recommending, but I think she said it would be more *modest*, in some sense, when asked, to call myself something other than *sensei*. She was suggesting another word, and it must have been *kyōshi* (as in *kyōshitsu*). The thing is, most of my students called me *sensei*. I was answering to *Kureigu Sensei*, and frankly, if asked *in Japanese* what my occupation might be, at that time I don't think I'd have understood well enough to respond in Japanese. I did, however, note that it might somehow be better if I didn't call myself *sensei* for the time being and pending a better understanding of what Ōkubo Sensei had told me.

And yet. I had a salesman come to my door one evening, as salesmen would sometimes do, especially those selling newspaper subscriptions. Quite often they'd ring my doorbell in the cool of the evening, then peer a little harder than might have been necessary through the dark when I opened the door. As often as not, they'd just look at my face, perhaps mutter *a, gaijin ka* (*oh, it's a gaijin*), turn and walk away. I was off the hook, then, most of the time. If the salesman at hand turned out a little less fazed, it would still, almost always, take just one word to dispel and despatch him: *yomenai* (*I don't/ can't read*). Who would want to argue with that, after all? But this particular evening, I was dealing with a more imaginative salesman.

He remained, and deftly asked me a few questions in a special kind of sub-language, reduced beyond being either English or Japanese: *Gaijin? From? Sensei?* When I was able to answer *Hai. Kanada. Hai*, he obviously had license to promote his newspaper as a valuable learning tool for my new life. Perhaps a little more than I realized, I was already showing some signs of getting a handle on Japanese language. I still didn't want a subscription, and I made this clear, but I remember his ultimate appeal to me, still working in the stripped-down Japanglish: *Doctor, please* . . . . I smiled, said *thank you*, and closed the door.

Non-sensei.

I heard Sue-Ann, the *gaijin*-teacher-manager at Jessamine, say that she wished she could think of a word other than *teacher* or *instructor* or *coach* or . . . whatever else there is, that would aptly name the sort of people working in her school. *Because*, she said (in her retired-Canadian-schoolteacher-and-principal voice), *what we do is not teaching. I don't know what you call it, but it's not teaching.*[52] Uh-oh, I thought: she would know if this really isn't teaching. Yet, even where students are instructed to address their teacher on a first-name basis, nearly all of the students in a typical *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* would quite without hesitation address their teacher as *Sensei*. This term refers, in English, mostly to the martial arts coach, if I go by dictionaries. In Japanese, however, it can be a name for *any teacher* or, indeed, as my most tenacious newspaper salesman had it, doctor as well.

---

52 *Also, remember this: I don't care what you do when the door closes on your classroom, as long as the students are coming out with smiles on their faces. Don't try too hard to be a* teacher.

The funny thing about trying to put *eikaiwa no sensei* on first-name terms with their students is that the students will often hardly know which name is first and which is last, whether the one on the left were the family name or not, whether when the teacher says *first name* she means family name (which usually comes first in a Japanese way of speaking) . . . or not. In general it's not hard to tell that *the* Japanese way of introducing oneself is *family-name-first*; but do people of all other nationalities introduce themselves the opposite way? Add to this the contrast that in many situations where it is Japanese to address each other by family name, *gaijin* are supposed to prefer given names, and things are quickly becoming more confusing.

What happens when a foreigner, speaking Japanese, introduces herself—are we to understand that she's adopting a Japanese idiom, or is this name only *her* name when the family name comes last? What about the title? *San* or *Sensei* would come at the end, but *Ms* would come at the beginning, as we know. The assumption seems to be that whatever I say my name is, it needs to be reversed, turned inside out, before it can be applied to any form of address. Whether I felt I was saying that my name was *Craig Mac-Donald* or *Makku Donarudo Kureigu*, I got called *Mr Craig* quite a lot in Japan, and of course *Kureigu Sensei*, but nearly never *Mr MacDonald* or *Sensei Craig* (apparently this latter would be the going phrase in the English usage as found in a dictionary).

Kureigu Sensei was most often what I would go by, since it was common practice amongst my peers and in the places where I worked that we should be known by our first names—but then, by the time I was teaching at a university most of the time, I was going by *Makku Sensei* a lot, and not *Makku Donarudo Sensei* (I think this would be pretty much exactly equivalent to saying *Mc Teacher*). All in good fun, of course, and quite as natural an association as what I encountered the first time I met nearly anyone during my year, long ago, as an exchange-student in France. PEI, where this is one of the more common family-names, remains a small place in the world, and the ways people find through life, here, aren't necessarily available or meaningful elsewhere. Anywhere else, I suppose, my name is something that goes before me only in the form of a restaurant, and it may very well be that I bring with me the first occasion for someone to think of this name as signifying *anything but a fast-food joint.*

In any case, these are the sorts of confusions I find we can run into when it seems everybody gets *a certain amount* of insight as to how foreign languages work, or insight of *a certain kind.*

Perhaps Sue-Ann had a point. Perhaps indeed we couldn't just allow ourselves to be called *eikaiwa no sensei* and leave it at that. Perhaps it needed to be something else before it could be real work, let alone real teaching (or even *real English*, I suppose we might have felt). Perhaps it needed to be something useful, something more material or at least explicitly productive, than conversation. Perhaps, for Sue-Ann, at her age and with her background, translating this new layer of her experience would involve asking a few questions. *If this new experience in* eikaiwa *is an experience of EFL, what is to EFL as sensei is to eikaiwa? If I can't look at eikaiwa as teaching, then what is it that I do instead of teaching when I am in the classroom?* (Imagine my surprise and sadness when the last thing Sue-Ann said to me was *some people are teachers, and some aren't.* It struck me that she herself had been much more of a *principal* than a *teacher* at Jessamine. She'd worked her way clear of the classroom, even though one position she was said to hold was *head teacher.* But if I'd men-

tioned this to her at the time, I'm sure she'd have reminded me, *you don't know the half of it.*)

By itself, *sensei* stresses roles of being learned or expert in a particular area as well, of course, as life in general; as such, we can put it across in English as *elder*, *mentor*, *sage*, *moral exemplar*, *doctor*, *lawyer*, and on and on. In a sense it doesn't have to be translated as *teacher*. So again, if we don't feel that we are *teaching*, if we don't feel the need to *be good at* something we're doing, then what is it that we are actually doing? Perhaps this is a good place in which to address the question of *professionalism*. It may have been Sue-Ann's point that many of those working in a place like Jessamine are fresh out of school, coming to Japan, more often than perhaps they'd care to admit, because they thought it would buy them some time before addressing the question *what are you going to do with your life?* Quite often I think *eikaiwa no sensei* can be someone who *isn't* doing that thing, whatever it is, that can be done with life. If a profession is something to be done with a life, then perhaps *eikaiwa* forms the opposite of a profession, or the evasion of a profession. To be sure, getting called *sensei* and knowing that it means *teacher* amongst other things, one might wonder what calls one to become such, what leads one to become such. If *schooling* is the necessary preparation for a profession, and if my baccalaureate degree is in, say, visual arts, but I come to teach English in Japan, then is there anything about me that's actually prepared to be called an *English teacher*? If I'm then assured that all I need is to be a *native speaker* of the language, then is it not reasonable for me to say that *I can speak this language and will allow you to pay me for doing so, but I must not be called a teacher, thank you very much. I think of myself more as a backpacker, truth be told. But like I said, I'm sure we can make a deal.*

So *eikaiwa no sensei*, as a description of what one does, what one is, might seem to mean less than *English teacher*. But on the other hand it's being in a position to provide a moral example, whether one is asked for advice or not. It's being in a position to explore knowledge and find answers that can be shared. The *eikaiwa no kyōshitsu* might seem less than a real school but it can also be more, can be that fabled *school of life* made possible when we appreciate the role of *sensei* for all its potential. Indeed, the usual way of speaking yields no verb that is to *sensei* as *teach* to *teacher*. *Sensei* need not involve more than living, really, and living in the recognition of having been born sometime *before*. This same usual way of speaking says that anything technically regarded as a profession in teaching is what its practitioners would call that of the *kyōshi* (it's true, after all, that few would introduce themselves as if to say *I am sensei*). To answer the question, *what do you do?* we might get *kyōshi* as a straightforward way of saying *I am a teacher*. But what does *kyōshi* do? The word is *oshieru*. *Teach*, yes, but more widely *tell*, as you would do, in everyday parlance, with a story or with a fact or piece of advice—and not as you would do with an order. Now, of course this comes full circle, again in the same usual way of speaking, when we observe that the usual action of *sensei*, as *sensei*, is also this kind of telling. If teaching is one side of things, and telling is another, I would venture that they are generally questioned and qualified in terms of a *what (do you teach)?* and a *how (do you tell)?*

If it weren't real teaching, I thought, then *eikaiwa* might be described as *entertainment, diversion*. This would bring to mind the young Russian woman working in a club—another of the relatively few *types* of *gaijin* you might find in any given city. Her job as *hostess* was to look pretty, to be charming, to sing a little karaoke with her guests or dance a little bit now and then. She didn't have to speak Japanese particularly well.

My colleague Anyta, herself born in Russia and a student of Psychology, advanced the hostess role as one with which she could identify in her work as *eikaiwa no sensei*. But she said she could also at times feel like her work was more specifically *therapeutic*, like students were in need of some medical attention which she would then feel called on to give: to listen, to give feedback and guidance, to keep a professional arm's length, to write whatever prescription she thought appropriate, and to maintain some kind of confidentiality about what talk went on in the room.

In any case the image of *sensei* was for me then mysterious and lofty, like the *old man with a grey beard* by which I suppose figures of wisdom are often imagined, from however childish a perspective. Consider, for instance, Mr Miyagi in *The Karate Kid* (perhaps the earliest exposure to *sensei* which I can remember). I remember him standing at a counter or table, an old man with a grey beard, standing over what might also have been my first image of a bonsai tree. The tree looks so small. *How is this possible?* Come to think of it, if Mr Miyagi wasn't my first image of *sensei*, then perhaps it was Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

As I meant to suggest above with this way of introducing myself that Ōkubo Sensei taught me, *sensei* is a title to be conferred and not arrogated—like any of the titles we use in English. When I hear someone introducing himself to me as *Mr Friday*, I brace myself for the question . . . *and who might you be?* I wouldn't know how to answer, most days. (I'd prefer to say *my name is Craig*, but wouldn't want to appear to be changing the subject.) My exploration of *sensei* in these pages, the formation of an identity around it, is my way of addressing what remains to me of the experience, what comes away with me and, especially when so much of this is carried in Japanese language (and more especially when I've *heard* so much more than I've ever spoken in Japanese), the word for all of this is *sensei*. Same with *gaijin*, of course.

Karate no sensei.

In Akita I'd joined a local dojo and practised karate twice a week with Jeff and Julienne, two of my colleagues from Shamisen. For us at the time, the after-school practice sessions which were our sensei's ordinary schedule were inconvenient because we had after-school lessons to teach as well. However, Hatakeyama Sensei, after he'd arranged to meet with us on a special schedule two or three mornings a week, integrated us as much as possible in the wider goings-on and special events at the dojo—tournaments and tests would happen a few Saturdays in the year, with the entire dojo assembled. He worked hard to prepare us for the advances we were able to make on our way, jumping belt-colours and so forth more quickly than many of his mostly once-a-week students.

Though I think he knew English (had lived for several years in Hawaii), he never spoke a word of it to us. With him, we had the opportunity to really be accepted on the same terms as other students, without mention of the fact that we were *gaijin*, without the batting of an eye at the fact that we couldn't (well, I speak for myself and, to some extent, Jeff rather than for his partner, Julienne) speak Japanese very well. Except now

and then he'd say something about how important it was to have a *poker face*. Here more than, say, at the local Doutor café or Mos Burger which we'd sometimes visit after a session, we could feel, not like anomalies but like reciprocating human beings.

Sure, we were *gaijin*, but Hatakeyama Sensei recognized that we could learn our kata just as his other students did. Significantly for me, in fact, I learnt to count in Japanese under his instruction: after counting out and showing us the steps in a new kata, Sensei would call out, again, *ichi, ni, san* . . . , marking each in kanji (see my glossary for the sequence in which he'd fill in strokes) on the chalkboard, and I'd concentrate on reproducing the sequence of forms in the pattern, counting silently along with him.

Gakkō no sensei (2).

Since *sensei* is unique amongst key terms in this research, not only for its importance but also for the fact that some English-language research has referred to it, let me offer a quick summary of an image thus afforded. Gordon (2005) depicts the place of the schoolteacher, *gakkō no sensei*, in contemporary Japan. Working from 113 interviews, held with 69 teachers and 44 parents in cities throughout the country, Gordon demonstrates the decline of *sensei* from feared representative of the samurai class to white-collar worker fighting to retain status. She situates this decline in a changing society that, since WWII, has dramatically shrunk its families, from those with three to six children, and grandparents (as well as neighbours) assisting in their upbringing, to a dominant culture of only-child parents who are themselves raising far fewer children. The lack of discipline widely taken as characteristic of these children does not sit well with teachers who wish to be seen as *more* than functionaries (but in terms of status, which Gordon reads as power) in a bureaucracy of education. Gordon's study emphasizes the lack of *respect* teachers seem to receive in these conditions, which *sensei* in their own words repeatedly contrast with "the good old days" (Gordon, 2005).

I decided to check this out with Hello NY, as you can read in my conversation with her (above).

Hoikuen no sensei, yōchien no sensei.

Of course the primary-middle-secondary sequence also has a kind of before and after. On the *before* side, according to Holloway and Yamamoto (2003), 95% of all Japanese children attend some form of pre-primary education, be it *yōchien* (private or public) or (public) *hoikuen*. In both places, the word *sensei* applies to the teacher-caretaker. These *sensei* are graduates of post-secondary colleges or universities, or have passed national examinations (though the basic qualifications for *yōchien no sensei* and *hoikuen no sensei* are somewhat different). Jobs tend to go to younger teachers who, being less experienced, are expected to be more flexible to any given school's way of doing things—and

many hold these jobs for a relatively short career, quitting by the age of 25 or so (Holloway & Yamamoto, 2003). During the relatively few years of service, *sensei* usually put in eight- or ten-hour days, have the support of mentoring relationships and don't hold union memberships in large numbers (Holloway & Yamamoto, 2003).

Reading the Holloway & Yamamoto piece, I remembered in particular the biggest challenge I faced as a novice in Akita (famous for its good rice, good saké, and beautiful women—all, I was told, issuing from the purity of the prefecture's water), working for Shamisen. Every Wednesday at ten or so in the morning I would board the shinkansen *Akita Komachi* (named after the historical figure, a beautiful poet of the ninth century named Komachi—who also had a popular brand of local rice named after her). The train would hurtle across the *tanbo* to Ōmagari (pronounced like in an old song, "Oh My Golly!"; now part of the new city of Daisen), then a town of about 40,000 people upon which, one day in August each year, some 400,000 tourists were said to descend—for the prestigious All-Japan National Fireworks Competition.[53] After a *brief stop* (as the English-language announcements would always say) in Ōmagari, the train would roll back out the way it had come in, then streak out across other *tanbo* down to Kakunodate or Tazawako (now I don't recall which), where I'd quickly change trains and ride the local line to Yokote. At Yokote station there would be a taxi waiting for me, ready to take me to *Sō Ai no Hoikuen.*

At the door, waiting for me every time, was Risa-Chan, probably the most outgoing five-year-old in the place, though a few of her colleagues also had plenty to say. She would greet me (*Sensei, konnichiwa* at about the top of her lungs), point across the *genkan* and tell me where to put my umbrella, if I were carrying one (it seems I often was, perhaps especially during the rather torrential rainy-season during which I suppose I began to get used to this ritual); she would take my briefcase (which was very nearly as tall as she was, just lifting it with a sanguine and vigourous *Hai*), she would untie my shoes and help me out of them—and into a pair of slippers that were always much too small. Then she would take my hand, say *come on* in English (she knew *o my god!* too, amusingly—I knew not whence), and lead me down the hall to where her 25 classmates and two teachers were waiting to greet me.

I would arrive just at lunchtime, and the kids would all have their bentos out, and cups of water which they'd lined up to draw at the sink in the back of the classroom. After a rhymed and religious thanksgiving ritual (it was a Buddhist kindergarten,

---

53 I bear witness to the crowds myself, having attended the fireworks festival in 2001. My colleagues Jeff and Julienne were with me. We'd got a drive out with some students of ours in the morning, but we needed to take a train back to the city. As the hours wore on and the crowds just spread out along the riverbank, all packed in, orderly, on their discreet blue tarps, I began to get the feeling that Jeff was feeling outnumbered—and who could blame him? When he said we'd better get going just as soon as the competition phase was over (and what I was thinking would be more the main event, the town's own fireworks show, just about to start), I felt reluctant but didn't want to hold him back. The train was packed as well, and I remember how hot that summer was, especially that night on the slow train back to Akita city. I remember shuffling along through the crowded streets to the station, fireworks bursting above our heads, the assembled crowd voicing unified gestures of approval which would echo off the far bank of the river—all up and over, behind my head. Walking away from the riverbank for as long as we could.

as I was told by my office manager), it would be time to eat, then time to clean up, then time for their English lesson (what I'd come for), then time for their mothers to come and pick them up.

I suppose that amongst these children and their teachers, sitting about and watching *Doraemon*[54] after the day's activities had ended, I had my first chance at explicit socialization in my new country. In some ways, that chance to observe and partake in how Japanese children grow up, with what stories and ways of playing together, has never come again. I have, though, recently returned to the *Monbukagakushō* curriculum, myself undertaking the role of a home-schooled first-grade student of language arts (called *kokugo*, or *national language*) for the sake of my general literacy as it pertains not only to Japanese writing but also to the stories which a Japanese child, growing up today, would encounter at school.

Holloway and Yamamoto highlight different ways in which the sort of *sensei* found in the *hoikuen* and the *yōchien* is likely to set the learning context amongst her students. First in the list is an emphasis on effort. As I read of "the need for trying one's hardest at all times" (Holloway & Yamamoto, 2003), the familiar words from my life in Japan, *ganbatte kudasai*, ring out loud and clear: somehow it's Risa-Chan's voice, at the *hoikuen* door again, waving good-bye and shouting the words in her commanding and endearing sort of way.

Holloway and Yamamoto also dwell on the kinds of teacher-parent relationships valuable to Gordon (2005), emphasizing that *yōchien* and *hoikuen no sensei* would tend to value *shūdan seikatsu* whilst mothers more often cater to the *amae* appeal of their children. This, they suggest, provides for disagreement and disapproval between two groups where the *sensei* group holds power as "the first link in the chain of educational institutions that determine children's future success" (Holloway & Yamamoto, 2003)—and the parents, well, they are the parents, after all, but "the power," they say, "of the school in a society built around 'educational credentialism' is indeed formidable" (Holloway & Yamamoto, 2003).

---

54 *Doraemon* is a long-running popular animated series named after a round blue-and-white cat-robot from the future who brings access to such wish-fulfilling technologies as the *dokodemo-doa*, or *wherever-you-like door*.

Home (4)

Men would construct their edifices and works of art as birds build their nests
and spiders spin their webs, would perform musical concerts
after the fashion of frogs and cicadas, would play like young animals,
and would indulge in love like adult beasts.
(Kojève, 1947/1969, p. 159)

Eikaiwa no Hosomichi

Hanami, 2001.

Perhaps, to many I passed in the streets every day, I was always coming from a foreign land, and never arriving in Japan. Nevertheless, I begin: It was late in the *hanami* season when I first arrived in Japan in 2001.

On the first day, I made my start by learning one word, having come to Japan without really knowing anything about the Japanese language, much less about anybody who spoke it. Having arrived on the last Shinkansen the night before and crashed in a little room in the Hotel Oahu, I was waiting, somewhat bedazzled in the April sunshine in front of the hotel, for a couple of outbound teachers from the school where I was to work. Sally and Gord. It was their last weekend in Akita. They pulled up with a friend, Yoshi, in his car, yelling out the window for all on that dappled sidewalk to hear: *hey, gaijin!* This, they told me as I got in the car, meant *foreigner* or *outsider*. They were having a laugh. Though difficult to mark as really significant at the time, at least in Akita it would turn out to be a basic element in the consciousness of the foreign nationals I met, be they tourists, backpackers, Assistant Language Teachers, *eikaiwa* teachers, businesspeople, academics, expats, entertainers, whatever—they were all quite recognizable in the street, and all, knowingly, *gaijin*. I hopped in the car, and off we went to get set up for an evening *hanami* barbecue where local beef and beer would be enough to prompt the *oishii* remark which, I was informed, meant *delicious* (not that I'd heard this word in English, very often, since my childhood). The other word of that first day was *kawaii*: the women present wanted to make sure I understood that bit (meaning, they told me, *cute*) of their vocabulary. In the weeks and months to follow, the frequency of these terms, their cultural-hermeneutic saliency, quickly became apparent to me.

Watson (2008, p. 124) writes of teaching English in Japan as "not something I'd dreamed of doing but something to do while I dream, some way to make a living." "I also wanted," he maintains, "to look around Japan, absorb some of it, drink it in (liter-

ally and figuratively), learn something different, flirt with Zen, talk with people, check out the ladies, frolic in the neon nighttime establishments" (Watson, 2008, p. 124).[55] Such, too, was my own frame of mind, to some extent, but first I had to start by waking up in the early morning daylight, looking around the room, and saying to myself, *right, I'm in Japan. Better watch out for the door-lintel as I go out to the kitchen for my morning coffee.* Every waking moment had become an adventure, had taken on a real uncertainty as to its outcome: I was in a place that had a different word for everything, or at any rate different uses and meanings for so many words that might otherwise be familiar—a phenomenon known as *false friends* in Applied Linguistics, but often simply called *Japanese English* in Japan. Even grocery shopping or using a machine to wash my clothes became the kinds of tasks worthy of some really careful thought (both activities involving the interpretation of a great many signs: pictures, locations such as aisles in the market, trial and error—anything except the Japanese language written around me, to the point where an English word on a label or a button would jump right out at me, as from a kind of silence, and shout *look at me, use me, think about me*), and the co-ordination of a day's best efforts; getting on the right train or ordering a pizza would prove to be landmark accomplishments in a life where every day I could taste of such victory. Of course there were days when it seemed disappointing to catch the scent of adventure or comedy beyond my apartment door, only to wind up at the office for another day of enforced busyness, under the constant scrutiny of the school manager, sitting with my colleagues in a cluster of desks arranged next to hers, ordered to fill in the time between classes by writing out scripted lesson plans—and such was the time-framework within which my

---

55 For an exploration of this side of life in Japan, John David Morley's *Pictures from the Water Trade* (1985) has plenty to offer, especially as it gets going. The external review of this thesis asked why I hadn't referred to Morley's novel. Having looked it up and started reading, I want to say that in many ways his representation is almost the opposite of mine: it is of *an Englishman in Japan* (connoting, I think, a refusal of the term *gaijin*). This student at a Japanese university dwells particularly on views of the floating world, of bare white necks under ravishingly-styled raven-coloured hair—and so on, at least until he meets Mariko.

He tends to present conversations in terms of *how they would come across in English*, making it look pretty easy, sometimes at the expense of what I would feel to be a high degree of nuance. I think it's partly because this narrator has been studious enough to master the Japanese language as a rather precise system of co-ordinates to English, and to have done so in his first three months in the country, now translating with ease and necessity in his choice of words as he relates his stories. Truth be told, this could hardly be any further from my own experience. He's also based in Tokyo, and this is another significant opposition, I feel, between his point of view and mine.

I've limited my concern for the most part so that it is with what we might call more *light-of-day* sorts of questions. This is not to say that I disagree with what Morley has done, nor even that stories like this would be impossible for me to tell in my turn. But I should note, here if nowhere else, that the present work wouldn't be the same if I'd felt I was writing a novel, as Morley has done. There may be something of the autobiographical in Morley's novel (as there is in my thesis), but I feel that my work, as enquiry, differs in its doing rather significantly from fiction—even if by rendering certain proper nouns as fictions it transgresses, as fiction does, the notion of autobiographical content as *true story*. I've found Chambers (2004) particularly instructive in these nuances.

classes would fall during my time at Shamisen: a rationalized, streamlined way of marking the time during which I was on the company dime. Punch in. Punch out. Leave for home at nine p.m., after the last evening class. Breathe in. Breathe out. Begin again at noon the next day. I digress, perhaps, but always with an eye on the context, or perhaps the head-space, in which I had my first encounters with what's known as *eikaiwa*.

Eikaiwa (3).

Sometime in the first month, a new friend, a fellow Canadian named Jim, brought me to a place called, simply enough, The English Café. I remember the stained-wood interior, the Hawaiian bartender named Kirk and the Bass Pale Ale he was pouring—the first I'd had, thinking it was funny I'd have to go all the way to Japan for such an experience. Perhaps such a setting couldn't help me to believe it, but here I was, in the relatively small city of Akita, capital of the Japan Sea-side prefecture of the same name, in the Tōhoku region of northern Honshu.

By this time, I'm sure, I'd heard the term *eikaiwa* (I was working for a place known as *Shamisen Eikaiwa*), but when an older local man approached me at the bar to give me his business-card and say, *please teach me English conversation*, I felt hard-put to make out what he meant by framing things, just so, in English. The formal yet direct phrasing sounded foreign to me, although the words were quite simple and familiar. I could understand being asked to teach him English; however, the seemingly extraneous *conversation* left me wondering if I was really understanding what I was hearing.

The man left directly after making his request. Mystified, I turned to the older and more experienced Jim, who explained that *English conversation* was the going translation for *eikaiwa*, and that *eikaiwa* was also the Japanese equivalent of the English term *English as Foreign Language*. This was, he explained, a chance to practise autonomously, and it's what Jim himself had gradually come to do in the foregoing few years: building up a timetable of teaching engagements directly with those who were interested in what I would learn to call *private teaching*. Until then, I'd thought *eikaiwa* only meant *English school, as in Shamisen English School.*

Here, in the proposed subject-matter of English Conversation, was a new piece of Japanese English which would prove to come up often: jumping out of an overheard but otherwise comfortably unintelligible conversation taking place somewhere over my shoulder in the Café Christmas; permeating, naturally, much of the actual conversation I had at Shamisen. It seemed to be important to people, everywhere I went, or at any rate the sight of me would seem to bring it up: *oh, look, he must be an eikaiwa teacher; have you ever tried eikaiwa?* But I had reservations: Jim was explaining that the *lessons* would take place at my home or at my student's home or, in the case at hand, probably right there at the English Café, meeting every week or so to share a beer and talk for awhile. Would *I* be able to teach in this manner? For one thing, my contract with Shamisen would forbid me to teach anywhere except at Shamisen. I belonged to Shamisen, both on and off the clock, even in my sleep, as a condition for the very fact of being here in Japan. In a city the size of Akita I would have to worry about word getting back to my manager,

and if that ever happened I could imagine losing my job—and then what would I do, being so new in this country, where I couldn't even speak the language well enough to go job-hunting and Shamisen had even signed, as guarantor, the lease for my apartment? Besides, would this even be *teaching*? Shouldn't teaching happen in a classroom?

Shumi.

One of the groups I taught in my last couple of years before leaving Sendai was an extraordinarily *genki* group of seniors who called themselves the Bushi. We'd meet at the local community centre in the Wakabayashi ward of the city. I didn't see them more than once every couple of months at first, and it seemed difficult, spending a couple of hours amongst these chatty people, to keep the dialogue from slipping, sometimes at great length, into Japanese. To feel like a really effective teacher of English seemed practically out of the question. Interestingly, perhaps, Andorf's (2002, p. 162) reading of the local *matsuri* (festivals) she attended hinges on observing her students *outside* of their classrooms, as participants in wider town events; for me, I think, the Bushi were themselves a town event. One Saturday morning they treated me to a dialogue in which we discovered the following.

Eikaiwa has its place amongst more or less widely recognized and accepted Japanese hobbies, or *shumi*. Many of the same people who practise *eikaiwa* have also practised more traditional Japanese disciplines like the tea ceremony, ikebana, or *shodō*. I feel, however, that when karate and other martial arts, just as well as fly-fishing, can clearly be seen on the same continuum of traditions old and new, the English word *hobby* fails to accurately portray the character of these free-time occupations, which are understood to be windows upon ways of the soul for those who engage in them. Indeed, such devotion to *one* art (there is a sense in which there can be only one in anybody's life), one activity in which the participant may become a master, remains central to Japanese recreational life and is a unique concept when compared to the usual sense of *hobby*.[56]

Watson (2008, p. 108) defines the *conversational school* as "a for-profit entity that employs teachers of spoken English, teachers who had come mostly from English-speaking countries." *Eikaiwa*, he says, is "'real', practical English, aimed at practical communication" as distinct from (even imagined as opposite to) a textbook's "*John hit the ball into the woods and no one was able to find it*" (Watson, 2008, p. 129). The certified teacher of English as Foreign Language, however full of buzzwords on teaching techniques, would find her career run ashore on this rocky coast if she didn't lower the sail of "intel-

---

56 **hobby**

like *Dobbin*, a nickname for *Robin* (in turn, a nickname for *Robert*);
a nickname, then for a nickname for a Christian name;
also often taken as a name for a toy horse, a *hobby horse*, made from a stick;
Dobbin, meanwhile, was used as a nickname for a real horse, on a farm;
ground for the speculation that Anglo-Saxons have never really had *shumi*;
not real, not work and perhaps just a *passing interest*

lectual imperialism: one mode of knowing and living spread over the earth" (Watson, 2008, p. 113). Such a teacher will often find herself radically modulating theories of teaching designed, for starters, with English-speaking societal contexts in mind; hopefully this is a process which leads to a deeper and more personal sense of what it means to be teacher or, as she will so often be addressed, *sensei*. There is a strong sense in EFL today, I think, that almost anything is to be preferred to the old grammar-translation methods for learning a language. If the *eikaiwa* classroom is supposed to contrast with what are widely characterized as outdated grammar-translation-based teaching methods in middle and secondary schools, then perhaps *eikaiwa* really could be almost anything: hobby to some, *shumi* to others, and so on.

Coming back to the topic of *shumi*, but still walking the road with Watson, the *eikaiwa no sensei* is likely to find that what *eikaiwa* students really want is novelty, and not necessarily novelty in styles of learning or some other element of *tekhnē* in Applied Linguistics: simple diversion; perhaps an entertaining insight on her life in their country (the pronouns are weighted here to suggest the kind of division many teachers experience when looked upon as native-speaking edutainers utterly dependent on their contracting companies); perhaps a bit of an escape from busy (and, one might assume, boring) Japanese lives; a sense, perhaps, of liberation, or a way of keeping active, of studying something, polishing and improving, gaining merit. This seems to be where my Bushi group would come in, to deliver the narrative of the *shumi*, and it's where Watson goes next as well, noting especially that he, too, was there for diversion, as perhaps many would like to be anywhere.[57] "There we were," says Watson:

> housewives young, middle age, or older, retired businessmen, grandmothers and grandfathers, a college kid here and there, a few college professors. Some actually did have some degree of interest in English and pursued English study as they would another hobby. Some were there after having taken ceramics for a few years or had been in water colors before; then on to conversational English. What was frustratingly obvious to me is that few of those who came to my classes were willing to put forth the effort needed—and it is a significant effort—to attain fluency or anything like it. (Watson, 2008, pp. 120-121)

Ultimately, the question may be, *If we're not going to try to be good at it then what are we doing?* "How can there be standards determining our curriculum," I ask with Block (1998, p. 18), "when we don't even know the situation to which those standards must answer"? When, where, will our students be called on to have a conversation in English? "For what am I preparing whom" (Block, 1998, p. 18)? Perhaps the discourse of *shumi* lays all

---

[57] Is teaching *eikaiwa* a kind of professional diversion? I remember thinking, as a new teacher, that it was something I could just try out for awhile. I was rather non-committal in my first year or so, and especially about my practice as having to do with this vague stuff called *eikaiwa*. When my one-year contract came up for renewal for the first time, I moved up to Sendai to see what I could learn by working in a larger school. This wish, to learn more about teaching, kept me exploring *eikaiwa* longer than many whom I saw come and go. It wasn't until I was beginning to feel that I had to some extent internalized *eikaiwa*, worked it into my dialogue, that I could feel at home and enjoy, not *working* as a teacher (for a boss, sometimes so many bosses it was just confusing, who might have this or that idea of *eikaiwa*), but *playing* as one.

of these questions aside, provides another approach to discipline, to mastery, which may be measured not by performance standards but by degree of engagement, so that in order to become a master, you must choose a way of mastery. In practising one *shumi*, even once a week, one hopes to at least feel close to something beyond the demands of everyday life, and in that way learn or achieve something. But if *eikaiwa* is *shumi*, we need to draw a clear line between this kind of discipline and the hard work it takes to master a foreign language.

道.

I'll here pause and attend to 道 (Tao/*michi*/*dō*), which I now want to locate beyond *shumi*, since the desire by which we relate ourselves to 道 involves more of us, more of our selves, than the concern with which we come together to practice our *shumi*. Concern for practice in *shumi*, I think, lies beyond the interest that we take in cultural forms such as baseball, hockey or the tea ceremony (though baseball, hockey or the tea ceremony may all serve equally well, as *shumi* or as 道). I'm thinking of concern on the order of what one pursues in one's *praxis*, for instance, in a profession: a concern for others, for service within a community, mediated through a particular activity.

I'd like to lay out the little I know of 道. As *Tao* it may be found in an English dictionary, defined as a way, especially, of harmony with the natural order. In Japanese, I realize it may be read as *michi* (street, road, even in the everyday sense) or as that piece we might identify as a common suffix (*dō*) in all these different spiritual disciplines known as the Japanese arts (including martial arts)—and *art*, too, can mean *way*, especially in the German idiom we sometimes experience in our use of English. 道 strikes me, from the sum total of my shallow readings in the *Tao Te Ching* or in the (other) words of Chuang Tzu: as a way *out* but also a way *in*, but always a way *through*—through the world, the given nature of things taken in totality; perhaps a way of *mastery*, not only of nature but of ourselves; a way of mastery situated in a given natural world bringing us to a desired freedom, to happiness, to nature—here it may indeed be a way *back*, but always a way *through*, always situated in natural particularity. It is a journey or way of the soul, too, as explored in Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi*, a poetic travelogue, a journey deep in to then-remote north-eastern Honshū, mindful no doubt of the region's name as *Michinoku* or, perhaps, *Michi no Oku*, *End-of-the-Road Territory*. *Oku no Hosomichi* has been translated into English in various ways, notably *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, *Narrow Road to the Interior*, *Back Roads to Far Towns* and, in Watson's edition, *Bashō's Road's Edge*. To venture my own phrasing, just for fun, I might suggest *The Trail of What Lies Beyond*. It is on this trail that Bashō wrote, *taking each day as journey, dwelling in journey*.

Watson writes.

> We are a journeywork of stars. Even standing still we move, change, live, die. As Heraclitus said, the only thing permanent is change. My home's name, 万流庵 [*Ban Ryū An*], the All Flowing Cottage, marks that as the letters inked on upturned roots (weathered enough to look like driftwood) fade, dissolve, disappear.
>
> The Dao permeates everything and nothing. It goes with the energy flow all our prepositions channel—in, through, out of, back to and all the rest. It is as they say in "the heavens" and—as Chuang-Tzu tells us—it's in the piss and shit. It's everywhere in every thing and there is nowhere it is not. It's in our words so how could it not be in *eikaiwa*?
>
> But: what can be said about the Dao is not the Dao. It's a *way* but it's the condition of there being no way. (Watson, personal communication, August 12, 2009)

Bashō, meanwhile, at the beginning of the *Hosomichi*:

> A hundred generations are made of months and days passing by, as each passing year is a traveller too. By boat to living's limits or leading a horse by its mouth towards old age is taking each day as journey, dwelling in journey. Many ancients have perished in journey. I too—from which year was it?—guided by winds from distant clouds, cannot keep from thinking to drift, roaming the strand, *from autumn of last year ridding this ramshackle hut of cobwebs, year's end soon, hazy sky raising spring, would sooner be passing through the Shirakawa Barrier and in spite of myself feel totally involved with things of god, feel summoned by the god of travel and cannot take up what's at hand.*
>
> So: mend my breeches, fasten a new cord to my *kasa*—no sooner treating my shins with moxa than Matsushima's moon burns in my heart—turn tenancy over to another and move to Sampu's country house.
>
> grass hut
> home to change
> chickabiddy dolls
>
> Leave this first portion posted on the hut. (Watson, Trans.; personal communication, August 28, 2009)

Writing at O-Bon, I find myself recalling how the holiday fell in 2006. I'd read about the *yamabushi* (Buddhist priests of the mountains, if you will) in Japan's sacred mountains, how their ascetic practice includes, famously, meditation immersed beneath a waterfall. It was to me more of a summer vacation, but there was I with my companion in the Dewa Sanzan (a group of three such mountains, found in Yamagata prefecture), near the summit of the tallest of the three, Gas San. Now I don't recall if Bashō's known to have visited more than Haguro San, the smallest of the three, but the entire arrangement of trails amongst these three places, with these old roads made of stone along most of the way—up, up, up and so on—traversed not in solitude (not at O-Bon, at any rate) but as part of a steady stream of climbers—these are ways of pilgrimage.

We'd spent the day climbing up to the Gas San summit by a longer alternate route to what most of our fellow-travellers and holiday-makers were taking (mostly deserted, as alternate routes always seem to be in these places—even at O-Bon, fortunately), then down along the main trail to drop off our packs at the *hinan-goya* where we planned to sleep, then down some more, over ladders in some places (again alone since the destination was accessible from the other side by bus) to Yudono San's revered hot-spring, where steaming waters issue from a great boulder turned orange by traces of the waters that flow all over it; we'd shelved our boots and walked about, as pilgrims do, in the warm cleansing waters of the shrine, then climbed again up over the ladders to the *hinan-goya*; we'd experienced a practically mystical sunset in which I'm pretty sure we were seeing as far south along the Japan Sea coast as Sado ga Shima; and just at dusk there appeared at our hut's door a fellow who said he was in *yamabushi* training, on his way over the summit to where he was lodging (he made the trek out and the return, before and after the day's exercises, with each dawn and dusk). He told us he knew where to find some good spring-water, just off the trail a little distance from here. We decided to follow him.

Passing along at dusk, behind him, I was aware of how difficult it was to keep up although his footsteps laid out a rhythm that matched the ground much more effectively than mine had done all day, and thus seemed easier to follow than my own sense of where feet could fall. He certainly didn't appear to be in any kind of hurry, like he was floating up the slopes and simply drawing me along, aloft. We conversed, too, and I learnt that he was from Tokyo, where, no doubt, he had work and all the rest; but he would spend all of his holidays in the mountains, and was able to do so as part of a curriculum of training so that one day he'd be *yamabushi*.[58] After we got to the spring, he turned around and in so doing seemed, before my eyes, to become *more like a cloud than like a human being*, but a cloud with these eyes peering out from the midst. Perhaps, just at that duskiest of moments when the last light of the day is falling, falling, it would be hard for me to say whether I were seeing more clearly, or less so, than usual. Anyway, it took my companion and me twice as long to walk back *down* to the hut, and when we got back we really couldn't account for how we'd got *up* to that place so quickly.

I wrote of this experience to Watson. He wrote back:

> *Hosomichi*, going on into the cloud, the blur, with only a pair of human eyes looking out from within it. The only human element left.
>
> B may have got to 50 K a day. Some days. Pushing it. And that is walking in *waraji* (straw sandals). Not the walking shoes available today. And they had to change them a couple times each day. They'd wear out.
>
> Satori, enlightenment, samadhi, nirvana. Bliss is the word used to describe the state of samadhi. God consciousness some call it. Or in Buddhism it might be considered an

---

[58] I've since learnt that there are courses available to anyone who might be serious about such an experience. They're not so different in price, if you break it down to a daily rate (they seem, often, to run in three-day chunks), compared to staying at an *onsen* (hot-spring) resort. Another alternate route to the enjoyment of the mountains?

> end to suffering. Life with no suffering. Freedom from suffering. Are these attempts to escape? Ways out? The Buddha as I understand it was seeking a way out of suffering.
>
> Realizing there is no way, does that become a way of no way? Sort of like Sisyphus.[59] (Watson, personal communication, 15 August 2009)

The question of curriculum in *eikaiwa* reaches deep as we ask ourselves what it means to *teach* (or to *learn*) *English conversation*. Doesn't it depend on what we want to talk about? Will our conversation be more or less essentially *English* as we discuss, now this topic, now that? Is it that we want to approach English language by addressing progressively more English topics? Or is English language merely understood as providing a way of conversing, and conversing generally as working towards enlightenment? Is enlightenment an understanding of freedom, a freedom greater than the suffering that confronts us in life? *What, after all, is this English that you want to learn?* After asking all these questions and more, we may well find that at any rate, at least there is no other way of going about things. No way *except* through.

Oku, uchi (2).

Sometimes I'm not sure whether I'm looking beyond or looking in, whether I'm at the window or at the mirror. We have approached the heart of things, and will now press on, lean in.

Here, too, is a journey homeward underway.

---

59 Sisyphus, it is worth noting, is a favoured figure in Maxine Greene's Teacher as Stranger (1973), as she calls on teachers to do philosophy. Her Sisyphus, like her Stranger, is borrowed from Camus (1955), who wrote of him as a kind of absurd hero. The Sisyphean Task is punishment for a life of breaking basic laws of god and man: killing guests, tricking and binding Thanatos, and so on; Sisyphus is literally a hell-raiser, and this is what he had coming to him. The Sisyphean Task, then, with which he settles into eternity, is to roll a great rock uphill; the rock never makes it, rolling back down to the bottom; the Challenge constantly renews itself, and the rock gathers no moss. Camus writes of Sisyphus's "scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life" (1955, p. 89). "The teacher," maintains Greene, "who is familiar with anguish and absurdity can hardly feel sanguine in his ordinary life" (1973, p. 258). And with absurdities, we remember like Estragon in Waiting for Godot, there is "Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1952/1994, p. 2)—even when, as Block points out, "this doesn't stop them from waiting for Godot" (1998, p. 28).

Home (5)

Stead of a Conclusion [60]

> Who at the moment he feels himself to be the poet possesses the primitive pathos of the lines, at the moment he feels himself poetized has the erotic ear which picks up every sound—that man, and that man alone, has realized the ideal of aesthetics.
> (Kierkegaard, 1843/1959, p. 140)

Dwelling.

It's time I addressed, directly, this sense of home I've been after, or in some sense *dwelt on*, for the year and a bit it's been since I began to write this thesis. To be sure, it's been right here all along, in its way, but I haven't really *gone there* at any length. So I begin: I wish to bring my innermost *dwelling* into account.

People, I learnt to notice and cultivate as I became accustomed to *eikaiwa*, love to talk about themselves. We love to bring to light what is hidden about ourselves, my students and I. What may be absent in the surroundings. These surroundings we adorn with our talk—of other places we've been to, people who are gone away, or even a distant *furusato*. We could talk for hours about places we knew. We could span the country and a good number of places in the wider world, just the few of us sitting in the *kyōshitsu* on a Friday afternoon, all the while gratified to also be talking about ourselves, our origins, our holidays—and an important forum for the skills gained in *eikaiwa* is the world of travel. As if travel were embodied in the presence of *gaijin no sensei*, someone from another side of the Japanese experience, out beyond the many shores.

---

60 This is the turn towards home, following a thread I've had in mind all along. As I finish my final revisions, I'm not so sure I wouldn't rather spend some more time with this chapter. But then again I think I've situated things so that I'll clearly have such dwelling to look forward to. Strangely, I feel, this chapter bespeaks another layer, not necessarily of the same substance as that evidenced in the foregoing chapters, all grouped, with this one, under the heading *Home*. These have all been reflections relating to the previous series of more directly conversational chapters. As these reflections are at least written without addressing others by name, they may be read as, in part, another kind of exploration of the same themes, a turn in towards the heart beyond. Digging down, here, making way for a foundation of sorts, has brought me about far enough, I think.

As much as anything, I feel I'm taking stock of my methods in this chapter, checking again, now that the wider thesis has unfolded, how far and how deep I can reach. I think now I've demonstrated *eikaiwa* in its autoethnographic potential.

I have beaten a path, a way that I can describe, inscribing it to the heart of things. I've found my way, and made of my methods and questions a home and final resting place for this thesis. I believe I have been *a kind of poet*: I have constructed a way of life, here, in the *furusato* of living as *eikaiwa no sensei*. Let me now take measure of my limits, my place, first as pedagogical dwelling, then as poetic dwelling, with some reference to exile and pilgrimage. I want to identify the sense of *uchi* in which I have dwelt as *eikaiwa no sensei*, and perhaps especially that to which I have returned as *eikaiwa no sensei* and also, after all this time, still *gaijin* in some way, whatever the wider setting of the *furusato*.

Living poetically, dwelling pedagogically.

Leggo returns to his anecdote, of living poetically, in order to further develop a sense of the place where I want to see myself. In "The Heart of Pedagogy" (2005a), he quotes Heidegger to say

> poetry does not fly over and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling. (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 218; quoted in Leggo, 2005a, p. 441)

Further, "the poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 228; quoted in Leggo, 2005a, p. 441). Such, then, is my sense of the framework in which I have meant to construct a sense of home and, before that, a sense of the way home and, along the way, a sense of being away from home.

All roads lead, have led *here*, as our experience will prove. But I have been out here, on my way, all this time. I have gone out, have been away from home; from here, perhaps, you, my reader, may follow the story of *M[aku]Donarudo Sensei*, who, being *eikaiwa no sensei*, must also be known as *gaijin*. This is the way: the same story may tell of the way of the soul arising in partaking with students of life and learning in the Japanese context where I have known them.

Foran and Olson (2008), "Seeking Pedagogical Places," ask "what it means to dwell pedagogically in a place" (Foran & Olson, 2008, p. 25). To them it is a matter of *being absorbed*, of *being able*. They define pedagogical place as site for teacher-student relational moments (building a sense of what Bakhtin might call a *chronotope*, a *place of the fullness of time*, for teaching). What is present to the *us* formed in this relational moment, the us that is here, in the flesh, present in the moment? There is a sense here of the importance of *dwelling authentically* in teaching, in the school and not just in the classroom. This would be an awakening from the busy work of *managing* and to the more teacherly *pedagogy* as mode of approach towards our students. "Belonging," as Relph (1993) put it,

> to a place, feeling part of it, gives many a positive sensation of security. Yet for others it may be oppressive and restrictive. Whether we know places with deep affection or

> merely as stopping points in our passage through the world, they are set apart in time and space because they have distinctive meanings for us. (Relph, 1993, p. 28)

Without belonging, displacement. Without regard, alienation. The four walls of the classroom, maintain Foran and Olson, speak of an inside and an outside, an inner and an outer world. There is, indeed, schooling and then there is *the real world* (see Arendt, 1978, for a discussion of the classroom's abstraction from the world). The school at large may yet be a kind of transitional space. There is a "simple connection that we, as humans, have to our world" (Foran & Olson, 2008, p. 40), which holds priority over any social conventions that may be imposed. It is in relation to this natural world (an *out there* in which we may not arrive at our freedom) that we find, with Gadamer, that "without thinking of ourselves as free we cannot understand ourselves at all" (Gadamer, 2001, p. 41). There is freedom *for* self-consciousness, where self-consciousness is also the concretion of freedom. This is, to me, an ideal experience of pedagogy. Its pursuit will bring us to being in a pedagogical place, a shared space and not just a fixed point on a map, a "location that was walked over or through" (Foran & Olson, 2008, p. 45).

Dwelling poetically.

Let me bear in earnest, then, with this sense of dwelling. It invites a nice pun, as I've already noted, but as I begin to follow Heidegger's observations (and I will do so in some detail) I further note that the word is *wohnen*—and I think I'll be excused for having used the rather plain English word *live* throughout. In any case, Heidegger distinguishes the kind of dwelling he's talking about from a form whereby we might understand it as one amongst other forms of human behaviour. We may work in the city but dwell in the country. We may travel, and as we do so we may dwell in one place after another. There might be all kinds of places we *call home*. But "dwelling so understood is always merely the occupying of a lodging" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 215). Perhaps, after all, there's nothing to say about this home without slipping into nostalgia. But to dwell a moment longer on the *Wohnung* that can be constructed from Heidegger's vocabulary, I want to explore how this distinguishes itself from the *Heim* of *Heimweh*, a German way of speaking of nostalgia as such. In any case it will be clear that *Haus* isn't in here at all, nor, with it, feeling *zu Hause, at home*. Instead, Heidegger is after the kind of dwelling that is also called human existence. This kind of living, he says, becomes what it is, becomes dwelling, because of poetry.

The kind of poetry we're talking about, by the way, is the *making* of poetry—that is, to put the verbs *dichten* (to *make poetry*) and *wohnen* up against each other reveals this shared *building*, a *making* that characterizes human experience, causes human existence as such. The question becomes, first, *where* we find this dwelling. Our answer is *in language*. Reminded that we do not shape or master language but that it shapes and masters us, we arrive at language as the greatest appeal that we can "help to be voiced" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 216). So one way in which we may live poetically, one way of living in this dwelling, is to *listen*. Another is "Cultivating and caring (*colere, cultura*)," which Hei-

degger says "are a kind of building" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 217)—a building up of what is of the earth, of nature as our dwelling-place. Then there is "*aedificare*, erecting things that cannot come into being and subsist by growing" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 217). But neither of these represents all that can be heard when we really listen. A house is not a home. If I look to the actual building, the four walls, as the only place where I have a sense of living, I am only building a trap. What we may raise from the ground up is not the ground itself; it is this ground that, being of the earth, is the ground of human dwelling. Like to like.

But is this concern with the *ground* really poetic? Is poetry not more a thing of the air, flying high, fantastically rising above all? Well, if it were so then it couldn't very well be written. Different writers write from different positions, each more or less horizontal and more or less vertical. But we are all of the earth, no matter what we think of our writings. To the earth, in time, we return to take our rest, and then our poetry remains but it, too, remains of the earth.

Heidegger's next question is *why* the human dwelling is poetic, is making, building. He says it is indeed *for security*: that of taking measure of our dimension, this place where our "upward glance passes aloft toward the sky, and yet it remains below on earth" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 220). Bringing in new lines from the Hölderlin poem in which this whole address takes its point of departure, Heidegger maintains that "this upward glance spans the between of sky and earth" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 220). This is the in-between dimension of human existence, then. Taking the measure of this dimension "brings dwelling into its ground plan" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 221).

Now, if poetry is building, making *and measuring*, then what is to measure? Well, there are limits to our dwelling. Note, indeed, that Heidegger doesn't seem to be using the term *Leben*, for *life* in the sense of *living*, when he says that we *exist* as mortals; indeed, if human beings *die*, we die all our lives—but the place of dwelling, even of dwelling on death, is in poetry. We attend to our dwelling, and one day return more fully to the earth of it, but there will always be the upward glance, the measure of my life against the unknown. There is the roof over my head, and then there are the stars in the sky. This is where I live, where I grew up, where I come from. This is the body in which I know I have life: the living body. In time, the dead body. Listen. Attend. Respond. From my place, here, walking on the ground, I know that my view is of the sky as from below. But I walk on two feet and carry an upward glance. Listen. Attend. Respond. It is only here and on the greater mountaintops of Tōhoku that I have grown to have this view of the sky. *What keeps the stars apart?* I want to tell you of my view. Here is how it appears to me: I give you my word.

I want to bring images into being. I want to let it be known that being appears to me and to let it be seen how being appears to me. The image is no fantasy, no illusion because it is of the nature of things as they appear to me; it is always already there, when I am at the heart of things. Listen. Attend. Respond.

> Dwelling occurs only when poetry comes to pass and is present, and indeed in the way whose nature we now have some idea of, as taking a measuring for all measuring. This measure-taking is itself an authentic measure-taking, no mere gauging with ready-made measuring rods for the making of maps. Nor is poetry building in the sense of raising and fitting buildings. But poetry, as the authentic gauging of the dimension of

> dwelling, is the primal form of building. Poetry first of all admits man's dwelling into its very nature, its presencing being. Poetry is the original admission of dwelling. (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 227)

Now perhaps I feel closer to what the ground itself charts. The ground I see is an image of home, an image of pilgrimage. *I guess that this must be the place* (see Byrne, et al., 1983). I take measure as for architecture, for the structure of human dwelling, as I follow through on my project of constructing a way of life, always *looking for a home* (see Byrne & Eno, 2008), a place for my construction. This is the *furusato* I've meant to make room for. This seeking, this desire, also has a lot for me to say about it. For one thing, if I am *away* from home, somehow outside of *my place*, my dwelling, the desire for it bespeaks its presence, "for dwelling can be unpoetic only because it is in essence poetic . . . a piece of wood can never go blind" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 228).

If the poetry of my dwelling is ever not now, then when is it, and how long does it stay? This is where my love grows. This is where *kindness* arrives, and "as long as this arrival of kindness endures" (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 229), this is where I dwell poetically. It is here that I walk the earth, with my head at times in the clouds, but always with this upward glance, this way of seeing *beyond*.

At home with the ancients.

So much more to say. *I can see home from here.* It is sometimes over across the waters when I see it. *Home is where the heart is. There's no place like home.* There is a barrenness or a wilderness, a wildness to the places that I pass. Something alien in me, to which I am alien. There is an exile in the heart when being *here* means being nowhere else. We wish for the *dokodemo* door. Without it we are meant to walk the earth, to cover the ground and seek to fill the storehouses of memory in such a way that we become aware of being in many places at once. We dwell in particular places as well, and each has its own measure, but measures are also of distance. This is what it's like to begin to want, to become aware of the desire "to penetrate the images, to see through them to their very ground," as Crouse says.

> Even if we deny the images, and seek to banish them, and lose ourselves in immediate occupations, still they impinge upon our consciousness, in the sense of emptiness and futility they leave behind them. By our very denial, we somehow affirm them. (Crouse, 1986, p. 4)

Taking a look, then, we find, out there, an *odos*, the stuff of odyssey, of *agōn*, of the road that lies ahead, of journey. If journey and story match as do image and poem, let me show you the protagonist as one who struggles through *for* reconciliation, for the arrival of kindness. This journey, a dwelling in journey, is my *hosomichi*, and it takes place in an *oku*.

I'm taking a turn for *oku* as I head for home: for there is a home, an *uchi*, that is not a house, an actual building whose walls I can knock on, not something *out there*; it is an interior, an image of indwelling, of referring to myself and my innermost subjective experience. It is hidden, by the way, in my Glossary's entry for *uchi* (above). Note the two kanji provided. Note, however, that only one of those can be used in the following entry, *uchi ni kaeru*. The other is not a place to go back to so much as it's always *here*. Here in my heart, or here with my heart. Here with my heart in it. This is the living body in and through which I inhabit.

The first thing Odysseus does when he gets home is to kill all the suitors who had come to his wife, Penelope, during his ten-year absence. This brings the suitors' sons and brothers for revenge, and Odysseus could take them all, but Athena, calling him "master of land ways and sea ways" (Homer, XXIV, 542-544; 1963, Fitzgerald), calls on him to *command himself*. There is an order to the place, to the home, as to the heart. There are limits, or there couldn't be measures. Until the word makes everything new again. Now the word is kindness. Now the word is love. Now the word is compassion. Now the word is *yūai*. Now the word is simply *ai*. After all that, the word is simply *I*. My love grows new in every moment, until I can no longer hear or say the word or take the measure. In the meantime I walk through gardens, swim through libraries, and every garden, every library tells me, speaks me, spells me out and says *I am here*.

There is a winter of discontent, a time when Leonard Cohen says "the blizzard of the world has crossed the threshold, and it's overturned the order of the soul" (Cohen, 1992). But this discontent is also measured and allowed for, here in the capacity for content and contentedness; for it is only ever *here*, it is always *here where we dwell*, that poets speak of a golden age and its return. There is, here, in language, in the word, a light in which we see ourselves for what we are, a light which speaks in images.

Crouse leads me back to Augustine's *Confessions*, where I hear the word *amor*:

> By its own weight, a body inclines towards its own place. Weight does not always tend towards the lowest place, but to its own place. A stone falls, but fire rises. They move according to their own weights, they seek their own places. Oil poured into water rises to the surface; water poured on oil sinks below the oil. They act according to their own weights, they seek their own places. Things out of place are restless (*inquieta*); they find their places, and they rest.
>
> My love is my weight (*Pondus meum amor meus*); whithersoever I am moved, I am moved there by love. (Augustine, XIII, 9, 10; 1986, Crouse)

There is, here, "a movement away from the multiplicity and temporality of worldly experience, a turning inward in search of a vision of the unity and stability of all things;" also, "The meaning of experience is not to be found in external phenomena, as such; they make sense only as they are judged and unified by the conscious self" (Crouse, 1986, p. 30). This turning inward, this interior way that can I find travels with me, is very much of the *uchi* in which I now bring my study, an autoethnographic thesis after all, to rest. *Where I come from, you can see deep in amongst the stars.*

Well, here we are. I'm feeling at the moment that it wouldn't be inappropriate to listen in, with Crouse once more, this time on Dante's concluding lines in the *Divine Comedy*:

> O thou eternal light, who dwellest in thyself alone,
> Alone self-knowing; joy and love proceed
> From thee, thy knower and thy known.
> (Alighieri, XXXIII, 85-87; 1986, Crouse)

There is a sense in which this, too, is a fundamental image for me in my efforts to measure the distance, the darkness over the waters of the earth, and so to take the measure of my existence, my own *ethnos* or citizenship, here in the middle of things. In visions of utopia, repatriation; in approaches to liberty, to equality, to brotherhood, I have found my way of describing a spiritual landscape without which I could not know myself, either as *sensei* or as *gaijin*. All these images bear witness to the restless heart of an *uchi*, a *my place*, a *where I come from* that travels with me, takes different shapes and makes me feel at times like a hermit crab, trailing my way sideways and around beneath the current in the depths of this understanding, this abiding task for knowledge of myself, in this work underlying the light of reflection and autobiography. I find in this *uchi* the seat of all *eikaiwa*, all conversation and that which has informed my profession to teach. The voices in this conversation mix in fellowship and reciprocity. *This is where I leave you. Thank you. Good night.*

Epilogue

On Reflection

Coming home to roost.

Composing a thesis for my MEd, I've taken a good look at how I've lived and how I've wanted to live in my profession to teach, during a sabbath of years spent teaching English in Japan. I've pursued the most important themes I could find there, and I've found quite a lot of support in many readings but in particular Block's construct of *teacher as Jew* (see Block 1998). His work is itself a reading of Greene's *Teacher as Stranger* (1973). Both pose fundamental questions for the teacher, and for the underpinnings of curriculum that determine the teacher's existence.

This is what I found most interesting about my life as *eikaiwa no sensei*, really: that it didn't even seem to answer all that well to technical innovations—or not, in my experience, *so much* in technique but in approach, I suppose you would say. So, there it is: I've been working on the more speculative side of the teaching experience that I've had, even though (or rather, precisely because) it was an experience in teaching *language*. I've been exploring relations, from my place in English as Foreign Language, between my experience and some of the wider settings of the field of Education.

The field of Applied Linguistics, meanwhile, to which my thoughts on teaching and on the *communicative* approach in language teaching owe a great deal, tends to provide for a different measure, proceeding from studies in language acquisition. Although I've made reference at several points throughout my thesis to some or other idea from within Applied Linguistics, I think this is another layer in practice as well as in theory from the kind of study I've advanced. For instance, I've done very little to describe at any sort of procedural level what would happen in any of my own *eikaiwa* classes. I have to some extent accommodated such detail with a sense of *silence* running throughout, visible here and there. It is matter for other studies.

But naturally, the experience which I've made it my task to represent is that of *a kind of language teacher*, one who goes to teach EFL in Japan—and, in my case at any rate, returns as *eikaiwa no sensei*.

I've really only worked with the plainest of details as far as classroom activities would go, and have dwelt much more on those thoughts Block (1998) would be having before he walked in to class. This is my *tell-tale heart*, speaking nevertheless as the heart of a language teacher. For instance, consider the centrality in *eikaiwa* of the question *where are you from?* This is indeed one of maybe two fundamental questions with which I returned from Japan, a year and more ago now, and took up my first formal studies in the field of Education. Perhaps this question can evoke quite a lot in the heart and mind of *eikaiwa* itself. So I've made it a basic concern to find where it is that I have my own sense

of *home*, of *dwelling*, such that I can find *my place* (and here, too, I tend to explore Japanese terms for my existence, points of reference like *uchi* and *furusato*) in a world including both Japan the island nation and Prince Edward Island, the island province. The other question, by the way, was *what is eikaiwa?*

Having donned the cap of Teacher Educator in some of the work I've done this past year, I've observed a bit of a roll of the eyes at any word related to *reflection*. I've invited teaching diaries as a form of written work for evaluation (my pre-service colleagues have, in these courses, gone forth to get a taste of what it's like to teach in the medium of what is, here in PEI, called English as Additional Language). I've offered the alternative of preparing an annotated bibliography relating to a topic in the same field. I've been somewhat surprised, though not displeased to be getting more of the latter.

The lay of the land.

Meanwhile, however, as a graduate student in my own right, what I've been working on is a kind of autoethnography of language teaching, exploring the seven-odd year period that preceded my current studies—a period during which I worked in Japan, being called *eikaiwa no sensei*—also *gaijin no sensei*. I've been reflecting quite a lot on themes arising around the identity suggested in such language, writing through most of the chapters in my thesis *in conversation* with students and colleagues back in Japan. The work is entitled *Letters, Home*. It becomes an epistolary enquiry at first, as I present the letters I've written to those in Japan (and not the letters they've sent me). I've also taken pains to protect identities, confident that the names I give for people and corporations are not the names of persons or corporations with which I've ever been associated in the kinds of situations I include in my account. The ethics of autobiography seem stickiest when you realize that in some way the entire life you mean to represent in your own words has been lived out in the presence, even at times in the gaze, of other people. My unit of analysis has come to be the *phenomenon*, and I myself am the instrument. I reach to account for my experience, and find myself, here and there, representing something that can surprise even me. I have adopted three watchwords. Listen. Attend. Respond.

In my letter-exchanges with real others from *my Japanese life*, I have been testing the limits of continuity in my life. At times I've found this continuity extremely limited, as it's hard even to present these letters in their proper context, whatever that may be. There is the context of personality, a shared agency in which my correspondent and I are co-ordinating our experiences or comments around a selected theme or question (of the nature of *eikaiwa*, of the nuances that lie between the Japanese *sensei* and the English *teacher*, of the place of *gaijin* in this Japanese practice, of the practice itself as it may relate to theories of Japan's place in the world).

Now I've got to the end of my enquiry, have constructed a way of life, am drawing everything to a close, beginning to answer a few anticipated questions. I feel I've taken my own way, thinking through my experience in the Japanese contexts where I lived and worked, asking myself what it meant to live under the given title of *(gaijin no) eikaiwa no sensei*.

Now I'm at my most reflective, japanning this artefact, this career in becoming as a teacher; I'm going to polish the lacquer until I see my face in it. Soon I will be finished, and my thesis will rest. *But first, this.* I reflect as I have arrived in my way at kindness, compassion, fellowship, *(yū)ai*. My thesis now comes to rest just as I reach these, and I know what I will say to practitioners in Applied Linguistics: *what I do is a kind of philosophy of language teaching, perhaps, or a poetics of it, to which I invite others.* But I also say this to a wider audience: in part to my friends, my family, my students; in part to anyone with an interest in pedagogy broadly speaking.

If I'm charting new ground, new questions or theories for researchers to take up as concerns for any field, I hope that this chart has unfolded (and refolded, when not needed) gracefully in my reader's hands. The detail is sketchy in places, as always, and the scale may never be entirely rationalized (because I'm taking myself as the scale), but I've found great enrichment in this autobiographical enquiry and its many references to others' ideas I've found exciting.

I suppose the experience I'm able to present in this way may be taken as representative or even typical in some ways, controversial and (even deeply) idiosyncratic in other ways. For example, the assertion of identity to which I turn the phrase *gaijin no eikaiwa no sensei* is certainly not a delicate—nor even polite—conversational starting-point, though I find it has been enriching to break it down into its constituent terms and then to explore each in a different conversation, with a different correspondent. All of this could, I feel, be applied in teaching professions quite generally, but if I speak as especially one kind of teacher, then I am a language teacher. I feel I've been able to go to the heart of all such things in this autoethnographic thesis: by taking *enquiry* as the form I've meant to make explicit in my communicative approach; by situating *gaijin* as initiator of *English conversation*; by taking this conversation as a unique form of enquiry; by problematizing the place of *sensei* in relation to *teaching*; by perhaps suggesting the ghost of a samurai and its tempting link to a fairly explicit way of life (codified, for instance, in the *bushidō* as present in Yamamoto's *Hagakure*, 1716/1979), an understanding that may be described. This is how I've been able to find my way through the experience of being, as I say, first of all a *language* teacher.

Spelling out Japanese words throughout the main body of this text, I've used simplified Hepburn *rōmaji*.

As a note on format, I should say I've followed the fifth edition of the APA *Publication Manual*, especially Chapter Six, "Material Other Than Journal Articles." The letters making up a good portion of this work have thus been presented according to what I thought should look best, and I hope this isn't too hermeneutic an approach to the *Manual*'s contents. To keep them looking like letters, to keep them *conversational*, I cut down on the footnotes, the references to outside texts (but especially page-numbers within texts—although every work to which I refer is listed in its proper place) and, whilst putting the letters in the same font as the rest of the thesis (Baskerville, as my choice amongst serif fonts "similar to" Times—see APA, 2001, p. 285), also skipping lines between non-indented paragraphs. In the end I felt this was most effective, especially with a view to *representing* the form in which I'd written each letter. In all other respects I feel I've more obviously found all the answers in the *Manual*, but I should note that interpretations of Chapter Six have also included the application of justified text, single-spaced throughout, footnotes appearing, like block quotations and the list of Ref-

erences, in a slightly smaller font size than the main body of the text—just as these would appear in the journal itself, *after* the article had been submitted in APA style, which I ultimately take to be a clear way of suggesting layout before such finalizing considerations (themselves less uniform, journal to journal, than the main APA guidelines) are brought to bear.

The order of parts in this work is also worth noting. Composition having begun with sketches here and there, lending to an overall sense of the questions I wanted to address, I began working those sketches in with my epistolary conversations as they got going. A simple chronological order held throughout the composition of the work overall, with narratives and essays interspersed amongst the letters I was writing—but then I found that my main themes were working their way across every section as I went on composing and revising. It now seemed suitable to allow a whole section of *Letters* to find its reflection in a complete second series of pieces under the heading *Home* (I'd chosen the title, as a working title, almost before I'd mapped out anything else about my research; it didn't just stick, I think, but even marked the spot where I wanted to dig, before any other details of the land had become evident). This reflection came most naturally, I felt, by showing the conversations in the order in which they'd been initiated, and this was perhaps most of all because the conversations seem to move towards that heart of things, that *oku* which had been my goal; the essays and narratives of the latter section are meant to bring us back to a place like that from which we first set out. After writing each series of letters, I've arranged it for better flow, including the dates for reference but not necessarily in chronological sequence as they were written. The generous reader will regard it as *wabi sabi*.

Without love.

But this essay wasn't meant to get bogged down in all these sorts of notes. What I really wanted to do was to take a stance and make of this a proper opinion piece. Most of all, I want to *share findings*, to put one last layer of lustre on this little pearl as I offer it up.

There's a song I know called "The Death of Ferdinand de Saussure" in which, amidst a relentless sequence of rhymes with *Saussure* (*so sure*, *closure*, *bulldozer*, *composer*, *composure*, *kosher*, *Dozier*), the poet reacts, loses his composure, shoots old Ferdinand and makes of these the man's last words:

> You are nothing
> I am nothing
> Without love (Merritt, 1999)

Hearing this song again recently, my reflections came back to Augustine's *Confessions*.

A favourite image of Augustine's is the dark glass of the mirror, what he looks *through* in his search for the truth. It is indeed of *logos* that he is speaking when he says that "in the dark image of the clouds, and through the glass of the heavens, not as it is"

(Augustine, *Confessiones*, XV, 6; 1876, Pilkington), *we know the word.* Listen. Attend. Respond. This central image in Augustine's work is of course drawn from I Corinthians (13:12): "now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (King James Version). The key to the wider utterance from which this verse comes, it is well known, is *love*: this is the grand utterance which begins by speaking the language of human and intellectual being but, without love, sounds like nothing so much as the sound of a horn or a gong, without words; it is the utterance that begins again in prophecy and understanding and knowledge, goes on believing it can remove mountains but, without love, comes again to nothing; it gives everything it has to those in need, and dies a martyr's death and, without love, gets nowhere (I Cor., 13:1-3).

So here I am, at table with Stephin Merritt and Ferdinand de Saussure. At this point in our symposium we've come through compassion to fellowship, to *yūai*, to *ai* as the desire for and practice of dialogue—for a good instance, in *eikaiwa*. We may be here for awhile. For now, we only wish to continue the conversation. The more, the merrier. Maybe, sometime down the road, we'll all have more to say. For now, perhaps, it's well to stick with the question, to let Saussure's last words provoke every possible response, to seek to know what measure love takes, here at home, in the *furusato* of a whole language, which is what it takes to sing my heart or to speak my mind. This enquiry, like everything, begins at home.

And so it ends. I conclude my enquiry in reflection, prepare to present it as a reflection, more or less stable, more or less finalized, more or less complete. I look at the measures I've taken in my writing, I look at the reaches I've made, the walks I've walked, and I keep seeing myself concerned with finding, in these stories of my life, *how* it is that I've done all of this. Finally writing myself into a sense of home, of *furusato*, with my experience as *gaijin no sensei*, I look in at the *uchi* (especially as 内) which I find there, and perhaps shouldn't be too surprised to find that what I profess is, perhaps at bottom, the compassion implied in *kaiwa*, in *conversation*. I'm not deciding to call it one thing or another: whether *amor* or *caritas*, fellowship, friendship, *(Yū)ai*, recognition, *dō* or Tao. For me now, these are all along the way, and the way of which I've now taken the measure, the way that can be described in my life, is *eikaiwa*. This is my English conversation. This is the *kyōshitsu*—home, like the *chashitsu*, to a *dō*, a way through the *oku*, in and through which my way passes. This is the earth I walk. Here I am peripatetic.

References

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Andorf, D. (2002). Half in, half out. In D. Chandler & D. Kootnikoff (Eds.), *Getting both feet wet: Experiences inside the JET Program* (2nd ed., pp. 154-168). Tokyo: JPGS.

Arendt, H. (1978). *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought.* New York: Penguin.

Asanuma, S. (2003). Japanese educational reform for the 21st century: The impact of the new course of study toward the postmodern era in Japan. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research* (pp. 435-442). London: Erlbaum.

Avildsen, J.G. (Director) (1984). *The karate kid* [Motion picture]. USA: Delphi.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays.* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.) Austin: University of Texas. (Original work published 1975)

Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). Response to a question from the *Novy Mir* editorial staff. In C. Emerson & M. Holquist, *Speech genres and other late essays.* (V.W. McGee, Trans.) Austin: University of Texas. (Original work published 1970)

Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In C. Emerson & M. Holquist, *Speech genres and other late essays.* (V.W. McGee, Trans.) Austin: University of Texas. (Original work published 1979)

Bashō, M. (1996). *Bashō's road's edge.* (S. Watson, Trans.) Sendai: Bookgirl.

Bashō, M. (2004). *Backroads to far towns: Bashō's travel journal.* (C. Corman, Trans.) Buffalo: White Pine.

Bashō, M. (2005). *The narrow road to the deep north.* (N. Yuasa, Trans.) London: Penguin.

Bashō, M. (2006). *Narrow road to the interior.* (S. Hamill, Trans.) Boston: Shambhala.

Beckett, S. (1994). *Waiting for Godot: A tragicomedy in two acts.* New York: Grove. (Original work published in 1952)

Belcher, D., & Connor, U. (Eds.) (2001). *Reflections on multi-literate lives.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bell, J.S. (2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly, 36*(2); 207-213.

Binyon, L. (1917). For the fallen. In *The cause: Poems of the war.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Block, A.A. (1998). "And he pretended to be a stranger to them . . . ": Maxine Greene and *teacher as stranger.* In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *The passionate mind of Maxine Greene: "I am . . . not yet."* London: Falmer.

Bloom, A. (1963). Foreword. In L. Strauss, *On Tyranny.* (A. Bloom, Ed.) London: Free Press of Glencoe.

Brown, H.D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). White Plains: Pearson.

Bueno, E.P. (2003). A leading language school. In E.P. Bueno & T. Caesar (Eds.), *I wouldn't want anybody to know: Native English teaching in Japan.* Tokyo: JPGS.

Byrne, D., & Eno, B. (2008). Home. On *Everything that happens will happen today* [CD]. New York: Todo Mundo.

Byrne, D., Franz, C., Harrison J., & Weymouth, T. (1983). This must be the place (naive melody). On *Speaking in tongues* [CD]. New York: Sire.

Camus, A. (1946). *L'Étranger.* New York: Pantheon.

Camus, A. (1955). *The myth of Sisyphus and other essays.* (J. O'Brien, Trans.) New York: Knopf.

Casanave, C.P., & Schechter, S.R. (Eds.) (1997). *On becoming a language educator: Personal essays on professional development.* Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Chambers, C. (2004). Research that matters: Finding a path with heart. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies, 2*(1); 1-19.

Chambers, C. (2008). Where are we? Finding common ground in a curriculum of place. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies 6*(2); 113-128.

Cohen, A. (1995). *Belle du seigneur.* (D. Coward, Trans.) London: Viking. (Original work published 1968)

Cohen, L. (1992). The future. On *The future* [CD]. Washington: Columbia.

Conrad, J. (1988). Heart of darkness. In R. Kimbrough (Ed.), *Heart of darkness: An authoritative text; Backgrounds and sources; Criticism* (3rd ed.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1899)

Crouse, R.D. (1986). *Images of pilgrimage: Paradise and wilderness in Christian spirituality.* Charlottetown: St Peter.

Coudenhove-Kalergi, R.N. (1938). *The totalitarian state against man.* (A. McFadyean, Trans.) London: Frederick Muller. (Original work published 1937)

Davis, L. (1995). *The End of the Story.* New York: Picador.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry.* New York: Henry Holt.

Dylan, B. (1967). I pity the poor immigrant. On *John Wesley Harding* [CD]. Washington: Columbia.

Eisner, E.W. (1996). Should a novel count as a dissertation in education? *Research in the Teaching of English, 30*(4); 403-427.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A.P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733-68). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ellison, R. (1995). *Invisible man.* New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1952)

Endo, S. (1969). *Silence.* (W. Johnston, Trans.) Tokyo: Sophia. (Original work published 1966)

Endo, S. (1989). And you, too. In *Foreign studies.* (M. Williams, Trans.) London: Peter Owen. (Original work published 1965)

Foran, A., & Olson, M. (2008). Seeking pedagogical places. *Phenomenology & Practice, 2*(1); 24-48.

Francis, B. (1988). Oh my golly! On *Surfer Rosa* [CD]. London: 4AD.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* London: Continuum.

Freud, S. (1961). *Beyond the pleasure principle.* (J. Strachey, Trans.) New York: Norton (Original work published 1920)

Garcia, J. & Hunter, R. (1970). Ripple. On *American beauty* [CD]. New York: Warner.

Gordon, J.A. (2005). The crumbling pedestal: Changing images of Japanese teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 56*(5), 459-470.

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger: Educational philosophy for the modern age.* Belmont: Wadsworth.

Gruenewald, D.A. (2003). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(3); 619-645.

Hashimoto, M. (2003). Japan's struggle for the formation of modern elementary school curriculum: Westernization and hiding cultural dualism in the late 19th century. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research* (pp. 417-424). London: Erlbaum.

Hayano, D.M. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects. *Human Organization, 38*; 113-120.

Hatoyama, Y. (2009, September) My political philosophy. *Voice.* Retrieved December 2, 2009, from http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20090909a1.html.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1977). *Phenomenology of spirit.* (A.V. Miller, Trans.). Oxford: Clarendon. (Original work published 1807)

Heidegger, M. (1971). . . . Poetically man dwells . . . . In *Poetry, language, thought.* New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1954)

Holloway, S.D., & Yamamoto, Y. (2003). Sensei: Early childhood education teachers in Japan. In O.N. Saracho & B. Spodek (Vol. Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives in early childhood education: Studying teachers in early childhood settings* (pp. 181-207). Greenwich: Information Age.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom.* New York: Routledge.

Hurston, Z.N. (1991). *Dust tracks on a road.* New York: Harper Collins. (Original work published 1942)

Huston, J. (Director) (1958). *The barbarian and the geisha* [Motion picture]. Japan: 20th Century Fox.

Ibuse, M. (1970). *Black rain: A novel.* (J. Bester, Trans.) Tokyo: Kodansha. (Original work published 1966)

Jacobs, R. (2001). *A beginner's guide to critical reading: An anthology of literary texts.* London: Routledge.

Keats, J. (1990). Ode on a Grecian urn. In *Poetical works* (2nd ed.; 9th rep, pp. 209-210). Oxford: UP. (Original collection published 1908; poem published 1820)

Kershner, I. (Director) (1980). *Star wars: Episode V—The empire strikes back* [Motion picture]. USA: Lucasfilm.

Kierkegaard, S. (1959). *Either/or* (Vol. II). (W. Lowrie, Trans.) Garden City: Anchor. (Original work published 1843)

Kierkegaard, S. (1962). *The point of view for my work as an author: A report to history.* (B. Nelson, Ed.; W. Lowrie, Trans.) New York: Harper. (Original work published 1855)

Kierkegaard, S. (1964). *Concluding unscientific postscript.* (D.F. Swenson & W. Lowrie, Trans.). Princeton: UP. (Original work published in 1846)

Kierkegaard, S. (1978). *Two ages: The age of revolution and the present age; A literary review.* (H.V. Hong & E.H. Hong, Trans.) Princeton: UP. (Original work published 1846)

Kierkegaard, S. (1983). Fear and Trembling. In H.V. Hong & E.H. Hong (Ed. & Trans.), *Fear and trembling/Repetition: Kierkegaard's writings, VI.* Princeton: UP. (Original work published 1843)

Kojève, A. (1963). Tyranny and Wisdom. In L. Strauss, *On Tyranny.* (A. Bloom, Ed.) London: Free Press of Glencoe.

Kojève, A. (1968). *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel: Leçons sur la* Phénoménologie de l'Esprit *professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études réunies et publiées par Raymond Queneau.* Paris: Gallimard. (Original work published 1947)

Kojève, A. (1969). *Introduction to the reading of Hegel: Lectures on the* Phenomenology of spirit *assembled by Raymond Queneau.* (A. Bloom, Ed.; J.H. Nichols, Trans.) New York: Basic. (Original work published 1947)

Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Lao Tzu (1963). *Tao te ching.* (C. Lau, Trans.) London: Penguin.

Ledwell, F.J. (2004). *Island sketchbook.* Charlottetown: Acorn.

Leggo, C. (2003). Calling the muses: A poet's ruminations on creativity in the classroom. *Education Canada, 43*(4); 12-15.

Leggo, C. (2005a). The heart of pedagogy: On poetic knowing and living. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice 11*(5); 439-455.

Leggo, C. (2005b). An archipelago of fragments. *Men & Masculinities, 8*(2); 195-207.

Lvovich, N. (1997). *The multilingual self: An inquiry into language learning.* Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Mann, T. (1969). *The Magic Mountain.* (H.T. Lowe-Porter, Trans.) New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1924)

McLaren, P. (1989). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education.* Boston: Pearson.

Melville, H. (1967). Moby-Dick; Or, the whale. In H. Harrison & H. Parker (Eds.), *Moby-Dick: An authoritative text; Reviews and letters by Melville; Analogues and sources; Criticism.* New York: Norton. (Original work published 1851)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1989). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published in 1962)

Merritt, S. (1999). The death of Ferdinand de Saussure. On *69 love songs* [CD]. Durham: Merge.

Merton, T. (1965). *The way of Chuang Tzu.* New York: New Directions.

Miyamoto, M. (1974). *A book of five rings.* (V. Harris, Trans.) Woodstock: Overlook. (Original work published 1645)

Mizoguchi, K. (Director) (1930). *Tōjin Okichi* [Motion picture]. Japan: Nikkatsu Uzumasa.

Mori, K. (1997). *Polite lies.* New York: Fawcett.

Morley, J.D. (1985). *Pictures from the water trade: An Englishman in Japan.* London: André Deutsch.

Nabokov, V.V. (1969). *Ada or ardor: A family chronicle.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Oakley, A. (1984). *Taking it like a woman.* New York: Random House.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Pinar, W.F. (2009). *The worldliness of a cosmopolitan education: Passionate lives in public service.* New York: Routledge.

Relph, E. (1993). Modernity and the reclamation of place. In D. Seamon (Ed.), *Dwelling, seeing, and designing: Toward a phenomenological ecology.* Albany, NY: SUP.

Rheingold, H. (1988). *They have a word for it: A lighthearted lexicon of untranslatable words and phrases.* Los Angeles: Tarcher.

Roach, J. (Director) (1997). *Austin Powers: International man of mystery* [Motion picture]. USA: New Line.

Sartre, J-P. (1974). The purpose of writing. In *Between existentialism and Marxism.* (J. Mathews, Trans.) New York: Pantheon.

Schwandt, T.A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Sheff, W. (2007). A girl in port. On *The Stage Names* [CD]. Bloomington: Jagjaguwar.

Shibayama, T. (Director). (1979-2005). *Doraemon* [Television series]. Japan: Shin-Ei.

Sōseki, N. (1971). *Kokoro: A novel.* (E. McLellan, Trans.) Chicago: Regnery. (Original work published 1914)

Swift, J. (1970). *Gulliver's travels.* In R. Greenberg (Ed.), *Gulliver's travels: An authoritative text; The correspondence of Swift; Pope's verses on* Gulliver's travels*; Critical Essays* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1726)

Thoreau, H.D. (1980). *The Natural History Essays.* Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith. (Original work published 1862)

Watson, S. (2008). Essay in a language seeking life. *Tōhoku Gakuin University College of Liberal Arts Review, 151*; 85-141.

Watson, S., & MacDonald, C.W.E. (2010). English conversation: *Oku no hosomichi. Tōhoku Gakuin University College of Liberal Arts Review, 155*; 69-108.

Yamamoto, T. (1979). *Hagakure: The book of the samurai.* (W.S. Wilson, Trans.) Tokyo: Kodansha. (Original work published in 1716)