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Discourse, Character, and Time in Premodern Japanese Narrative: An Introduction

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Sebastian Balmes

Discourse, Character, and Time in Premodern Japanese Narrative

An Introduction

Narratology, which has its beginnings in Russian Formalism and was mainly developed from the second half of the 1960s on by structuralists such as Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette, before focusing on broader cultural contexts since the second half of the 1980s, has become a central field of research within literary studies. While it has even spurred much interest among scholars of premodern literary traditions (for a comprehensive overview, see von Contzen/Tilg 2019), narratological research of texts written in non-European languages remains scarce.

In Japan, starting in the 1970s there have been attempts to use Western narratological theory in studies of *monogatari* 物語 tales from the Heian period (794–1185) (see the article by Jinno Hidenori in this volume, see also Yoda 2004, pp. 147–148), most notably in the work of Mitani Kuniaki¹ (e.g. 2002). In tales such as ‘Genji monogatari’ 源氏物語 (‘The Tale of Genji’), written in the early eleventh century by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部, it can be difficult to discern whether a certain text segment is spoken by the narrator or a character in the story. Since issues of speech and thought representation were already taken up

in medieval commentaries on ‘The Tale of Genji,’ narratology seemed to be concerned with similar questions and Mitani, therefore, considered his so-called ‘discourse analysis’ (*gensetsu bunseki* 言説分析) a fusion of the two, although he does not directly refer to structuralist narratology but rather to authors such as Émile Benveniste, Roland Barthes, and Mikhail Bakhtin (*ibid.*, pp. 15–16).²

However, scholars like Mitani failed to apply a systematic approach and to explore ramifications in regard to a general theory of narrative. This is connected to the fact that, even after Japanese translations of narratological ‘classics’ such as Genette’s ‘Narrative Discourse’ appeared in the second half of the 1980s and the first of the 1990s,³ these theories were seldom noticed by *monogatari* scholars.⁴ Eventually, interest in the textual and linguistic approaches proposed by Mitani and others seems to have somewhat declined, and since the beginning of the twenty-first century scholarship on ‘The Tale of Genji’ is mainly preoccupied with textual variants and reception history (Hijikata/Jinno 2017, p. 111). At the same time, outside of Japan there has been research on premodern Japanese texts that is more closely concerned with specific narratological models, such as the papers published in Steineck/Müller 2009 or in Moretti 2009 (for a brief overview of narratological work in Japanese Studies, see Balmes 2019a).⁵ Yet, there have been few attempts to extend the subject of study beyond individual texts.

The aim of this special issue is to examine a few categories central to narratological theory with regard to premodern Japanese literature: discourse, character, and time. This is not to question the relevance of any of these categories in textual analysis, but by reconsidering the supposedly universal nature, less of these categories themselves but of concepts connected to them, it is possible to elucidate characteristics of classical, i.e. Heian-period, and medieval Japanese narrative. The present volume is thus addressing not only specialists in Japanese language, literature, and

culture but also an audience that takes an interest in narrative theory, including medievalists focusing on other cultures.

Arguably most striking are the elusive qualities of premodern Japanese texts that figure on several levels of narrative. The papers in this volume span a wide range of narratives from the tenth to the fifteenth century, including noh plays and paintings, although ‘The Tale of Genji,’ unchallenged in its significance within Japanese literary history, is a recurring theme. The purpose of this introduction is to reveal theoretical connections between the individual papers, add some theoretical observations, and present a few conclusions with regard to discourse, character, and time.

In narratological terminology, discourse designates the narrative in its verbalized/textual form, as opposed to the narrated content, i.e. the story.⁶ We may thus expect that characteristics of Japanese narrative that are connected to the Japanese language are to be found in discourse. In the first contribution to this volume, Jinno Hidenori focuses on the discourse of *monogatari* tales up to ‘The Tale of Genji,’ especially concerning the concept of grammatical person, which has been vital to many narratological models. By discussing examples from classical texts, he demonstrates that grammatical person is not a category that is of much use when analyzing Heian-period literature. At the same time, Jinno illustrates how grammatical person, or rather its absence, is inseparably linked to the representation of characters, i.e. the ‘persons’ that are real within the boundaries of the narrated world, as there are many instances in which the contours of characters seem unclear.

Since narrative strategies that serve to leave characters indistinct increase until the time of ‘The Tale of Genji,’ they are not a mere by-product of classical Japanese grammar but seem to have been employed intentionally, Jinno argues. The close relationship between prose and poetry in Japanese literature also indicates that a certain degree of ambiguity or

indeterminacy could be put to use quite intentionally (Balmes 2019a, p. 319). In Japanese scholarship, cases in which the perspective or voice of a character and the narrator appear to overlap are often described as a ‘unification’ (*ittai-ka* 一体化) of the two. However, this expression is quite imprecise and trivializes literary techniques since it conflates two separate entities (narrator and character), disregards the fact that the perspective of a character can only be represented within the perspective of the narrator (see Zeman 2016, pp. 28–32; Igl 2018, pp. 134–135), and ignores the distinction of perspective and voice (although it can admittedly be a tricky one). Jinno proposes to speak of intersubjectivity instead. He argues that characteristics of Japanese facilitated the gradual development of forms of intersubjectivity that also include the narrator and readers respectively.

In my own paper, I approach discourse while following Genette’s categories ‘voice’ and ‘mood,’ the latter being subdivided into ‘distance’ and ‘perspective.’ Although several aspects of Genette’s theory can be criticized, it still provides a useful framework that is employed frequently, e.g. in the introduction to narrative theory by Martínez and Scheffel (2016 [1999]) that is very often quoted in German-speaking scholarship and has also been translated into Japanese (2006). Subdivisions of the longest chapter on the ‘How’ (*ika ni* いかに) of narration include, among ‘time’ (*jikan* 時間), ‘mood’ (*johō* 叙法) and ‘voice’ (*tai* 態).

By discussing the use of ‘pronouns,’ I question the usefulness of grammatical person as a category in the analysis of classical and medieval Japanese texts, taking up Jinno’s argument. But whereas Jinno is mainly concerned with the implications regarding character in *monogatari* literature, i.e. with the third person, I focus on narrative voice and, therefore, on the first person. Narrators in *monogatari* tales refer much less directly to themselves than the narrators in medieval European literature, however, this does not mean that their presence is not marked within the texts. Rather, their presence can be almost always detected, although it is comparably weak and is mostly lost when texts are translated into European

languages. This ‘presence’ of the narrator may also be called perspective (that this is not reflected in Genette’s theory is probably its greatest flaw). Therefore, the perspective of a character is similarly marked by verbal suffixes, honorifics, etc. Techniques foregrounding the perspective of a certain character are easily comprehended in the original texts but difficult to translate. On the other hand, in Japanese it can be particularly difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between perspective and voice. Although this may have facilitated the assumption of a plurality of narrators in ‘The Tale of Genji,’ it can be shown that an important part of this theory results from a lack of distinction between voice and knowledge. The latter pertains to perspective, but can be clearly differentiated from voice.

Narrative distance, as defined by Genette, is mostly discussed in the context of speech representation. However, textual analyses show that such a concept is hardly tenable with regard to premodern Japanese literature. I therefore propose to define distance only by the second criterion identified by Genette, i.e. narrative speed, which relates to the degree of detail in a given text segment. This definition also has the advantage that, in contrast to definitions centered on narratorial presence, distance cannot be regarded as a mere subset of perspective.

Takeuchi Akiko turns to noh theater, a most complex object for narratological studies, since the physical speaker, marked by the ‘tag clause’ of the actor that embodies them on stage, is not always identical to the speaker in the narratological sense. In noh, actors speak not only the words of the characters they play but also short narrative parts, and in addition, the choir chants not only narrative parts but also characters’ speeches. This gives rise to situations in which it is not clear who the speaker in the narratological sense is. Historically, this kind of “narrated drama” (Takeuchi 2008, p. 4) can be traced back to the development of noh, resulting from monks’ sermons that were performed in increasingly entertaining ways (ibid., pp. 7–8, 13–14). While my article has shown that

in many premodern Japanese texts the narrator cannot be clearly described as either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic (being neither fully part of the narrated world nor completely outside of it), Takeuchi focuses on cases in which it is not possible to make a sharp distinction between narrator and character—somewhat similar to the passage from the ‘Genji’ chapter ‘Hashihime’ 橋姫 (‘The Maiden of the Bridge’) scrutinized by Jinno, but much more conspicuous since the ‘tag clause’ embodied by the actor is rendered irrelevant. Takeuchi discusses these kind of ambiguities with remarkable clarity. Furthermore, her analysis of the discourse of Zeami’s 世阿弥 (1363?–1443?) god plays (*kami nō* 神能) and warrior plays (*shura nō* 修羅能) does not restrict itself to theoretical observations. She convincingly demonstrates how these narrative techniques are linked to the social and religious functions of the plays, which were defined as they are through Zeami’s reformation of noh theater, accommodating to the tastes of his warrior patrons.

While the three types (epic, lyric, dramatic) by which texts have been traditionally categorized in Western literary studies have been challenged by modern “hybrid and cross-over discursive forms” (Margolin 2011, p. 52), Takeuchi’s description of the noh as ‘narrated drama’ has the potential to question this trinity already for medieval Japan (and it should not be forgotten that playwrights such as W. B. Yeats and Berthold Brecht were inspired by noh theater; cf. Takeuchi 2008, pp. 32–33). This recalls a theoretical proposal brought forth by Uri Margolin (2011, pp. 53–54) according to which texts are to be first categorized into two types: texts with and without a narrator who is marked explicitly.

Not only can there be no doubt that narratological theory can be applied to noh drama and achieve significant results—as is aptly demonstrated by Takeuchi. Conversely, the approach from theater semiotics she employs to distinguish two kinds of communication (onstage and stage–audience communication) might also prove useful for the analysis of non-dramatic texts. Two-fold communication (author–reader, narrator–

implied reader) is often regarded as a characteristic peculiar to narrative (epic) texts. I strongly feel that this exclusiveness has to be questioned, which is also implied in an article by Raji C. Steineck (2009) on a doctrinal text by the Zen monk Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) when Steineck devises the category ‘expositor’ as a non-narrative equivalent to narrator as the speaker of the text. A distinction similar to that of onstage and stage–audience communication for ‘epic’ texts could be termed inter-character (to borrow an expression by Takeuchi) and character–(implied) reader communication and prove helpful for the cognitive-narratological analysis of Japanese text segments with indeterminate speech representation. What Takeuchi shows for the noh might also hold true in ‘epic’ texts: when the speaker is ambiguous, inter-character communication is hardly perceived; hence, the reader is more involved (in character–[implied] reader communication). At the same time, this may lead to ambiguous utterances being granted greater narrative ‘authority’ than clear characters’ speeches. It seems worthwhile to test this hypothesis in ‘epic’ contexts and explore how it might affect interpretations of the texts in question.

Thus, the first three contributions to this special issue testify to the fact that narratological categories or entities (such as specific characters) may be hard to grasp within the context of premodern Japanese narratives, or may have fuzzy boundaries. Jinno rejects grammatical person, pointing to implications for the way characters are perceived; I demonstrate that not only may it be difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between direct and indirect speech, the distinction between free direct and free indirect speech may be just as hard, which demands a reconsideration of narrative distance; and Takeuchi alerts us to the fact that the distinction of narrator and character may blur in noh theater, since the physical speaker is not necessarily identical to the speaker in the narratological sense.

After these somewhat linguistic observations, Sonja Arntzen is more concerned with literary quality, introducing us to how the literary translations through which Western readers experience Heian-period narratives come into being. Translation remains one of the core tasks of scholars of Japanese literature, and the characteristics of Japanese literature that can be elucidated by narratological methodology may sharpen the view of issues pertaining translation. Conversely, Arntzen considers herself a ‘scholar-translator’ (perhaps one could also speak of a ‘translator-scholar’), whose scholarly work is fundamentally shaped by translation. Quoting Michael Emmerich, she defines her goal of not only checking the plausibility of theory by translation, but also forming theory. Indeed, her essay contains important hints for cognitive narratology.

As a heuristic means, Arntzen distinguishes between ‘high’ and ‘low art’ in Heian-period literature, which does not imply a value judgment but is referring to its goals and the expectations that were directed toward this literature. She defines ‘low’ art as event- or plot-centered, while ‘high’ art is more concerned with style, i.e. discourse. When translating narratives that can be identified as ‘high’ art, it is essential to stick as closely to the original as possible, since authors presumably put much effort into choosing their words. With ‘low’ art, on the other hand, its entertaining quality should be preserved as far as possible, even if that means changing or adding a few words.

One issue that is particularly relevant to cognitive narratology is the problem of how characters are conceived. In accordance with Heian-period conventions, the protagonist of the ‘low’ narrative ‘Ochikubo monogatari’ 落窪物語 (‘The Tale of Lady of the Low Chamber,’ late 10th c.) remains anonymous and is referred to in different ways throughout the text, neither of which corresponds to what we perceive as a personal name. Arntzen argues that this suggests a different conception of personhood, as identity appears not to be linked to a name but rather to various social relations; it would even have been considered unnatural if the nar-

rator referred to a protagonist of imperial lineage by her personal name. However, conventions of Western literature greatly differ, and Arntzen argues that, in order to preserve the entertaining quality of the narrative, a rapid plot requires characters of a more fixed nature, with names that do not change simply because a character rises in rank. This is why, although she had always preferred translations that closely adhere to the original, Arntzen decided to invent a name for the protagonist in her translation of the ‘Ochikubo monogatari.’ While to a certain degree such an approach banishes phenomena of indeterminateness like those analyzed by Jinno from the English translation, Arntzen feels that a name is needed “as a marker for an existence that the heroine has on her own.” This all suggests that research inquiring whether, or to what degree, there is a difference regarding the ontological status of character in Western and Japanese narrative could contribute greatly to narratology.

The second half of the eight papers in this volume are concerned less with linguistic details and approach ‘character’ and ‘time’ mostly with regard to content. Notwithstanding, discourse continues to be relevant, and even though the authors refrained from giving transliterations, texts are quoted in the original (which in Japanese Studies is much less common than in other disciplines of medieval philology), alongside a translation.

After Arntzen has concluded that ‘The Tale of Genji’ may be interpreted as an example of a “perfect marriage of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art” and Jinno has acquainted us with its discourse—or with its quality as ‘high’ art as defined by Arntzen—Midorikawa Machiko analyzes how plot develops within the ‘World of Indirectness’ of the imperial court where the story of ‘The Tale of Genji’ takes place and where men and women are hardly allowed to see each other. Dealing with story and plot, Midorikawa is thus concerned with the aspects of the work that Arntzen ascribed to ‘low’ art. She astutely guides us through the text of ‘Genji,’ quoting from Royall Tyler’s

translation, which she had compared in its entirety with the Japanese original before its publication (Tyler 2003, p. v).

Because of the social rule that forbade women of noble descent to be seen, scenes in which someone sees or is seen acquire special significance within the narrative and serve to build suspense. If a character is seen, this often triggers substantial plot developments. A typical situation of seeing is the secret one, where a man peeks at one or several women through a hole in a wall or fence or through curtains and blinds (*kaimami* 垣間見). At the same time, the restrictedness of visual experience increases the importance of other forms of perception, foregrounding olfactory, auditory, and haptic perception. Midorikawa introduces *kewai* けはひ as a keyword pertaining to the vagueness of characters, a classic Japanese noun primarily designating an impression of something or someone gained from non-visual senses. (We should also keep in mind that most of the characters appearing in ‘The Tale of Genji’ are introduced without names.) Thus, Midorikawa demonstrates that the indeterminateness of Heian-period literature is not limited to discourse but is fundamentally permeating story as well.

Apart from *kaimami* scenes, descriptions of the physical appearance of a character are extremely rare. In this sense, although the narrator of ‘The Tale of Genji’ is mostly presented as omniscient (see my paper in this volume) and despite frequent changes of perspective, characterization seems to be restricted by the perception (i.e., perspectives) of characters other than the one being described. This intensifies the readers’ experience of this ‘World of Indirectness.’ Yet, one should not go so far as to assume that this kind of discourse intentionally reflects the characters’ experience of the world they inhabit. This becomes clear when we look at another work of literature such as the medieval war tale ‘Heike monogatari’ 平家物語 (‘The Tale of the Heike,’ 13th–14th c.), which fundamentally differs from ‘Genji’ in content and style. However, even in this tale depicting a completely different world, that of fighting warrior clans, only ex-

tremely few descriptions of the physical appearance of characters are provided.

As Michael Watson argues in his study on character in ‘The Tale of the Heike,’ descriptions of this kind are to a great deal interwoven with plot. While this may appear as a structural similarity to ‘Genji,’ in ‘Heike’ *kaimami* scenes are an exception, although some can be found within certain narrative schemes. In most cases, physical appearance is narrated implicitly by referring to (bodily) actions, armor and weapons, etc., especially before battle scenes. While ‘Genji’ has a remarkable psychological interest (which is why it has sometimes been considered the world’s first novel), ‘Heike’ is an event-oriented narrative, and this difference has strong implications for character representation. Of course, the historical (factual) elements of ‘Heike’ also have to be taken into account. Compared to ‘Genji,’ the significance attributed to characters’ names is striking. ‘The Tale of the Heike’ even contains characters’ speeches called *nanori* 名乗り (‘self-naming’), in which warriors introduce themselves to their enemy before battle. Another aspect that is certainly relevant to the importance of names in ‘Heike’ is that one purpose of its recitation was to pacify the souls of the fallen warriors (see also Takeuchi on the suffering of warriors in early noh plays). That most characters are introduced with their names also means that their boundaries, as conveyed in discourse, are much clearer than in the examples discussed by Jinno—which seems more fitting for a tale that was (in the version discussed) not read quietly but heard recited—even though ‘Heike’ characters are also referred to by their titles, which may change during the narrative.

By contrast, what seems hardly relevant to the medieval war tale is the psychology of characters—although there appear to be some exceptions to this rule, such as the famous ‘Giō’ 祇王 episode (Book One, Section Six in the Kakuichi-bon 覚一本 variant). Not only does Watson adhere to the rule not to psychologize characters in the interpretation of texts, i.e. not to ascribe feelings and emotions to them that are not conveyed in the narra-

tive (Haferland 2013, pp. 91 [9.], 106–108), he even doubts that the characters possess any psychology whatsoever. Instead, Watson argues that psychological analyses should be limited to the listeners or readers of the tale, hence arguing for a cognitive approach to narrative.

Finally, two papers are devoted to time. Although they deal with this category under different aspects, they also have some points in common. As a fundamental category of narrative (see also the beginning of Simone Müller's article), time is an integral part of many definitions of narrative, either explicitly or implicitly—the latter is the case when, for instance, a sequence of events is part of the definition since every sequence is based on temporality (see the definitions assembled in Ryan 2007, p. 23). In most cases, time is referring to the semantic level of narrative, i.e. the story (or narrated world), and Marie-Laure Ryan justifies this approach by arguing that a definition of narrative should apply to different media and to fictional as well as factual narratives and should therefore not focus on discourse or pragmatics (ibid., pp. 24–26, esp. p. 26; see also pp. 28–30 for Ryan's own definition). Of course, time is also pertinent to discourse, not only regarding the order in which events are narrated, but also because it takes a certain amount of time to narrate a story or read a text. Günther Müller (1974) is often credited with distinguishing between narrating time (*Erzählzeit*) and narrated time (*erzählte Zeit*) in a lecture read in 1946—although Boris Tomaševskij (1985, p. 226) had already distinguished between 'fabula time' (*fabul'noe vremja*) and 'narrating time' (*vremja povestvovanija*) as early as 1928—and the relationship of the two categories indicates how detailed a narrative account is, for a detailed account is also considered slow, while a summary-like one is conceived as fast (Genette 1986, p. 166). On a more fundamental level, much could be said about time in the Japanese language, especially regarding tense and aspect, but this is not the place to do so. At this point, it shall suffice to

acknowledge that time as a narratological category is hard to grasp since it is relevant to several levels of narrative.

In her study on the thirteenth-century memoir ‘Utatane’ うたたね (‘Fitful Slumbers’), Simone Müller takes a semantic approach, yet she focuses not so much on time as a dimension of the storyworld in the sense of a virtual physical category, as on time in an immediate content-related, even thematic sense. Put differently, she is dealing less with time as a general narratological category and rather with specific, even conscious perceptions of time in premodern Japanese women’s diaries, especially ‘Utatane.’ She employs Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope as well as Bart Keunen’s model based on Bakhtin, which she modifies for ‘Utatane’ in a highly convincing manner. Thus, Müller’s article reflects that time is inseparably linked to space (the other category that is required by even the most basic narrative, such as the theory of evolution; cf. Ryan 2007, p. 30). While the ‘minor chronotopes’ of ‘Utatane’ are mostly identified by places, as is common practice in literary studies (Keunen’s model is no exception), the ‘generic’ or ‘major chronotopes’ that Müller finds in Japanese female diary literature are primarily temporal in nature: ‘everyday time’ and, as secondary generic chronotopes, ‘loss’ and ‘waiting.’ In these generic chronotopes, time metonymically stands for something that is either in the present, the past, or the future. That which is present in ‘everyday time’ is unfulfilling, while loss and waiting point to something fulfilling in the past and future respectively. Furthermore, we may conclude that because of the significance of self-contemplation (*jishō* 自照), which encompasses the present as well as the past and the future, the range of the temporal dimension in Japanese women’s diaries—here understood with regard to the narrated world—is particularly great.

Employing the terminology by J.T. Fraser, Müller argues that ‘Utatane’ expresses a conflict of nootemporality, i.e. personal or individual time, and sociotemporality, thus voicing discontent with social structures. By analyzing the main chronotopes of the narrative Müller demonstrates that

it ends with the defeat of the protagonist, who, although reluctantly, accepts that she cannot escape social constraints. Eventually, she realizes the transience of all things—a Buddhist notion and arguably the most prominent time experience of medieval Japan. In this context, ‘time’ first and foremost means the temporality of existence.

After Müller’s gender-narratological study, Robert F. Wittkamp chooses an inter- and transmedial approach to narrative, focusing on the ‘Genji monogatari emaki’ 源氏物語絵巻 (‘Illustrated Handscrolls of the Tale of Genji’) dating from the first half of the twelfth century. Just like modern narratology cannot ignore film (which is even reflected in narratological terms that are applied to texts, such as ‘camera-eye mode’), from the point of view of medieval studies it is essential that the visual arts are taken into account (Becker/Hausmann 2018, p. 4). That being said, Wittkamp’s approach differs from Müller’s not only regarding the medial status of his research object. While Müller is concerned with how time is structurally semanticized throughout one complete narrative, Wittkamp deals with temporality in pictures in a more general sense, namely as a prerequisite for narrativity, taking the recipients as his starting point.

It is a commonplace that texts progress in time, whereas pictures unfold in space, as Lessing stated in his ‘Laocoon’ in 1766 (Lessing 1887, pp. 90–92 [chapters XV–XVI]). However, paintings may suggest the passing of time, which opens up the possibility of narrating.

Painting, in its coexisting compositions, can use but a single moment of an action, and must therefore choose the most pregnant one [*den prägnantesten*], the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow. (Lessing 1887, p. 92; cf. Lessing 1967, p. 90 for the original German text)

On a more fundamental level, Mathias Obert (forthcoming, note 42) argues that the temporal dimension of characters is inherent in premodern East Asian painting (we have to bear in mind that characters are written in a certain stroke order).

Wittkamp introduces Japanese theories on inter- and transmedial narrative in the context of illustrated handscrolls (*emaki* 絵巻) that have been directly influenced by Western theory to only a limited extent (refer to Wittkamp 2014 for a more detailed account). He focuses on two contradicting theories on the ‘Genji monogatari emaki,’ which he achieves to bring together by explaining the different premises underlying the theories. Wittkamp does not commit himself to a certain degree of temporality with regard to a specific painting, but chooses a cognitive-narratological approach and takes into account the individual recipient. He argues that the temporal dimension of the painting perceived by the recipients, and therefore its narrativity, correlates with their knowledge of the original ‘Tale of Genji,’ since with increasing knowledge they are more likely to pick up hints at events that have “gone before” or are “to follow.” Thus, it can be concluded that narrativity, in the sense that it can be compared to the quality of a verbalized narrative, is not so much inherent in the picture itself, but is rather constructed within and by the recipient. In this sense, the ‘Illustrated Handscrolls of the Tale of Genji’ can be truly considered transmedial narrative.

Despite the differences between Müller’s and Wittkamp’s approaches discussed above, parallels can be discerned as well. Wittkamp uses a theory by Sano Midori 佐野みどり that centers on vectors into the past and future fueled by memory and anticipation. These are exactly the time-related cognitive processes that are also emphasized by Müller with regard to women’s diary literature, although not concerning the readers but the narrator. In diary literature, these vectors gain special significance and their range is particularly great, which is why Müller classifies them as ‘secondary generic chronotopes,’ subordinate only to self-contemplation directed at everyday time. Moreover, to both Müller and Wittkamp the distinction between cyclical and linear time is relevant to some extent. The most striking parallel, however, is the close relationship of temporality and transience. In ‘Utatane,’ this is not only apparent by the feeling of loss

caused by memory, but also by the protagonist's eventual realization of evanescence. In the 'Illustrated Handscrolls of the Tale of Genji,' temporality is generated by images of transience, as explained by Wittkamp with regard to the illustration to the chapter 'Yomogiu' 蓬生 ('A Waste of Weeds'), and the notion of transience may even be described as the overall theme of 'The Tale of Genji' as a whole, not only extending to love but also to life itself (and even politics). While it cannot be denied that the (Buddhist) notion of evanescence permeated Japanese thought, the example of the 'Yomogiu' illustration points to the fact that time as a narratological category constituting narrativity cannot be considered independent from historically and culturally specific conceptions of time.

The starting point for this publication was a small symposium on 'Japanese Literature and Historical Narratology' at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in Munich in May 2018 where some of the papers included in this volume were presented. I would like to express my gratitude to 'Global Cultures – Connecting Worlds' (GCCW), part of the program 'IPID4all' of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), for the generous funding, and to Professor Evelyn Schulz and Professor Klaus Vollmer for their help in carrying out the symposium. I would also like to thank the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB), especially Dr. Thomas Tabery, for allowing us to look at two rare manuscripts for several hours, a complete copy of 'Genji monogatari' dating from the early seventeenth century (Cod.jap. 18) and a late seventeenth-century version of the digest 'Genji kokagami' 源氏小鏡 ('Little Mirror of the Genji,' Cod.jap. 14) with lavish illustrations, and for the permission to use one of these illustrations for the cover of this special issue and in the paper by Dr. Midorikawa. I am also grateful to the contributors who did not have the opportunity to participate in the symposium but joined us for this publication.

It is our hope that the papers in this volume will prove useful not only to readers with a background in Japanese Studies but also to scholars

specializing in other literary traditions, including medievalists. ‘BmE’ seemed to be the ideal place for this endeavor, also with regard to open access. I would like to express my thanks to PD Dr. Anja Becker and Professor Albrecht Hausmann for the opportunity to introduce research on premodern Japanese literature to a medievalist audience and for their great care in preparing this publication.

In Japan, the medieval period (*chūsei* 中世) usually designates the period after the victory of the Minamoto 源 clan over the Taira 平 clan (or Heike 平家) at Dan-no-ura 壇ノ浦 in 1185, which is depicted in Book Eleven of ‘The Tale of the Heike,’ to the sixteenth century. Therefore, from a Japanese point of view many of the papers comprised in this volume do not deal with medieval literature but with texts of the classical period (*chūko* 中古), the so-called Heian period (794–1185). Nevertheless, they also may be of interest to medievalists, since they were written during a time that is considered part of the Middle Ages in Europe, and since they too considerably differ from modern forms of narrative—even though this difference is of another kind than the alterity of medieval European narrative. The latter is more easily compared to medieval Japanese texts such as ‘The Tale of the Heike,’ regarding style and content, but also issues of semi-orality. This is also why models such as the ones on the structure of episodes by Suzanne Fleischman and Monika Fludernik, based on William Labov, are more readily applied to ‘Heike,’ as demonstrated in an article by Michael Watson (2004), than to ‘Genji.’

To conclude this introduction, I would like to outline some problems that might be explored in future research. While most of the narratological research on premodern Japanese literature deals with texts from the tenth to the seventeenth century, not much has been written on the narrative characteristics of the myths, semi-historical accounts, or narrative poems that were recorded in the eighth century in a language quite different from that of most works of Heian-period literature. Furthermore, very few

studies apply narratological theory to the various genres of popular prose printed in the second half of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century that are subsumed under the label *gesaku* 戯作 ('playful compositions').

Also with regard to the categories on which this volume focuses much work remains to be done. While we have been introduced to discourse-related characteristics of Japanophone prose (*wabun* 和文), which—apart from the occasional word—was written in phonographic script (*kana* 仮名), comparisons to Sinographic prose (*kanbun* 漢文), either Chinese or Japanese put down in logographic characters, are still to be awaited. The relationship of voice and perspective also requires further investigation. Since in Japanese different types of speech representation are often not grammatically distinct, a systematic study on focalization and free indirect discourse would certainly be challenging, but also promise interesting results. Moreover, as proposed above, it is tempting to explore the ramifications of the communication model of theater semiotics for 'epic' texts.

Regarding character, the papers in this volume raise anthropological questions: how is personality or personhood constructed if the (real) person or (fictive) character in question does not have a fixed name—at least none one would be allowed to use—and cannot even be seen? A systematic study of character that is not limited to a specific text would be highly desirable. The contributions to this special issue could serve as the basis for further cognitive-narratological and anthropological research.

The papers on time suggest that time in premodern Japanese narrative, even as a narratological category, is shaped by the notion of transience. This hypothesis could be further examined by analyzing time as pertaining to various levels of narrative. Furthermore, it has become clear that temporality (or 'progressive action'; Lessing 1887, pp. 90–92) is a prerequisite for narrativity, yet narrativity should not be equated with temporality, even within the context of the visual arts. Thus, for a more comprehensive consideration of narrativity in *emaki* illustrations or pictures in general, one would have to take into account other aspects as well.

In addition, there are other categories on which we have touched but not yet discussed in detail. One of these categories is plot, which is closely related to character. It can either be argued that a specific type of plot requires certain characters, or, conversely, that a specific character (type) demands a certain type of plot. Premodern plot structures may be determined by finality or include repetition, yet just as promising are inquiries of “ruptures and lacks of coherence, contradictions, and unlikely and unreliable scenarios” (von Contzen 2014, p. 9; for the analysis of a narrative from the mid-fourteenth-century ‘Shintōshū’ 神道集 [‘Anthology of the Way of the *Kami*’] which seems incoherent and cannot be explained by causality, see Balmes 2019b). Another basic narratological category is ‘space,’ which is closely intertwined with time. Therefore, space also figures in Müller’s paper on chronotopes in ‘Utatane,’ but, needless to say, it is also a concept that deserves attention on its own.

Besides research on individual narratological concepts, diachronic analyses seem particularly promising, also regarding comparisons of Heian-period court fiction and medieval plot-oriented types of narrative—the simplistic notion of a historical ‘inward turn’ toward figural narration, i.e. narration dominated by the perspective of a character, does obviously not apply to Japanese literature (Balmes 2019a, p. 321). Studies from the point of view of historical narratology, i.e. inquiries into historical concepts of narrative, would be equally of interest (for this distinction between historical and diachronic narratology, see the editors’ introduction in von Contzen/Tilg 2019, pp. VII–VIII).⁷ The ‘Mumyōzōshi’ 無名草子 (‘The Nameless Book,’ between 1196 and 1202), a text discussing *monogatari* literature (for an introduction and translation, see Michele Marra 1984), and terms from premodern commentaries on ‘The Tale of Genji,’ such as *sōshiji* 草子地 and *utsurikotoba* 移り詞, immediately spring to mind,⁸ but without doubt there is also much else left to explore. Finally, comparative studies would contribute greatly not only to our understanding of different literary traditions, but also of narrative in general.

Notes

- 1 For Japanese names, including those of the contributors, throughout this volume the Japanese convention of giving the surname before the personal name is followed.
- 2 Mitani also draws on Tokieda Motoki's 時枝誠記 'language process theory' (*genko katei setsu* 言語過程説) introduced in 1941, which defines language as fundamentally subjective and assumes that in Japanese this is particularly salient. For a critical and thorough review of Tokieda's theory and its application by scholars of Heian-period tales, see Yoda 2004, pp. 146–181.
- 3 Gérard Genette's 'Disours du récit,' originally published in 1972 in 'Figures III' (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, pp. 67–282), was translated into Japanese by Hanawa Hikaru 花輪光 and Izumi Ryōichi 和泉涼一 under the title 'Monogatari no disukūru' 物語のディスクール in 1985 (Tōkyō: Shoshi Kaze no bara 書肆風の薔薇). Other authors like Wayne C. Booth and Paul Ricoeur followed. For an overview of narratological theory translated into Japanese, see the list of references in Prince 2015, pp. 218–242.
- 4 A notable exception is Fukuda Takashi's (1990) book on 'Genji monogatari,' which was published in the same series as the translations of Genette's works and books by Booth and Seymour Chatman, to name but a few. Unfortunately, Fukuda's study seems to have been barely noticed by *monogatari* scholars like Mitani. Another exception that deserves mentioning is the English-language article by Amanda Mayer Stinchecum (1980), who has a firm grasp of Japanese scholarship and also draws on the theories by Dorrit Cohn and Ann Banfield, but eventually fails to revise the Japanese theories accordingly (see my own article in this volume).
- 5 A thorough critical review of narratological approaches to premodern Japanese literature can be found in my doctoral thesis, 'Narratologie und vormoderne japanische Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen, Forschungskritik und sprachlich bedingte Charakteristika japanischen Erzählens' ('Narratology and Premodern Japanese Literature. Theory, Critique of Research, and Linguistic Characteristics of Japanese Narrative'), submitted to LMU Munich in March 2019.
- 6 'Story' and 'discourse' are used equivalent to *histoire* and *discours*, which Tzvetan Todorov introduced as French translations of *fabula* and *sjužet* as used by Boris Tomaševskij. Todorov took the terms from the linguistic theory of Benveniste (Todorov 1966, pp. 126–127), who used them in a completely different way, referring to the objective (*histoire*) or subjective (*discours*) quality of an utterance (*énoncé*) (ibid., p. 145)—certain parallels to Tokieda's theory (see

note 2) can be detected, which may be the reason that both Benveniste and Tokieda are frequently referred to by *monogatari* scholars. There are also slight differences between French *histoire/discours* and Russian *fabula/sjužet* in narrative theory (ibid., p. 139; Schmid 2010, p. 187). Furthermore, some authors have conceived more than two narrative levels (ibid., pp. 188–193).

7 This definition by Eva von Contzen and Stefan Tilg is also the reason that the title of our symposium in 2018, ‘Japanese Literature and Historical Narratology,’ no longer seemed fitting as a title for this special issue.

8 I have treated these concepts in my doctoral thesis (note 5), which is to be published in the future.

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