

Translation and Difference— A Review Article

RICHARD H. OKADA

THROUGHOUT HER CAREER Helen McCullough has enjoyed a solid reputation as a meticulous translator of premodern Japanese texts. She has, on the whole, chosen to deal with material that leans toward the historicaliterary, rather than the more strictly literary, spectrum. In Japan such texts are commonly known by the terms *gunki monogatari*, "tales of war," or *rekishi monogatari*, "tales of history." Her numerous publications include a translation of *Gikeiki*, a text depicting the life of the tragic warrior Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159–89) and more recently, in conjunction with William McCullough, a rendering of *Eiga monogatari*, a narrative history of tenth- and eleventh-century Japan.

By 1968 McCullough had turned her considerable energies from chronicles written in prose to a mid-tenth-century text of poetry plus prose, *Ise monogatari*, an *uta monogatari*, "tales of poems." An exceedingly difficult text to classify in terms of its literary nature and its status in Heian letters, *Ise* afforded McCullough the opportunity to tackle the thirty-one-syllable *tanka* and its development in Heian society. Of the 209 poems (according to some versions) that constitute the *Ise* text, 62 appear in *Kokinshū* (or, as it is known by its full title, *Kokin wakashū*, "Collection of Japanese poems old and modern").

Now, seventeen years later, McCullough has again focused her attention on the Heian *waka*. She has produced not only a complete translation of *Kokinshū* (ca. 905), the second to appear in two years (see Rodd and Henkenius 1984), but also her own version of *Tosa nikki* (ca. 935), Ki no Tsurayuki's diary written in the persona of a woman, as well as the first English translation of *Shinsen waka* (ca. 940), a collection of 360 *waka*—282 of which are taken from *Kokinshū*—personally chosen by Tsurayuki in accordance with an imperial command.

Richard H. Okada is Assistant Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, Princeton University.

Brocade by Night: "Kokin Wakashū" and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry. By Helen Craig McCullough. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. xii, 591 pp. \$55.00.

Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry (with "Tosa Nikki" and "Shinsen Waka"). Translated and annotated by Helen Craig McCullough. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. x, 388 pp. \$49.50.

The author wishes to thank the following for their assistance in the publication of this article: Anthony Chambers, Norma Field, Edward Fowler, Harry Harootunian, Masao Miyoshi, Tetsuo Najita, William Sibley, and all those signers of a petition presented to the editorial board of the *Journal* at the Boston meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in April 1987.

The Journal of Asian Studies Vol. 47, No. 1 (February 1988):29–40.

© 1988 by the Association for Asian Studies, Inc.

The 1,111 poems in *Kokinshū* represent the first imperially commissioned *waka* anthology in Japan. The appearance of the anthology in the early years of the tenth century was an event of the utmost significance for the Japanese literary tradition, displacing as it did the three previous imperially commissioned *kanshi* (poetry written in Chinese) collections. It also heralded the new prestige of the *tanka* form and provided not only source material for writers of later texts but also a standard of poetic composition for centuries to come. The study of Japanese literature in the west has long needed a readily available English version of *Kokinshū*, and it is indeed fortunate that there are two to choose from now.

McCullough's translation itself is, for the most part, carefully executed. As the *Ise* volume demonstrated, her English versions of *waka*, in contrast to the prose of *Yoshitsune*, may not always read fluently, much less poetically, but they do display a kind of clinical accuracy in that most of the elements in the Japanese are closely attended to. McCullough chooses, as Rodd-Henkenius did, to employ a 5/7/5/7/7 English syllabic pattern. Use of the pattern helps to maintain economy of expression and gives the reader some sense, over a long series of poems, of the rhythms of the collection. A few examples must suffice. KKS 192 is characteristic of McCullough's style:

sayonaka to
yo wa fukenuashi
kari ga ne no
kikoyuru sora ni
tsuki wataru miyu

The deepening night
seems to have come to midpoint,
for the moon poises
at the zenith of the sky
echoing wild goose calls.

Although the English is accurate, the words "poises" and "zenith" and the awkwardness of the last line create a mechanical effect that is at odds with the poet's realization at the cries of the geese.¹ KKS 474 is more successful, although "absolute stranger" has the ring of cliché and is probably an overreading of *yoso nite mo*:

tachikaeri
aware to zo omou
yoso nite mo
hito ni kokoro o
okitsu shiranami

Over and over,
like white waves from the offing,
my fond thoughts return
to an absolute stranger
who has carried off my heart.²

Other examples of less than felicitous wording are "ripped into shreds" (23), "Must you refuse again / to grant us satiety?" (61), "Brown leaves" (320), "going *island-*

¹ Compare the Rodd-Henkenius version, which more closely captures the spirit of the Japanese:

as night deepens it
seems midnight must be near for
only the cries of the
wild geese are heard and the moon
has climbed high in the dark sky

² The Rodd-Henkenius version specifies, perhaps unnecessarily, the persona:

I turn back to her
as the white waves roll to shore
from the offing no
matter the distance my heart
is held captive by her charms

bid" (409), "I exist, it seems, / *only that when evening falls*" (815), "rice ear" (822), and "in deep mountain *fastnesses*" (954). Problems of interpretation are at issue in such poems as KKS 366, in which "journeying where" might have been something closer to "journeying from," and in KKS 497, in which "show my *colors / as blossoms*" might have been "show *colors bright as blossoms*."

There are occasions when attempts, valiant as they are, to match the puns in Japanese produce English that borders on the unintelligible, as in KKS 649:

kimi ga na mo	Let us keep gossip
wa ga na mo tateji	away from your name and mine.
naniwa naru	You must not mention
mitsu to mo iu na	the "seepore" at Naniwa,
aiki to mo iwaji	nor I the "met" net fishing.

The note provided for the poem helps to decipher the wordplay, but the translation itself cannot be called a success. There are other cases, such as KKS 307, when a different metrical configuration might have prevented the somewhat comical ambiguity of referent (here, of "its"):

ho ni mo idenu	As I stand guard
yamada o moru to	in the mountain paddy field,
fujikoromo	its ears still unformed,
inaba no tsuyu ni	my coarse robe is wet daily
nurenu hi wa nashi	by dewdrops from the rice plants.

One wishes that both McCullough and Rodd-Henkenius had used a system of romanization approximating the orthography of late ninth- and early tenth-century Japanese, which would have preserved the numerous instances of phonological and orthographic ambiguity and play (KKS 376, or the extreme case of KKS 955, where a different system would have allowed the reader to see that no two syllables are repeated). One wishes also that McCullough had provided more supplementary notes to allow the reader to follow a greater number of the wordplays and the crucial links from poem to poem. Finally, both translators, in their 5/7 patterns, largely ignore the phenomenon of *ji amari*, lines containing 6 or 8 syllables.

Difficult as it may be to translate Heian *waka*, however, it is even more difficult to discuss them, as the second volume under review demonstrates. In what is a signal departure from the usual "introduction-plus-translation" format one finds in other English translations of Japanese texts, McCullough has vastly expanded the remarks made in the introduction to her earlier study of *Ise* into a separate, 591-page companion volume to the translations, thereby creating a major event for Japanese studies. As she did in her work on *Ise*, the author continues to derive most of her methodological perspectives from the work of the Japanese scholar Konishi Jin'ichi, especially his 1959 article on *Kokinshū*, which she later translated (Konishi 1978). In that article Konishi argued that it was the Six Dynasties style, especially the style which appeared at the Liang court, that exerted the major influence on Heian poets (Konishi 1978:66). In McCullough's words in *Brocade by Night*: "It is to the late fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, when aristocratic courts were the centers of Chinese poetic activity, that we can most profitably look for correspondences. . . . The current tendency in Japanese scholarly circles is to focus on those centuries, and we shall do likewise" (p. 9).³ Her

³ This is not quite the case. Recent Japanese scholarship (for which no citations appear in *Brocade by Night*), in addition to its ongoing study of the Six Dynasties period, has continued



present study can be seen as a faithful acceptance of Konishi's proposal: "The whole matter of Chinese influence on Japanese literature requires new investigation; and one of the foundation stones of such research must be the identification of whatever Chinese elements are present in the *Kokinshū*" (Konishi 1978:170).

A large part of *Brocade by Night* consists of just such an attempt to identify "Chinese elements." McCullough discusses a variety of texts from both the Chinese and Japanese traditions and supports her points with an impressive quantity of material. She includes useful information on such texts as the Chinese poetry anthologies, the early Heian *kanshi* collections, *Kudai waka*, and *Shinsen man'yōshū*. Even specialists who can go straight to the Japanese sources will find it an accessible if cumbersome reference work. It is clearly not for the general reader, however.

This reader was struck by two aspects of the companion volume in particular: first, the sheer number of poems, most of them translated by the author herself, given as illustration. With over 50 percent of the 1,111 *Kokinshū* poems reappearing in *Brocade by Night*, what McCullough has produced is, in fact *two* volumes of translation. The emphasis on translation is not coincidental, but an important part of the author's methodology. Second, despite its breadth of coverage and its tone of reasonableness, *Brocade by Night* is filled with perplexing statements, and the work seems founded on questionable assumptions concerning history and literature. Indeed McCullough's remarks often mystify, rather than clarify, such broader issues as the complexity of intercultural relations—particularly such issues as "influence" and literary value. They also raise further questions concerning the role of a translator-interpreter of a non-western culture and the discourses (including the never-innocent act of translation itself) that characterize the resulting interpretation. Although detailed coverage of all the issues raised is beyond the scope of this review, the size of the study, written by a scholar of impeccable credentials, makes it imperative to address at least some of the more important ones squarely. Let it be said here that, in view of the author's long and productive career, I hesitate to criticize what is obviously the result of tireless labor; it is in the hope of contributing to an alternative approach to Japanese literature that the following comments are offered.

In a brief introduction attached to chapter 1, "The Chinese Heritage"—there is no independent introductory chapter—McCullough provides the *raison d'être* for *Brocade by Night*: "It is now widely agreed that an adequate appraisal of the artistic accomplishments of the *Kokinshū* poets and compilers requires, at the very minimum, a knowledge of Chinese poetry and its influence on Japan; a familiarity with Heian aesthetic conventions; an awareness of the aims of poets and compilers, and of the expectations of their intended audience; and an acquaintance with the workings of Heian society" (p. 5). Aside from the implication that such knowledge is readily available to a researcher-translator, the phrase "appraisal of the artistic accomplishments"⁴ stands out to this reader: the goal of the study appears to be evaluation

to focus on the poets of the early and mid-Tang period, and especially on Bo Juyi, who, in McCullough's words in *Brocade by Night* (again following Konishi), "had no significant effect" (p. 9) on *Kokinshū*. Kojima Noriyuki is one notable scholar who, in his voluminous writings, has always emphasized the role played by Tang poetry. Japanese scholars have also increasingly scrutinized the native Japanese tradition, both *kanshi* (poems written in Chinese) and earlier *waka*—McCullough's discussion of the native *kanshi* tradition is skewed in this regard. See *Bungaku* 1985:vol. 53, no. 12, a special issue devoted to essays on the relation between *kanshi* and *Kokinshū*.

⁴ Cf. her 1968 statement: "How original is even the best Japanese court poetry? Without some notion of the extent of Chinese influence in all these matters [originality, social role of

(scarcely present in Konishi). In other words, McCullough is interested in an act of judgment—"appraisal," which carries a familiar connotation of "connoisseurship." One might question the wisdom of this preoccupation with determining literary value, an act that is nowadays performed, if at all, with great caution even in studies of western literature—not to mention in studies of a culture for whose members the question of "accomplishment" was consistently dispersed within the broader, interpersonal matrices of group effort and communal reception.

In addition to following Konishi, McCullough adheres closely to George Sansom's classic description of Heian society as governed by a "rule of taste": "Here we may merely note that the famous 'rule of taste' was an aspect of the moral code, and that it dictated, among other things, the nature of the Heian approach to poetic composition" (pp. 2–3); "Much of this book will be devoted to determining what constituted a good poem, which is to say a tasteful one, in early Heian eyes" (p. 4). To characterize a society as having evolved a "rule of taste" is one thing; it is quite another methodologically to determine, much less adopt, as the author does, such a criterion in one's own literary and cultural exegesis or, in this case, appraisal.

McCullough is also concerned with the question of autonomy: "*Kokinshū* repays serious critical attention, both as a repository of individual poems and as an independent literary creation" (p. 6). But such terms as "individual" and "independent literary creation" (also "repository," which denotes "museum," "vault," or "tomb") suggest a preoccupation with what might be called essentialist or monolithic concerns that are not completely congruent with a text produced in tenth-century Japan.⁵ Furthermore McCullough adopts a problematic view of historical development: "We need to understand not only what the rule of taste entailed, but also how it evolved" (p. 5); "When *Man'yōshū*, *Kokinshū*, and the literary activity of the period between the two anthologies are considered as a whole against the backdrop of the Chinese literary tradition, it becomes apparent that the entire period from the seventh-century Ōmi court to *Kokinshū* was one of *gradual adaptation and assimilation of imported models*, and that *Kokinshū* must be viewed not as a sudden, radical departure from *unsullied ancient norms*, but rather as the *culmination* of 250 years of experimentation with Chinese poetry and Chinese aesthetic concepts" (p. 7; emphasis added). Such statements, with an overemphasis on China, suggest a view of history and literature that pays insufficient attention to the active side of cultural interplay in which differences can only culminate in ever-changing instabilities. It also neutralizes the differences between an earlier tradition, whose originary "norms" are hardly ever "unsullied" (whether or not *Kokinshū* represents a radical break or a "culmination"), and later interpretations of that tradition—whether Heian Japanese or contemporary western. To view history as progressing in a neat, linear fashion "of gradual adaptation and assimilation" is to succumb to the seduction of teleology and to ignore forces of "discontinuity" and "disruption."⁶

poetry, Japanese values, etc.], one can neither appraise the poetry in *Tales of Ise* nor properly understand the cultural milieu from which it emerged" (McCullough 1968:14).

⁵ Chapters 6 and 7 are called, "The 'Kokinshū' Style and the Individual Voice" and "Kokinshū as Literary Entity," respectively.

⁶ See the "Introduction" by Tetsuo Najita in Najita and Koschmann 1982:3–21. Najita's essay contains this remark by Hayden White: "The Historian serves no one well by constructing a specious continuity between the present world and that which preceded it. On the contrary, we require a history that will educate us to discontinuity more than ever before; for discontinuity, disruption, and chaos is our lot" (p. 6). Other writers who have addressed the issue include Michel Foucault (1976:pt. 4, chap. 5) and Thomas Kuhn (1962:2–3 and chap. 9).

The task of appraisal raises first and foremost the question of criteria: “*Good taste* [for the Six Dynasties poets] required . . . urbanity, wit, and a tactful reluctance to let political problems or deeply felt personal concerns intrude” (p. 63; emphasis added). To “urbanity” and “wit” McCullough adds “allusion” (p. 64), “figurative speech” (p. 66), “metaphor” (p. 67), “feigned confusion” (ibid.), “reasoning technique” (p. 68), “personification” (p. 70), and “aestheticism” (p. 130). The problem of terminology quickly arises. How, for example, is “figurative speech” to be distinguished from “metaphor”? And terms like “urbanity,” “wit,” and “aestheticism,” with their genteel ring, are apt to be slippery and falsely comforting; they can be made to apply to practically any *Kokinshū* poem. It is unusual to find them the focus of a study at a time when scholars have been attempting to achieve precision in the critical reading of literature. The use of such imprecise terms gives a writer tremendous leeway in their application but it also puts that writer in the privileged position of being as much an arbiter of “taste” as the society being described.⁷

McCullough then proceeds to identify influence. A sampling of the type of statements in which the study abounds: “It seems best to think of it [KKS 781] as an imitation of the Chinese palace style” (p. 215); “The rest of *Shinsen man’yōshū* also strongly reflects the influence of Chinese poetry in general and the Liang salons in particular” (p. 266); “As might be expected, all four [of the following poems] exhibit the characteristic traits of the Chinese court style” (p. 288); “Many of his [Tadamine’s] *waka* . . . show conspicuous Six Dynasties influence” (p. 391). She even finds that *Kokinshū* poems can be grouped statistically on the basis of detectable influence: “Most love poems use the Man’yō style of direct affirmation (and some the *jo* [introductory segment]), but Chinese influence is strong in approximately one-third” (p. 189).

McCullough’s discourse on influence is worth a closer look. First, what is the larger significance of having identified Chinese influence if not simply as a means of judging the level of development of Japanese poetic skill or success of a particular Japanese poem? The conflation in McCullough’s discourse of the search for influence and the goal of evaluation turns into a procedure by which the extent of perceivable influence becomes the standard used to assess the worth of the poetry. As noted above, however, Heian *waka* almost never occupied isolated moments of composition but arose out of specific, although changeable, contexts. Second, and more important, she implies not only that Chinese elements are importable but also that they remain distinctly identifiable, in their reified forms, over space and time and across languages and cultures. Yet recent studies of language and meaning, revitalizing the seminal work of Ferdinand de Saussure, have tended more and more to emphasize the diacritical nature of signification. Linguistic concepts, in the words of one critic, are “purely differential . . . determined not by their positive content but by their relations with the other terms in the system” (Belsey 1980:40). In other words, the terms or signifiers of a given linguistic system do not possess any essential properties or values (“positive content”); they generate meaning only as they relate to and differ from other terms or signifiers of that system. When two or more cultures are in question, the relations between them can then be problematized as each is granted its own temporal and spatial integrity as a linguistic or cultural system of differences. “Chinese

⁷ See Konishi 1978:71. The devices, which are not evaluative terms in themselves, derive in large part from Konishi’s use of the Chinese term *i-bang*, “oblique,” found in Chinese texts, to characterize the “indirect” style of Six Dynasties poetry. Such designations were already problematic in Konishi’s essay: all poetic language, of course, is indirect in some fashion or other.

elements,” for example, are not natural objects but must be seen as part of a network of relations within a specific culture in a given historical epoch. Attention to such issues might have shown McCullough the relevance of recent notions of language and meaning production for the classical Japanese linguistic and literary situation as it confronted the Chinese examples, notions that might also have allowed her to describe more compellingly the Japanese literary scene, especially the supremely “relational,” fluid contextualizations of Heian *waka* (of which the *Kokinshū* anthology is an excellent example). It would also have allowed a different perspective on the search for influence.

McCullough’s treatment of influence in *Brocade by Night* demonstrates the hazards of intercultural interpretation: it leads to a consistent valorization of China (the mentor) and devaluation of Japan (the pupil)—“We should not be surprised that the *Kaifūsō* use of parallelism [does not achieve] the urbanity of the Chinese court style” (p. 93). Such implicit sinocentrism prevents the native Japanese tradition from manifesting itself as anything but direct, derivative, primitive, marginal, and even “cheerful,”⁸ of which the phrase “unsullied ancient norms,” cited above, may be taken as emblematic. According to McCullough, the early (pre-*Man’yō*) poetry was direct: “Much more common, however, is the direct, straightforward mode of expression found in folk literature” (p. 121). Among the *Man’yōshū* poems themselves, she finds some with and some without Chinese influence. The following reveals the author’s general attitude toward *Man’yōshū*: “We may dispense with most such considerations [understanding the rule of taste] in the case of *Man’yōshū*, an anthology that is accessible to the modern reader because it is, to a large extent, the product of a different and more readily intelligible poetic tradition” (p. 5). This is a remarkable statement. As the innumerable volumes of commentary and centuries of scholarship devoted to them testify, the 4,500 poems in *Man’yōshū* are anything but “accessible” or “readily intelligible” to modern readers; it is the author’s presupposition of evolutionary development (and the power of translation?) that makes them so. Finally, by her account, *Kokinshū* represents the culmination of a process: “A deep gulf separates the two [early Japanese song and *Kokinshū*]; for one is, after all, the product of an illiterate, isolated society and the other that of an advanced civilization heavily indebted to borrowings from abroad” (p. 85).⁹ McCullough does seem to believe that the early, “native

⁸ Just how “cheerful” (p. 177) or “happy” are poems in *Man’yōshū*? Let us examine MYS 2421, which McCullough cites as an example of “happy love” (p. 122): “I hope there will be / no hills with rocks to tread on / along the way: / what if the horse should stumble / bearing the one I await?” Depending on the context, the poem could easily be read in other than “happy” ways: as an expression of anxiety (line 4), loneliness (“I await”), frustration (yet another excuse for a lover’s absence), etc. By the same token, although she states that most love poems—love being one identifiable native topic—are expressions of painful love, the poems she cites contain little in themselves to suggest pain (see, for example, the discussion of MYS 2680 [p. 143]). McCullough also ignores the implications of her own conclusions that the later *Man’yō* poems are indistinguishable, in many cases, from poems found in *Kokinshū* (ibid.). The deeply contextual nature of *waka* and the problem of poetic persona—that is to say, the fictive nature of Japanese poetry—must be kept in mind when analyzing individual poems.

⁹ On influence, see Michael Baxandall: “‘Influence’ is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who is the patient. . . . To think in terms of influence blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation. . . . Worse it is shifty. To say that X influenced Y in some matter is to beg the question of cause without quite appearing to do so.” In short, it is better to regard Y, whether it be Picasso (vis-à-vis Cezanne) or Japan (vis-à-vis China), as actively responding to specific circumstances and making an “intentional selection from an array of resources” (Bax-

tradition” constituted part of the “influence” on *Kokinshū*, but her with/without scheme of analysis precludes the possibility of confronting it directly.¹⁰

Taken together with her concern for appraisal, McCullough’s inscribing of China and Japan into what may be termed a primary/secondary or central/marginal polarity is disturbing. It suggests that Japan is unable to stand on its own as a literary culture. Instead, the Chinese tradition provides the requisite standards for ennobling the derivative culture and serves to mediate our understanding of Japan. But Chinese tradition too needs to be translated and the appropriate elements selected and applied. The elements, once found, were designated by the author using terms impossible to define. The final “selector” thus always becomes the translator herself, and her own notions of “taste” end up having been unquestioningly imposed on the subject of study from the beginning.¹¹

Concomitant with the search for standards of taste and influence is the author’s focus on individuality and originality (or their absence). Throughout, she attempts to locate evidence of “an author’s unique genius” (p. 368): Henjō is “urbane, elegant, witty—and, within safe bounds, original” (p. 217), Narihira makes “convincing lyrical statements” (p. 208), and “Komachi is thus a poet capable of remarkable resourcefulness, originality, and subtlety, a distinctive voice in her own era” (p. 230). This quest for originality seems to run counter to a poetic form that depended heavily on context and convention and to poets who responded in regulated ways to practically ritualized situations, whether public or private. That is not to say that syntactic patterns cannot be perceived (but what does it mean to say that a poet is original “within safe bounds”?) or that they should not be looked for, but a constant search for originality goes against one’s sense of the artistic and textual environment of the Heian period, which gainsays any approach centered on conceptions of individual authorship or on such terms as the “lyrical.” As the very act of anthologizing demonstrates, poems were freely appropriated, repeated, revised, recopied, and recontextualized.¹² Although McCullough devotes one chapter to the structure of the anthology, that discussion is so marked by her typical search for the superior and the inferior and for norm and deviance that the open-ended, playful, inter- and intra-discursive movement of the Heian poetic language, as well as the inventive manip-

andall 1985:58–59). Baxandall’s comments are equally applicable to literary history and criticism. Such a notion as “intentional selection” would allow one to begin to describe more accurately the Japanese poetic impulse itself and to grapple with such questions as why the Japanese chose what they did from the Chinese literary tradition.

¹⁰ The question of the vital role played by the newly developed *kana* writing system that enabled Heian poets to write freely in Japanese in the first place and the question of how that act of writing relates to native transformations of Chinese poetry are only given a passing comment by McCullough (p. 172). Aside from descriptions of “auditory effects,” she also never addresses the critical question of the “oral” nature of *waka* presentation and reception.

¹¹ See the symposium on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (May 1980):485–517.

¹² As McCullough herself states, “By and large, if a poet was good enough to gain admittance to *Kokinshū*, his style was, by definition, basically anonymous” (p. 285). She concludes, “In a sense, therefore, we must return a negative answer to the basic question we raised at the beginning of the chapter [‘Can one competent *Kokinshū* poet really be distinguished from another?’]” (p. 418); the “negative answer” one finds here suggests that different questions might have been asked more productively. On McCullough’s use of the term “lyrical”: KKS 411, the famous *karakoromo* poem by Narihira, is called a “convincing lyrical statement” because “the artifice is so well concealed” (p. 208). One of the most obviously contrived in the whole collection, KKS 411 is perhaps one of the least lyrical poems one can imagine. For McCullough to call its artifice “well concealed” is to display a bold disregard for the workings of rhetorical language.

ulation of *waka* by the *Kokinshū* compilers, is barely discernible. What the study of Heian *waka* needs is not an approach based on influence and evaluation but rather a sustained examination of what it meant, in literary, historical, and political terms, to compile poetry collections—an act that was repeated again and again in premodern Japan—and how that act related to the question of individual/social *waka* composition. A closer examination of such questions might have prevented McCullough from bemoaning the fate Mitsune and others receive in *Shinsen waka*, where Tsurayuki's "editorial policies . . . have resulted . . . in the virtual disappearance of an authentic individual voice . . . [and] his misrepresentation of two earlier poets, Komachi and Narihira, is truly astonishing" (p. 531).

The search for originality also goes against modern-day critical practice in the west. Such notions as "originality" and, by extension, "authorship" have been vigorously put into question. There has been a shift in emphasis from author to "reader" and "text," both terms having undergone considerable refinement in the past two decades. In order to avoid the ethnocentric pitfalls that accompany unexamined uses of terminology, it would help to keep in mind the relation of writers and texts to the forces of power and control at work in any given society.¹³ The concern for originality and individuality ultimately does little more than satisfy a need for single, determinate meanings, for guarantees of "truth," which in turn are necessary for the act of appraisal. The Heian tradition itself—based on Shinto and Buddhist worldviews that emphasize a social nexus and do not posit one supreme deity—as well as modern critical procedures point in a different direction.

The preoccupation with standards and the binary thinking thereby produced—foreign/native, oblique/direct, and original/stereotyped—extends in McCullough's discourse to her conception of literary language and rhetoric. Here the polarity that emerges may be termed main statement / ornament: "More often, the *jo* [an 'introductory' segment that provides a lead-in to the rest of the poem] makes a contribution to the main statement" (p. 393); "To function as an *engo* [a word semantically associated to another to intensify poetic adhesion in a poem], a word must have two meanings: a primary one contributing to the *main statement*, and a secondary one establishing relationship with *something else* in the poem" (p. 222; emphasis added). What is that "something else"? How does it relate to the "main statement"? It is just as misleading continually to speak of "main statement" as somehow distinct from rhetorical devices as it is to speak of "*Man'yō* direct styles" as distinct from "Chinese elements." Moreover the notion of poetry as "propositional" remains a highly debatable issue in criticism today and, in any case, is not to be taken for granted. *Makurakotoba* ("pillow words," or epithets conventionally associated with certain words) and *jokotoba*, which are said to derive from earlier times (early Japanese poetry could, of course, be indirect too), and *engo* and *kakekotoba* ("pivot words," or puns playing on phonic/orthographic ambiguity), considered later developments, are all part and parcel of the poet's response, that is, the "statement" itself.¹⁴ To put it another way, the rhetorical itself is often the "statement" a poem makes. A similar

¹³ As Roland Barthes has put it, "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes 1977: 146). Or, in Edward Said's words: "To what extent is a text so discontinuous a series of subtexts or pre-texts or paratexts or surtexts as to beggar the question of an author as simple producer?" (Said 1975:58).

¹⁴ McCullough's discussion of KKS 113 mentioned in the next paragraph, where she notes the potential for multiple interpretation, actually demonstrates the impossibility of keeping the elements distinct, but her concern with "originality" obscures the total linguistic picture.

dichotomy noted earlier, norm/deviance, can be seen at work in the low opinion McCullough holds of certain *Kokinshū* categories—"Eccentric," "Names of Things," and much of "Miscellaneous." Poems in the last category receive some of the author's harshest judgments.¹⁵

A further look at McCullough's discussion of rhetoric and rhetorical devices: "The last three [of five] poems may represent an evolution from simile to metaphor" (p. 120—is metaphor higher on the *tanka* evolutionary scale than simile?); Komachi's famous poem (KKS 113) "is neither metaphorical nor symbolic; rather, it is wordplay of the highest order" (p. 223). The terms metaphor, symbol, and wordplay have become almost meaningless here. The problem extends to her discussion of Tsurayuki's famous *kokoro* and *kotoba* distinction: *kokoro* includes "topic, theme, tone, wit, *mitate*, conceit, and conception," whereas *kotoba* incorporates *makurakotoba*, *jokotoba*, *engo*, *kakekotoba*, and imagery or, in McCullough's words, "diction, rhetoric, imagery, syntax, and auditory effect" (p. 326). McCullough equates *kokoro* with "wit" and *kotoba* with "beauty" (p. 329)—again not clearly definable (or distinguishable) critical terms. And although she rightly defines the important term *mitate* as "a blanket term embracing figurative language of all descriptions" (p. 66), she does not seem to see its close kinship to other tropes but suggests that it is somehow qualitatively different from both metaphor and simile. The latter two belong in her scheme to *kotoba*, whereas *mitate* gets subsumed under "conception," that is, *kokoro*: "If we are justified in treating *mitate* as an aspect of *kokoro*. . . ." (p. 329). In the end, one is never sure exactly where *mitate* belongs or what the author's idea of figurative language, rhetoric, *kokoro*, and *kotoba* might be. Another trope, metonymy, perhaps the best way to describe such figures as *mitate*, never enters the discussion at all.¹⁶ In short, the relation between a term McCullough lists in one category and a term in the other is not self-evident, and the terms themselves are not identical (the Heian preference for ambiguity itself shows that *kotoba* and *kokoro* were hardly stable entities) but undergo change (and change of value) according to the nature of linguistic difference and their particular compositional contexts. Traditional binarisms like *kokoro* and *kotoba* (or form and content) are metaphors that often conceal as much about linguistic interplay as they reveal. That the Japanese themselves believed the situation to be more complex than McCullough's discussion implies can be seen in the existence in *waka* discourse of such terms as *sama* and *sugata* (signifying something like "rhetorical mode" and "situational effect," respectively) which McCullough does not treat.

Difficulty with the intricacies of rhetoric is symptomatic of the state of most *waka* criticism in the west today and is by no means unique to McCullough's discourse. As their earliest recorded poems and folksongs show, the Japanese have always displayed an affinity for wordplay—possibly a combination of their belief in the power of words, *kotodama*, impulses gained from Chinese precedents, and an inclination

¹⁵ "KKS 455 [is] negligible as literature" (p. 481).

¹⁶ See, for example, KKS 27: "It twists together / leafy threads of tender green / and fashions jewels / by piercing clear, white dewdrops— / the willow tree in springtime." To see dew as beads or jewels and willow leaves and branches as threads is to indulge in figural language whose components, *kokoro* and *kotoba*, cannot easily be divided. For McCullough the poem shows that "kokoro itself becomes a source of beauty [*kotoba*] as well as of wit" (p. 329). Aside from the problems involved in attempting to maintain essentialist distinctions, the *mitate* seen in KKS 27 may be better characterized by the term metonymy, rather than either metaphor or simile: the willow-thread and dew-jewel pairs become associated conventionally into bound figures. The same can be said for plum/cherry-snow, dew-tears, deer-bush clover, etc. In a recent article, Suzuki Hideo clearly argues that *mitate* ought to be considered a rhetorical device (Suzuki 1986).

arising out of the phonological nature of the Japanese language. Instead of treating rhetorical devices as somehow distinct from “main statement” or from expressions of lyricism and “authenticity of suffering” (p. 395), new methods for tropological analysis must be developed to resituate Konishi’s work¹⁷ and to attempt to integrate the various facets seen above—reasoning and confusion (although such terms along with wit, urbanity, and aestheticism are perhaps better discarded), personification, *mitate*, *makurakotoba*, *jokotoba*, *engo*, *kakekotoba*, *utamakura* (poetic toponyms), and *kago* (conventionally employed poetic words)—into a view of Heian poetic composition that can more fully describe the propensity for wordplay that lies at its heart, encompass poems that might otherwise be seen as deviant or anomalous, and delineate the socio-political forces that crisscross it.¹⁸

The issues raised by the volumes under review provide an important, albeit belated, lesson for literary studies of Japan. The act of translation, which initially dreams the possibility of a seamless (or even a complete or nearly complete) transfer of “content” from a source language into a target language, must not further mislead the translator into assuming by analogy a possibility of natural transfers for areas of research such as history, literature, and politics. In reading *Brocade by Night*, one experiences a time-warp sensation. Unaffected by the implications of recent research in the humanities and social sciences for the study of Japanese *waka*, and otherwise unable to view the poems in their situational complexity, it is a text out of the past. Hence the tale told by *Brocade by Night* becomes an old one. There is a source language/culture that is deemed deficient in its ability to shine, so to speak, by itself. It must be illuminated, explicated, re-presented in an altered (translated) guise. In this case the guise is enhanced by the rhetorical fabric of Chinese civilization and elevated terminology and by McCullough’s authoritative text. McCullough’s comment on KKS 297, from which the title of the companion volume derives, sums it up: “KKS 297 satisfies the *kanajo* criteria as fully as any *tanka* in the anthology. Its conception, a model of courtly wit, demonstrates precisely the right degree of originality, its imagery evokes a scene of great visual appeal, and its carefully ordered diction creates elegant aural effects. . . . We might say, indeed, that both KKS 297 and *Kokinshū* itself resemble ‘brocade worn in the darkness of night.’ The weaver’s skill cannot be

¹⁷ Konishi himself was interested in demonstrating a similarity in attitude between Chinese Six Dynasties and *Kokinshū* poets; but even more, he was writing a polemic directed at *ko-kugakusha* scholars who had been shortchanging the role of China in Heian poetic practice. McCullough, in taking him at face value, fails to see the extent to which Konishi might have overstated the case to make his point. A reexamination of *Japanese Court Poetry*, the standard English-language text on classical Japanese *waka* (which also relied on Konishi’s work), is long overdue (see Brower and Miner 1961).

¹⁸ One of the reasons that McCullough included *Tosa nikki* and *Shinsen waka* was that they might shed light on why certain “ambiguous and overspecific compositions,” “naive songs,” or “assertive statements” were part of *Kokinshū*: “We must try to determine whether such anomalies are due to nonliterary constraints . . . to disagreement among the compilers . . . or simply to a lack of firm standards” (p. 494; emphasis added). Then, after a conscientious examination of the two texts comes this conclusion: “Unhappily, we cannot claim to have identified definitive explanations for *Kokinshū*’s editorial inconsistencies. . . . We lack the data to go beyond the realm of conjecture” (p. 534). Such elements only appear to be “anomalies” and “inconsistencies” when they are seen in terms of faulty assumptions about poetic composition and value; in fact, it is elements like these that may provide a clue to a different approach. McCullough also overlooks important work being done on rhetorical devices. She does not cite names like Suzuki Hideo, one of the best scholars working today on Heian poetry, especially *Kokinshū* rhetorical devices, and Katagiri Yōchi, who has been examining, among other topics, *makurakotoba*, *utamakura*, *kago*, and the relation between voice and persona in *waka*. See, for example, Suzuki 1974 and Katagiri 1983.



appreciated without proper illumination" (p. 415). The poem, on its own, is neither superior nor inferior to countless other *tanka*, but it gets transformed in the illusory light of McCullough's discourse. *Brocade by Night* stands as a mighty attempt to turn the dream of pure transferal into its own interpretative weave. In some cases, however, rather than proceed in the deceptive clarity of a mystified slumber, might it not be better to provide illumination more awake to the dictates of difference?

List of References

- BARTHES, ROLAND. 1977. "The Death of the Author." In *Image—Music—Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang.
- BAXANDALL, MICHAEL. 1985. *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- BELSEY, CATHERINE. 1980. *Critical Practice*. New York: Methuen.
- BROWER, ROBERT H., and EARL MINER. 1961. *Japanese Court Poetry*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL. 1976. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Harper and Row.
- KATAGIRI YŌICHI. 1983. *Utamakura, utakotoba jiten* [A dictionary of *utamakura* and *utakotoba*]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- KONISHI JIN'ICHI. 1978. "The Genesis of the 'Kokinshū' Style." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38:61–170.
- KUHN, THOMAS. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MCCULLOUGH, HELEN CRAIG. 1966. *Yoshitsune: A Fifteenth-Century Japanese Chronicle*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1968. *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- MCCULLOUGH, WILLIAM H., and HELEN CRAIG MCCULLOUGH. 1980. *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period*. 2 vols. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- NAJITA, TETSUO, and VICTOR KOSCHMANN, eds. 1982. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- RODD, LAUREL RASPLICA, trans., with the poet MARY CATHERINE HENKENIUS. 1984. *Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- SAID, EDWARD. 1975. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Basic Books.
- SUZUKI HIDEO. 1974. "'Kokinshū' hyōgen no keisei" [The formation of the *Kokinshū* style]. *Bungaku* 42, no. 5:63–77.
- . 1986. "'Kokinshū' no mitate ni tsuite" [*Mitate* in the *Kokinshū*]. *Bungaku* 54, no. 2:167–79.