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Beyond Dualism: Towards interculturality in pictorialisations of Miyazawa Kenji's 'Snow Crossing' (Yukiwatari)

Helen Kilpatrick

Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933) is one of Japan's most renowned authors and his many children's stories (*dôwa)* represent a Buddho-animist quest for a more integrated cosmos. In his desire for this kind of holism, Kenji was largely writing against all the forms of scientific rationalism that, by his day, had entered Japanese consciousness through intellectual thought and new forms of Naturalist literature. (For further discussion of this prevalence see, for example, Keene 1984, Chapters 11 & 16). Such rationalist modes of thought formed the foundation for a society that Kenji saw as responsible for many inequalities. Despite, or because of, Kenji's spiritual quest, he wrote many tales that demonstrate his concern with a more earthly egalitarianism. Kenji's multi-layered tale 'Snow Crossing' celebrates cultural and ethnic diversity. In this tale, he constructs a set of dualistic relationships that gradually break down through intercultural negotiations, which demonstrate the positive potential of such dialogism.

Although Kenji was writing in the 1920s, his tropes of egalitarianism and cultural diversity are still pertinent now as demonstrated through many contemporary visual representations ostensibly published for children. Kenji is one of the most oft-illustrated authors in Japan today, and picture book exhibitions of his work are regularly held in Japan (the most recent being in September 2007 at the Hiratsuka Museum of Art; see http://www.city.hiratsuka.kanagawa.jp/art-muse/2007203.html). Indeed, 'Snow Crossing' is one of Kenji's more commonly illustrated stories. I have selected two pictorialisations of Kenji's 'Snow Crossing' because they particularise the transaction between opposing groups within an 'otherworldly' space where their differences can be transcended. Rather than merely re-presenting a monologically 'faithful' replication of story events, these two books build a consciousness of 'other', constructing a distorted Thirdspace whereby fixed notions of identity and self are challenged through the involvement of viewers in a dialogic process of identity construction. These versions first published in the 1990s and still readily available toda are illustrated by two internationally-acclaimed Japanese artists: Satô Kunio, an ex-carpenter who has dedicated over twenty years to creating woodcuts of Kenji's stories; and Katao Ryô, an eminent artist and picture book illustrator. (For examples of their artwork, see respectively: http://www.yamanekokoubou.com/ http://www.1worldart.com/catlbyartist/catkatao_ryo.html).

In my examination of these two picture books, I utilise Edward Soja's (1996) concept of 'Thirdspace' to explore how the artwork breaks down barriers and challenges constructed centre/periphery or dominant/minority hegemonies for a (post-)modern Japanese audience. Similar tensions can be found in many multicultural societies today and are also relevant to Japan's constructed 'homogeneity', evidenced in theories of *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese uniqueness) that arose in the 1970s, and which maintain some currency today (see Befu 2001). Before beginning a discussion of how the contemporary visual discourse creates and then dispels dualistic cultural tensions, a more detailed discussion of the story in the context of its intersubjective intercultural relations will provide the basis for the close pictorial examination to follow.

The tale constructs a complex set of opposing relations between humans and animals that, through an idealistic set of intercultural negotiations among children of two different sets, exemplifies a meaningful interchange between dominant human/adult and minority animal/child cultures. This set of transactions occurs within a transcendent space, reminiscent of Appadurai's (1996) 'imaginary', in which interactions push beyond exotic or tokenist notions of multiculturalism. At story level, 'Snow Crossing' challenges fixed notions of identity by first 'othering' adult foxes as untrustworthy or inferior and adult humans as avaricious, and then using the negotiations between fox and human children to break through these constructed stereotypes. In narrating the principle negotiations between the human children and the fox cubs, the tale not only challenges hegemonic ideologies between groups that discount diversity and sustain inequalities, but also attends to some of the dominant/minority complexities of agency that arise in social interactions between different groups.

The uneasy social negotiations between a young brother and sister, Shirô and Kanko, and the saintly fox cub, Konzaburô, centre around an exchange of 'unclean' food. The story immediately establishes a dualistic structure through its two halves: in the first, set in the morning, Shirô and Kanko

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inadvertently invoke a meeting with Konzaburô, who invites them to an evening slide-show; and in the second part, at this slide-show the two sets of children, human and fox, overcome their suspicions of each other to establish mutual trust and accountability. It signals many other binary oppositions such as day/night, village/forest, but it is the children/adult and animal/human binaries that establish the cultural ideologies of difference that need to be transcended through the 'crossing' indicated in the title.

Such a transaction is reminiscent of the passage across a stream which is the Buddhist metaphor for salvation after death (Waters 1997, p.71) through which the subject is reincarnated through a series of worlds and lives towards an 'enlightened' cosmic integration. This ideal is representative of a deep, transcendent interculturality that can acknowledge, surmount, and reorder cultural differences. The term *interculturality* refers to an 'imaginary' or 'openness' where countervailing forms of resistance can reassert 'cultural differences and reaffirm the power of heterogeneous political cultures and identities' (Soja 2000, p.209). Later in this paper, I shall discuss the potential of such an imaginary in relation to visual imagery.

Regarding the child/adult binary, just as the negotiations between the characters in 'Snow Crossing' become possible only within a unique space, the exchange can take place between only certain parties, 'marked off' by age. Shirô and Kanko's older brothers cannot go to the slide show because the intermediary, Konzaburô, provides tickets for only the young, those under eleven. (By Japanese reckoning at the time the story was written (1921) everyone was immediately counted as one in January, so eleven could be anything from ten to twelve actual years). Children are often viewed as having a closer proximity to nature than adults because of their perceived naiveté and innocence. Hagiwara (1993) suggests that in Miyazawa Kenji's children's stories, the child's nearness to the womb accesses a more primeval innocence that involves the suspension or loss of individual solipsistic 'selfhood', enabling an ingenuousness that affords Soja's 'space of radical openness' (2000, p.13). This space ensures both sets of children's ability and willingness to trust and to achieve what Hagiwara calls 'restored innocence' where all beings can exist together harmoniously (see 1986, 1992, & 1993). Such a magical 'otherworld' allows an openness of profound intercultural union. This is a space in which all barriers and tensions can be bridged through an understanding of what Buddhists refer to as the 'non-essential' self that integrates with all 'others' (see LaFleur 1998), where the mind can be emptied and therefore ready and open to anything and everything.

With reference to animal/human binaries, in Japanese culture, foxes are magical, duplicitous creatures that often trick humans, so the humans in the story fear, disdain, and set traps for foxes. Therefore, besides trust, the story emphasises the necessity for effort from both parties in overcoming the cultural barriers of prejudice, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation. During the interval at the slide show in the second part of the story, for instance, after having just seen slides that appear to confirm the children's suspicions–pictures showing drunken humans scoffing down excrement and straw disguised as food–Shirô and Kanko must eat the fox cubs' diligently home-made rice cakes. Initially, they partake very tentatively but, through their acknowledgment of the food as delicious, community, accountability, and trust are established.

After the interval, slides of adult foxes snared in human traps ridicule similarly mutual transgressions. Both sets of slides foreground the avaricious appetites and offences of corrupted adults, signalling their selfish over-attachments that leave no room for understanding of the 'other'. Such acts by members of one group can misrepresent the whole and create ideologies of difference that erect barriers to communication and understanding, preventing any deep sense of community among apparently separate groups. In other words, the underlying misunderstanding occurs through stereotyping and the whole transaction underlines the mutual responsibility of any successful intercultural exchange. The ultimate success of the final transaction breaks down social constructions and misrepresentations of the 'other'. In doing so, it gives voice to the two minority cultures, that is, foxes and children, in a genuinely intercultural manner.

In their artistic representations, Katao and Satô create a privileged 'otherworld' which is like Homi Bhaba's

inbetween or Third Space, where the politics of polarity may be eluded and the hybridity of culture can be negotiated and articulated in dialogue (Bhaba, 2004, p.56). Soja (1996) elaborates on his alternative term, Thirdspace, as, 'a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meaning (p.2). ... It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other ...' (p.5). He further explains such spatiality as a strategy of 'thirding-as-Othering', which creatively restructures and opens out alternatives to all dominant modes of binary thought (p.5), a 'space of radical openness' (p.13).

These terms will be used throughout this paper to refer to the type of space in which the 'thirding-as-Othering' is constructed through a dialogic process among the verbal and pictorial narratives and the reader/viewer, pushing towards an awareness of an interculturality which provides agency to the represented minority groups and viewers. Throughout 'Snow Crossing', the constructions of 'other' between the human and fox subjects highlight the tensions within, yet potential for overcoming, difficult cultural differences. It is this space which the artwork of Satô and Katao accesses through their less representational images, drawing out and interrogating the underlying philosophies in the narrative.

The complexity of the visual images has a capacity to re-vision the text and to interpellate readers/viewers and story subjects into 'other' subject positions within the project of identity construction. Underpinning this notion of interpellation are Arjun Appardurai's (1996) theories of, 'the imagination as a social practice ... a social fact' that is 'central to all forms of agency' (Soja 2000, pp.209-10), whereby the imaginary is recognised as a valid social construction of identity. Both artists access the 'otherworld' as an imaginary of 'other-ed' possibilities. Their pictorial 'othering' of story space and represented story participants helps the audience negotiate the pictorial discourses. Through defamiliarisation, they disrupt conventional viewing positions and encourage a dialogic interaction with the intercultural aspects of the text.

Katao and Satô (de)construct and challenge culturally-constructed ideologies of ethnic identity in several different ways: 1) by disrupting spatiality and temporality through distortions of the everyday world; 2) through a pictorial play with notions of presence/absence, light/dark, and the double coding of represented phenomena; and 3) through disruptions to, or alternations within, composition, layout, and sequencing. Such (de)constructions of the quest for a profound interculturality signal, on the one hand, the difficulty and fragility of transcending the cultural obstacles established in the text, and on the other, the fluidity and empowerment associated with the success of such a quest. These points provide the focus for the following discussion of the children's negotiated transactions in the artwork.

Satô's and Katao's opening and closing pictures from each of the two sections of the story exemplify their contrasting metafictive defamiliarisation of the story space as a mystical Third-, *inbetween*- space. By foregrounding this dissonance of normal time and space, both sets of images disturb notions of local/centre, and of dominant/minority, and signal an otherworld of possibility for hybridities that enable other subject positions and the interdependence of such differences (Soja 2000, pp.209-10). Their first openings, for instance, construct the story's dualistic tensions quite differently, but both create visions of a space where all cultural boundaries can be overcome and dispelled.

In Katao's opening scene, his grainy mistiness and mysterious luminosity assemble the *inbetween* space as a locus of endless possibility, distorting the everyday world, suggesting the contemplative emptiness that evokes the aforementioned 'non-essential' world or mind as an empty vessel, open to any possibility. His surrealistic landscape stretches across the book's wide format, immediately encapsulating the obscure space. Together with the lack of human presence in the accompanying verbal text, Katao's abstract vastness encourages viewer meditation on the intense emptiness. Katao's unconventional monochrome, at a further remove from reality than colour, works with his out-of-focus features and landmarks to reject all sense of material referentiality. Such an aesthetic immediately foregrounds the imaginary, auguring the epiphanistic atmosphere of the children's later experience by breaking down fixities (of, for instance, cultural constructions of

dominant/minority power relations) through displacing viewer expectation.

Amidst such intense emptiness, and despite the apparent absence of any humans, Katao's play of light and shade over the surface of the three predominant planes and the suggestive reverse curves in the upper contours are reminiscent of an abstracted human body, an image which recurs throughout the book. This hint of human presence/absence emphasises his metafictional play with notions of vision and reality, also highlighting a space of absorption which can incorporate the differences among the groups in the text. On the one hand, such an evocation of a figure recalls the baser animal desire inherent in all human sensuality which in itself, through inherent human selfishness, prevents mutual interconnectivity. On the other, the pictorial graininess, simultaneously suggests this vague human form as abstracted from sand, connoting notions of creation and absorption and constructing the vastness as a space for transcendence of the text's more fixed humanist ethnicities. In contrast to the dualism in such evocations of human presence then, this incorporation of human figure into landscape (or vice versa) helps signal the reconciliation of any dichotomous splits in, for instance, the selfish acts of the human and fox adults shown during the slide show. Katao's absorptive human presence and distorted spatiality thus raise yet integrate the dualistic divisions and cultural barriers encountered by the two sets of children, foreshadowing the possibilities for the later intercultural interdependence through the mutual understanding, trust, and accountability among only the young.

Katao's pictorial dissonance also positions the reading subject as a distanced 'other' whose view of the conventional story world has been displaced to align with some of the similarly distancing otherness of intercultural tensions signified in the narrative. It disconcerts the reader/viewer by destabilising more habitual ways of seeing and being in the world. This first scene, then, achieves an atmosphere that transcends all here-and-now dualism which, for readers familiar with Buddhism, signals the aura of an ideal 'Dharma-realm',[1] creating the *inbetween-* or Third-space where all marginalising ideologies of culture and ethnicity might be dissolved, disseminated, and absorbed. Such flux allows the space in which individualistic differences can extend 'beyond the dualisms of subject and object, existence and non-existence ... beyond the individual unconscious, ... [to] a universal reality which lies "within" all beings' (Harvey 1990, p.108). Katao thus defamiliarises the viewing plane, encouraging a reading space that doubly interrogates the verbal narrative's questioning of dualistic ethnicities and consequent subject positioning, signaling this mystical *dharma* essence as that which Shirô and Kanko (not introduced until his second spread) must access in order to successfully negotiate their forthcoming intercultural relations with the foxes. Katao's pictures maintain this keenly ethereal quality throughout, thus maintaining a perspective of 'other' that continually encourages a dialogic reading of the text's oppositional cultural ethnicities.

Despite his very different medium and style (naïve woodcuts), Satô's first scene introduces a similarly evocative presence/absence, yet (de)constructs the dualistic forms of the children as imbued with reconciliatory spiritual power. In contrast to Katao's oblique reference to human presence, Satô represents the forms of Shirô and Kanko as two sets of diaphanous reflections (Figure 1). The 'real' Shirô and Kanko are introduced as a smaller, upper black dual set of silhouettes, joined at the hands like paper cut-outs as they sing and kick their way out onto the frozen field, while the reflected shadows join each 'real' figure at the feet. Satô's whole first opening reverberates with an invisible spiritual truth and evanescence, like that underlying the Neoplatonist metaphor of the shadows

Figure 1

deep in the cave where everything is suggested as One. It alludes to a numinous presence or the material world as itself spiritual, like a reflection of this world on the other, infusing the spiritual into all matter and creating the potential space for acceptance and incorporation of the text's socially-constructed differences. By connoting another dimension of being, a higher order of reality where all life-forms are mere shadows and where beings are less differentiated, it intimates the double nature of existence that is to be transcended.

Together with the 'millions of tiny little shimmering mirrors' in the narrative (p.2), Satô's play of light and transparency dramatises this sublime atmosphere of a dreamlike mirage. In animist Shinto religion and iconography, mirrors suggest the presence of *kami* (gods) and reflect all things, showing their true qualities (see Colligan-Taylor 2000, np; and Hall 1995, pp.4-5). Satô's prominent woodgrain resonates through the ink, emphasising this kind of Buddho-animist interculturality by evoking the 'glittering and glimmering' surface of the frozen snow. These shimmers of snow seep through the children's inky figures and blend them within this wide expanse of the landscape, signifying their immersive ability, the potential to transgress and be absorbed, in a reassertion and reordering of the cultural differences inherent in the material stasis of the human world they are now leaving. Satô's *kami*-nature, reflective within all phenomena, thus suggests the bridge-building possibilities in the children's pending exchange. Satô's play with light and transparency through and around the blackened print of the woodgrain animates the whole plane and constructs the special spatio-temporality, pushing beyond all tensions and dichotomies, evoking an invisible truth, an imaginary which incorporates dualistic diversity. It simultaneously implies a merger among all phenomena in time and space and the uncomplicated simplicity of this extraordinary heterotopia, activating the 'radical openness' of this unusual intercultural transaction wherein all can co-exist harmoniously.

Satô's strong vectors also interpellate the viewer into such a collective, forming a triangular shape running from the line through the shadows, children, pool edge, and sun to merge at the top with those between the tree in the foreground and the sun in the background. By situating the spectator higher on the vertical axis above the children and closer to the tree in the foreground, the audience is positioned to look down across the vast emptiness of the infinite like a supreme spiritual mind. The viewer is thus aligned with the emanating force behind the illumination and ensoulment of the represented forms and becomes part of the brooding eeriness, further deconstructing the dichotomies between viewer and text. Satô therefore creates an atmosphere and viewing position that incorporate all culturally-constructed divisions and ethnic differences such as those of between the two sets of children or between the reader and the fiction.

Whereas Katao's images show a continual break with representational convention throughout, Satô's ruptures of represented time and space at specific moments in the story enhance the reader's sense of the cultural obstacles to be overcome. Satô's more monologically illustrative re-presentation throughout his intervening pages, for instance, contrasts markedly with the spiritual enlivenment in his opening and closing scenes to each section of the story. The heavy woodgraining that breathes life into the landscape is much less evident in the subsequent internal stories of exchange among the two sets of children. Satô's second scene, for instance, presents the children as more corporeal characters, in a differentiated, more earthly space. By framing the more mundane 'reality' of here-and-now within his initial supernaturally imbued world, Satô foregrounds the *inbetween* space of deeper interculturality as an imaginary ideal that needs significant endeavour. The protagonists and viewer move in and out of this space in a similar manner to the to-ing and fro-ing of negotiation required by the two sets of children in their movements, for instance, between both home and forest and in their relations with their adult brothers or their 'other-ed' opposites.

Satô's disruptions through such framing therefore signal the crossing of social boundaries and foreground the difficulties associated with overcoming cultural obstacles from a perspective of 'other'. This kind of endeavour relates to the Buddhist concept of self-effort (*jiriki*) in the attainment of salvation rather than reliance on a supreme beneficence. (For further details on *jiriki* see, for instance, Endô 1999, pp.248-252.) Satô's differentiated space metafictively

signifies the dichotomies inherent in the tale and the challenges of the underlying cultural tensions. His framing techniques thus underline the fragility of all union and the inherent tensions among such relationships, signifying the need for continual effort in the intercultural quest.

In contrast to Satô's creation of dualistic children, Katao, besides his otherworldly landscape and play with presence/absence, signals the cultural dualisms in the text by using light and dark both to contrast the more mundane 'sordidity' of humanity's base animal desires with the otherworldly 'purity' of nature and to signify the transcendence of such cultural and ethnic differences through constructions of union. When the children are first represented, they are dark and mundane and yet other-ed beings. Their move towards the forest along the glistening snow under the blazing sun suggests their move away from the familiarity and mundanity of home, represented by the shaded grassy plane of 'reality' in the foreground, towards a mandala-nimbus of dazzling sunlight. Their positioning, together with their sustained ordinariness within the surrealistic pictorial space, underlines their difference from the foxes yet also the unconventional spatiality of exploration and adventure in their 'illicit' intercultural exchange with the more 'innocent' foxes of nature.

Furthermore, the luminescence, weightlessness, and malleability of the foxes and their haloes all contrast with the children's materiality of form throughout. In Part 2, for example, the fluidly luminescent halo-coronae above the foxes contrast with the relatively corporeal children as heavier dark shadows that continue to signal their materiality of body while they taunt the fox cub Konzaburô with chants about fox dumplings being made from rabbit droppings. The humans are thus still connected with the world of the here-and-now until the exchange of food cements the mutually-trusting relationship. The children's relative mundanity also contrasts with the supernatural pallor of the fox cub. Together with Konzaburô's translucent whiteness, which signals him as the idealistic instigator of the transaction, a sudden shift in viewing position here, from third person to first person, emphasises his role as a dynamic negotiator. His ethereal saintliness suggests a higher order negotiating power as he now 'demands' that the audience attend his contrasting image of purity. The viewer is simultaneously aligned here with Shirô and Kanko in an even more directly-powerful interpellation into the intercultural negotiations than Satô's.

As the children move away from their home towards the 'unknown' surrealistic mist and weightlessness of the forest, constituted as a space of the exchange and the *inbetween* space of the intercultural negotiations, however, Katao's pictorial play with light and the sense of weightlessness also breaks down the tension between the parties. Light, as an intangible, malleable mass that can penetrate space yields a profound feeling of 'natural' permeability in a similar way that Sato's transparency through the woodgrain animates his represented phenomena. Katao's light is translucent rather than bright, like a dreamlike haze, and implies the interpenetrative possibilities for all existence. This translucency leads beyond the duality of light and dark to 'the self-luminosity of all things' (Leidy and Thurman 1998, p.166). It therefore suggests the piercing through of all the dualistically-constructed cultural tensions between the fox and human children who need to recognise the bridging possibilities of finding the 'self' in the 'other' or the 'other' in the 'self' in order to reach a successful intercultural transaction.

Both artists also heighten certain moments to signify the easy fracturing of negotiations yet also to maintain the more fluid possibility for overcoming cultural misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Both, for example, foreground the short-lived euphoria of the first interchange among the children when, together, they fail to summon an elusive deer at the end of Part 1. The artists' signification and play with the deer's absence/presence and its elusiveness while it responds with only a distant 'peep peep' registers this as a moment of transgression, expressing both the children's desire for the transactional process and the lost opportunity that underlines the difficulty of re-ordering cultural differences.

Satô, with this scene punctuating his Part 1, returns to a more animated space, his layout and composition working with his contrasting preceding pictures to reiterate the aforementioned Buddhist need for self-effort (*jiriki*) in overcoming the difficult intercultural negotiations. His represented but partially-hidden deer is distanced from the

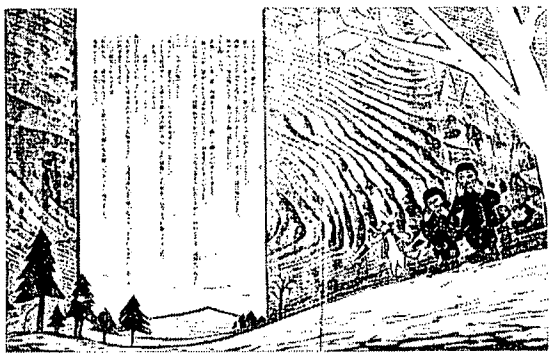

Figure 2

three now-united children on the opposite side of the spread as they try to invoke the deer with their chants (Figure 2). The deer is positioned so that the viewer can see what the children cannot. Although the children's line of sight leads towards it, they miss it at the periphery of the scene, the space of the less familiar or new information. Even though Konzaburô is united with the earthly, 'unenlightened' human children within a 'safe' or 'given' space, their distance from the obscure deer that blends in with nature, and their failure to see it, highlight the elusiveness of successful intercultural 'enlightenment'.

In a further visual semiotic of connection and disconnection, the geometrical frame around the central verbal discourse here also interrupts the eye's flow across the picture plane, physically separating the children and deer. Yet Satô's vectors lead the viewing eye over undulating contours of landscape that slip past softened organic streaks of blue 'cloud' under the hard borders of this frame, towards the deer in the distant stand of trees, the whole ultimately signaling the possibility of bridging the binary tensions. The animated space around the divisions, of text and valley, for instance, heightens this sense of overcoming the cultural tensions between the opposing parties: humanity and the children on one side and nature and the deer on the other.

This scene's very divisions, however, underline the need for effort in the intercultural quest for diversity among the different human/animal and child/adult cultural groups. It is only the children's 'restored innocence' or 'radical openness', as expressed through their union here with Konzaburô, that can accept and celebrate the dissolution of cultural or ethnic differences that arise from socially-inscribed power relations such as those constructed between foxes and humans. While Satô's separation of the deer from the main protagonists suggests their differences and the difficulties of communication with any such 'other-ed' being, this linking of the three children also signifies the potential for connection among the three, this scene thus heightening the inherent tension and the possibility for overcoming cultural differences through effort.

Katao similarly underlines the same moment at the end of Part 1 by extending it into a kind of non-gravitational circular 'dance' that emphasises the sense of euphoria yet also the fragility of the union. His first picture alongside text of the children's chants, shows the three of them circling around a huge mandala-sun, united in a weightless cosmic fusion, powerfully signifying transcendence of the cultural differences between foxes and humans. Mandalas symbolise perfect wholeness, 'the collective unconscious as an autonomous entity' and, similar to Satô's animation of life through the woodgrain, represent a bridge over 'apparently irreconcilable opposites' (Leidy & Thurman 1988, pp.162-3). On the following page Katao's perfect mandala-circle dissolves into a hazy mass. These dissolving, gliding, and flowing coronae highlight this moment as one of potential renegotiation and reconciliation, yet the shift simultaneously suggests the possibility of slippage, the fragility or difficulty of compliance with more rigid forms.

This dissipation signifies the difficulty of trust and belief in an 'other' and foreshadows the next episode in Part 2 where such cultural transactions will have to be renegotiated at a deeper level in order to be successful. Katao's two pictures signify the potency of intercultural ability and community, yet when the circular gravitation of the three children dissipates into a more arbitrary pattern of weightlessness against the suggestive background as the deer is heard but doesn't appear, the vulnerability, tentativeness, and transience associated with becoming something other is also signalled. The less-defined blurry white orbs and shadowy contours here conjure visions of the spotted markings of the deer, suggesting this tentative potential of their transgressive transaction and the blending of nature/humanity. Katao's

floating depictions of Konzaburô, the foxes, and the children in such cosmic dances resonate with a weightlessness where everything can merge together, suggesting the euphoric transcendence of all dichotomous boundaries. His artistic manipulation of elements such as light and shade, presence and absence, and gravity and buoyancy evoke a surreal ephemerality that simultaneously symbolises a fluidity in which the two sets of children can surmount all cultural differences and tensions and cement their union, a space of genuine intercultural potential.

Katao's closing pictures again utilise mandala symbology to exude a now nirvana-like quietude, similar to the effect of a mandala-like sense of completion, heightening the sense of overcoming the cultural tensions during the slide show. In this penultimate scene, for instance, the children are viewed from below sitting in front of another large mandala-moon to suggest the children's elevated condition against the divided lower realm above which they are now seated. The space of this picture is cut into unequal planes to signify the divisions transcended through their transactions at the slide show; the cut-off contouring in the bottom third recalls the earlier abstracted human shape, and the straw represents the more realistic yet lesser-terrestrial space of avaricious humanity. In the larger upper expanse, the weightlessness and light of the privileged *inbetween*, represents an intercultural ideal. Shirô and Kanko, having transcended the lower plane through trust and friendship with the unfamiliar foreign foxes, sit quietly together on the upper plane while the fox cubs with their individual haloes cluster around and behind the huge low-hanging mandala-moon. While they all listen to Konzaburô's final exhortations to try to keep their promises into adulthood, the mandala-moon signifies the perfect completion of the union and suggests a more intuitive, supernatural transcendence of all the dualistic cultural tensions.

Satô's closure also signals the whole transaction as a tenuous yet cyclical heterotopia when the more mundanely-figurative bodies of the children are welcomed home by their more 'experienced', un-enlightened adult brothers in the distance (Figure 3). Shirô and Kanko, now on the verge of exit from the higher-order, spatio-temporal netherworld, are about to re-enter the 'real' world of more static identities with the reflections of their three brothers

Figure 3

stretching towards them, metonymic of both entrapment and potential for release. A huge bluish contour, suggestive of a looming human silhouette, spreads a sense of awe over the entire landscape while also connoting the negative aspects of the children's return to a dualistic 'sordidity' of more static human sensuality emanating from this figure and viewer space. This more transparent silhouette, however, infuses the scene with light, which reverberates as another unifying essence, an omnipotent beholder that represents the potential of an intercultural ideal.

Ultimately, these two artists both reject verisimilitude and utilise varying levels of abstraction to help disrupt normal conventions of seeing or 'knowing' the material world in order to suggest the imaginary as a space of negotiation. Both artists, for instance, immediately signify the everyday made strange, engaging with the extraordinary temporality and spatiality in the verbal narrative of 'Snow Crossing'. Both artists metafictively invoke the *inbetween* space as an unconscious, open space of negotiated possibilities through which, for example, readers can interpret their allusions to presence/absence and their play with light, transparency, and weightlessness in a dialogic process that is similar to the process of negotiation between the fox and human children.

Satô intersperses his *inbetween* space with a more conventionally representational illustration of story events, constructing binaries and highlighting the imaginary as an ideal, thus encouraging readers through such disruptions to interrogate similarly socially-inscribed positions in

the everyday world. He metafictively aligns the viewer with the status of both insider and outsider, therefore focusing on *jiriki* effort. Katao, on the other hand, while alluding to similar binaries through a continued 'othering', foregrounds a more transcendent sense of community. Yet his predominantly-abstracted world also encourages an interrogative reading position throughout. By disconcerting the viewer with unconventional images, the reader is situated as 'other' and interpellated into a discomfited position similar to that of the foxes who, from a human perspective, are 'other-ed' in their cultural transactions with the children. This kind of visual defamiliarisation 'demands' of the viewer a 'radical openness' that helps collapse the text's identity constructions through an imaginary, which suggests the unifying potential of such synthesising negotiation in today's similarly divisive world.

In different ways then, both artists overtly provide the human children and viewing subject with a dialogic agency that constructs viewpoints of 'other' which challenge the conventional humanist position whereby an individual has a fixed identity that, in the course of time and experience, will be uncovered (Bradford 2006, p.116). Such artistic constructions for 'Snow Crossing' foreground the children's ethnic subjectivities as developed through transactions with other cultural subjectivities. The visual positioning of the foxes and children and the viewer highlights the vicissitudes of the negotiation. Yet by destabilising more conventional notions of fixed meanings and/or static identities, this also emphasises the ultimate reconciliation through cooperation, thus allowing for movement towards negotiated understandings of self and other in the imaginary, *inbetween*- Third- or 'different'- space of an interculturality which moves beyond more superficial and divisive concepts of multiculturalism.

NOTES

1. Dharma constitute all phenomena, factors, or elements of existence and as they 'lack an independent, self-subsisting core or essence, they are considered to be subject to change' (Matsunaga & Matsunaga 1976, p.30).

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