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RESEARCH ONLINE

Buddhist Visions of Transculturalism: Picturing Miyazawa Kenji's *Yamanashi* (Wild Pear)

HELEN KILPATRICK

This paper analyses the interaction between the 1920s narrative of Yamanashi by Miyazawa Kenji and two sets of contemporary accompanying images. Both books challenge centrist ideologies and nationalist Nihonjinron *theories of a homogeneous Japan that arose after World War II. Kobayashi Toshiya's (1985) more representational rendering of the story's Buddhist significance of co-existence within nature provides the basis for comparison with the minimalist artwork of Kim Tschang Yeul (1984). While Kobayashi's multiple viewing perspectives demonstrate how a non-Buddhist like fear of death can be transcended in an underwater microcosm, Kim's non-replicatory rendering of the story extends this signification towards the transcendence of xenophobia. Comparison of the focalisation strategies of these two artists shows how, through a combination of references to culture and nature, a more transcultural focus is brought to the original Buddhist theme of interdependence. Whereas Kobayashi's quiet monochromes demonstrate an integrated natural environment, Kim's famous* trompe-l'oeil *water drops set against different cultural backgrounds show how this integration is extended to intercultural themes. Both books challenge dominant cultural epistemologies in Japan and elsewhere.*

Key words: *picture books, nature, Buddhism, transculturalism, Kobayashi Toshiya, Kim Tschang Yeul.*

This paper will analyse recent picture books (*ehon*) of the tale of *Yamanashi*. *Yamanashi* is a well-known children's story (*dôwa*), originally written during Japan's modernising Taishô Era (1912–26) by the renowned Buddhist author, Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933), generally known as Kenji. The narrative is still widely read in Japan today, indicating that the modern Japanese audience is still receptive to its cultural ideologies.[1] In fact, several contemporary artists have reinvigorated *Yamanashi* in picture book form using an array of intriguing styles. These pictorialisations, ostensibly produced for children, offer a unique opportunity to explore the different meanings that contemporary artwork produces in response to the fixed source text.[2] The textual processes involved in the construction and consumption of these picture books affect the creation of meaning, formation of significances and constructions of subjectivity and self within contemporary Japan. The investigation thus involves discussion of

a cultural and epistemological heritage that is being revitalised and disseminated through contemporary Japanese children's literature.

In particular, this paper will investigate the interaction between visual and verbal coding in two pictorial representations of *Yamanashi*, showing how artistic expression inscribes, nuances and extends the Buddhist significance(s) of the original narrative. It will firstly discuss some of the ideological purposes for which Kenji's writing has been appropriated, demonstrating particular cultural epistemologies. An explanation of the Buddhist significance(s) in the *Yamanashi* narrative will then provide the foundation for exploration into how some visual imagery focuses on Buddhist themes in Nature, while other artwork expands these themes towards contemporary transcultural issues.

Although not well received in his day, Kenji's work was used in the 1980s to deconstruct the humanist metanarrative of an ultimate centralised truth that a modern, humanistic outlook – progress, consumerism, excessive consumption, individualism – brought to Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868). Tanigawa Gan (1923–95), for instance, deliberately appropriated Kenji's tales for their nativism, regionalism and multivocality. This appropriation not only provides an interesting example of ideological processes surrounding the Kenji canon but, as Wesley Sasaki-Uemura (152) indicates, it also forms part of the resistance to a revival of cultural nationalism and individuation in Japan.

Tanigawa was a poet, philosopher, educator and activist. Sasaki-Uemura explains that his writings on marginalised people and places focused on 'how the margins could resist co-optation and or incorporation into the center' (130), thus comprising 'a kind of "response" before the fact to the *Nihonjinron* [theories of Japaneseness] that appeared several years later' (130). As Mouer and Sugimoto (242) indicate, *Nihonjinron* nationalism treats 'the Japanese' as a homogeneous group with no internal variations, uniquely different from non-Japanese.[3] Tanigawa adopted Kenji as 'a new vehicle of expression' of resistance, using his stories as part of an alternative education for children to develop self-expression in middle and high school students (See Sasaki-Uemura 129–63, 152). This kind of appropriation thus represents part of a resistance to Japan's individualistic and nationalist thought. Contemporary picture books continue this project, challenging similarly nationalist/centrist ideas still prevalent in contemporary Japan.

In Kenji's work the relationship between humanity and nature is not in any way oppositional, dominant or separate. Sasaki-Uemura points out that his literature offers a unique plurality that shows the interdependence of natural and human co-existence (153). In other words, all of Kenji's work has a premise of inclusivity that is significantly different from the logocentric or anthropocentric views of the individual which dominate much modern Japanese thought and literature. This Buddho-animist sense of interconnection has implications for contemporary Japanese constructions of self and subjectivity.

The narrative of *Yamanashi* forms a vital part of the path of resistance to individualistic and nationalistic subjectivities, not only because it forms part of the series of picture books that was commissioned by Tanigawa to commemorate

the fifty-year anniversary of Kenji's death (in 1983). Because it also forms an intrinsic part of Kenji's Buddhist desire for the harmonious co-existence of all sentient beings, the story offers a profound understanding of the notions of inclusivity and belonging. These concepts extend beyond the natural world to human social relationships, including intercultural relations.

Set in the microcosm of one natural realm, the narrative offers a thought-provoking exposé of life and death, partly through the theme of fear. In particular, the tale is about two young crabs who experience fright at the bottom of a mountain stream. The tale is in two halves: in the first, entitled 'May', the crabs witness a kingfisher devour a fish, and in the second part, entitled 'December',[4] they chase after a wild pear (*yamanashi*) that drops into the stream in front of them, becoming potential devourers themselves.[5] An unknown narrator opens and closes the story with slides at beginning and end:

> Here are two bluish magic lantern slides at the bottom of a little valley brook. (3)
> 小さな谷川の底を写した二枚の青い幻燈です。
> (*Chiisana tanigawa no soko o utsushita nimai no* aoi *gentô desu.*)[6]

The infant crabs are then introduced beneath the water as they discuss why an ambiguous figure by the (non-Japanese) name of Klammbon 'laughed [then] was . . . killed?' (6–7).[7] Together with their uncertainty and probing about life and death here, the narrative's refusal to explain the slide-show, who Klammbon is or why he died, creates a perspective of elusiveness that also signifies an indefinitely inclusive space.

The Buddhist world view sees all temporal life as but a fleeting aspect of a holistic cosmos and, at the narrative level, *Yamanashi* explores one of the paradoxes of this philosophy: that of autophagy, whereby life has to feed on other forms of life in order to survive. This paradox involves difficulties associated with finding one's place within the natural balance and progression of life. The first half of the story clearly signifies the crabs' fear. This fear originates with the anxiety that they might become the victims of an attack; not only is their space being invaded, but they might die. Such an outlook, however, fails to embrace all the complexities of a fully integrative Buddhist existence. The entire tale explicitly seeks to transcend such a one-dimensional, individualistic viewpoint. As Takao Hagiwara suggests, the story celebrates the fantastical beauty of the whole design of creation. It thereby registers a more equilibrial recognition of one's infinitesimal place within the natural food chain (45–6). This balance extends to an intercultural harmony that embraces rather than excludes the other. The fear of those who seek to enter one's environment from the outside signifies exclusion of those perceived as different or foreign. More implicitly then, the fear and lack of understanding of the 'other' also acts as a metaphor for xenophobia or the failure to embrace social cohesion in the world at large, ultimately signifying the necessity for intercultural understanding of one another's differences.

Several enigmas in this deceptively simple tale suggest an indeterminate interconnection among all beings. In Japanese aesthetics, such polyphonic vagueness is not unusual. As Donald Keene points out, in Japanese art

there is a tradition of simplicity, bare lines and monochromes, evoking the quality of *yûgen* (mystery and depth) which 'can be apprehended by the mind, but [...] cannot be expressed in words' (17).[8] Whereas Western traditions have used the natural world as a sign system to explain meaning, with nature symbolising particular concepts, ancient Japanese religious traditions have been based on beliefs that the natural world is the original world.[9] As Joseph Kitagawa indicates, the Japanese aesthetic apprehension of the world is the 'nonsymbolic understanding of symbols [where the] total cosmos is permeated by sacred, or *kami*, nature' (70). In other words, early Japanese understood symbols in terms of direct participation, regarding everything within the world, not as representations of *kami* but as *kami*, identified with personal emotions (46). In relation to Japanese literary traditions, Kitagawa suggests that rather than trying to understand human life through the rhythms of nature, early Japanese saw a direct correspondence between the 'capriciousness of human life and the swift change of the four seasons' (48), correlating the rhythm of nature and that of human life. In a similar manner, *Yamanashi* favours suggestion over realism, promoting a less fixed, more multivocal reading perspective that rejects dualistic rationalism.

The picture books which provide the focus for this study are illustrated by Kobayashi Toshiya and Kim TschangYeul.[10] Both books, still available today, were first published in Japan in the 1980s, when Japan was becoming disenchanted with the repercussions of post-World War industrial development and prosperity.[11] Around this time, with the expansion of the economy and a policy of internationalisation in Japan, issues about use of foreign labour and immigration were constantly raised in Japan's mass media.[12] With the increasing numbers of Vietnamese 'boat people' to Japanese shores, these picture books thus arose at a time of social unrest and can respectively be taken as examples of contemporary responses to rationalism and the 'threatening' prospect of the diversification of Japan.[13]

These two artistic depictions mediate the story's theme of fear very differently. The artists are quite distinctive, for instance, in their choice of style: Kobayashi is more representational, while Kim is completely abstract, making little or no apparent reference to the story. Whereas both works amplify the tale's inherent indeterminacies, they provide contrasting perspectives from which to view and examine notions of 'being' and place in the world. On the one hand, Kobayashi tightly controls the viewing space, following a similar narrative approach to the words. Yet he also uses an array of other pictorial strategies, creating a dynamic tension between broad and narrow viewpoints of the underwater microcosm that elaborates the crabs' integration into nature. On the other hand, Kim's non-replicatory rendering rejects any visual focalisation of the story through the crabs, constructing an external, yet actively naïve inquisitor who, like the youngsters, has to ask several questions (about, for example, the meaning that arises from the relationship between the pictures and words). In contrast with Kobayashi's multiple perspectives of the natural microcosm, Kim extends this perspective outwards by invoking international cultural references

and explicitly rejecting conventional reading positions. He displaces the reader's expectations somewhat, positioning the reader as an unfixed 'outsider', thus helping challenge notions of a fixed viewpoint on, for instance, the concept of a homogeneous society.

While both artists signify the story's ideal of balance in Nature, the following argument will suggest how their artistic interpretations shift the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual nuances of this fragile ideal. I shall argue that whereas Kobayashi's artwork attends to an internal, emotional signification of Buddhist integration in the natural world, Kim's art extends this Buddhist paradigm towards external cultural challenges, encouraging a multivocal engagement with the story in a manner that must acknowledge cultural differences. The initial focus will be on Kobayashi's Part One, showing how his more conventional replication interpellates the viewer into an interior perspective of the kingfisher's attack into the crabs' space. Kobayashi's representation will provide the foundation for the contrast with Kim's interrogation of this 'foreign' incursion, demonstrating the latter's extension of the significance towards a broader understanding of intercultural relations.

KOBAYASHI'S MULTIPLE FOCALISATION STRATEGIES

Kobayashi creates a sense of transparency through finely etched contours that complement the tale's poetic simplicity and fragile ephemerality. His delicacy of touch and monochromatic blues cohere with the fleetingness of any single life interwoven into the greater Buddhist whole. Together with this semblance of rejection of a single (humanistic) perspective, however, Kobayashi's numerous illustrations progressively track the action. By moving observers from an exterior narrative viewpoint, through focalisation of the story through the crabs, then to direct observation of the underwater realm, the reader is firmly aligned with their perspective of alarm. Such movement ultimately takes the viewer from a knowing exteriority to an intimately fearful perspective of the outside world, signifying how the act of exclusion can be terrifying in itself.

Kobayashi inserts the viewer into the intimate process of underwater life through a pictorial point of view. His controlled narrative technique augments the drama by closing in on the action. Visual focalisation through the crabs is reiterated by the angle of view which gradually moves the viewer closer to their black silhouettes amidst the rocks and detritus at the bottom of the stream. The crabs are then tracked from below and behind in progressive 'shots' of similar scenes in the third and fourth pictures. They are thus observed in their underwater world from a third person perspective as they in turn watch, for instance, the transparent fish, etched in white against the still blue, gliding lazily above (see Figure 1). Despite this detached third person positioning, the filmic tracking process draws the viewer into the drama of their fear.

The viewer's involvement with the story suddenly intensifies as the perspective changes. Just before the kingfisher strikes, at the crabs' last refrain

Fig. 1. Kobayashi Toshiya. Plate 3 from *Yamanashi: Gahon Miyazawa Kenji.* 1985. Tokyo: Paroru Sha, 1996.

about the unknown Klammbon's laugh, both the crabs and the river bottom abruptly disappear, thrusting the onlooker into a first person perspective (see Figure 2). The viewer is now completely drawn into the crabs' world, directly aligned with their viewpoint, seeing only the lines of white light and blue shadow above with them. The audience is thus confronted with a sense of their fright about the processes of life and death. This rupturing of the previous third-person-positioning emphasises the non-Buddhist-like fear of incursion into one's own 'natural' territory. Together with the suddenness of the shift, such alignment with their viewpoint increases climactic tension, enhancing psychological unease. Although the unexpectedness registers a sense of Buddhist ephemerality, the perspective of angst creates an apprehension both for and with the crabs, precipitating the ensuing kingfisher attack.

While the viewer is completely interpellated into the crabs' space, it is nonetheless as a more informed reader who always knows and understands more than the story participants (through both the verbal and pictorial narrative). Such awareness is instituted through techniques that encourage a dialogic reading position. For example, Kobayashi's first scene replicates the lantern slide projector, reiterating the slide-show as story and the verbal narrative's more detached viewpoint. This initial image obscures the projector, barely visible, etched in black through a dark background. It thus not only foregrounds the textual dichotomy between narrator and action, but also actively involves the

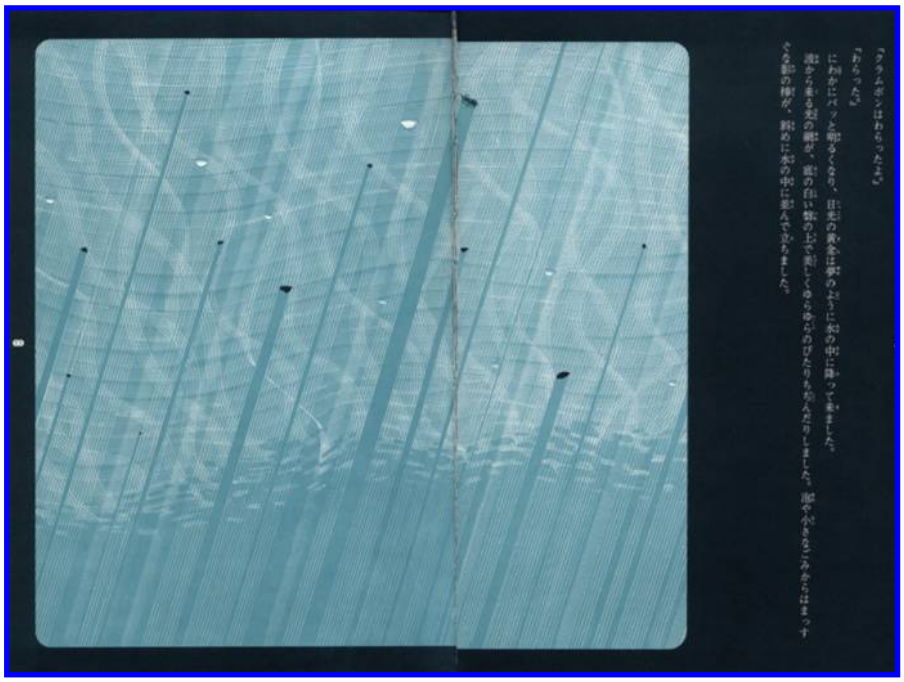

Fig. 2. Kobayashi Toshiya. Plate 5 from *Yamanashi: Gahon Miyazawa Kenji.* 1985. Tokyo: Paroru Sha, 1996.

viewer in a search through the darkness.[14] Further, this image distances the story in time and space, enhancing the idea of separation between the 'essential' world of here-and-now and the 'other' murkier underwater realm in later pictures. Kobayashi also frames his later underwater images against short divisions of text, promoting a sense of captioned slides (see Figure 2). This slide-framing thus continues the sense of boundaries and exterior narration, distancing viewers and reinscribing the position of an external, corporeal spectator who, able to observe the crabs as they perceive the world, can see and notice more than they do.

Although Kobayashi maintains the focus on the natural world in a more monologic manner (in comparison with Kim's rendering), his constructed 'murkiness' nevertheless helps break the established boundaries, dialogically amalgamating the 'real' and the ethereal. The obscurity, for instance, encourages the action of searching which is itself coherent with the narrative's multivocality, helping the reader break into the subliminal beauty and mystery of the strange underwater realm where everything merges into a shadowy oneness. The viewer again has to strive (from right to left, in this book's direction of reading) to make out the shapes of the crabs when they are introduced in Kobayashi's second picture, etched as blue contours amidst the dimness that simulates the underwater darkness and distortion. This practice of searching works with the lack of verbal explanation of the unknown Klammbon, adding to the sense of mystery and questioning which is similar to that of the crabs as they ask why

Fig. 3. Kobayashi Toshiya. Plate 6 from *Yamanashi: Gahon Miyazawa Kenji.* Tokyo: Paroru Sha, 1985.

the ambiguous figure laughed and died. This visual elusiveness further reiterates the sense of blurry, refracted light in the verbal imagery where everything 'looks all steel-blue and dark' (青くくらく鋼のやうに見えます/ *Aoku kuraku hagane no yau ni miemasu*). (6). Access into this space is yielded in accord with the uncertainty of the infant crabs about their environment and belonging. The lack of clarity in these early pictures thus works dialogically with the ambiguity about Klammbon, emphasising the mystery yet cohesiveness of Buddhist co-existence in Nature.

Another strategy suggests a metafictive pun on encapsulation when the fish, which has been 'catching things' (とつてるんだよ / *totteru n da yo*) (9) in front of the crabs, itself becomes 'caught' in Kobayashi's illustrated net of white light, dramatic against the blue water and diagonal shadows (see Figure 3). This implied visual cessation of the movement of the fish before it actually 'vanishe[s] from sight' (かたちも見えず / *katachi mo miezu*) (12) into the clutches of the kingfisher reinscribes the sense of prescience and foreboding about the kingfisher's attack (in Kobayashi's next opening). Such pictorial allusion doubly signifies the tension and anxiety of the crabs. Together with impact of the previous shift from third to first person viewing positions, it underlines the fear that prevents the crabs from full understanding of an interpenetrative Buddhist universe.

Ultimately, Kobayashi's delicate artistry successfully contrasts both quietude and suspense. While his subtle lines and monochromes suggest transparency and the merging of phenomena, his changing viewpoints also create a tension between awareness of fear through the act of exclusion and fear itself. His multilayered focalisation strategies also juxtapose the wider sense of a knowing other against an interior angst about the unknown, intensifying the crabs' fear of autophagous transience in order to signify that which needs to be transcended. The viewer is placed directly before the action at climactic points, dramatically inserted into the underwater realm, enhancing an interior sense of dread and apprehension. At the same time, the exterior subject positioning allows a more knowing reader to anticipate story events from an 'actual world' perspective. This perspective of a more informed onlooker combines with the interior viewpoint to emphasise the crabs' lack of understanding of holistic interpenetration. Kobayashi thus maintains the story's explicit focus on Buddhist integration in the natural world. In other words, his artwork concentrates more on fear of death as a catalyst for inclusivity in the underwater microcosm than Kim's, which extends this signification to a human fear of the foreign in an international realm.

KIM'S METAFICTIONAL ARTWORK

Kim's overtly metafictive imagery, on the other hand, not only demands completely different reading strategies, but also expands the story's significance of inclusivity by incorporating culture/nature dichotomies that reflect international and intercultural tensions. In contrast to Kobayashi's focalisation through the crabs, Kim rejects any conventional depiction of characters, countering Western humanistic aesthetics and rationalism by emphasising what in Frank Hoffman's terms seems a 'traditional Asian spirituality' (78). Kim's famous *trompe l'oeil* waterdrops have all the Buddhist connotations of, for instance, a simultaneous emptiness and fullness which together signify a principle of interconnectedness.

As a Korean artist who has studied in New York (in the 1960s) and has been living in France since 1969, Kim is no doubt aware of various transcultural tensions around the world, including those in Japan (and those arising from Japan's colonisation of Korea). Kim was a part of the minimalist group, *Monoha* (literally 'school of things'), which, as Hoffman explains, critiqued 'the Western objectification of the self and the Other, [and] reflected the challenge to modern esthetics and rationalism posed by Heidegger and the Japanese [Buddhist] thinker Nishida Kitaro' (77). Kim's awareness of such tensions is apparent through his juxtaposition of realistic waterdrops against the cultural subject matter which makes up much of *Yamanashi*'s background material.

Kim's 'foreign' background materials work together with his *trompe l'oeil* imagery to increase awareness of artifice and construction (of, for example, boundaries, categorisations, territorial or hierarchical ideologies, or notions of

Fig. 4. Kim Tschang Yeul. Plate 1 from *Wild Pear: Yamanashi.* Trans. C. W. Nicol and Gan Tanigawa. Illus. Tschang Yeul Kim. Tokyo: Monogatari Têpu Shuppan, 1984.

inside/outside groupings prevalent in Japan and elsewhere). Kim portrays his artistic replicas of a profusion of waterdrops against foreign newspapers daubed with paint, maps of Europe, leaves, and so on. In the first spread which follows the narrative's single line introduction of the slides, for instance, his realistic water droplets are spread across an apparently old, yellowing French newspaper daubed with paint (see Figure 4). These visual representations are clearly extraneous to the story, creating a certain dissonance between narrative and picture. All require imaginative leaps to draw links with the narrative, encouraging the reader to question the relationship between the represented materials and story: Whether the drops and newspapers are painted or photographed, real or constructed, old or current? And why French newspapers or European maps? What effects or meanings do the drops and different background surfaces represent? There is no single answer to these questions but there are some possible explanations as to how these signs interact with the story to signify the transcendence of existing homogeneous cultural epistemologies and tensions.

While a connection can be drawn between Kim's water droplets (that continue in every image) and the underwater aspects of the tale, his minimalist expression fosters an emotional experience of otherness and strangeness, creating a naïve space from which to pursue the indeterminate questions of being raised in the tale. The drops, for instance, could have been placed or fallen against

the 'cultural' backgrounds for a variety of reasons, yet the accompanying story demands that connections be made. Kim nevertheless constructs a less fixed perspective which metafictively provokes exploration of the story's ontological questions: about Klammbon and his death; the kingfisher's attack on the fish; or, in the second half, the crabs' anticipated consumption of the pear and what this signals about one's ultimately fleeting place in the world.

The process of trying to decode the pictures initiates a self-reflexive questioning of 'reality' and otherness, while the foreignness of the background materials provokes a similar unease to that of the infant crabs, even before turning the page to the narrative's first scene in which they question their unfamiliar world. The whole design of Kim's introductory double spread (see Figure 4), for example, instigates an interplay between fantasy and reality, culture and nature, or life and art, connoting the Buddhist appreciation of a less rationalistic, more inclusive and harmonious society. The solid reality of the newspaper contrasts with the hyper-reality of the droplets, while the guileless daubs (in white, yellow, brown and black) around the edges of the newspaper suggest another level of the unconscious in between. This picture therefore intimates at least three levels of reality or representational meaning: the 'real' or concrete world of here-and-now (or culture) that arises from the realistic newspapers; the 'surreal', evoked through the hyper-realistic waterdrops; and the naïve or unconsciously 'innocent', suggested in the artlessness of the paint-strokes around the edges of the image. Significance here seems to oscillate at an invisible periphery, between the actual world and the transcendental. This sense of suspension of consciousness evokes the Buddhist notion of ephemerality that is inherent in the world, indeed, in any single life, either within or beyond the underwater realm, suggesting the possibility of a Oneness throughout everything (including the cultural, symbolised by the newspapers).

Moreover, reference is made to notions of interpenetrative depth through revelation and concealment evident in the print and line markings that are apparently reflected through the underside of some of the newspaper backgrounds. Such notions reiterate an underlying conceptual depth beyond mere representation, implying, for instance, an interdependence, thus transcendence of superficial cultural differences. The painted droplets seem more identifiably painted in the first half than the second, yet they all draw attention to their illusory status by being obvious depictions. This play with the notion of representation itself thereby exploits the uncertainties in the tale and suggests artifice and immateriality, thus the ephemerality of all cultural 'reality'.

The interplay between notions of reality and artifice, or life and art, similarly comments self-reflectively on the relationship between words and images and notions of seeing, understanding and representation itself. While the inherently beautiful yet enigmatic imagery evokes a sense of wonder that connects with the crabs' sense of awe and existential questioning, the disjunctions in the first picture, for instance, intensify the ambiguity of meaning and ontology. The disjuncture reflects the imbalance of a society that rejects understanding of the other while the ambiguity suggests infinite possibilities for unity. Together

with the elusiveness of meaning and understanding in the newspaper, especially to those who do not read French, there is a further sense of vagueness and disconnection evident in the paint that obscures part of the newspaper text. Even for those who do read French, the newspaper pages are truncated at the edges and misaligned, physically divided at the gutter of the book, not joining consecutively. Such disjointedness is also found in the subject matter of the newspaper, with a mixture of articles on world affairs and cultural events. These articles extend the crabs' narratival fear of the kingfisher's invasion into their space to a transcultural concern about the foreign entering one's own 'natural' sphere.

A theme that comes through the newspaper topics is resistance, revolution and change. Taken together, the articles signify the move beyond political and ideological homogeneity or rigidity towards cultural blending. There are, for instance, articles about a protest march, opposition against government decisions, and negotiations with the government that, although divided by the book's gutter, sit alongside 'high art', cultural pieces on the theatre and opera, for example (see Figure 4). The last two (torn and partial) articles in Part One focus on culture; film and the folk song and dance of 'indigenous' Mauritians (Creole, who by their very make-up consist of an integrated blood-mix). Kim's final cultural referent, a newspaper spread, at the beginning of Part Two, also juxtaposes articles on architecture (with a reference to the Louvre pyramid and its architect, Leoh Ming Pei, commissioned in 1984 – the publication year of Kim's *Yamanashi* – and not completed until 1989) with an apparent petition against the politics of hate. Together – the maps of Europe, the French language newspapers, the art by a Korean artist living in France, the English translation in a book produced for a Japanese audience – all point to the broader transcultural significance of the story. Moreover, the translation indicates that those who want to learn English are part of the target audience for Kim's book. It also makes the story accessible to other readers of English. Similar to the possible rationale for using French newspapers, learning a foreign language and reading foreign literature are in themselves transcultural acts, coming from a position of other or, more specifically, a position of wanting to know about the other. Taken together with the bi-lingual text, the juxtaposition of political and cultural newspaper content would suggest some transition from rigidity and certainty to the acquisition of knowledge about the uncertain, tentative or unknown – the other – mediated through more malleable artistic culture. Such art offers the potential to open up rather than close off intercultural questions and solutions.

The sense of Eastern spirituality in Kim's waterdrops works with the story's delicate sense of ambiguity and ethereality, not only constructing an interrogative viewpoint about the 'other' that is similar to that of the young crabs as they question the world about them, but also reflecting a rejection of the individualistic ego. This rejection coheres with Tanigawa's appropriation of Kenji's work to resist 'co-optation and incorporation into the center', a philosophy that is

synonymous with Kim's own. In his words:

> The reason for drawing drops of water is to dissolve everything into drops of water and return it transparently into nothingness. When we have turned anger, unease, and fear into emptiness, we can experience peace and harmony (Christie's 174).

Ethereality and ephemerality are further situated in the lightness and lucidity of the waterdrops. Their translucent, luminous beauty can take on a multiplicity of significance that works with the narrative's Buddhist ideologies of incorporation of all differences into a greater community. These droplets morph into different shapes, juxtaposed against a variety of backgrounds and different types of paper as the narrative progresses. Despite their close proximity to each other, the drops remain separate on each page, never running into one another, yet they linger together in various clusters and shapes, suggesting a collection of individual entities that can, but do not yet, come together as one. The concept of water, usually a weightless, buoyant mass, further enhances the sense of interplay between the real and the ethereal; the shaded drops are subject to gravity, yet some are apparently still and motionless, juxtaposed against the fixity of the newspaper print and the fluidity of the artless brushstrokes. The juxtaposition of the solid with the malleable also suggests stasis and transience, calling into question any 'concrete' reality such as mono-cultural being.

Moreover, water as 'an all-encompassing element of nothing and all, negative and positive' (Christie's 526) has interpenetrative qualities, while its repetition in each image has a meditative aspect that provokes a suspension of consciousness. These aspects complement the verbal poetics and the story's significance of connectivity among all beings. Together with these qualities, the cleansing properties of water also suggest the notions of ritual in nature, purifying Buddhist death rites, and a release from material concerns (such as fear of the other) that the crabs (and all beings) should and will eventually move towards.

Whereas the water links with the realm of the stream, it also repels or is repelled on the paper, suggesting notions of repulsion and attraction, fluidity and solidity. The European map (in the second picture) and oil-splotched brown paper and newspaper (in the third and fourth double spreads) are all apparently impervious to the droplets of water. The concept of repulsion or resistance reiterates the sense of strangeness and exclusion, working with Part One's narrative focus on the fright of the infant crabs at the kingfisher's 'invasion' into their space. This exclusion continues when, as the young crabs' questioning continues, their father fails to reassure them: 'The fish? The fish has gone to a scary place' (魚かい。魚はこはい所へ行った/*Sakana kai. Sakana wa kowai tokoro e itta.*) (13). The non-penetrative nature of the depicted material signals the inability of the infant crabs, and by extension humans, to surmount their fear of the 'invader'. Pictures of disjointed, repellent materials continue to render an atmosphere of an uneasy, non-penetrative exclusion and the suggestion of incomprehensibility through to the end of Part One. As if to underline the lack

of 'true' understanding of an integrated society, upside-down and torn bits of newspaper punctuate the final opening (to Part One).

In contrast to the sense of strangeness and exclusion in Part One, the tenor of Kim's artwork in Part Two becomes less extraordinary, more balanced and familiar, suggesting an emotional shift from the unknown to a calm acceptance or recognition of things as they are in the world; that is, of the outsider as belonging to the greater community. The last newspaper article, whose content is a long list of names, appears to be a petition. Its fragmented headline reads: '*. . . nce et a l'initiative de . . . que la discussion, le . . . substituent dans le né- . . . at politique à la haine . . . nnie.*' (. . . and at the initiative of . . . that the discussion . . . substitute them in the . . . politics of hate . . . .), indicating that this is a petition for change against the politics of hate. This final page of protest thus punctuates a change in tone that occurs as the climax juxtaposes the crabs as potential consumers with the pear as the edible; that is, as they begin to accept the notion of the 'other' into their world. (It is rather ironic though, that this acceptance occurs at the point when the crabs themselves become potential devourers.) In contrast to Kim's introductory picture, this initial image for Part Two, which follows the scene where the young crabs compete to see who can blow the biggest bubbles, depicts fewer but fuller, globular drops. These water beads appear less subject to gravity, less mobile. Although they may suggest the bubbles of the infants' competitive underwater babble, their fewer number, rounder shape and semi-regular placement across the spread evoke the more mature, composed or meditative perspective of the crabs as they begin to embrace the 'emptiness and fullness' of accepting an other into their space, in effect, signing up against a 'politics of hate'.

Significantly, in accordance with their new perspective on life, this petition is the last obvious pictorial representation of culture. The disappearance of the verbal also signals the end of Babel-like confusion about the 'foreign'. Apart from Kim's waterdrops (themselves a representation), Kim's first rendering of an element of nature comes as the pear drops into the water in front of the crabs. Set against a stark white page, an individual bead of luminous water rests upon an autumn leaf as if to symbolise the joining of all drops into an all-inclusive Oneness. Such pictorial serenity, suggestive of a more unified equilibrium, continues in the next spread as the three crabs begin their own pursuit of 'the wetly bobbing pear' (24) (see Figure 5). The background surface of the Japanese *washi* paper here also signals their more holistic embrace of the other. *Washi* is hand-made from natural fibres, evident in both the beige colouring and the flecks, with connotations of familiar (and often idealised) traditions. It is more absorbent than the previous oily-splotched, repellent paper, signifying an emotional change from fear and exclusion towards a composed atmosphere of inclusion, an acceptance of the other. The incantory patterns of gentle beads of water and shadows (the latter suggestive of the round pear) are dotted in rough groupings across the top of the page, connecting with the peaceful intonation of their verbal musings as they savour the scent of the ripened fruit and 'danc[e] after the pear's round shadow' (山なしの円い影を追ひました/*Yamanashi no marui kage*

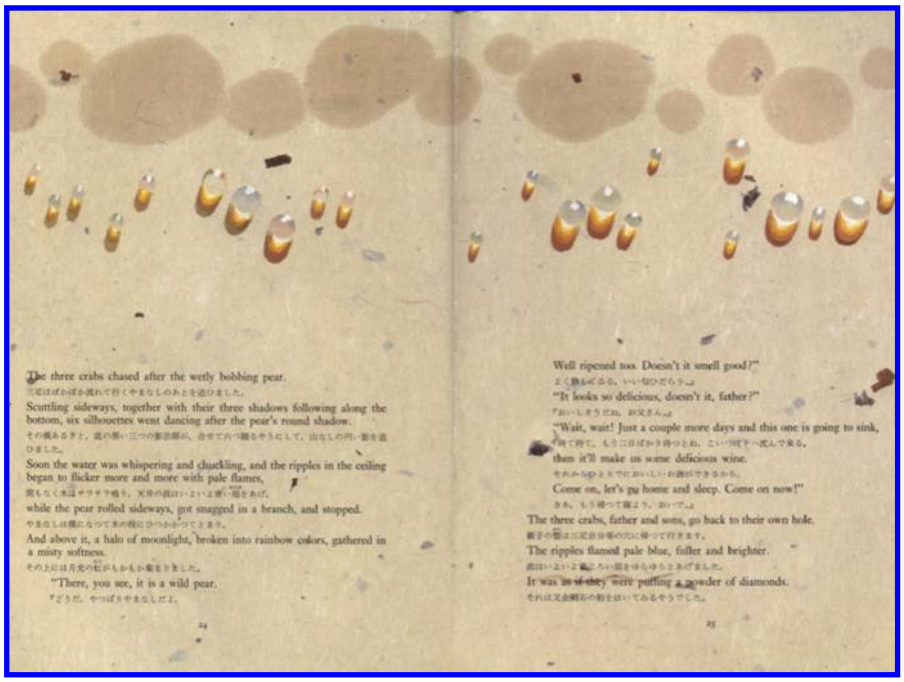

Fig. 5. Kim Tschang Yeul. Plate 8 from *Wild Pear: Yamanashi.* Trans. C. W. Nicol and Gan Tanigawa. Illus. Tschang Yeul Kim. Tokyo: Monogatari Têpu Shuppan, 1984.

o oimashita.) (24). The shift in tone is further reiterated in Kim's final picture where most beads of water are now situated within, rather than outside of, the oily splotch on the right, and an earlier suggestion of graph paper is revealed as a backdrop. This placement reiterates a more absorptive process among, for example, societies incorporating different cultures such as signified through the subject matter of the previous newspapers.

Part Two's quiet serenity signifies the possibility of comprehensive inclusion rather than discriminatory exclusion. This contrast with Part One's strange and 'foreign' or manufactured (cultural) otherness of the unfamiliar and disjointed print and maps represents the transformation from an emotive uncertainty, a dread of the unknown, to an acknowledgement of mutual co-existence and interculturality. The whole of Kim's Part Two suggests the oneness and unity of the larger family of life, with all its light and shadowy, positive and negative aspects, thus suggesting the 'emptiness and fullness' of a more integrated society. Kim's juxtapositioning of 'natural' waterdrops against the cultural newspapers, then against elements of nature, demonstrates both the tension inherent in intercultural transactions and the possibility for positive change. The second half's transition to natural elements like the leaf and the *washi* paper signifies a successful blending of both the cultural and the natural. Moreover, the endpages that frame the entire story depict a string of waterdrops against a backdrop of *washi*, reinscribing the story as a meditation on the blending, permeability and

peaceful continuity of the whole life process. At the same time, Kim's waterdrops are never completely merged or absorbed, signifying the difficulties associated with the concept of complete harmony (also signified in the juxtaposition of disparate newspapers and articles), respect for individual differences, and the need for effort to resist discriminatory centre/periphery processes.

Ultimately, Kim's rejection of any specific focalisation has a dramatic effect on story. By completely divorcing itself from a representational replication of Kenji's narrative, Kim's artwork makes it necessary to create one's own interpretive links between word and picture, thus implicating the reader in an actively psycho-social exploration of the story's syncretic significance. The only apparent link with the contents of the tale is through the painted drops of water on realistic, yet foreign, objects (the newspapers, maps and paper). The polyphony of meaning that arises from this juxtapositioning creates a more subtle reading of the crabs' existential uncertainty, exploiting the sense of unease that initially needs to be conquered in order to comprehend the inherent beauty and calm of an integrated society. This juxtapositioning of opposing elements of culture and nature and repellence and absorption, however, also signifies the challenges associated with the artwork's themes of transculturality and human interdependence.

Kim's art defamiliarises the world of the tale, provoking uncertainty (similar to the existential uncertainty of the crabs) and encouraging full rein of the intellect or imagination. By positioning the spectator as an external 'other' who has to ask questions about the representations, he opens up ways of seeing, an altered state of consciousness that allows the interrogation and exploration of one's own world from an unfamiliar subject position. Kim's minimalist expression and use of mixed media thus offer much more than mere decoration, working on at least three levels: (a) to provoke ambiguity or naïveté; (b) to create atmosphere and emotion; and (c) to juxtapose seemingly opposing phenomena in order to mediate them, metafictively encouraging contemplation on a larger Buddhist and social interconnectedness.

This comparison of contemporary picture books shows how the artists have constructed different interpretive positions from which to read Kenji's portrayal of the interpenetrative nature of 'being' in contemporary Japan. Whereas Kobayashi's artwork maintains the Buddhist significance of the story within the natural sphere, Kim's extends it into the cultural. Kobayashi's dramatic imagery and changes of viewpoint elaborate the story's significance of the transcendence of a disconnection in Nature. In contrast, Kim's indeterminacy and references to the 'foreign' extrapolate beyond the natural towards a transcendence of the differences between cultures, signifying intercultural understanding. Kim's indeterminacy creates a dialogism that disconcerts, making the familiar strange, thus challenging nationalistic/centrist individualism and the comfort zone of homogeneous Japanese thought (*Nihonjinron*). Ultimately, the discussion of this early twentieth century story demonstrates how the disparate artistic depictions have nuanced and reinvigorated the concept of an integrated society. The artistic re-visionings themselves represent part of a larger metaethic, be it implicit or

explicit, that is actively preserving and revitalising Japanese Buddhist cultural epistemologies and heritages.

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NOTES

1. *Yamanashi* is studied in schools and universities in Japan. According to Miyagawa's graph of Kenji's works showing which of Kenji's works are taught at which levels, the narrative is usually introduced in about the sixth grade of elementary school (Miyagawa, *Shô-Chû-Kô-gakkô no Kyôkasho no Miyazawa Kenji* [Miyazawa Kenji's work in primary, middle and senior high school textbooks] 106).
2. Kenji's original words are never modified, even for children's picture books. These picture books are not usually on the school curriculum but individual teachers sometimes introduce them to students. The school textbooks that include Kenji's narratives usually include one or two incidental illustrations.
3. See Harumi Befu, '*Hegemony of Homogeneity*' (particularly 78–80), for details on how a dominant *Nihonjinron* discourse on national and cultural identity impacts on how Japanese (uncritically) consider themselves as an homogeneous group.
4. Part Two was entitled 'November' in a first draft of the tale (Hagiwara, *Iihatôbu no kaze* [Stories heard from the wind] 74*)*. Most publications take it as December, but Nicol and Tanigawa's (1984) translation takes it as November. Page numbers after quotations from the narrative in this paper refer to the Japanese and/or English in this book (of *Yamanashi* illustrated by Kim Tschang Yeul). It uses the older form of Japanese from the period the tale was originally written.
5. The *yamanashi* is a small bramble pear, not usually eaten due to its bitterness (Nishida Yoshiko 2000 personal communication). The well-known *nashi*, eaten internationally, is an improved version of this genus (see Hara, *Shin Miyazawa Kenji Goi Jiten* [New glossarial dictionary of Miyazawa Kenji] 721).
6. The word for 'slide' here is *gentô*. The two ideograms (幻燈) that make this word respectively mean 'vision' and 'light', but translate as 'magic lantern' or 'filmslide'. Many commentators point to the blurry, exotic images implied by the term (see, for example, Hara 243; Tsuzukihashi, *Kenji dôwa no tenkai* [The development of Kenji's tales] 63, 68). It is the older nomenclature for the modern word *suraido* (slide). In Kenji's day, of course, the slide-projector would have been the height of modernity.
7. Klammbon is an approximation of *kuramubon*, written in *katakana*, the Japanese script for foreign words. John Bester, for example, transliterates it as Crambon (Bester, 249).
8. See Gary Hickey for further explanation of the avoidance of realism, nothingness or silence as the artistic expression of a more profound truth, that which cannot be seen (177–80).
9. See, for example, Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory* for an exposition of religious and literary influences on Western mountain symbolism. This symbolism ranges through Greek and Roman anthropomorphisms to the Romantic discovery of the imaginative qualities of mountains.

10. Kobayashi is an award-winning artist who has dedicated much of his life to illustrating Kenji's work. Kim is an internationally renowned Korean artist living in Paris.
11. Kobayashi's book was first published in 1985. Parole Publishing (パロル舎 *Paroru Sha*) gives Kobayashi full control of editorial details, including those involving layout and textual divisions. Kim's picture book of *Yamanashi* was originally published in 1984. Tanigawa Gan commissioned Kim to illustrate *Yamanashi* as part of the aforementioned series in which Kenji's work is accompanied by minimalist art, with Japanese text alternating line by line with an English translation.
12. In the 1980s, the Japanese government instituted many internationalisation projects. For example, the Japanese English Teaching (JET) Programme was established in 1987. This programme initially dispersed about 1000 teachers of languages other than Japanese in schools throughout Japan and has since grown exponentially, continuing today.
13. John Lie suggests that immigration and foreign labour issues were considered by conservatives as posing a threat to 'social cohesion and integrity'(35). Under the 1985 UN High Commission for Refugees, Japan agreed to take a yearly quota of refugees. The issue of Vietnamese boat people also caused waves in international circles. In 1983 (the year before Kim's *Yamanashi* was published), for example, the film *Boat People*, directed by Anne Hui, caused a furore at the Cannes Film Festival.
14. Kobayashi's first and second pictures are almost totally black, too dark to be successfully reproduced here.

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