

Multiple Correctness, Or Against “Orthography”:  
On The Architecture Of Written Japanese

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Standard written Japanese operates within an architecture of script that distinguishes itself from other major forms of writing in common use today. It is not phonographic nor can it be described as logographic. Instead, the script makes use of three distinct modes of expression that incorporate elements of both phonographic and logographic writing. How does this architecture of writing affect the way texts (literary or not) are produced and consumed within the space of written Japanese? Does this affect, apparent in many written works, constitute an element of a text's "textuality"? This study will approach such questions by first examining how various modes of writing come together on a page, understanding these visual interactions as "visuality." From there, two new concepts, the "invisible phonograph" and "kanjification," are introduced so as to theorize the capabilities contained within this architecture. These two concepts are then briefly surveyed in premodern, modern, and contemporary works.

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MULTIPLE CORRECTNESS, OR AGAINST “ORTHOGRAPHY”:  
ON THE ARCHTECTURE OF WRITTEN JAPANESE

Think about this for a moment. Those of us who are used to the Japanese writing system and accustomed to its foibles tend to become inured to how absurd this whole thing has become. Some of us, perversely, begin to see beauty in these intricate mechanisms. Others get so wrapped up in the orthographic meanderings that they imagine there is some redeeming pedagogical value in all of this, instead of seeing it for what it is: a hopeless mismatch, which requires glosses of glosses to work and which has wrecked the Japanese language to the extent that its users have been able to make it work.

--Wm. C. Hannas, *Asia's Orthographic Dilemma*

旬を! 《^^》 しむ。 ♥ 温まる

Enjoy the season; a warming heart

-- a noodle shop near Shinkōenji Station (Tokyo, Japan)

### Introduction

Standard written Japanese, born of a broader late 19<sup>th</sup> century rush towards modernization, operates within an architecture of script that distinguishes itself from other major forms of writing in common use today. It is not phonographic (like English, Arabic, or Korean) nor can it accurately be described as logographic (like the majority of characters used in Chinese). Instead, the Japanese script simultaneously makes use of three distinct modes of expression that incorporate elements of both phonographic and logographic writing. This perceived complexity has led to two<sup>1</sup> persistent forms of criticism both in Japan and abroad that seem to always be staring the written language in the face: the first, a sometimes vitriolic attack on the perceived

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<sup>1</sup> In fact a third group of thinkers should be mentioned: the first generation of critics and scholars writing in English about the structure, formation, and function of Chinese characters. The work of these early critics tended to focus on the myth of the Chinese character as an ideograph, a legacy which has persisted to the present day. For an introduction to this group of thinkers and their thoughts, see David Lurie's "Language, Writing, and Disciplinarity in the Critique of the "Ideographic Myth" (2006).

“absurdity” of the entire system, and the second, an overly enthusiastic reception of said architecture that is determined to find ethnic uniqueness within the script.<sup>2</sup>

It may come as a surprise that the celebrated historian George Sansom, in his 1928 study *An Historical Grammar of Japanese*, offered a scathing criticism of the written language while referencing the script’s multifaceted use of Chinese characters: “One hesitates for an epithet to describe a system of writing which is so complex that it needs the aid of another system to explain it. There is no doubt that it provides for some a fascinating field of study, but as a practical instrument it is surely without inferiors.”<sup>3</sup> For a “positive” mode of criticism we can look to the field of critical theory, a field that has been particularly active in a brand of orientalism that, at times, reeks of essentialism and, at others, exhibits a lack of general knowledge with both the historical development of the written form of Japanese and the way it is both used and encountered today. One striking example is Lacan’s diagnosis in the Japanese language preface to *Écrits*:<sup>4</sup> he decidedly proclaims that for those “in possession of” (i.e. those speakers of) Japanese, the process of psychoanalysis is neither necessary nor is it possible.<sup>5</sup> Despite the fact that Lacan’s claim is based on an over simplified understanding of the language (we are told he studied it for a few months before visiting Japan in 1972!), his theory on the unanalyzability of the Japanese psyche vis-à-vis the written Japanese language has created an industry within the Japanese critical world (and, to a lesser extent, abroad) that engages with

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<sup>2</sup> This enterprise is known in Japanese as ‘nihonjinron’ 日本人論, or “theories on the Japanese people.”

<sup>3</sup> Sansom, 44

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the Japanese translation of Lacan’s 1966 *Écrits* appeared in 1972, five years before the first partial English translation and nearly thirty-five years before the first complete translation by Bruce Fink in 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Lacan, 3. A few of the other, more relevant examples include: Freud’s discussion of the “mode of life of the Mikado of Japan” in *Totem and Taboo* (52); Kojève’s characterization of Cold War era Japanese society in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on Phenomenology of Spirit* as “posthistorical” and full of “[s]nobbery in its pure form” that “created disciplines negating the ‘natural’ or ‘animal’”; and Barthes’ reading of Japan as an empty symbol in *Empire of Signs*.

this reading of Lacan's and attempts to read various aspects of Japanese culture and its (perceived) accompanying structures through this lens.<sup>6</sup>

Both schools of criticism – the pragmatic (the system is broke!) and the abstract (writing in Japanese is fractured and thus so is the Japanese psyche!) – emerge from grave misunderstandings of the language: both schools ignore the materiality of text – what I call “visuality” – inherent in the architecture of written Japanese. They also ignore the reality that the written form of the language as it is both consumed and produced, and thus experienced, in both literary and non-literary texts, operates within an historically determined architecture that, over time, developed the ability to present and re-present the written language in ways that escape the inherently limited functionality of either predominately phonographic or logographic writing. The result of this polarization is an immediate dismissal of the other's claims: for the pragmatists the goal is reform (i.e. the abolishment of Chinese characters altogether) and for the abstractionists the goal is the advancement of a theoretical practice determined to explain preconceived cultural assumptions.

The majority of pragmatists in question are critics writing in Japanese while the (first generation of) abstractionists are writing in Western languages (mainly French). Despite living in different times and writing in different languages (and scripts) these two critical camps, the pragmatists and the abstractionists, can be thought of as working under the same spell of modernity. They both paint complementary portraits of written Japanese that are clearly orthographic in origin: pragmatists call for reform beneath echoes of modernization while abstractionists bathe in misconceptions that suggest orientalism; pragmatists envision an

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<sup>6</sup> For example: Karatani Kōjin, “Bungaku ni tsuite” in *Sōseki Ron Shūsei* [“On Literature” from *Collection of Essays on Sōseki*] (1992); *Nihon Seishin Bunseki* [Japan-Psycho-Analysis] (2002); Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girls* (2000, English translation 2011); Ōsawa Masachi, *Shakai wa Taezu Yume wo Miteiru* [Society Keeps on Dreaming] (2011).

approachable script while abstractionists laud its arcane nature (its “foreignness”). It is in this gap that a slippage is born. The dialogue between the two – both of which must be understood as Western in origin<sup>7</sup> – neglect the point of interaction between producer and consumer: the text. The space of the “text,” here broadly defined, is an environment constantly in flux and, as such, is one that should not be discussed in prescriptive terms. To speak of reform is to beckon a standard while to praise opacity is to reject one. Though cries for reform had been heard (and had been multifaceted) for decades, it was after the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945 that serious (and centralized) language reform was realized. And while the creation of a standard written language would forever (re)shape the surface of written texts, what about its underlying architecture? Did it, too, change? If not, why, and how does this architecture affect one’s engagement with a given “text”? And how can we begin to describe the surface-level interactions that exist only on the visual plane? What is critically lacking is a vocabulary – a theoretical foundation – by which we can begin to engage with, and evaluate, the textuality of works written in the Japanese script. We can begin to fill this void by proposing two terms that stand at the core of the visual experience: the “invisible phonograph” and “kanjification,” concepts that will be explored in the latter half of this study.

The goal of this paper then is to engage fully with Sheldon Pollock’s call for a philological practice that “may be seen as the critical self-reflection of language,”<sup>8</sup> one that recovers “the initiatives, theories, methods, and insights of scholars across time and across the world in making sense of texts.”<sup>9</sup> The first step in realizing this process is to understand – to accurately and absolutely theorize – the capabilities (or architecture) of a given script, and

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<sup>7</sup> That is, the calls for modernization and internationalization, and the accompanying widespread reforms should be understood as a product of the push towards “modernization” in the broadest sense.

<sup>8</sup>Pollock, 934.

<sup>9</sup>ibid.

consider how this architecture shapes the way both producers and consumers (can) engage with a text created in such an environment. In the context of contemporary literature written in Japanese<sup>10</sup> such a reevaluation of textuality could take as its subject the radical (written) style of authors such as Takahashi Gen'ichirō or Sakiyama Tami, an understudied Okinawan-born writer who has characterized her own written style as “guerilla warfare;”<sup>11</sup> it could allow critics to consider the difference between “Fukushima” written in Chinese characters and “Fukushima” written in non-Chinese characters; it could provide a space for considering the role of visuality in the poetry of Tanikawa Shuntarō or Yoshimasu Gōzō;<sup>12</sup> and it could provide a framework by which to incorporate script politics into a broader conceptualization of literature written in the Japanese script.

And while this project aims to direct the eye to script, it also is an attempt to recognize varying degrees of intensity: that is, this project does not claim a uniqueness endowed to all text written in the Japanese script but, rather, acknowledges that certain texts are more engaged with the architectural capabilities of the language (“high intensity”) than other texts (“low intensity”) and that both high and low intensity texts are produced and consumed within a space that must always contain such a capability. In other words, in this schema, a “high intensity” text is “high intensity” precisely because it is *not* “low intensity”; all texts, regardless of whether they embrace the theoretical capabilities contained within the architecture they reside in are linked by that very possibility and must be understood (or evaluated) as such.

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<sup>10</sup> I consciously avoid saying “Japanese (language) literature” simply because, as will be discussed later, the architecture I am describing is reflected in cultural stations well beyond “literature” in the narrow sense: it can be found in advertising campaigns and naming practices, and even the architecture of certain internet service websites.

<sup>11</sup> Sakiyama says: my “‘technique of mixing’ [standard and non-standard Japanese] takes *shimakotoba* [lit. “island language,” i.e. the language of Okinawa] that I have set with a bomb, infiltrating the center of Japanese, aiming for the opportunity of explosion; this is what I call guerilla warfare” (Sakiyama, 170).

<sup>12</sup> Consider, for example, Tanikawa’s collection of poetry *Naked* はだか in which Chinese characters are not utilized in the author’s poems.

No comment on written language in Japan would be complete without a thorough and penetrating discussion of what is referred to as “pre-modern Japan”: the origins of writing in Japan, the first appearance of Chinese characters, the numerous styles of written Japanese, the various contexts in which texts were written, and the even more limited contexts in which they were read. Such a discussion, however, would surely overwhelm the present study and, as such, is beyond the capabilities of the author. Instead, it is the goal of this paper to theorize the state of writing in contemporary Japan, considering in the broadest terms the current state of writing as is relevant to its historical context. A thorough investigation of the past, while valuable for any study of the development of the writing, may be set aside when looking at contemporary usage.<sup>13</sup> That being said, the present study will engage with premodern examples of works that illustrate clear connections between contemporary and pre-standardized written Japanese.

Part one of this study looks at the structural features of the written Japanese language, introducing key terms indispensable to the comprehension and study of Japanese language texts. This introductory material, though tedious at times, strives to establish between reader and writer a shared vocabulary for what are surely unfamiliar terms to the non-specialist. The purpose of developing such a vocabulary is to include critics working in fields outside of Japanese literature or those within the field who have yet to incorporate the study of visuality into their research. In an attempt to make this section as comprehensible as possible I have chosen to avoid Japanese language terminology when possible. Thus, I write “cursive phonograph” instead of ‘hiragana’ and “abbreviated phonograph” instead of ‘katakana.’ So as to avoid redundancy the term ‘kanji’ has been referred to as “kanji,” “Chinese character,” or simply “character” depending on the context. This first part also introduces the reader to the “applied phonograph” (or ‘furigana’), an

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<sup>13</sup> For valuable English language studies dealing specifically with the development of writing in Japan see Seeley (1991) and Lurie (2011).

architectural feature of the Japanese script that will be explored fully in sections two and three. By briefly examining the complex relationship between naming practices and kanji, the particular role the applied phonograph plays in resolving a Chinese character's reading will be clearly illustrated.

Part two begins my attempt to theorize the role written Japanese has on the literature it is recording. This argument is presented in terms of "architextuality," a concept proposed by Elaine Treharne that strives to account for various aspects of materiality contained within a given text that come together to create a larger, more complete textual moment, what will be referred to in this study as a TEXT. In this section I tie the notion of a TEXT composed of numerous smaller "texts" to a Chinese character holding numerous readings. The rationale for this is explained in terms of "hyperflat," a concept borrowed from critic Azuma Hiroki. My intervention attempts to show Azuma's discovery of a hyperflat condition as a signpost of otaku culture and postmodernity is nothing of the sort. Rather, I argue, Azuma's discovery of the hyperflat condition is really a rediscovery, a recognizance, of an already existing architecture of script, one found across time and space within the framework of the Japanese script.

This leap is made by first referencing Chiba Masaya, a thinker that has identified characteristics of Azuma's theorization of hyperflat and otaku-like consumption to various modes of cultural production clearly beyond the parameters of the otaku. As Chiba points out, similar consumptive tendencies can be identified in a contemporaneous subculture wholly removed from the otaku: the gyaru-o. As such we can begin to imagine an environment of hyperflat whose parameters extend beyond just the world of the otaku, penetrating various other avenues of textual interaction. I locate the historical justification for this claim within the two architectural concepts of language I propose in this paper, namely the invisible phonograph and

kanjification. These two concepts are fully explored in this section, as is the impossibility of an orthography of Japanese writing conceived of in the same vein as an English one. This fact is illustrated through two radically different – and yet, correct – renditions into Japanese of the same base Chinese poem.

The third and final part of this paper begins by looking at critic Sugimoto Tsutomu's treatment of Ihara Saikaku's use of written characters. Upon closer examination, what is usually assumed to be a radical written script by Saikaku – though certainly radical by today's standards – is really rather commonplace when viewed in the context of his contemporaries. Looking at haikai linked poetry and linked verse composed in alternating verses of Japanese and Chinese, we discover a much more radical visual environment. We also discover the birth of what I have been calling a hyperflat space through the use of the applied phonograph and kanjification.

This section also looks at contemporary examples of visuality, focusing mainly on the works of contemporary author Takahashi Gen'ichirō and prominent translator of science fiction Kuroma Hiroshi. Though these two authors' high intensity style suggests a postmodern aesthetic, as already stated, their individual styles should be read against a long historical tradition dating back to at least the seventeenth century. This paper concludes with a look at popular advertising campaigns.

This study strives to provide an as yet uncreated vocabulary that would be useful for the discussion of textuality, namely visuality, as it is made possible within the architecture of written Japanese. For too long the visuality of text has been ignored: scholars writing in Japanese tend to take such visuality for granted<sup>14</sup> and scholars writing in a language other than Japanese tend to avoid this aspect of text-ness because of its perceived incongruities with the traditional concerns

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<sup>14</sup> By this I mean that an established vocabulary already exists. This vocabulary and rhetoric, while helpful, is based on a series of historical assumptions that limit the scope of what Pollock refers to as "global philology."

of literary analysis and criticism; an orthographical (or alphabetic) worldview tends to dwell on “deep” readings while ignoring “surface” ones.<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for the latter are numerous, but I suggest the anti-orthographical nature of written Japanese is to blame; removing literature from its written (con)text is/was the only historically acceptable means to approach a work in the context of translation, providing a silent opportunity to avoid questions of “authorial intent”<sup>16</sup> that are imagined to transcend the written, existing primarily in an aural conception of narrative. This, coupled with the dominance of the “I-novel”<sup>17</sup> (*shishōsetsu/watakushishōsetsu* 私小説) over all other forms of literary expression during the period of modernization, helped to remove much discussion of the materiality associated with Japanese language texts. In other words, at the center of the “I-Novel” obsession was an assumed urtext; whether or not it was possible to corroborate? what was written with what was “true” was irrelevant: the only imaginable slippage was between the author and her text. Such a text, of course, was not the story she *wrote* but, in true Romantic fashion, in the story she *told*. The language by which this story was told, however, was artificially constructed under the name of ‘kokugo,’ or the “national language.” It is the assumptions of singularity contained within the artificiality associated with a “national language” that we must consider.

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<sup>15</sup> For recent discussions on the problems of a “deep reading” based approach to literary analysis, as well as an introduction to “surface reading” theory, see Best and Marcus’ “Surface Reading: An Introduction” (2009) and Love’s “Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn” (2012).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the critique of notion of “authorial intent” in Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy” (1946), a seminal text that initiated the New Criticism movement. See also W.W. Greg’s influential essay “The Rationale of Copy-Text” (1949) that took an opposite stance: for Greg, authorial intent was not only something that could be found, but something that could, in the right circumstance, be entrusted to the editor of manuscripts. Greg’s methodology would have a lasting effect on the editing of manuscripts (and thus the production of “authoritative editions” for scholarly consumption) while the Wimsatt and Beardsley’s approach would claim the pursuit of authorial intent to be a misguided practice.

<sup>17</sup>The I-Novel is a genre of Japanese literature written in the confessional style and assumes a one-to-one relationship between the author and the narrator. English language studies of the I-Novel include: Fowler, Edward *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-century Japanese Fiction*; Hijiya-Kirschner, Irmela *Rituals of Self-Revelation: Shishōsetsu as Literary Genre and Socio-Cultural Phenomenon*; Suzuki, Tomi *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity*. For translations from the Japanese see Karatani, Kōjin *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*.

The problem is, as Maki Hirano Hubbard notes in the translator's introduction to Lee Yeounsuk's groundbreaking work *The Ideology of Kokugo*, *kokugo* "was created as a value-laden norm suitable for Japan as a modern nation-state, locking together a political community called a 'nation' with a linguistic community that was assumed to share the same language throughout that nation."<sup>18</sup> One goal of this move towards a national language was the *creation* of uniformity (or standardization); unlike English, which could boast works such as Samuel Johnson's 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Japanese would not see a "modern" (which is to say, contemporary monolingual) dictionary until the publication of Ōtsuki Fumihiko's *Genkai* (言海, literally "Sea of Words") in 1891.<sup>19</sup>

What this means for our discussion is that until the Japanese language underwent the artificial process of standardization in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the written language existed and thrived without a system that corresponds to "modern" (read, Western) standards of uniformity. And while the push towards a modern written language (through the standardization of spelling, simplification and limitation of Chinese characters, and the establishment of a common dialect) had an undeniable effect on the experience of reading texts written in Japanese, I argue that these developments were not able to change the fundamental structure of the already existing architecture. The same potential for multiple correctness (what can be understood as a key element of the visuality I am examining) that existed *before* the creation of a standard language continued/s to exist as a possibility even *after* its supposed removal. Before exploring this aspect of the written language, however, let us look at the basic structure of writing in modern Japan(ese).

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<sup>18</sup>Yeounsuk, ix.

<sup>19</sup> And unlike Johnson's dictionary, the compilation of *Genkai* was an overtly political project. As Yasuda Toshiaki shows *The Politics of the Dictionary: What Are The Parameters of Language?* 辞書の政治学：言葉の規範とは何か, Ōtsuki was commissioned by the Meiji Government to work on compiling the first "modern" Japanese language dictionary, a project equated to the creation of a "cultural standard" (50).

## Part I: Writing in Contemporary Japan(ese)

The structure of contemporary written Japanese consists of the following three distinct modes of writing:

- I. Chinese characters (Kanji 漢字)
  - a. 'Sound' reading (On-yomi 音読み)
  - b. 'Gloss' Reading (Kun-yomi 訓読み)
- II. Phonographs (Kana 仮名)
  - A. Cursivized Phonographs (Hiragana ひらがな)
  - B. Abbreviated Phonographs (Katakana カタカナ)<sup>20</sup>
- III. Roman characters (Rōmaji ローマ字)<sup>21</sup>

Kanji are “graphic elements, mostly derived from Chinese,<sup>22</sup> representing logo/morphological units.”<sup>23</sup> Examples include 大 ‘big’ or 人 ‘person,’ with more complex characters including 臓 ‘entrails’ or 龜 ‘turtle.’ The earliest extant writings from Japan can be traced to the fifth century, with kanji thought to have entered the Japanese archipelago via Korea. Because a vast majority of official government-related documents through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were written in some form of classical Chinese, Chinese came to be perceived as an official (and thus masculine) mode of written expression.<sup>24</sup> Today the Ministry of Education, in an expanded version of the 1,923 “common-use kanji list,” currently recognizes 2,136 “regular-

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<sup>20</sup> The translations for kana, hiragana, on-reading, kun-reading, and katakana have been adapted from David Lurie's *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (2011).

<sup>21</sup> “Roman characters” are just that: alphabetic writing, namely the Latin alphabet.

<sup>22</sup> There is a limited set of characters produced in Japan that are incomprehensible to Chinese readers unfamiliar with Japanese. These characters, known as “kokuji” 国字 (lit. “national characters), offer valuable insight into the relationship between kanji and writing in Japan. For an exhaustive (if not outdated) list of kokuji in English see Alexander's “Kokuji” supplement to *A Grammar of Formal Written Japanese* (1951).

<sup>23</sup>Smith, 209. I have chosen to base my descriptions of the major features of the Japanese language on the entry by Janet S. Smith, “Japanese Writing” as it appears in the authoritative study of the world's scripts, *The World's Writing Systems* (ed. Peter Daniels and William Bright).

<sup>24</sup> Kanji were in fact referred to as a “man's hand.” This is conceptually opposite to the phonographic script that will be discussed below, which was referred to as a “women's hand.” Despite this naming practice these modes of writing were not exclusive to the different sexes.

use kanji”<sup>25</sup> that, being deemed necessary for daily living in Japan, are taught over the course of elementary, middle, and high school. These restrictions on the number of kanji, however, have some direct effects on writing in everyday contexts: the most apparent can be found in public documents and newspapers, where kanji that are not included in the approved list will be written in the phonographic script (i.e. 忌憚 “reserve; modesty” will, when appearing in a newspaper, be written 忌たん). These restrictions do not extend to private publications, and in fact, literary texts as well as the literature of specialized fields, not to mention restaurant menus, advertising campaigns, and websites, make use of kanji with little concern for their status as decreed by the government.

The majority of kanji maintain two (though in most cases more) readings, which are also subject to restrictions by governing bodies: the “sound reading” (on yomi) and the “gloss reading” (kun yomi). The sound reading is an approximation of the Chinese pronunciation of the character at the time of its importation into Japan. For example, one sound reading of 大 is ‘dai,’ 人 is ‘jin,’ 臟 is ‘zō,’ and 龜 is ‘ki.’ It must be stressed that there is not always a one-to-one correlation between sound readings and characters; because kanji entered Japan through various avenues and at various times, the Chinese reading, or sound reading, of any given character is often geographically and temporally dependent. The four major sound readings as they exist in Japanese are the Han reading, Wu reading, T’ang reading, and the Song reading.<sup>26</sup> While there can be overlap among readings there can also be differences. The character 人 can be read in the Han reading as ‘jin’ but in the Wu reading as ‘nin;’ depending on the context 龜 can be pronounced as ‘ki,’ ‘ku,’ ‘kyū,’ ‘ku,’ ‘kin,’ or ‘kon.’ And in many cases meaning is determined

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<sup>25</sup> A copy of said list can be accessed here:

[http://www.bunka.go.jp/kokugo\\_nihongo/pdf/jouyoukanjihyou\\_h22.pdf](http://www.bunka.go.jp/kokugo_nihongo/pdf/jouyoukanjihyou_h22.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> These names refer to, rather generally, the Han Empire (206 BC – 220 AD), Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 – 589), the T’ang Dynasty (618 – 907), and the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279).

by which reading one uses. In the case of the character combination 人間(“person” and “space”), if one reads it in the most commonly encountered way, ‘ningen,’ it means “a human being; a person;” if one reads it as ‘jinkan’ it means “the world.” How then does one know how to read a given character? Context. Context, as we shall see, is key.

Phonographs, or kana (lit. “temporary characters”), “are phonographic characters derived in the ninth century from the borrowed logo/morphographic kanji,” and are a “complete orthography” capable of reproducing in writing any sound occurring in the standardized Japanese language. The phonograph is further divided into two sets: cursivized phonographs (hiragana) and abbreviated phonographs (katakana). Both the cursivized and abbreviated phonograph subsets consist of 46 characters, each being capable of representing the same sounds.

This means that the pronunciation of cursive phonograph か, pronounced ‘ka,’ is identical to the abbreviated phonograph カ. Additionally, in this particular case, both the cursive phonograph and the abbreviated phonograph were developed from the same parent kanji: 加.

Other examples of cursive phonographs (with the parent kanji in parentheses) include:

Cursived Phonograph	Parent Kanji	Reading
あ	安	‘a’
い	以	‘i’
う	宇	‘u’
え	衣	‘e’
お	於	‘o’

Examples of abbreviated phonographs include:

Abbreviated Phonograph	Parent Kanji	Reading
ア	阿	‘a’
イ	伊	‘i’
ウ	宇	‘u’

エ	江	‘e’
オ	於	‘o’

As their names suggest, cursive phonographs developed as cursivized forms of their parent kanji while abbreviated phonographs were usually constructed by taking one component from (and thus abbreviating) their parent kanji. Though 於 serves as the parent kanji to both お (cursivized phonograph) and オ (abbreviated phonograph), as the above charts show, it is not uncommon for cursivized phonographs and abbreviated phonographs to have developed from different parent characters (c.f. the different parent characters for あ and ア). Most texts in modern Japan are written in a mixture of kanji and phonographic script.<sup>27</sup>

Most commentaries on modern writing in Japan are quick to note that the cursive phonograph “is used for particles, auxiliary verbs, and the inflectional affixes of nouns, adjectives, and verbs – in sum, the grammatical elements of sentences” and that the abbreviated phonograph is “used in contemporary texts to write foreign names and loanwords, onomatopoeic and mimetic words, exclamations, and some specialized scientific terminology.”<sup>28</sup> To illustrate this point let us look at a random passage from Miyazawa Akio’s 1999 collection of essays, *The Art of Being Vague* 茫然とする技術:

新宿の西口には、中古レコードや輸入レコードの店がいくつか点在する。  
先日もある場所で用事をすませたあと、新宿を通ったので、電車を降り、  
レコード店をいくつか回ることにした。そのうちのひとつで、スタンダー  
ドの古いアナログ盤を大量に置いてある店に入ってすぐに気がついた。ど  
うも様子がおかしい。かつて来たときとは棚の配置がちがう。あらためて

<sup>27</sup> This was by no means the case in pre-modern (or pre-standardized) Japan(ese). Depending on the year, the genre, the author, and/or the place of composition, texts could be written completely in kanji (official documents, [male] diaries), the cursive phonograph (court poetry, “fiction” [*monogatari*], female diaries), or a combination of kanji and any of the two phonographic systems.

<sup>28</sup>Smith, 212.

店の全体をはっきり見た。驚いた。ヴィジュアル系というやつの店になっ  
ていたのだ。<sup>29</sup>

At the West Exit of Shinjuku [Station] there are, sprinkled about, numerous used and import record shops. The other day, after finishing up some errands at a certain place, and because I passed through Shinjuku, I decided to get off the train and visit a number of these record shops. I noticed it as soon as I entered: this shop had set up a large collection of your standard used analog records. Something seemed strange. The placing of the shelves was different from the last time I visited. I looked closely at the store in its entirety. I was shocked. It had become a visual-kei<sup>30</sup> store.<sup>31</sup>

In the Japanese passage above all kanji have been underlined with dots, all cursive phonographs have been underlined with a single line, and all abbreviated phonographs have been underlined with a double line. A quick scan of the text confirms that it ought to be regarded as a piece of writing that conforms to general expectations of a perceived standard writing: the cursive script is used mainly to write grammatical features of the language while the abbreviated script is used to write words of foreign origin (in this case ‘record,’ ‘standard,’ ‘analog,’ and ‘visual’). However, as the next section will suggest, it would be better to refer to this style of representation not as “correct” (in the orthographical sense) but rather as non-marked. That is, in terms of the visuality being explored in this study, it should be understood as “low intensity.”

And while the above excerpt is typical, it would be premature to assume that by combining these three systems of writing we have arrived at the defining characteristic of the architecture of written Japanese. Instead, let us begin our engagement with the most radical possibility contained within said architecture with a humble example; let us consider the opening scene of Yamada Eimi’s 1993 bestseller *I Can’t Study* ぼくは勉強ができない:

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<sup>29</sup>Miyazawa, 262.

<sup>30</sup> For a cursory overview of “visual-kei” culture see <http://www.visualkei.com/>.

<sup>31</sup> Unless noted all translations appearing in this paper are my own.

クラス委員長は、ぼくと三票の差で、脇山茂わきやましげるに決まった。彼は、前に出て挨拶あいさつをするために立ち上がった瞬間、振り返り、ぼくの顔を誇らしげにちらりと見た。相変わらず仕様のむつない奴やつだなあと、ぼくは思う。彼は、ぼくが忌々いまいましくてたまらないのだ<sup>32</sup>

With three votes difference between us it was decided that the class president would be Wakiyama Shigeru. Standing up before the class in order to deliver his greetings, he turned around and triumphantly glanced at my face. I thought to myself, “as usual, what a hopeless guy.” He annoyed me to no end.

Though the three character sets we have so far discussed – kanji, cursivized phonographs, and abbreviated phonographs – are all represented in the above passage, the observant reader will notice glossing in a script smaller than the main text that has been positioned directly above certain characters or character clusters. This feature of written Japanese is known as “applied phonographs” (furigana). Applied phonographs, known in Japanese as ‘furigana’ 振り仮名 or ‘rubi’, are usually defined as “small-sized [phonographs] added to the side of [or above] Chinese characters to show their pronunciation.”<sup>33</sup> It has been this focus on the pragmatic aspect of applied phonographs that has dominated the attention of critics and scholars; indeed, it is the pragmatic function of the applied phonograph that has received an overwhelmingly large amount of attention concerning its role within the architecture of the written language. As we shall soon see, however, such an understanding neglects the potential for intentional (and unrestrained) glossing on the part of the author, a possibility that necessarily positions it alongside all other modes of creative expression.

The first line of *I Can't Study* introduces Wakiyama Shigeru 脇山茂, who we are told has just been elected class president. The gloss appearing above his name is there to instruct the reader to “read” the character 茂 as Shigeru. According to *Jitsū*, a kanji dictionary that includes

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<sup>32</sup>Yamada, 8.

<sup>33</sup>Seeley, 133.

readings of Chinese characters when they are used in personal names (these readings are referred to as “nanori”), possible readings of 茂 include ‘shigeru’ and ‘tsutomu,’ with the former being the most commonly encountered. And though “Shigeru” is the most common reading, this does not mean it is the *correct* reading; in fact, the only certainty is that, until the reading is *resolved* (that is, made explicitly known to the reader), it contains all possible readings and thus harbors multiple correct ones. While convention has done much to stabilize the relationship between 茂 and Shigeru, such a relationship should be understood as, if not exceptional, not standardized. Without clarification through applied phonographs one can *never* be sure of a kanji’s “correct” reading, especially in the case of proper names. P.G. O’Neill describes the situation in the opening to *Japanese Names*:

There is no final or complete solution to the problems of reading Japanese names written in Chinese characters. Such characters usually have special name readings which are distinct from the readings of the characters in their ordinary meaningful usages and therefore have to be learned separately. Virtually all these characters have more than one recognized name reading, and may have other unpredictable ones as well [...]. It is usually only in speech, however, that they [those reading in Japanese] have to commit themselves to a particular reading of a name, for, when writing in their own language, they can leave the name in the obscurity of its characters.<sup>34</sup>

O’Neill’s dictionary lists ‘Shigeru’ and ‘Shigemi’ as possible readings for 茂 when it appears as a standalone character, and ‘MO,’ ‘BO,’ ‘shige,’ ‘toyo,’ ‘mochi,’ ‘yuta,’ ‘ari,’ ‘taka,’ ‘tō,’ ‘moto,’ ‘ikashi,’ and ‘shigei’ when it appears together with other ones.<sup>35</sup> The chart below illustrates some of these readings:

Name Written in Kanji	Reading(s)
茂	Shigeru; Shigemi
茂二	Shigeji

<sup>34</sup>O’Neill, vii.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., 77.

茂三治	Mosōji
茂仁	Toyohito; Yutaka
茂木	Mogi; Motegi
茂子	Shigeko; Shigeiko

Admittedly this system may seem cumbersome, a common complaint by those calling for a reform of the language, but that is only because a modern(ist) desire for orthography, or standardization, has made it so. This system, like all writing in the Japanese script, reflects an architecture of script that is in need of theorizing. I propose that, instead of keeping a kanji's reading "obscure," such writing allows for an unmarked kanji to simultaneously and continuously contain all possible readings until a reading has been resolved, either by the scribe (vis-à-vis the applied phonograph) or the reader (vis-à-vis vocalization).<sup>36</sup>

As previously discussed, the majority of kanji have more than a single reading associated with it; thus, it logically follows that any given reading (that is, vocalization) has more than one kanji that can represent it in written language. Returning to the chart of possible readings associated with the character 茂, we can engage in a different set of possibilities contained within the written speech of Japanese: possible kanji associations with particular readings. Reversing the direction of the chart, a new dynamic emerges; it is precisely in this moment that a rejection of reconciliation between sound and script is born. The following chart illustrates a sampling of possible kanji associations with the sound values 'Shigeru,' 'Shigemi,' and 'Yutaka,' respectively.

Names	Possible Kanji Associations
Shigeru	茂 ; 重 ; 成 ; 繁 ; 繫 ; 滋 ; 秀 ; 樹

<sup>36</sup> Note that it is this same architectural feature that allowed Kikuchi Hiroshi 菊池寛 (1888 – 1948), the great writer of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to work under the penname Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛, as well as the tool that enabled the late Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明 and enables Katō Norihiro 加藤典洋 to be referred to as Yoshimoto Ryūmei and Katō Ten'yō, respectively.

Shigemi	茂美；重美；茂実；重見；成美
Yutaka	茂；寛；豊；浩；穰；隆；裕；優

This means that, removed from its visual context, the character 茂 can be “correctly” read in any number of ways. These include: ‘shigeru’ (“dense or lush [foliage]”), ‘shigemi’ (“a bush”), ‘utsukushii’ (“beautiful”), ‘tsutomeru’ (“to work; to strive”), and ‘sugureru’ (“to be excellent”). The most appropriate reading is usually discerned through context and the attached grammatical elements (today usually written in the cursivized phonograph): the two most common readings of 茂, ‘shigeru’ and ‘shigemi,’ when they appear as a syntactical unit, are generally written as 茂る and 茂み, respectively. And though context and convention will often limit the number of perceived “correct readings” of such a syntactical unit based on its positioning within the sentence, its grammatical function, etc., this seemingly fixed usage still requires of the reader to *provide* a reading. This means that while one can “see” 茂る they must “read” 茂る<sup>しげ</sup>. We can understand this process of supplying a non-visible reading as reading, or materializing, the invisible (i.e. a character’s reading) through the visualization of pronunciation vis-à-vis an always existing phonograph, regardless of whether it manifests itself on the page or not. It is here, in this complementary drive and demand to draw out the invisible, that we are forced to confront the materiality of written Japanese.

## Part 2:

### Hyperflat and the Architextuality of Written Japanese

Up to this point we have considered the architectural features of the written form of the Japanese language, looking at the way it shapes both the consumer's and producer's seemingly insignificant interactions with a text. In such a discussion of "text," however, it becomes necessary to consider the boundaries and limits of such a term. Here, the proposed division of "text" and "TEXT" by Elaine Treharne, an authority of medieval English literature and manuscript culture, may prove useful. Treharne's most recent work strives to differentiate the vague concept of "text"<sup>37</sup> from what she calls "TEXT,"<sup>38</sup> a term used to mean the final product, or unified moment of, any number of smaller "texts" – a textual moment – regardless of whether they happen to be written or not.<sup>39</sup> One aspect of this engagement (or interaction) Treharne is especially interested in is the unique chemistry all TEXT necessarily owns. As in chemistry every TEXT is composed of elements. Some of these elements – such as paper size and font or color schema and font size – are clearly visible, while others – such as the particular history an individual "reader" brings with them or the historical construction under which each text is read – remains invisible. These elements combine at different degrees and intensities to give TEXT its "textuality," or "text-ness."

For Treharne this translates to the following: to what degree is the font of any given text part of its textuality? In the case of a manuscript, how should we consider the ink it has been written with or the material of the manuscript itself; does it matter if it is palimpsest, paper, or

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<sup>37</sup> That is, the definition used most often in the context of literary research and theory to mean (as the first definition in the Oxford English Dictionary describes it): "The wording of anything written or printed; the structure formed by the words in their order; the very words, phrases, and sentences as written". (Oxford English Dictionary)

<sup>38</sup> Though a book-length project (tentatively titled *The Sensual Body*) dealing with Treharne's theory of TEXT is underway, at the present time the most accessible discussion can be found in her 2009 essay "The Architextual Editing of Early English."

<sup>39</sup> Treharne indeed maintains a generous view of the term "text." While questioning whether a YouTube video or a canvas in the Louvre may or may not be TEXT, she notes: "Yet, when we use the lexeme 'text', we do already mean multiple things – from the words to be marked up in computer programming irrespective of their actual meaning, to a whole literary work; it is increasingly used of visual forms requiring 'reading'." (Treharne, 4)

papyrus? It is Treharne’s claim that these often overlooked issues must be acknowledged when discussing a “text:” for her, “text” is nothing but an ambiguous term denoting any number of elements that combine to create TEXT. Or, to put it another way, “text” in the singular comprises only one block in the make-up of a TEXT. Treharne refers to this textual make-up as “architextuality.” She says:

by ‘architextuality’ I seek to engage with architectural metaphors in the interpretation of ‘text’ in its broadest sense, and especially to question the methods employed in editing texts — whether in print or in electronic form. Effectively, my view is that we need a new frame of discourse as we move into the postprint and hypermedia era, a discourse that allows us to think freely about the possibilities of more realistic electronic replication of ‘text’ that reflects the cohesion of a building despite its separate parts.<sup>40</sup>

At the base of Treharne’s claim is a simple statement: “text” is not, nor was, ever only about words. Rather, her point is that “texts tend to be unstable”<sup>41</sup> and that “it is possible to extend its meaning beyond the limitations of the written, or indeed, of any attachment to a sign *per se*.”<sup>42</sup> Taking a step away from literature in Japanese, a famous English language example, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, should make this point clear. *Hamlet* as it is most commonly read today is in fact a weaving together of three distinctly different versions of the play; and yet, despite this fact, few people would argue that *Hamlet* as a singular, cohesive textual experience does not exist. To illustrate just how different these variant texts can be let us briefly examine the first two lines of Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy as found in two strikingly different versions: the First Quarto text of 1603 (the so-called “Bad Quarto”) and the Folio Text of 1623:

First Quarto text of 1603 (7.115 – 7.117)	Folio Text of 1623 (3.1.55 – 3.1.60)
To be, or not to be – ay, there’s the point.	To be, or not to be – that is the question.
To die, to sleep – is that all? Ay, all.	Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer

<sup>40</sup> Treharne, 1.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

No, to sleep, to dream – ay, marry there it goes,  
For in that dream of death, when we’re awaked  
And borne from an everlasting judge (...) <sup>43</sup>

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them. To die: to sleep (...) <sup>44</sup>

The differences between the so-called Bad Quarto and the Folio Text of 1623 are striking; though a discussion of literary merit is beyond the scope (and interest) of this paper, it is interesting to note that, by all measures, it is the Bad Quarto that should be considered the most “authorial.” That is, as the only extant text to have appeared during Shakespeare’s time (he died in 1616), and without any refutation of the text by the author himself, there is little justification *save for aesthetic reasoning* that would grant more “authority” to the 1623 variant. And yet, the *Hamlet* TEXT is not compromised by the existence of this perceived “substandard” (albeit authorial) variant edition. While the “texts” of *Hamlet* may be different, the popular *Hamlet* TEXT endures. In this way the traditional (or, modernist) fetish for an urtext (meaning here “singular” or “orthographic”) is challenged. <sup>45</sup> With the realization that a hierarchy of text is useless, the possibility for multiplicity becomes accepted. It is precisely here, with the acceptance for “multiple correctness,” that the concept of texts, TEXTs, textuality, architextuality, and the possibilities of written Japanese converge.

As a rule, all written text is produced within a set of rules (or grammar) governed by the script it is represented by. These rules of written language govern all aspects of creation, including authorship (production) and reception (consumption), and serve to limit the means by which a creator can choose to represent herself. That is, all performances perceived to be “radical”

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<sup>43</sup> *Hamlet*, 92 – 93.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 258.

<sup>45</sup> While at first glance this concept may seem similar to Structuralist Paul Zumthor’s concept of fluidity among texts, or “textual *mouvance*,” (see *Toward a Medieval Poetics*), there is one major difference: Zumthor, while accepting the fact that any attempt to trace, or “re-find” an authorial source for a manuscript is nothing more than an anachronistic endeavor on the part of modernist scholars, he clearly is privileging an ambiguous notion of “text” that is based on a hierarchical model of phonocentricity. That is, the physical form in which a manuscript is presented becomes disjointed from TEXT and as a result does not enter into critical discussion.

can be experienced as such only when they are conceived of in relation to a given norm. In the case of written Japanese, the norm is different from the set of expected norms one maintains when reading written English. It is these set of rules (i.e. architecture) governing these norms that have existed on the fringes of the critical gaze for some time. The reason for this is simple: no vocabulary, and thus no systematic means of observation, currently exists to describe written language's effect on a TEXT's textuality.

Elsewhere I have used the terms “invisible phonograph” and “kanjification,” and in the remainder of this study I will suggest that these two elements of written language are central to any discussion of the architextuality of written Japanese. First, to recapitulate, one element present in all literature written in the Japanese language is the constant possibility<sup>46</sup> of expression that, fundamentally, rejects the aural, or “phonecentric,”<sup>47</sup> superiority of language assumed in most Western written languages (and in fact also experienced in the relative stability between written and spoken language in languages such as Korean and Chinese). This possibility is not a recent development; it actually resides deep within the architecture of the “standard Japanese language,” that language born from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century project of modernization.<sup>48</sup>

How then should we understand this “possibility” of language that is at the core of written Japanese? I propose we conceive of this written space as “hyperflat.” Taking a hint from

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<sup>46</sup> I stress the term “possibility”: like any form of rhetoric and/or aesthetic, the use of language as a mode of expression is a choice (whether conscious or unconscious). Thus, as mentioned earlier, it is best to conceive of a text's visuality in terms of “intensity.” When this intensity becomes pronounced (i.e. when it becomes a “high-intensity” text) the process should be regarded as a conscious one. An example of an author who acknowledges this high-intensity environment is the aforementioned Sakiyama Tami. For an example of how she views written language and its relationship to “literature,” see her essay “Kotoba; kotoba; kotoba” コトバ・言葉・ことば in *The Place Where Language is Born* コトバの生まれる場所.

<sup>47</sup> Derrida famously called this tendency “phonocentrism” in *Of Grammatology*.

<sup>48</sup> It is necessary to note that the project of “modernization,” when applied to language, demands an architecture of uniformity. This was a comparatively easy task (and one met with relatively little resistance) in regards to languages using alphabet-based scripts. The reason for this is simple: phonocentrism by definition privileges the aurality of text; as such, any form of variation is viewed as a nuisance capable of short-circuiting the successful transmission of sound to the reader. For written Japanese, however, which privileges the visual over the aural, this process of *genbun icchi* was nothing less than artificial. (See, for example Lee's “*Genbun Itchi and Kokugo*” (38 – 54) in *The Ideology of Kokugo*.)

Azuma Hiroki's concept of "hyperflat," which denotes the state when a planar, two-dimensional text simultaneously transcends a flat plane,<sup>49</sup> I suggest that kanji, which lie at the center of written Japanese, reproduce (or is it create?) a hyperflat environment. The idea of hyperflat, despite its close association with otaku culture and consumption, should not be dismissed as an isolated cultural phenomenon. As critic Chiba Masaya has pointed out, at around the same time such consumptive practices were being witnessed in otaku culture – namely the flattening of traditional notions of social hierarchy that was accompanied by a dissemination of new, anonymous means of non-voiced communication (i.e. the internet) – similar processes can be witnessed in the actions and behaviors of a very different subculture, one far removed from the anti-social sentiments of the otaku: the gyaru-o. The derivation of satisfaction found in the flattening of society by the gyaru-o, which Chiba calls a "horizontal collage that parallelizes values of representation," universalizes (within a Japanese context) the experience of the otaku. Regarding this shift Chiba continues,

This shift from the vertical to the horizontal is in tandem with the shift in representation consumption by otaku internet users of the late 1990s and 2000s. That is, as Azuma Hiroki and others have made clear, the manga, anime, and video game aspect of otaku/internet culture is not a unified Grand Narrative in the Lyotardian sense, but, rather, takes as its foundation a database of information/image fragments that possess a creativity – e.g. second-character derivation ['*niji sōsaku*' 二次創作] and the ever important *kyarakutā*, both of which are nothing more than a collection of so-called *moe* elements, or *kyara moe*<sup>50</sup> – that pluralistically re-arranges those fragments of information and images, a process that would eventually spread beyond the realm of the otaku and effectively change the landscape of pop culture in Japan. However, unlike (male) otaku who, in most cases, parenthesize their own bodies, shy away from graphic communication, and take pleasure in the fiction of a non-relationship ['*hi-kankei*' 非関係] with two-dimensional characters, it is possible to regard the turn to a *charai*-ness as witnessed in the gyaru-style as an ideology akin to transforming

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<sup>49</sup> Azuma, 102.

<sup>50</sup> From the English "character" though a decidedly different word when used in the Japanese. For detailed discussions on these terms see Azuma Hiroki's *Database Animals* (2001), *The Birth of Game-like Realsim* ゲーム的リアリズムの誕生 (2007), Ōtsuka Eiji's *How to Make a Kyarakutā Novel* キャラクター小説の作り方 (2003), and Itō Gō's *Tezuka Is Dead* テヅカ・イズ・デッド (2005).

one's own body into a *kyarakutā*, with graphic sexual communication being quite like playing a fictional video game.<sup>51</sup>

As the above quote illustrates, however, Chiba believes this possibility of consumption takes as its epicenter the otaku, extending outward to gyaru-o culture. Indeed, Chiba convincingly traces this moment of transcendence to the overwhelming popularity of the polygonal features of Cloud, the main character of Sony Playstation's 1997 *Final Fantasy VII*.<sup>52</sup> This analysis, however, is historically sound while ignoring its structural roots: upon close examination we notice that the otaku-like consumption model, of which the flattening of social structure and database consumption is born out of a hyperflat environment, mirrors the architecture of written Japanese. However, taking Chiba's point that otaku-like consumption was being practiced in areas far removed from the otaku, we must then begin to think of otaku-like consumption as a particular instance of consumption while reexamining the origins of hyperflat. To that end, then, while mainly focusing on the visuality of written Japanese the study at hand is also consciously engaging with the question of otaku-like consumption and its origins, though an explicit exploration of such is best left for a separate occasion.

Contrary to popular belief, the hyperflat condition is not a recent development; as I will show in part three a "hyperflat possibility" was in fact born from the historical process of (a) attaching a phonograph to kanji (or kanji compounds) and (b) constantly modifying the definition of kanji (or kanji compounds). Applied phonographs, as previously mentioned, are intertextual notations generally meant to resolve a kanji's reading. The implications of such a practice serves as the crux of my argument: precisely because the architecture of written Japanese allows for any phonograph to be attached to any character regarded as kanji, one can also say that behind every kanji there always, without exception, exists the possibility of

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<sup>51</sup> Chiba, 65 - 66.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 77 - 80.

numerous phonographs. These ubiquitous phonographs I shall call “invisible phonographs.” Conversely, I will refer to the process of treating non-kanji as kanji as “kanjification.” Kanjification, then, is also the gaze directed towards a single character or character compound that differentiates it from established historical (and orthographical) standards. While examples of the “invisible phonograph” and “kanjification” abound in all areas of contemporary culture and literature (and will be discussed in detail later), in the next section let us examine similar (and more radical) experiments with language that can be found in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is within these experiments, I argue, that the origins of a hyperflat mode of cultural production and/or consumption is to be found.

Re-imagining the landscape of written Japanese as hyperflat, and theorizing the concept of reading an invisible phonograph is not something to be written off as abstract theory or as an endeavor inconsequential to the study of literature. Consider the opening line of Kawabata Yasunari’s (1899 - 1972) *Snow Country* 雪國, one of the most famous lines in the canon of modern Japanese literature:

國境の長いトンネルを抜けると雪國であつた。<sup>53</sup>  
The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.<sup>54</sup>

The first two characters of the novel, 國境, immediately present the reader (and indeed, the translator,) with a challenge: how is this character combination intended to be read? Authoritative dictionaries tell us 國境 (“border; frontier”) can be read as either ‘kunizakai’ or ‘kokkyō,’ and the (authoritative) *Collected Works of Kawabata Yasunari* altogether avoids this issue of reading by foregoing the application of applied phonographs. And, as if to dispel any hope of finding a manuscript with applied phonographs intact (as if this even mattered), we are

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<sup>53</sup> Kawabata, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Kawabata [Seidensticker trans.], 3.

told that there are no extant copies of the work in the author's own hand.<sup>55</sup> What is buried within the possibility of these various readings is not some revelation meant to change our understanding of the larger narrative of *Snow Country*; rather, it is a humble reminder that there is a constant variation that exists not only in the larger TEXT of *Snow Country* but within the visuality of the inherently hyperflat text itself, a condition of Japanese-language literature. This hyperflatness readies a condition of multiplicity, a condition the author himself recognized.

Iima Hiroaki notes that Kawabata, in conversation with scholar and critic Takeda Katsuhiko (b. 1929), acknowledges the possibility of these two readings and, though he seems to support the more common 'kokkyō' reading, makes no effort to persuade Takeda (who favored 'kunizakai') one way or the other.<sup>56</sup> What the difference in readings amount to, according to Hatori Tetsuya (1936 – 2011), who also supported the 'kokkyō' reading, is nothing more than an “aesthetic of language” ('go no bikan'), presumably because he was in no position to rule out the possibility of a 'kunizakai' reading.<sup>57</sup> More recently, however, as if dismissing Kawabata's opinion (though perhaps doubtful he knows of it), the critic Ishihara Chiaki has claimed the character combination should be read as 'kunizakai.' His reasoning, which can be found in the ongoing (and aptly titled) series “Misdelivered Lovers” 「誤配」された恋人たち is as follows:

『雪国』は 1935 年から短編連作風に小間切れに書き継がれ、やや複雑な過程を経て一応の完成を見るまでに十数年の月日を経ているが、作中の「現在」は戦前だろうから、おそらく「方言」よりもまだ「お国言葉」という呼び方にリアリティーがあった時代である。だから「くにざかい」と読むべきだろう。<sup>58</sup>

From 1935 *Snow Country* was, in the style of the short story, written in a manner that spliced various smaller pieces together in what was to be a rather complicated process, with a seemingly finished product to be seen after a span of

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<sup>55</sup>ibid., 502.

<sup>56</sup>Iima, 158 – 159.

<sup>57</sup>ibid., 160.

<sup>58</sup> Ishihara, 327.

some ten years. Because the “present” of the piece is the pre-war era, rather than a “dialect” it was presumably a time when reality would be found in the “language of the country.” Thus, we should probably read it [國境] as ‘kunizakai.’

Ishihara’s locating of “reality” in the reading ‘kunizakai’ is particularly relevant to our discussion: if the author himself suggests that ‘kokkyō,’ not ‘kunizakai,’ is the most appropriate reading, what are we to do? There is, of course, no resolution. With a little creativity we can imagine a more complicated scenario in which “reality” becomes absolutely relative: while the situation at hand offers no solution (because there are no applied phonographs to resolve our dilemma), what if the author’s readings are, indeed, a mistake? Or anachronistic? If Kawabata intends for 國境 to be read as ‘kokkyō’ but for different readers, in this case Ishihara, ‘kunizakai’ seem more “real,” then it seems we have arrived at a fork in the road.

One may be tempted to write this discrepancy off as a matter of personal analysis; this, however, is a dangerous assumption. As Ishihara’s comments suggest (by imagining the atmosphere of a pre-war Japan as well as his use of sentence ending particle ‘darō,’ a mark of faith on his part), it is only a stable (or edited) text that opens itself up for a definitive “reading.” In other words, the atmosphere of pre-war Japan that Ishihara cites is used to justify his ‘kunizakai’ reading, despite the fact that such a reading is contingent on an assumed pre-war environment. While serialization began in 1935 and continued to 1937, it was re-published in novel form in 1948. 1935 and 1948 were very different times: Ishihara locates “reality” in the imagined “present” of the text, though this ignores an equally important but different reality, namely the reader. The reader in 1937 is different from the reader in 1948, and even if it can be reasonably assumed that the Kawabata of 1937 would have expected his readers to read 國境 as ‘kunizakai’ and not ‘kokkyō,’ this 1937 text must not be confused with the TEXT *Snow Country* as it exists today; the 1948 novelization is not the same as the 1937 serialized version, and as

such, any such attempt to standardize reading without explicitly acknowledging this reality is flawed. The stability presumed by Ishihara's analysis, in this case the reading of 'kunizakai' for the first two characters of *Snow Country*, are in fact created by Ishihara himself, justified by his own assumptions and "readings" of the larger TEXT. Much like readings of a Frankenstein, or conflated, *Hamlet* that combines various editions and spellings and variations to make up the textuality of *Hamlet*, Ishihara's reading is based on an inherently subjective aesthetic rationalization that determines "correctness" (and, we should add, brings along with it assumptions of class, education, social standing, etc.) and prepares (an expected) stable text for analysis. There is much work to be done on the mirror-like quality a chosen reading can suggest to us. Unfortunately such a discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

Returning to this architectural feature of the language, however, this room for multiplicity also means that, quite simply, there is no purely standardized form of reading. In the previous section we looked at the character 茂, whose primary reading is 'Shigeru' when read as a name. As the various possible readings for the character suggest, however, the relationship between the kanji 茂 and the sound 'Shigeru' is not, however, a clean A=B equation. That is, 'Shigeru' is simply a single possible reading, a single point of contact, contained within the parameters of character 茂; additionally, the sound value 'Shigeru' is not exclusively associated with the character 茂. We can express this relationship formulaically as  $R = (\text{茂}, \text{'Shigeru'})$  with R representing any given kanji's reading.  $(\text{茂}, \text{'Shigeru'})$  is thus a single point on a Cartesian coordinate plane where X=readings of 茂 and Y=possible kanji associations of sound value 'Shigeru' where both the X- and Y-axis extend indefinitely. Referring again to *Jitsū*, characters

associated<sup>59</sup> with the sound value ‘Shigeru’ approach forty, with larger kanji dictionaries (e.g. Morohashi’s famous *Daikanwa jiten*) listing over sixty.<sup>60</sup> One may be tempted to ask, “but even if one hundred or so attested readings for the character 茂 exist and character associations with the sound value ‘Shigeru’ can reach upwards of sixty, are there still not definite ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ readings?” The answer is a resounding “no.”

This is because the applied phonograph makes possible the potential to apply one’s *own* reading to any given form of a kanji or kanji combination. To recapitulate, the (deceivably) simplest definition of the applied phonograph can be summarized as follows: phonographs written next to (or above) Chinese characters to show the pronunciation. This definition, however, as I have shown, is lacking. It does not allude to, nor permit, the rendering of creative readings onto kanji.

The reality is that applied phonographs make possible *explicit* visuality, a materiality that not only resists any attempt to privilege aural language over written language but, in the process, also serves to problematize faith in spoken language. While it would be misguided to think of the relationship between written English and spoken English as an ideally corresponding one (homophones run rampant and unpredictable spelling conventions are the norm), it is possible to understand the establishment of an orthography (‘straight, right’ + ‘writing’) as evidence of a phonocentric (or singular or Cartesian or Romantic) worldview that regards meaning as an entity always existing in fleeting aural shadows. For written Japanese, however, meaning (perhaps

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<sup>59</sup> “Associated” here means historically attested readings of characters in Japanese language texts.

<sup>60</sup> The room for variation is multiplied when it comes to even more common characters. Consider ‘miru,’ to see. Morohashi’s dictionary lists of two-hundred (!) historically associated characters for a single sound volume. Some of the more common associations include 見 (to see) , 視 (to see [something in one’s vision] , 觀 [to watch <a film>] , 看 [to watch over <someone>] , 相 [to see <the future>; to divine] , 診 [to see <a patient>] , and 覽 [to survey something]. And while all of these kanji are indeed from the Chinese, their pronunciation in Chinese differentiates them at the aural level. Their readings in modern Chinese are jiàn, shì, guān, kān, xiāng, zhēn, and lǎn, respectively.

“experience” is more appropriate) can also manifest itself at the visual level. And this visuality is not a recent development; rather, I argue that it is the result of an historical process developed and explored within the textual space that allows for the application of phonographs to kanji. It is this possibility that is at the core of any Japanese language text.

As linguist Imano Shinji states in his *A History of the Applied Phonograph 振り仮名の歴史*, there are “no hard-and-fast rules” regarding the Japanese language. He says: if we are going to call these “hard-and-fast rules” orthography, then it is the case that “Japanese has no orthography.”<sup>61</sup> The standard Japanese translation for “orthography” is ‘seisho-hō’ 正書法, literally “the correct writing method.” This term, however, is generally reserved for specialized usage, especially when referring to the correct method of spelling words in English or other languages that have an agreed upon standard of spelling.<sup>62</sup> The Japanese language equivalent to the English language “orthography” is not as deterministic in its scope; *hyōki* 表記, or “representation of script,” can be, as Imano notes, interpreted to mean a “generally agreed-upon style of writing.”<sup>63</sup> The notion of “representation of script” suggests an element of creativity on the part of the producer. While irregular orthographies are common in English language literature they are, by necessity, read against an established correctness (and as such can, in that moment of resistance, become radical). One need only look as far as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and e.e. cummings for English language examples of a radical orthography of poetry; and yet, in the context of written Japanese language, the architectural generosity of the script allows for multiple modes of expression to be used *without* an immediately assumed radical

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<sup>61</sup> Imano, 26.

<sup>62</sup> For example, while the spelling of “knight” may not reflect its pronunciation its spelling has an agreed-upon correct form. The set of agreed-upon spellings are referred to as “orthography.”

<sup>63</sup> For more on 正書法 and its relationship to the Japanese language, see Okinari Takuya’s entry for 正書法 in the *Nihon daihyakka zensho (Nipponika)* 日本大百科全書(ニッポニカ).

agenda. The script acknowledges an aesthetic element within all visual representation, making radical (or “high intensity”) expression work differently for its desired effect.

For an example of orthography as it exists in English, consider the verb “to think.” Defined as “the most general verb for expressing internal mental activity, excluding the simple perception of external things or passive reception of ideas,” the Oxford English Dictionary provides over 45-recorded historical spelling variations of the word. Some chosen at random include: (Old English) þæcan, ðence; (Middle English) denke, ȝenke, þeinke, þenk; (pre-17<sup>th</sup> cent.) think, and thenk. Despite concrete differences in spelling these variations have no effect on the signified meaning. Though these differences in spelling (may) represent localized differences in pronunciation, the written letters are nevertheless meant to be aural triggers that ultimately lead to signification of a meaning removed from writing: variation in spelling is not intended to indicate variation of meaning. Instead, it should be understood as evidence of a non-standardized form of transcription. As long as the tool (i.e., the spelling) leads to the desired product (i.e., evoking “to think”), then the emergence of a “correct” spelling can be understood as an arbitrary development. As this paper has argued, the concept of an orthography is bound to a Romantic notion of narrative singularity and aural privilege. The actual spelling of a word becomes irrelevant so long as signifying the concept of “to think” is achieved. The issues of meaning and nuance then become controlled not by the written form of the word but rather through syntactic dependency. In a linguistic system where aurality is king, visuality is always to be subjugated: the alphabets of the language dictate that letters are in and of themselves devoid of meaning, with their worth firmly planted in the ability to excavate sound.

What the applied phonograph does, however, by allowing the scribe to annotate and create a desired reading, is short-circuit an orthographical system of alphabet-based writing. This

feature of the language is not new. In fact, its origins can be traced to the very introduction of writing in Japan, and can be thought of as reaching its heights in 17<sup>th</sup> writing.

### **Part 3:**

#### **Marking the Invisible and the Birth of Hyperflat**

In a suggestive study of Ihara Saikaku (1642 – 1693), Sugimoto Tsutomu notes that within Saikaku’s writings eleven different methods of representing the single word ‘sasayaku’ (whisper) can be found. They include: 呬 ; 囁 ; 細語 ; 耳語 ; 私語 ; 小語 ; 小話 ; 私言 ; 密語 ; 少語 ; and ささやく.<sup>64</sup> These readings, few of which are attested to in major dictionaries, are made possible through the application of phonographs (in this case ‘sasayaku’) to Chinese characters. While each of these representations of the act of “whispering” (‘sasayaku’) hover around a similar action (i.e. that of whispering), in terms of materiality these contesting moments of visibility can never be accessed through the aural. While 囁 (a single kanji composed of a mouth and three ears) and 私語 (“private language”) are relatively standard in modern Japanese, 細語 (“concise language”), 耳語 (“ear language”), 小語 (“small language”), 小話 (“small talk”), 私言 (“private words”), 密語 (“secret language”), and 少語 (“sparse language”) are all unfamiliar associations.

Sugimoto astutely notes that any discussion of this condition will lead to a discussion of Saikaku’s written style, but I would also add that such visibility is just as important to the collective textual experience as the “narrative.” In other words, the TEXT itself is composed of numerous elements, of which the “text of narrative progression” and the “text of written

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<sup>64</sup> Sugimoto, 194.

language” are both single components. In a phonocentric context it may be tempting to privilege the “text of narrative progression” (because all building-blocks of said TEXT seem to be privileging the aural) but in the context of a visual-dependent language such as Japanese (where aurality fails to convey a layer of “text” available only on the visual plane) such an assumption would be nothing short of irresponsible.

Other examples of evocative kanji usage found in Saikaku include 浮雲 (“rising cloud”), 雲落 (“clouds falling”), and 雲踏 (“clouds trampling”), all read ‘abunashi,’ meaning “dangerous.”<sup>65</sup> While today such language may appear to be both provocative and radical (some may even say “queer”<sup>66</sup>), Sugimoto is quick to note that ‘abunashi’ as a reading for 浮雲 is recorded in the Muromachi Era *Setsuyōshū* 節用集; can be found in the works of Tsubouchi Shōyō; and, in fact, this particular character combination can be traced to a passage in the Chinese classic *The Analects of Confucius* 論語.<sup>67</sup> What this suggests, clearly, is that Saikaku was not unique. Quite the contrary: Sugimoto’s reading of Saikaku places him within an (architectural) tradition that is older and vaster than Saikaku himself. Sugimoto is making the claim that what is today viewed as “irregular kanji usage” would in fact have been the norm, and as such, there was no concept of “accepting” variation because variation was in fact standard. What Sugimoto is suggesting, instead, is that within the already existing architecture of written Japanese it is possible to extract a personality of language unique to Saikaku. Sugimoto writes:

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 196.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the possibility of a “queer philology” see Jeffery Masten’s *Queer Philologies: Language, Sex, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2014).

<sup>67</sup> One finds the following line at 7-16: 子曰。飯疏食飲水，曲肱而枕之，樂亦在其中矣。不義而富且貴、於我如浮雲。(The A. Charles Muller translation follows. “The Master said: ‘I can live with coarse rice to eat, water for drink and my arm as a pillow and still be happy. Wealth and honors that one possesses in the midst of injustice are like floating clouds.”)

確かに作家、特に俳諧師にとって、漢字を好みで用いる恣意性、俳諧師ゆえの戒律（去嫌<sup>さりきらい</sup>など）などもあるが、逆にまた個人個人の確かな好みもあり、そこに文体論などの成立する一条件があると私考する。<sup>68</sup>

Certainly for writers – and haikai poets in particular – there is a fondness for the arbitrary use of kanji and for the precepts (such as *sarikirai*) they follow as masters of haikai. On the other hand, however, there are also definite predilections and, I believe, it is there that a prerequisite for the establishment of a theory of style [文体論] exists.

With this statement Sugimoto is instructing us not only to consider the aural narrative of Saikaku but – and this should be expanded to all writers writing in Japanese – the written style as well. Any talk of “style” must account for the visuality of the text in question. Throughout his study Sugimoto divides the applied phonographs found in Saikaku’s literature into two distinct groups: Group A, or those applied by Saikaku himself, and Group B, those applied by another hand. Group A can be further divided into two subsets: subset a’, applied phonographs that have been appended to difficult to read kanji and kanji compounds and subset b’, applied phonographs appended to irregular kanji combinations that Saikaku (or someone) wished to force a particular reading upon. Group B, as mentioned above, would not have seen any intervention by Saikaku himself. Instead, Sugimoto hypothesizes the existence of a professional applier of phonographs.<sup>69</sup> Without getting into too much detail, such a distinction is important to note because it suggests that “textual authority” as perceived by the reader is constantly in flux: multiple authors emerge through the hand of annotation, and the concept of a singular author becomes blurred when talk of intent appears.

The process of applying phonographs to kanji so as to extract a character or character combination’s desired reading also implies an unstated (or unstable) reality: the impossibility of pinning down the totality of “meaning” assigned to any given word at any given time when one

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 201.

lacks visual access to a fully annotated (e.g. kanji with applied phonographs) text.<sup>70</sup> That is, given the nature of written Japanese, when any given word is experienced only in its aural capacity (i.e. it is heard), in that very instant, the visuality anchored to its written form recedes into the background; conversely, when one reads a Japanese text without applied phonographs – the case in the majority of texts written in modern Japanese – the architecture of the language requires the reader to supply, in essence create, a supposed “correct” reading. This process of “seeing” a character’s invisible reading is, at the same time, the process of creating it: a result of this expectation on the part of the reader is the exploitation of the invisible phonograph on the part of the scribe.

We have already seen this reality in practice: if the first two words of a major work such as *Snow Country* can invoke such discrepancy, what of a work composed completely in Chinese characters, an environment that demands of the reader (in this case “reader” is interchangeable with “scribe” or “annotator”) to supply all readings and syntactical changes, as well as grammatical inflections? For an extreme example of just how differently an unmediated text can be interpreted (and, I stress, “correctly” rendered), let us compare the varying styles employed by two eminent scholars of Chinese literature: Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄 (1878 – 1963) and Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 (1904 – 1980). It is important to note that their methodologies are not translations free from their source text but, as can be discerned below, are inextricably linked to the base text from which they are working.

Though a disciple of Suzuki, Yoshikawa, in his landmark *Notes on Du Fu* 杜甫ノ一ト, presents a rendering into Japanese of Du Fu’s (712 – 770) “Moonlit Night” 月夜 that is clearly at

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<sup>70</sup> “Word,” not “kanji,” is specifically used here. This is because, as we shall see later, the architecture of written Japanese allows for a fluidity of text that can assign a double-layered meaning to any object *regarded in a kanji-like manner*.

odds with his teacher. By going against the standard practice of rendering Chinese prose and poetry into a form of Japanese that tends to privilege the sound reading (on yomi) of kanji, Yoshikawa created a new literary space by forcing – it would not be an over exaggeration to characterize it as such – the gloss reading (kun yomi), a practice that imposes a Japanese vocabulary on a Chinese landscape. With this radical reading of Chinese poetry Yoshikawa on the one hand seems to be aligning himself with Edo Period Nativist Scholars and on the other can be seen as blurring the lines between conceptions of “Japanese-ness” and “Chinese-ness.” The result is a wholly new text that can only ever exist on the visual level. As will become clear, if a wholly textual-dependent reading such as Suzuki’s cannot transmit meaning through sound, it is the constant possibility of correct characters that chain Yoshikawa’s rendering to a misleading sense of accessibility. Thus, while what Yoshikawa presents as a solution to Suzuki’s problem (of which the source of disdain, while relevant to a discussion of nationality and identity, is irrelevant here), it brings to light the impossibility of correctly “reading” a text that is being consumed in a hyperflat environment. Essential to this discussion is the intermediary nature of the “Chinese” poem, illustrated by the fact that both of the renditions below are undoubtedly correct ones; that is, behind each kanji is an invisible phonograph, a phonograph that is at times shared among the two and at others wholly different.

月夜  
Yue ye

今夜鄜州月 閨中只獨看  
Jinye Fuzhou yue, guizhong zhi du kan.

遙憐小兒女 未解憶長安  
Yao lian xiao ernü, wei jie yi Chang'an.

香霧雲鬟濕 清輝玉臂寒  
Xiang wu yunhuan shi, qing hui yubi han.

何時倚虚幌 雙照淚痕乾  
Heshi yi xu huang, shuang zhao leihen gan?

Prose translation:

Tonight in Fuzhou my wife will be watching this moon alone. I think with tenderness of my far-away little ones, too young to understand about their father in Chang'an. My wife's soft hair must be wet from the scented night-mist, and her white arms chilled by the cold moonlight. When shall we lean on the open casement together and gaze at the moon until the tears on our cheeks are dry?<sup>71</sup>

Suzuki's Reading	Yoshikawa's Reading
げつや 月夜 getsu ya	げつや 月夜 getsu ya
こんや ふしゅう 今夜 鄜州の月 kon'ya fushū no tsuki	こよい ふしゅう 今夜なる 鄜州の月を koyoi naru fushū no tsuki wo
けいちゅう た ひと み 閨中 只だ獨り見るならん keichū tada hitori miru naran	けいちゅう ひと 閨中 にては只えに獨り見るならむ keichū nite ha hitoe ni hitori miru naramu
はる あわ しょうじじよ 遥かに憐れむ小兒女の haruka ni awaremu shōjijo no	ちご むすめ 遥かに憐れむ小さき兒の女の harukani awaremu chiisaki chigo no musumeno
いま ちょうあん かい 未だ長安を憶うを解せざるを imada chōan wo omou wo kaisezaru wo	な 未お長安を憶うを解せざるを nao chōan wo omou wo kaisezaru wo
こうむ うんかんうるお 香霧に雲鬢 濕い kōmu ni unkan uruoi	わけ 香ぐわしき霧に雲なす鬢は濕い kaguwashiki kiri ni kumo nasu wage ha uruoi
せいき ぎょきひ さむ 清輝に玉臂に寒からん seiki ni gyokuhi ni samukaran	ひか かいば 清らなる輝りに玉なす 臂は寒からん kiyoranaru hikari ni tama nasu kaiba ha samukaran

<sup>71</sup> The original Chinese, roman character transcription, and the prose translation are all taken from Minford and Lau, 769 – 772.

いず　　とき　きょこう  
何れの時か虚幌に倚り  
izure no toki ka kyokō

とも　て　　るいこん  
雙に照らされて涙痕乾かん  
tomo ni terasarete ruikon kawakan

*A Poetry Anthology of Du Fu* 杜少陵詩集

むな　　とばり  
何の時か虚しき幌に倚りそい  
izure no toki ka munashiki tobari ni  
yorisoi

なら　　あと  
雙び照らされて涙の痕の乾かん  
narabi terasarete namida no ato no  
kawakan

*Notes on Du Fu* 杜甫ノート

By “seeing” the gloss reading Yoshikawa chooses a reading that can be understood to a listener when read aloud.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Suzuki’s rendition attempts to preserve a pronunciation (and thus nuance) similar to the “original” Chinese by making use of the sound reading. Today, Suzuki’s style of rendition is regarded as the standard one. This style presents a text assumed<sup>73</sup> to have been originally written in Chinese that has been re-written to adhere to rules of classical Japanese, making heavy use of the sound reading. As a result, it lacks an opportunity of aural appreciation, something that quite ironically the original Chinese, through prescribed verse forms and complex rhyme schemes, prioritizes. The preservation of the sound reading actually serves to hinder the transference of meaning at any level beyond the visual: it essentially creates a system of writing that can exist only in a relationship dependent on the written character.

Consider this line from the base text: 香霧雲鬢濕. Utilizing the sound reading Suzuki writes ‘kōmu ni unkan uruoi,’ while Yoshikawa reads the same characters as ‘kaguwashiki kiri ni kumo nasu, wage ha uruoi.’ For one who has not previously *seen* the characters assigned to

<sup>72</sup> I should note here that, in fact, in practice, the readings of Chinese characters in Japanese are not limited to just the sound reading and gloss reading when they are read as character combinations. In addition to these two seemingly polarized readings one frequently encounters the jūbako reading 重箱読み (or yutō reading 湯桶読み), a reading of two or more characters that combines both the sound and gloss readings. Examples of these would include ‘basho’ 場所 (“place;” gloss + sound) and ‘shiai’ 試合 (“match;” sound + gloss).

<sup>73</sup> I say, “assumed” because it is common to find texts written in the ‘kambun kuzushi’ style despite the fact that there is no “original” Chinese text; that is, this genre of literature is composed directly in said style.

Suzuki's sound reading derived rendition it is an unreasonable expectation that the reader will be able to accurately associate those sounds into the appropriate Chinese characters. Comparing this to Yoshikawa's 'kaguwashiki kiri ni kumo nasu wage ha uruoi,' Suzuki's level of visual dependence, and thus his rendition's level of "visuality," is immediately apparent. In this case, "visual dependent" means that (a) without prior knowledge of the text at hand an accurate reading is not possible, and (b) without that same prior knowledge, signification of meaning ceases to exist when experienced on the aural plane.

Though Yoshikawa on the other hand manages to transcend the empty aural of Suzuki by employing the gloss reading, his solution brings us face-to-face with a problem that persists in the present day and is a direct product of the architectural features of written Japanese that we have been looking at: without simultaneous access to both the visual form of the language and the aural, there is a never-ending static between the aural and the visual, a static that constantly negates the very possibility of singular meaning. This feature of the written language – and which extends its influence to the spoken – is, naturally, born within a hyperflat landscape. By favoring the gloss reading Yoshikawa's rendition is just as dependent on an outside agent (the receiver's application of kanji), but the lack of signification experienced by Suzuki's 'kōmu unkan uruhoi' has been substituted by, perhaps, an even more elusive 'kaguwashiki kiri ni kumo nasu, wage ha uruhoi.' Borrowing another term from the work of Azuma Hiroki, it is the kanji "database" contained within each individual that becomes meaning's point of departure. As discussed in the first section of this paper and seen in the discussion of proper names, many sound values in Japanese have various Chinese characters they have become bound to by convention. While some of these associations are indeed limited in number, when considered as a whole even these isolated limited possibilities can become overwhelming. The table below

illustrates conventional kanji associations for each of the gloss readings appearing in the single line ‘kaguwashiki kiri ni kumo nasu, wage ha uruoi.’

kaguwashiki	kiri	kumo	wage	uruoi
香, 薰, 馨, 芳	霧, 霏, 桐	雲, 曇	鬣, 鬢, 髻	濕, 潤, 濡, 渥, 澤

What this illustrates is that for every utterance within the poem the aural utterance is, by necessity, subjected to the process of kanjification, and as a result of this process the number of possible interpretations is vast. Expressing the above chart mathematically it becomes clear the architectural feature of the written language, that which allows for multiple readings to be applied to a single character, when applied to the five character base line 香霧雲鬢濕 allows for a total of over 350 possible “correct” renderings (despite the fact that the original Chinese allows for only one). It should also be noted that a “reading” is not an “interpretation” of the poem (though they can be overlap); these two practices are traditionally different.<sup>74</sup> In the case of ‘kaguwashiki,’ without access to the visual, it is up to the reader to choose between 香, 薰, 馨, and 芳. And while it is true that each character modifies some proto-notion of ‘kaguwashiki,’ a quick check in any dictionary of Chinese characters tells us they are not the same. Their very existence, their possibility, does nothing less than change any theoretical proto-notions of an ur-kaguwashiki; they are now condemned to be completely different entities. Though on the aural level they remain the same, beyond the sound used for signification lies a meaning chained to a Chinese character. As such, it is irresponsible to assume that because they are “similar” they are the “same.” This confusion results in the possibility for numerous final texts that are very

<sup>74</sup> That is, in Japanese collections of classical Chinese poetry it is common for an explication of a poem to *follow* the reading given by the annotator.

different from the anticipated original, all of which are now subsumed, simultaneously, within a larger TEXT. One could even say the textuality of each new reading of “Moonlit Night” is but a drop in the bucket of the TEXTual presence of a larger “Moonlit Night,” a luxury made possible by the architextuality of written Japanese.

Again, all possible (mis-) readings are at the same time correct. Or, to be more precise, no reading can ever be incorrect. This realization, perhaps to the chagrin of language teachers everywhere, should not be misunderstood: the impossibility of correctly reading a character does not speak to either likelihood or contextual probability. In many cases the *most likely* reading can be readily surmised; this, however, does not make it the only correct reading. Such a condition must be readily understood as the product of what I claim to be a ubiquitous invisible phonograph as it exists within a hyperflat space. In the case of Du Fu’s “Moonlit Night,” every character on the page comes to the reader (either through personal experience or through historical channels) already annotated on a level beyond the visual. This annotation, this *invisible annotation*, is omnipresent, often unseen, and waiting to be read by the reader. Taking the hyperflat condition as the starting point for understanding the complex relationship between a text written in Japanese and those consumers and producers who thrive within such an environment, it seems both necessary and productive to understand the writing system as it exists and is used today as one rooted in an assumed multiplicity rooted in a plane beyond both the aural and the visual. This condition, the hyperflat one, opens new avenues for expression that have serious ramifications for producers of written texts, a topic we will explore in the next section.

We have already seen that Ihara Saikaku’s style of written language was not unique despite the fact that it may appear so today when removed from its context. Although certain

characteristics of Saikaku's written language distinguish him from his contemporaries, his application of visuality to literature – that very act – was par for the course. For examples of written language being pushed to its extreme we must turn our gaze to the world of haikai. Here we will see three distinct usages of kanji and phonographs that, for all intents and purposes, can be understood as the birth of the hyperflat context, a context that continues to inform all aspects of modern cultural production and consumption.

First I would like to introduce two poems from the *Haikai dokugin shū* 俳諧獨吟集 (1682, ed. Jūtoku 重徳).<sup>75</sup> This 100-verse sequence of poetry is in the “Japanese and Chinese haikai” (wakan haikai 和漢俳諧) tradition and, as the name suggests, compiled by a solo author. At this point it is necessary to briefly discuss “Japanese and Chinese linked verse” (和漢連句) and its derivative Japanese and Chinese haikai. The reason for this detour is because wakan haikai, though little studied, highlights an important step in the development of the hyperflat condition and its relation to the architecture of written Japanese. Kai Xie has noted that wakan haikai is “popular linked verse written in Japanese and Chinese”<sup>76</sup> that has been composed in alternating verses of Japanese and Chinese. This means that one verse, composed by someone writing in the Japanese language, will have a follow-up verse attached to it written by someone else writing in the Chinese language. This new Chinese language verse will serve as the base verse for a new line in the poem, this time written in Japanese, which will in turn become the base for a new Chinese verse, and so forth.

Kai continues: the “alternation of Japanese verses and Chinese verses in a linked verse sequence was not new in wakan haikai. Wakan renku, or traditional linked verse of Japanese and

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<sup>75</sup> A facsimile of this manuscript can be found in volumes 4 and 5 of the *Tenri tosho wataya bunko haisho shūsei* 天理図書館綿屋文庫俳書集成 series.

<sup>76</sup> “Chinese as the ‘Other’: Wordplay in *Wakan haikai* of the Pre-Genroku Period.” Kai Xie, unpublished thesis.

Chinese, had been composed at gatherings of Zen monks, renga masters, and the elite since Mid-Kamakura period.”<sup>77</sup> The difference between the two, however, as scholar Fukasawa Shinji notes, is that the Chinese poetic tradition (i.e. ‘kanshi’ 漢詩) represented in the Chinese language verses and the renga tradition represented in the Japanese language verses as they are found in the wakan renku matrix are incompatible.<sup>78</sup> One can say a clash of architectures prevented a harmony of language between the two from being established. That is, each belonged to a world (or database) removed from the other, and as such, the two worlds remained foreign (to one another). Nevertheless, as we shall see, born from this dialogue of incompatible architecture was a new possibility of written language: the invisible phonograph and the process of kanjification.

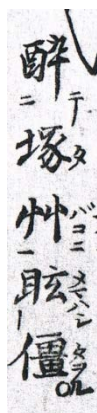
It is within the space of wakan haikai that the gap between the Chinese language verses and the Japanese language verses of wakan renku begins to shrink. Ogata Tsutomu has noted an important characteristic of wakan haikai: the Chinese verses have now become extremely Japanized.<sup>79</sup> Various meanings can be extracted from this notion of “Japanification,” but for the sake of the discussion at hand it is best to understand Japanification as analogous to the process of “localization.” It is within this space of localization that the possibility of hyperflat as it exists today begins to develop. Kai provides a typical example of a Chinese poem appearing in wakan haikai:

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Fukasawa, 118-120.

<sup>79</sup> Ogata, 4.



Base Text	Japanese Reading Order of Base Characters (with Applied Phonographs)	Reading of Characters According to the Applied Phonographs	Translation
酔塚州眩僵	タバコ 塚州ニ酔テ メマ タヲ 眩ハシ僵ル	tabako ni yōte memawashi taoru	High on tobacco my eyes spin and I collapse <sup>80</sup>

We see localization occurring here in the phonographically indicated readings of the kanji compound 塚州 (Chi. zhǒng cǎo) and the single character 僵 (Chi. jiāng). While the latter kanji 僵 does have an attested gloss reading of ‘taoru’<sup>81</sup> (“to fall; to collapse”), the character’s association with death is heightened through this unattested combination of the characters used to represent ‘tabako’ 塚州 (lit. “mound” + “grass”). These two characters, when read together as ‘tabako,’ suggest an over indulgence of grass, a sizable consumption perhaps equal to a mound (‘tsuka’ 塚). In addition to visually referring to the amount of tobacco consumed, the combination of these two characters also suggest the mound in which a body – which has fallen down (alluded to through the specific use of the character 僵) – will lie. In fact, the character 僵 has a meaning more profound than “to collapse;” the dictionary of Chinese characters *Kanjigen* 漢字源 tells us that the character in question means

<sup>80</sup> The image is taken from *Haikai dokugin shu*, 169.

<sup>81</sup> See the entry 僵 in *Jitsū*.

To collapse. The body becomes stiff and it grows elongated. Also, that condition.

‘僵死’ (kyōshi) means ‘a corpse in which rigor mortis has already set in.’

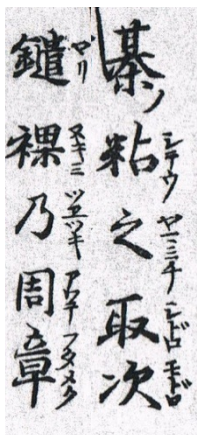
This shadow of meaning, namely the presence of death, is lost the instant aurality is privileged. Without access to the written text (that is, its “visuality”) this poem, this poetic moment, ceases to exist, and the intertextual allusive quality woven together with the thread of the applied phonograph can do nothing but remain unrealized. We can say, then, that the experience of this poem can never be fully realized without access to its visual context.

This first style of kanji usage represents an extension of an already existing relationship between a kanji and its potential readings. By now it is clear that the tool by which such a reading is made possible is through the application of a phonograph. What we must also recognize is that it was the author’s volition to materialize this reading. For the author it was necessary to *make visible* the reading of ‘tabako’ for the character combination 塚艸. This particular form of a kanji’s reading is referred to as, to again borrow Lurie’s term, a “semantic logograph,” or ‘gikun’ 義訓. Though the tradition of the semantic logograph can be traced back to the Nara Period (710 – 724) collection of poetry, the *Man’yōshū* 万葉集, it is important to remember that the phonograph was not a part of the production or consumption process associated with that anthology. While we can see an early indicator of the phonograph’s eventual birth it would be anachronistic to describe the environment as a wholly hyperflat one. The phonograph does not constitute a part of the *Man’yōshū*’s architecture. As one scholar has described it, reading the *Man’yōshū* in the original is like trying to decode a rebus.<sup>82</sup> It is this usage of the phonograph that separates wakan haikai from the *Man’yōshū* and other classical works.

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<sup>82</sup> Lamarre, 25.

A second style of phonograph use, and one suggesting an early hyperflat sensibility, can be found in the same collection of wakan haikai. This second style I shall call the “new-pictograph kanji.” Consider the following couplet:



Base Text	Japanese Reading Order of Base Characters (with Applied Phonographs)	Reading of Characters According to the Applied Phonographs	Translation
碁粘之取次	碁 <sup>シテウ</sup> ノ粘 粘 <sup>ヤマミチ</sup> 之 <sup>シドロモドロ</sup> 取次	go no shichō yamamichi shidoromodoro	On the prowl in <i>Go</i> A mountain path Confused
鑢裸乃周章	鑢 <sup>ヤリヌキミ</sup> 裸 裸 <sup>ツエツキ</sup> 乃 乃 <sup>アワテフタメク</sup> 周章	Yari nukimi tsuetsuki awatefutameku	Spear unsheathed, Using a walking stick: A bewildered state <sup>83</sup>

As the readings provided make clear the above verses should be read within the context of the traditional board game *Go*. ‘Shichō,’ usually written as 征 (“imperial march”) or 四丁 (“four corners”) and often translated into English as “ladder” or “steps,” refers to a basic move in the game in which the attacker pursues his or her opponent across the board in a zig-zag manner. The character used here to represent this “ladder” play, however, is 粘 (nián), meaning “to stick to; to be persistent.” By using this particular non-standard and non-attested character to represent

<sup>83</sup> *Haikai dokugin shu*, 168.

– to annotate – the suggested chase, the visual image of the attacker pursuing his or her opponent is emphasized; the action of pursuit becomes central to the “reading” of this poetic moment. However, as our eyes move to the second line (the ‘tsuke-ku’) we realize that this chase shifts from a figurative one to a dark, dangerous one. The character read as ‘nukimi’ (“an unsheathed blade”) in the second line is here written 裸 (luō), meaning “naked.” The *Ingo Daijiten* makes it clear that ‘nukimi,’ aside from its primary meaning of “an unsheathed sword,” can also mean “a naked man” or, more specifically, “an exposed penis.”<sup>84</sup> This use of the character 裸, coupled with the word ‘yari,’ or “spear,” another term for the phallus,<sup>85</sup> puts to rest any doubt that the desired image is an explicitly graphic one.

In typical haikai renga fashion the dynamic of the first poem, or mae-ku 前句, changes here with the attached verse, or tsuke-ku 付け句: what began as an imagined chase on the *Go* board is transformed into a real-life pursuit. What separates this poem from more typical renga (that is, renga without a strong kanji component) is that while an aural-based reading could conceivably focus exclusively on the image of an attacker chasing his or her opponent across the *Go* board in a zig-zag manner, a visual based reading forces one to read this poem as a violent, highly sexualized one. By reading the character 裸 as ‘nukimi,’ or “unsheathed [spear],” the erect phallus is brought to the forefront. Bearing this in mind, rereading the first verse of the poem reinforces such an understanding: the non-attested character used to represent the so-called “ladder move,” 粘 (“to stick to”), suggests a sexualized one-sided pursuit marked by the presence of bodily fluids. Additionally, the image of the “walking stick” in the second line takes on a new image. While a scent of such a scenario is conveyed aurally (particularly through the

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<sup>84</sup> Ingo, 937.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 1293.

use of highly sexualized vocabulary such as ‘yari’ and ‘nukimi’), it is the application of the phonograph that makes this image explicitly visual. This use, however, is similar to the first style of kanji-usage we witnessed in the tobacco poem of the same collection.

For an example of the second type of kanji usage we must instead focus on the third character of each line: 之 (zhī) and 乃 (nǎi). I shall call these “kanji re-imagined as pictograms.” The character 之 in this poem, through the use of the applied phonograph, is to be read as ‘yamamichi’ (“mountain path”). Usually read in the gloss reading as ‘kore’ (“this”) or simply ‘no’ (the possessive marker), and in some instances ‘yuku’ (“to go”), this kanji rarely transcends its role as an unmarked character. Here, however, by being read as ‘yamamichi’ the annotator has re-cast the visual significance of the kanji, localizing it at the microlevel. The standard meaning of “this” has been discarded and a new meaning has been forged through the application of a phonograph: mountain path. This reading, one which self-reflexively alludes to the shape of the character itself, must here be interpreted to mean not simply a “mountain path” but, rather, “a road that zigzags in the mountain.” This image of crossing back and forth from one end of the mountain to the other serves as a metaphor for the movement, and attack, taking place on the *Go* board sitting before the imagined participants.

In a similar fashion, and in fact in a syntactically parallel position within the poems, the character 乃, here given the reading of ‘tsuetsuki’ (“planting a walking stick”), is imagined to represent a person carrying a walking stick, presumably suffering from the attack incurred in the previous line. And yet, just as the “mountain path” has come to have new meaning when envisioned on the *Go* board, so has the “walking stick:” here, given the context, the character 乃 has clearly come to represent not an opponent who has suffered a major blow but, quite to the contrary, an exposed, erect penis chasing his or her victim. Again, while a purely aural reading

does not negate all meaning, there is a visual nuance, a textuality, that cannot be conveyed through sound alone. It would not be too much to say that the explicit visuality of this poem is part of the poem itself, and any reading removed from such context is a flawed one. The relationship between the two characters discussed above and their relationship to the applied phonograph have been elucidated in the graphic below.

Character	i) Reading of Applied Phonograph	iii) Meaning of Applied Phonograph
	ii) Conventional Reading of Base Character	iv) Meaning of Base Character
ヤマミチ 之	i) 'yamamichi' [山道]	iii) "mountain path"
	ii) 'kore'; 'no'; 'yuku'	iv) "this"; possessive marker; "to go"
ツエツキ 乃	i) 'tsetsuki' [杖突き]	iii) "using a walking stick"
	ii) 'sunawachi'	iv) "namely; that is to say; precisely"

What these two linked verses represent is a genuine re-forging of the architecture of written Japanese by making use of, and exploiting, the hyperflat context contained within the language. This poetic moment marks the birth of a heretofore unknown sensitivity towards visuality that would continue to be valued in various modes of cultural production and consumption. I say "birth" because, in fact, as Fukusawa has noted, earlier examples of what Xie calls "kanji as pictograms" cannot be found in the wakan haikai tradition earlier than the Kanbun

era (1661 – 1673).<sup>86</sup> We can infer, then, that it was at this point a new relationship between written language and visuality emerged. A new architecture of written language has been created.

The third type of kanji/phonograph usage, and one that fully engages with its hyperflat environment, can be dated to 1685. Dated two years after Saikaku completed his first major work *The Life of an Amorous Man* 好色一代男, another visually intensive text, the haikai collection *Haikai Hitotsuboshi* 俳諧一星 (1685)<sup>87</sup> is a collection of wakan haikai edited by Kishimoto Chōwa 岸本調和 [1638 – 1715]. Chōwa, as he is best known, was a leading man of haikai of the Genroku period who was “without doubt” an important figure, but is someone who is today often neglected in discussions of haikai.<sup>88</sup> Contained within this manuscript are works that serve as some of the earliest examples of the process of kanjification I have thus far discussed.

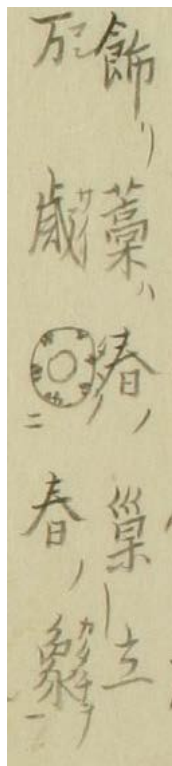
The first pair of poems I would like to examine is by little known composers of haikai Suizan 水斬 and Shikei 紫筭, respectively:



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<sup>86</sup> Fukusawa, 169-176.

<sup>87</sup> A digital version of the manuscript is available online through the *Waseda koten seki database* 早稲田古典籍データベース: [http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko18/bunko18\\_00096](http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko18/bunko18_00096)

<sup>88</sup> Hagino Kiyoshi had this to say about Chōwa in the article “Man of Haikai: The Life of Kishimoto Chōwa”: In this way, the haikai group led by Chōwa was without doubt the largest of its kind in the Edo Period [1603 – 1868]. Yet, despite this fact, his name, which serves as its head, has not become popular in the least. And not just that: still, now and again, even among the specialist scholar, there are instances of his name being left out in discussions of Genroku era [1688 – 1704] haikai circles.



Base Text	Japanese Reading Order of Base Characters (with Applied Phonographs)	Reading of Characters According to the Applied Phonographs	Translation
飾藁春巢立	飾り藁ハ春ノ巢立	Kazariwara ha haru no sudachi	The decorative straw [means] the fleeting New Year season
万歳  春象	<small>マンサイ</small> 万歳 <small>カタチ</small> 春ノ象ヲ  [タタ] ク	Manzai haru no katachi wo tataku	The <i>manzai</i> dance: drum the shape of the New Year!

The vocabulary of the first verse, namely ‘kazariwara,’ or “decorative wreath,” immediately calls forth the image of the lunar New Year. This image, coupled with that of a fleeting New Year (here ‘haru’ refers to the New Year), clearly anchors the first verse to a scene of a New Year season on its way out. Then, in the second verse, we are told that the shape (象) of the New Year is celebrated with sounds of ‘manzai.’<sup>89</sup> There is a complex self-allusion occurring here: the

<sup>89</sup> The *Kokugo daijiten* tells us about ‘manzai’: Meaning to offer one’s congratulations on the “Senzu Manzai,” it is song and dance to celebrate the New Year. Also, the performers of said song and dance. From the early years of the Kamakura Period [1185 – 1333] onward those who entered the Imperial Court were called “Senzu Manzai,” and around the time of Oda Nobunaga [1534 – 1582], Toyotomi Hideyoshi [1536 – 1598], and Tokugawa Ieyasu [1543 – 1616], they were simply called “Manzai.” In the Edo Period, because those who entered Kantō would depart from Mikawa Province (in the Eastern half of present day Aichi Prefecture) they

“shape” of the New Year, namely the waist-drum, or the “shape of the New Year” one would expect to accompany the sounds of the ‘manzai’ New Year celebrations, actually appear in the poem as a kanji-like character: 𪛗. We are instructed to read this unfamiliar (and in fact utterly unique) character as ‘tataku,’ or “to drum; to beat.” It appears here in the poem functioning in exactly the same manner as a kanji. We can say then that 𪛗 is, for all practical purposes, functionally indistinguishable from any other character in the repertoire of written Japanese; it has been subjugated to the process of kanjification, even annotated with its own phonograph.

Let us look at a similar phenomenon occurring in a separate poetic dialogue from the same manuscript:




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were called “Mikawa Manzai” while those going to Kyoto, because they would leave Yamato Province (present-day Nara Prefecture), were called “Yamato Manzai.” Initially their clothes consisted of the folded *eboshi* and the *suō*, but in later years performers would wear a pointed hat [*kazaori eboshi*] and a *hitatare* [formal clothing for men worn at times of leisure] with large patterns. While banging their waist-drum [*koshi tsudumi*] they would sing greetings, dancing and walking about. This word is associated with the New Year.

Base Text	Japanese Reading Order of Base Characters (with Applied Phonographs)	Reading of Characters According to the Applied Phonographs	Translation
象鑿 <sup>土</sup> 生菌	象ハ <sup>土</sup> [ツチ] ヲ ウカツ クサヒラ ナ 鑿テ 菌 ト生ル	Zō ha tsuchi wo ugatte kusabira to naru	An elephant digs the soil and [in the soil] a mushroom grows
艸菌巴猿耳	艸菌ハ巴猿ノ耳	Kusabira ha haen no mimi	The mushroom is in the shape of the ears of a gibbon heard on a journey

The third character in the first verse, <sup>土</sup>, like the character read as ‘tatau’ in the previous poem, is clearly not a traditional kanji. Here read as ‘tsuchi’ (“soil; earth”), it is not to be found in any extant kanji dictionary. It is another example of the process of kanjification. Of note is the progression of time, or the description of the resultant state, implied by the form of the character itself. Within the space of this poem an elephant is digging the soil, and from this soil a mushroom emerges. Interestingly enough, however, the image depicted with the character to be read ‘tsuchi’ does not suggest “soil” as referenced by the term ‘tsuchi’ but, even more provocatively, seems to be alluding to the resultant state of that soil. This acknowledgement of the future state of the soil – that with a mushroom growing in it – is only fully realized inside the visual context of the poem. This intertextual dependence is not only vital to a nuanced reading of the poem but, as I hope is clear by now, any reading of this poem. This relationship is further contextualized by the reference to the “ears of a monkey” in the second line: the similarities between the shape of soil with a mushroom growing in it and the image of the ears of a monkey are clearly illustrated through the image of soil presented in the first line.

In this section I have attempted to highlight three distinct types of kanji and phonograph usage found in wakan haikai that I believe not only readied but created a visual aesthetic possible only within a hyperflat environment, and one that would be re-discovered, and re-theorized, by Azuma and others. They are:

- (i) phonographs applied to kanji so as to elaborate upon an already associated meaning;
- (ii) establishing newly created visual associations based on the perceived shape of a kanji that is at odds with traditionally associated readings;
- (iii) and the unprecedented creation of new kanji-like characters.

This evolution of written language is analogous to the localization of Chinese characters in wakan haikai, and is also indicative of a more pronounced embrace of an architecture of hyperflat. Authors in group (i) had already begun applying new readings to familiar kanji when authors in group (ii) redefined their relationship with kanji. By stripping away a perceived “Chinese-ness” of kanji they managed to localize, and thus appropriate, the foreignness of those symbols through the application of phonographs.<sup>90</sup> A reader “reads” the meaning behind a character; this same reader, the moment he applies that reading, becomes the author. This relationship would in turn give rise to group (iii), the creation of new characters. Once the existence of an invisible phonograph was established the concept of a fixed character-to-concept relationship collapsed. From this collapse came liberation from historicity: kanji became something to be created. This creative force, of course, is the process of kanjification, and is still a strong element of the architectuality of texts written in the Japanese language, a phenomenon we will now consider.

Saikaku and the wakan haikai poets examined in the previous sections were long dead by the time the push for the standardization of the written form of the Japanese language began reshaping the landscape of written texts. It is critical to remember that they were not the last

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<sup>90</sup> This process of localization is not isolated from other the cultural developments of the time. As many critics looking at this period of history have indicated (for an example of one such study see Katō Norihiro’s *Self-Images of the Japanese* 日本人の自画像), it was precisely at this point in history that a triangular crisis of identity emerges, namely the one between “Japan,” China, and the West (Dutch).

writers to make use of such visual potential. In this section let us look at two contemporary writers, Kuroma Hisashi and Takahashi Gen'ichirō, who make great use of the architectural possibilities available to them within the architecture of the written Japanese language.

In the realm of contemporary literature Takahashi Gen'ichirō (b. 1951) is an author extremely sensitive to the issue of visibility. As a younger member of the baby-boomer generation, Takahashi was able to participate in the later activities of the student movements of the 1960s. For his involvement in these protests he was arrested on a charge of assembling with offensive weapons and sentenced to time in jail. Because of trauma experienced while being incarcerated Takahashi developed dysphasia, a psychological disease that causes difficulty in speaking and understanding. Simply put, he became silent. As a means of rehabilitation he began writing a novel, *The Great Japanese War* 素晴らしい日本の戦争, a piece that would eventually be published in a re-edited form eight years later as *John Lennon vs. The Martians* ジョン・レノン対火星人. Takahashi's written style at that time suggests an author fixated not on the aural but rather the visual. His use of the phonographs in *John Lennon* is particularly noteworthy for our discussion:

「<sup>オー・マイ・サン</sup>わが息子よ！」と受話器の向こうでわたしのママは言った。やっぱりわたしのママになんか相談するんじゃないかった。

[...]

あなたが為すべきことは既に『聖書』の中に述べられているのです、

<sup>マイ・サン</sup>わが息子よ。<sup>91</sup>

“Oh my son!” – My mother said on the other end of the phone. I guess she wasn't consulting about something.

[...]

Everything you should do has already been stated in the Bible, my son.

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<sup>91</sup> *John Lennon*, 89.

In this conversation between mother and son it is the mother’s refrain, わが息子よ, that exudes hyperflatness; it clearly illustrates the complementary processes of kanjification and the application of the applied phonograph. The base cluster わが息子よ, would usually be read with unflinching confidence as ‘waga musuko yo.’ Despite this, Takahashi has applied two *different* readings to the same phrase that appears twice on the same page of text: ‘ō mai san’ (“oh my son”) and ‘mai san’ (my son”). That is, only by subjecting the phrase わが息子よ, which is composed of both abbreviated phonographs and kanji, to the process of kanjification can Takahashi then “see,” or “read” (and thus create and apply) the phonographic readings of “oh my son” and “my son.”

Takahashi’s extreme use of the applied phonograph does not stop there – consider the following examples chosen at random are expressed in the following chart:

Visual Moment	Gloss Reading	Conventional Translation of Gloss
	Conventional Reading of Base Text	Conventional Translation of Base Text
<small>アムール コンセントレーション</small> 1. 愛と集中	‘amūru to konsentorēshon’	“love [fr. <i>amour</i> ] and concentration”
	‘ai to shūchū’	“love and concentration”
<small>メディテーション・スペース</small> 2. 瞑想空間	‘meditēshon supēsu’	“meditation space”
	‘meisō kūkan’	“meditation [contemplation] space”
<small>ソーセージ</small> 3. 双生児	‘sōseji’*	“sausage”
	‘sōseji’	“twin”
<small>ビッチ</small> 4. 淫売野郎	‘bicchi’	“bitch”
	‘inbai yarō’	“bitch; whore; prostitute”
<small>ウエイク・アップ</small> 5. たってる	‘weiku appu’	“wake up”
	‘tatteiru’	“to be standing”
<small>トレ・ビアン</small> 6. 素敵だよ	‘tore bian’	“très bien” (fr.)
	‘suteki da yo’	“very good”

レ・キャピトール  
7. 資本論

‘re kyapitōru’	“ <i>Le Capital</i> ” (fr.)
‘shihon ron’	“ <i>Das Kapital</i> ” (Gr.)

\* There is a complicated visual pun contained within this visual moment: ‘sōseji,’ when heard, will generally be associated with the homophonous Japanese word for “sausage.” This connection is reinforced through the use of the abbreviated phonographs appearing above the kanji. Needless to say the sound reading of the 双生児 is indeed ‘sōseji,’ though it would conventionally be written with the cursived phonograph.

It is through Takahashi’s excessive annotations that he not only acknowledges the role visuality plays in the production and consumption of literature written in the Japanese language but also the flexibility required to “read” it. While his usage is certainly extreme it can be understood as a practice with a long-standing historical precedent. In fact, the visuality of his literature positions him alongside those haikai poets explored in the previous section and the dueling readings of Du Fu by Suzuki and Yoshikawa.

These possibilities of visual expression, namely the applied phonograph (and its cousin the invisible phonograph) and the process of kanjification are all products of the architecture of the written Japanese language. For example, it is the invisible phonograph that allows not only for Takahashi to make わが息子よ to be read in numerous ways within the same text but also for Yoshikawa Kōjirō to produce an alternative, albeit no less “correct,” reading of “Moonlit Night.” The line 香霧雲鬟濕 from Du Fu’s poem exists as nothing more than a string of Chinese characters, just like わが息子よ and all of the characters Takahashi has annotated. These characters, then, must exist within a hyperflat space.

To render this into Japanese it is the reader, in this case both Yoshikawa and Takahashi, that must look *beyond* the character (or, computer screen). Instead, they must extract an already existing reading (or, HTML code) from an invisible plane. Yoshikawa, looking at 香霧, extracts a reading which exists on the gloss reading plane, while Takahashi, looking at わが息子よ, ignores the standard Japanese reading, opting for “oh my son” on one occasion and simply “my

son” on another. What is striking about this ability for both 香霧 and わが息子よ to simultaneously possess dual readings (and thus, one could argue, dual meanings), is that at any given moment 香霧 and わが息子よ’s signification is, if lacking an applied phonograph, determined by the reader, *never* the author. Here, “meaning” understood and described in singular terms begins to breakdown.

Looking again at Takahashi’s わが息子よ we can see this peculiar shift of authority playing out. Conventionally read as ‘wa ga musuko yo,’ the readings “oh my son” and “my son” have been, at various spots, prescribed to it. In the context of the conversation between mother and son this reading is justified (we are told the mother uttering these words is a Christian), but the fact of the matter remains: if the applied phonograph had not supplemented the standard reading, any reading other than ‘waga musuko yo,’ would be deemed incorrect. Would it not, then, be more productive to regard these appended readings not as “incorrect” (for, in this instant, they have become attested reading) but rather “less likely”? This is because, as both Suzuki and Yoshikawa, as well as Takahashi have shown us, all writing regarded as Japanese – this includes texts written solely in Chinese – is heavily layered in planes beyond the visual that are limited only to the extractions of any given author.

Changing directions, let us look at another “high intensity” writer that pushes the boundaries of what a text should be able to do visually. Prolific translator of science fiction Kuroma Hisashi makes great use of both the possibility of kanjification and the applied phonograph. His translations, which often borders on interpretation, do not shy away from challenging the textual authority of the base text. Kuroma’s translation of William Gibson’s influential novel *Neuromancer* is characteristic of his style. It is also worth recalling that the novel itself is set in Japan (the first chapter is titled “Chiba City Blues”).

Case lowered the gun. “This is the matrix. You’re Winter mute.”

“Yes. This is all coming to you courtesy of the simstim unit wired into your deck, of course. I’m glad I was able to cut you off before you’d managed to jack out.” Deane walked around the desk, straightened his chair, and sat down. “Sit, old son. We have a lot to talk about.”<sup>92</sup>

ケイスは拳銃をおろし、  
「これはマトリックスだ。あんたは<sup>ウウインタームユート</sup>冬寂」  
「そう。こういったものがきみに伝わるのは、デッキについ<sup>シムステイム</sup>ないだ擬験  
ユニットのおかげさ、もちろん。きみが<sup>ジャック・アウト</sup>離脱する前に切り離せて良か  
ったよ」  
ディーンはデスクのむこう側に行き、椅子を戻してすわり、  
「すわりなさい。話すことがたくさんある」<sup>93</sup>

Two character combinations unique to Kuroma’s translation and one familiar character combination with a heretofore unique reading can be found in the above passage: <sup>ウウインタームユート</sup>冬寂,

<sup>シムステイム</sup>擬験, and <sup>ジャック・アウト</sup>離脱. The first character combination, 冬寂 (“winter” and “loneliness”) is here read as “Wintermute;” <sup>シムステイム</sup>擬験 (“pseudo” and “experience”) becomes “simstim;” and <sup>ジャック・アウト</sup>離脱 (“separate” and “escape”), usually read as ‘ridatsu’ (secession), is to be read as “jack out.” In other words, in the space created by Kuroma (which in turn is based on Gibson’s), each of these character combinations are subjected to the process of kanjification and then given readings via a phonograph. Because these phonographs have been applied to a kanji-like object we can surmise that they represent a reading already contained within them; Kuroma has thus only visualized, or materialized, what was once invisible.

Even more extreme is the following passage:

Cath rocked back on her tanned heels and licked at a strand of brownish hair that had pasted itself beside her mouth. “What’s your taste?”  
“No coke, no amphetamines, but *up*, gotta be *up*.” And so much for that, he thought glumly, holding his smile for her.

<sup>92</sup>Gibson, 119.

<sup>93</sup>Gibson [Hisashi trans.], 198.

“Betaphenthylamine,” she said. “No sweat, but it’s on your chip.”<sup>94</sup>

キャスは日灼けした踵に体重を移して、口の脇に張りついた茶色っぽい髪をひと筋ねぶり、  
「お好みは……」  
「<sup>コ</sup>カ<sup>イ</sup>ン<sup>ン</sup>は駄目、アンフェタミンも駄目、とにかく<sup>ア</sup>刺<sup>シ</sup>激<sup>キ</sup>的<sup>テ</sup>に、<sup>カ</sup>覚<sup>ク</sup>醒<sup>セ</sup>的<sup>テ</sup>で」  
言ってみればそういうところで、とふさぎこみながらも、ケイスは相手には笑顔を向ける。  
「ベータヘニチルアミンね」  
とキャスは言い、  
「簡単よ。ただし、お代はあんたの<sup>チ</sup>素<sup>ソ</sup>子<sup>コ</sup>にかかると」<sup>95</sup>

With the exception of Takahashi’s ‘waga musuko yo,’ the majority of examples of kanjification we have looked at centered on kanji or kanji-like characters. With this passage, however, we can see that this is not always the case. <sup>コ</sup>カ<sup>イ</sup>ン<sup>ン</sup> whose base text is written completely in abbreviated phonographs <sup>コ</sup>カ<sup>イ</sup>ン “cocaine” has been annotated with another set of abbreviated phonographs <sup>コ</sup>ー<sup>ク</sup> “coke.” In other words, neither kanji, nor their shadows, are present in this visual moment. Additionally, given the allusiveness of a base word without an associated kanji, any trace of this reality vanishes the moment the text is vocalized.

Two other examples from this passage serve to illustrate just how complicated applied phonograph usage can be. Both <sup>ア</sup>刺<sup>シ</sup>激<sup>キ</sup>的<sup>テ</sup> and <sup>カ</sup>覚<sup>ク</sup>醒<sup>セ</sup>的<sup>テ</sup> are familiar kanji combinations, read normally as ‘shigekiteki’ (“stimulatingly”) and ‘kakuseiteki’ (“arousingly”), respectively. In this passage, separated from each other by a single character, they are both made to be read as ‘appu’ (“up”), creating another visual anchor that disappears the moment it is severed from its written context. In fact, the Japanese translation here actually serves to annotate the original English: where the only word to appear in Gibson’s original is “up,” the Japanese translation has, through its visuality, added the nuance of “stimulatingly” and “arousingly” to the textual moment.

<sup>94</sup>Gibson, 133-4.

<sup>95</sup>Gibson [Kuroma trans.], 233.

The above examples challenge both consumers and producers of Japanese culture and literature to reconsider how kanji and phonograph shape and inform textual interactions. At the very least, these insights force us to re-conceptualize the term “kanji”: we should recognize kanji in the narrow sense and kanji in the broad sense. A standard working definition of kanji in the narrow sense can be found in the OED: the corpus of borrowed and adapted Chinese ideographs which forms the principal part of the Japanese writing system.<sup>96</sup> While kanji do indeed “[form] the principal part of the Japanese writing system,” it is incorrect to say that they are simply composed of a “corpus of borrowed and adapted Chinese ideographs.” A literary critic’s understanding of kanji and the effect interaction with them have had on the architecture of written Japanese, and thus on the language of Japanese literature that has been committed to script, is enormous. As such, the definition of kanji must be generous enough to include any representation of writing *regarded or treated* as kanji.

To be clear, I am arguing that by applying the reading of コーク, which is written in abbreviated phonographs, to the base text コカイン, also written in abbreviated phonographs, a new visual experience, namely コ<sup>コ</sup>カ<sup>カ</sup>イ<sup>イ</sup>ン<sup>ン</sup>, has been created. This visual moment, part of the textuality of Kuroma’s translation, is made possible through the application of the applied phonograph and the process of kanjification, two undeniable (though neglected) features of the architextuality of written Japanese. And, as a major architextual feature of the language, they are also components of literature that must be included in a more inclusive TEXT.

As this study has shown, the process of kanjification is not unique to the present day: 17<sup>th</sup> century author Ihara Saikaku made liberal use of visuality in a way parallel to Kuroma Hisashi’s

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<sup>96</sup> "kanji, n.". OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. 14 December 2013  
<<http://www.oed.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/view/Entry/102481?redirectedFrom=kanji&>>.

translation of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. The potential for kanjification and applied phonographs – two sides of the same coin, really – add a visual (and thus material) element to texts composed in the Japanese script that simply cannot be ignored in any discussion of Japanese language literature and writing.

## Conclusion

After the 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and accompanying nuclear accident Takahashi again developed a bout of dysphasia. He immediately began writing the novel *My Dear Nuclear Power Plant* 恋する原発 that was slated to appear in the 2011 September issue of the literary magazine *Gunzō*. The story, described by Takahashi as “to now, the novel I’ve most wanted to write,” centers around a group of men struggling to create a “pornographic charity video for the Great Earthquake.”<sup>97</sup> The piece was finished in September but due to its controversial nature did not see the light of day until the November of the same year. In the piece Takahashi does not use a single phonograph (though he does bold words). This rejection of the phonograph, which exists on the other end of the spectrum of visual extremity, serves to create a tension that, again, remains unique to the Japanese writing system.

Though an analysis of the text itself is better suited for another occasion, it is noteworthy that the main character, while feeling unproductive at a production meeting for the adult video he will next be involved in, decides to pass the time by watching the newly released 55<sup>th</sup> installment of the “*Wives With Deep Appreciation for Penis: You Can You Can Play With Yourselves But*

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<sup>97</sup> Taken from the book jacket.

*I'm Not Going to Put it In, 'kay?'* series. While watching this video he closes his eyes and numerous words flood his mind:

腐敗。墜落。惰性。借金。サラ金。闇金。売春。滞納。差押さえ。  
盗作。性病。蓄膿。死体。窃盗。民主党。自民党。みんなの党。逃亡。  
脱落。鬼畜。虐待。  
それから。  
ビョーキ。低能。アル中。ヤク中。シャブ中。依存症。首吊り。  
クズ。ゴキブリ。ウスノロ。ガラクタ。イジメ。早漏。ロリコン。浣腸。  
変態。飲尿。耄碌。侮蔑。罵倒。盗癖。虚言癖。みのもんた。みのもんた  
....  
ダメだ...。目を瞑っていると、勝手に、頭の中で、もうひとりのお  
れが、目録かなんかを朗読しているみたいなんだ。こんなビデオを毎日  
見たり、作ったりしているからなのかもしれない。<sup>98</sup>

Putrefaction. Crash. Inertia. Debt. Loan shark. Black-market money.  
Prostitution. **Default**. Foreclosure. Plagiarism. **Sexually transmitted disease**.  
Accumulation of pus. Corpse. Larceny. Democratic Party of Japan. Liberal  
Democratic Party of Japan. Everyone's Party. Desertion. Defection. **Fiend**.  
Torture.

And then.

**Disease**. Low intelligence. Alcoholic. Drug addict. Speed addict.  
Addiction. Hanging oneself. **Trash**. Cockroach. Dim-witted. Junk. Bullying.  
Premature ejaculation. **Lolita complex**. Enema. Pervert. Urine drinking. Senility.  
Scorn. Condemnation. Kleptomania. Pathological lying. Mino Monta. Mino  
Monta...

It's no use... When I close my eyes it's as if another me is reading off a  
catalog or something inside my head. It might be because every day I'm watching  
and making this type of video.

The first part of this catalogue, almost out of necessity, is composed predominantly of Chinese characters. As the list continues, however, words conventionally written in kanji appear in abbreviated phonographs (e.g. 'byōki,' or "disease"), and words from everyday life and popular culture begin to seep in (e.g. 'gokiburi,' "cockroach" and 'Mino Monta,' the "world's busiest live TV presenter"<sup>99</sup>). This breakdown of script, in effect the melting of normalcy associated with the stability of the written word, seems to echo a similar phenomenon experienced soon

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<sup>98</sup> *Nuclear Power Plant*, 71.

<sup>99</sup> McNeil and Quintana, "Japan's 'Mr. Television.'"

after the gravity of the Fukushima nuclear accident became clear: the standard method of writing Fukushima (literally “fortune island”) 福島, began to be written as フクシマ in the abbreviated script:

官邸もメルtdown・浜岡原発停止はフクシマの人災隠し<sup>100</sup>

Kan Residence Also in Meltdown: Stopping the Hamaoka Nuclear Reactor  
Covers up the Man-made Disaster of Fukushima

There are various ways to analyze such a breakdown of script but two productive modes come to mind. The first takes a hint from the disaster itself: the concept of the nuclear disaster, coupled with the presence of the word “nuclear,” conjures images of that other nuclear tragedy Japan suffered more than half a century ago. The destructive power of nuclear energy has blown away, or melted, the very shell (i.e. kanji) of Fukushima, the “fortune island,” leaving only the disaster-struck skeleton standing in the disaster’s wake.

The second mode of interpretation recognizes the continued existence of a real – an enduring and historically grounded – Fukushima 福島 as well as a new, foreign, even imagined one in the form of フクシマ. This means that, in line with the popular conceptualization of the function abbreviated phonographs play in the written form of the language, フクシマ represents a foreign space removed from a “real” 福島. The point here is that both endure: the creation of フクシマ allows one to distance the disaster from the physical land, allowing for, at least in this virtual space, a method for approaching the trauma of disaster.

Whatever the case may be, such visuality has historical precedence. It is well know that after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki two new forms of expressing these cities

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<sup>100</sup> This is an advertisement seen on May 25, 2011. It was seen in various train stations around Tokyo.

emerged in writing: Hiroshima 広島 (in Chinese characters) came to be written as ヒロシマ (abbreviated phonographs), with the written form of Nagasaki following a similar pattern.

I will end this discussion by moving from one extreme of visual representation to another. If the act of writing Fukushima, Nagasaki, or Hiroshima not in Chinese characters but in abbreviated phonographs speaks to the most profound implications of studying the possibilities contained within the architecture of written Japanese, then seemingly throw-away advertisements highlight the everydayness of them. Two examples from recent Japanese advertising campaigns will make this clear. The first advertisement, from the seasonal menu of a popular ramen restaurant, reads:

旬を!<sup>た の</sup>《^^》<sup>こころ</sup>しむ。♥ 温まる  
Shun wo tanoshimu. Kokoro atatamaru.  
Enjoy the season. Warm the heart.

At the risk of sounding pedantic allow me to reassure you that !《 ^ ^ 》 is not from “the corpus of borrowed and adapted Chinese ideographs” that are so important to written Japanese. Despite this undisputable fact, it has been given a reading through the application of an applied phonograph. In this way it is no different from the kanji-like characters appearing in the Edo collection of linked verses in Chinese and Japanese or the double-stacking of applied phonographs one finds in the translations of Kuroma Hisashi.

Also, last summer, Japan’s largest donut chain ran the following ad:

こころ まある  
♥ を ○ く  
Kokoro wo māruku  
Round out your heart

Again, neither ♥ nor ○ are kanji proper. These two ads, while certainly exploiting the novelty of the visual contained therein, are operating within an architecture of text that, as this study has strived to show, was established at least four hundred years earlier.

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