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**The Lost Samurai:  
Researching Across and Between**

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It is a great pleasure to be here today. Special thanks to Gordon Anderson for inviting me.

I've never spoken to a group of librarians/information scientists before. You all of course know more and better about how the books are organized, but my hope is that it will be useful to get a kind of field report on my field-specific experiences of how the books are organized. Which field? Well, I am in the Department of French and Italian at Northwestern, but my degree is in Comparative Literature. I work primarily in modern French and German literature and culture, with a focus on the cultural imaginary of European/East Asian relations during the period of modernism, broadly construed (roughly: mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries). Not exactly Area Studies, then, and some would say "not exactly Europe." Not surprisingly, I routinely find myself having to work across and between disciplinary institutions and conventions. In concrete terms, this often involves looking in parts of the library that are, in principle, remote from my "field" –or having to track down materials that, in the context of even a sizable U.S. library, can seem a bit obscure even to fellow modernists.

My thesis, if you will, for today, is that the cross-cultural character of the work I do magnifies in various ways the values underlying the categories by which knowledge and, speaking more concretely, books are organized. So, while there may never be a great number of scholars researching my exact areas of interest, I do think that some of the lessons of my experiences will

have broader applicability. I'll proceed by examining a series of different kinds of cross-cultural relationships and the ways in which their in-between or across status is handled by the existing organizational categories –and then end with a few wild proposals for some alternatives.

To start with: the example alluded to in my title, a quite obscure book: Heinz Corazza's 1937 *Die Samurai: Ritter des Reiches in Ehre und Treue*. The way in which I stumbled upon this book, in fact a whole set of interesting books, seems to me exemplary of the downside of current methods of organization. (Well, "current": Northwestern uses the Dewey decimal system!) The book effectively falls between two chairs, as they say in German. On the one hand, it is an old and no doubt severely out of date book written in German (and printed in *Fraktur*, no less), so it is unlikely to be taken up by Japanese Studies. On the other hand, because it is a book about Japan by someone who is neither a great author nor a major historical figure, it falls under the heading of stuff-about-Japan and is therefore removed from the routine routes of German scholars.

And yet it is arguably a book that, at least from today's perspective, tells us more about German than about Japanese cultural history. This is often the case with works of cross-cultural representation, of course, but it is acutely the case here for reasons attested to not just by what we might call the text but also by the book itself, as an artifact. The book was published by the Zentralverlag der NSDAP as a "Sonderdruck aus dem "Schwarzen Korp,"" and includes a foreword by Heinrich Himmler.<sup>1</sup> The particular edition includes a library stamp from its former home, the Adolf-Hitler-Schule in Munich. The brief Himmler foreword stresses the importance of studying Japan, given the universality of the principles by which nations rise and fall. So, here we have Nazi-propagated cosmopolitan sympathy and even admiration for a non-white "race," precisely during the

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Eher Nachf. Berlin, Munich. "*Das Schwarze Korps* [. . .] was the official newspaper of the Schutzstaffel (SS)."

heyday of Yellow Peril discourse in the Allied nations (to speak nothing of Himmler's own words and deeds).

This led me to look around the rest of the section, where I found other books on Japan that also has Nazi stamps in them, including Erwin Bälz's *Die Todesverachtung der Japaner*, this copy being the 1942 second edition of the 1936 original edition (runs of 5K each).<sup>2</sup> This material will have to be part of the book after next, but my initial efforts to sketch out the field suggest that it is a significant historical phenomenon that has received relatively little scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup> The interest and potential importance of the topic is immediately apparent, but at the same time it's no wonder that it has gone so under-researched. It's not the fault of the Dewey decimal system, of course, but that system reflects and reinforces a kind of topic-based national organization of knowledge that makes topics such as this one difficult to come upon, even in such an intensely-studied area as Nazi Germany.

My point here is just to say that there are downsides to categorizing things according to what they are ostensibly about because what they really turn out to be about is often something quite different. Obviously not everything is going to be quite this dramatic, but the general point holds that, for example, European works about the non-European world are, whatever else they might be, part of the corpus of European cultural history. Some knowledge of or relationship to Japan was important enough to appear in such a location, with such official sanction. To be clear, the point here is not to find out whether Corazza and company got Japan right (I'm guessing they didn't), but to think through the consequences of Europeans looking outside Europe for models of modernity – a very specific and not very desirable form of modernity, to be sure. I think here of Austrian

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<sup>2</sup> Dewey: 915.2 B139u (i.e. the Asia section of "Geography and Travel"). Stamp from the Ordensburg-Sonthofen Bibliothek. LoC: Bj5r 936b (i.e. "Ethics" as a sub-heading of Philosophy, Psychology, Religion).

<sup>3</sup> Bill Maltarich. *Samurai And Supermen: National Socialist Views of Japan*. Peter Lang, 2005.

architect Adolf Loos's remark, around the turn of the century, that the Japanese were more German than the Austrians and that the latter needed to learn to catch up.

What seems important to me about all this is the way in which it reverses the direction of the typical questions that frame European/extra-European relations. Not: was Japan modern too? But rather: how did Japan shape Western modernity? My broader methodological point is that Eurocentrism lurks in disciplines and methods as much as in subject matter. Talking about Japan as if it existed in a parallel universe is, I would argue, more Eurocentric than talking about Germany in ways that recognize its relationships with the extra-European world. I would distinguish between Centrism of value and Centrism of fact. A lot of contemporary mainland Chinese scholarship, for example, is fantastically Sinocentric in matters of value. The final question of every investigation must always be: "How will this help we Chinese?" But discussing China as if the rest of the world did not exist would be inconceivable; on the contrary, the question of China's relationship to the rest of the world is something of an obsession.

In my opinion, too much of the emphasis of (Western) multi-culturalism was been on questions of value: about affirming a multiplicity of cultures. But as the Himmler example suggests, saying nice things about other peoples doesn't guarantee any kind of ethical high ground. For me it is not a question of feeling good or feeling bad, but of being accurate. It is not the case that Europe is *becoming* interconnected with the rest of the world, but rather that the way we study Europe might finally be beginning to catch with what has long been a fact, if to a lesser degree.

But: to move to a more literary set of examples, let's consider the issue of translation. Do translations belong with books written in the same language as the original, or do they belong to the literature of the language into which they have been translated? On the one hand, it seems reasonable to look for Constance Garnett's Dostoevsky translations in the Russian literature section, but on the other hand these can very much be thought of as part of the history of the modern

*English* novel. In situations of great historical distance, or in cases in which the translator is a major author in his or her own right, the inappropriateness of everything being pinned to the source language becomes clear. It's not too hard to think of Dryden's Virgil as a work of Restoration literature rather than as "Virgil." But in the case of cultural remoteness, the dividing line is often less clear.

Despite his Bloomsbury associations, Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese go under East Asian literature. Ezra Pound's *Cathay* (1915), by contrast, goes under a variety of different headings: under his name in American literature if it is part of a collection, but sometimes part of East Asian literature, but mostly under various rare book headings because the only stand-alone edition is the first, which is small and now rare.

The category of *Nachdichtungen* further complicates things. The most famous example here would Hans Bethge's *Die chinesische Flöte. Nachdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik* (1907) –taken up by Mahler and dozens of other composers (over 180 in fact, and the book sold over 100,000 copies, if Wikipedia is to be believed). But Bethge's text was itself based on Hans Heilmann's *Die chinesische Lyrik* (1907), which was in turn based on Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de jade* (1867) and the *Poésies de l'époque des Thang* of Le Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denis (1862). To say that a work like Bethge's –a late link in this chain—belongs to Chinese rather than German literature requires a very strong sense of national origins, especially given how widely read the book was in the German-speaking world. While the Dewey decimal system tends to put these works under "Literatures of East and Southeast Asia," the Library of Congress system puts them under German literature.<sup>4</sup> [Another quick example along these lines: the 1910 edition of the *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse* edited by Martin Buber ("translated" largely from English versions) --and his edition of the fantastic tales of Pu Song-ling

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<sup>4</sup> Library of Congress subject headings: "Japanese poetry--Translations into German" and "Japanese poetry--Translations into German--History and criticism--Bibliography."

(*Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten*, 1911) –read, for example, by Kafka (and, I believe, Benjamin). Hardly a major contribution to Sinology, but part of modern German cultural history.]

A different kind of problem emerges with multi-national, even multi-lingual contemporary authors. Yoko Tawada, for examples, writes in and has won major literary prizes for her work in both Japanese and German. So: is she a German or a Japanese writer? The Library of Congress system has her originally German-language books in the PT section, her originally Japanese-language books in the PL section. Translations are grouped according to the original language: so, a French rendering of a Japanese text in the Japanese section. The Dewey decimal system, by contrast, puts all her work in the Japanese section. Pros and cons: the former splits up the body of work into a series of monolingual writers. The latter has the unfortunate effect of removing her work from German literature entirely. [Samuel Beckett, by contrast, goes under French in both systems].

In sum, I've talked about two different structures of cross-cultural relation: subject matter and observer; and 2) national language or literary tradition of origin and translation/adaptation. In both cases, questioning the primacy of the subject matter or source should open up new ways of thinking about their importance to the knower or translator. These kinds of examples could be multiplied, for example in terms of disciplinary divisions.

My point is not at all to quibble about where any particular book has gone or should go. I don't mean to suggest that the current way of doing things is bad. Even though I think that it is unfortunate, for example, that translations are distanced from the body of the literature in which they (that is, the translations) are produced, no doubt it would do more harm than good if, for example, all the Japanese literature translated into English were to be scattered around the English literature shelves, organized by translator.

Impractical suggestions: 1) physically reorganizing things; 2) buying lots more books, specifically in the areas I'm interested in.

So, I thought I would end by suggesting some possible models for aiding this kind of work. One possibility is simply more tags, some kind of supplemental markers that go beyond the LoC system and provide connective tissue for researchers. These might be tags that could be turned on and off so as not to clutter up business as usual. A more specific version of this might be something like a virtual shelf on which one might find gathered in one place items that are separated in the physical library. A starting point for such a project might be simply a good existing bibliography, possibly hyperlinked. If such projects were shared among libraries, I don't think it would take too long before some pretty robustly interdisciplinary groupings were developed.

At the risk of scandalizing the professionals, I have to say that I often find Amazon searches extremely helpful. Of course, they generally have a very limited historical memory, don't roam too far beyond English, and are largely restrained to things currently in print. But such models as "frequently bought together" and "people who bought X also bought Y," applied to a richer archive and driven by the histories of a different set of users, seem to me to have a lot of potential. Search results that are dynamic and user-generated rather than based on traditional scholarly categories would have their own downsides, of course, but as a supplement to the existing methods this kind of *social networking for books* could be an enormous benefit to interdisciplinary research in particular. Again, a single library might not have enough of an archive or enough user histories, but multiple ones might coordinate.

Similarly, such Amazon features as "Listmania!" and "So you'd like to . . ." provide some surprisingly helpful specialty lists. Sometimes annotated (not always very well), these informal bibliographies generally compose readings lists that would be fairly obvious to any specialist, but if the principle were applied to more specialized fields, and shared, it would be helpful to researchers. And even the more mundane lists would be of value to students. Instead of getting a price and clicking to buy, you could get a call number and click to reserve or ILL.

I have the luxury relative ignorance about the institutional and technical hurdles to these ideas and no doubt better ones. So, this is just a –storm seems a little grandiose, so a bit of a “brain shower.” No doubt many of these things are already in the works.

Most of the things I would like to see changed about the way European literature gets studied have more to do with disciplinary practices and norms than with where the books get put on the shelves or how they get tagged. But as I hope my examples have suggested, a little confusion about who is wagging whom in the world of disciplinary dogs is always possible and often good.