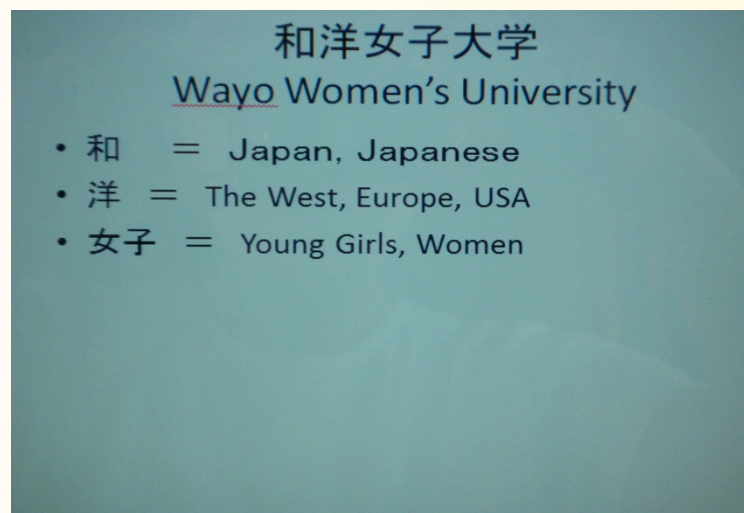


An Approach to Teaching Caribbean Poetry in Japan

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**School of Humanities:
Department of English Language and Literature
(Major in English Literature)**



The department of English Language and Literature to which I belong to has two sub-departments. Through reading, analyzing, and comparing literature, the English Literature program aims to help students develop a deep appreciation for humanity and an understanding of various cultural and social viewpoints and ways of thinking that are vital to participate in a globalized world.

**School of Humanities
Department of English Language and Literature
Major in English Communication**



The other sub-department is English Communication: The English Communication department offers students a tutorial-style course of concentrated study to prepare them to use the English language in their careers. Students study the culture and history of various English speaking countries and improve their communication skills.

Department of Japanese Literature and Culture Specialization of Calligraphy



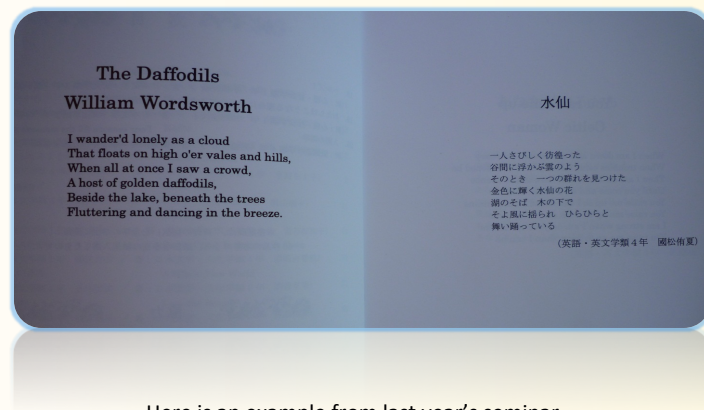
In my presentation, you will notice that the Department of Japanese Literature and Culture has an important role. Students in Japanese Literature, especially those who major in Calligraphy, gain a deep understanding of Japanese literary expression and historical background that prepares them to write persuasively and with richly diverse sensitivity.

Poetry Reading Seminar: The Site of Self-Expression

1. English major students select English Poetry.
2. They translate the poem into Japanese.
3. English major students read their English version in front of other students and professors.
4. Calligraphy students copy a phrase of the Japanese translation in calligraphy and exhibit them in public for a while.

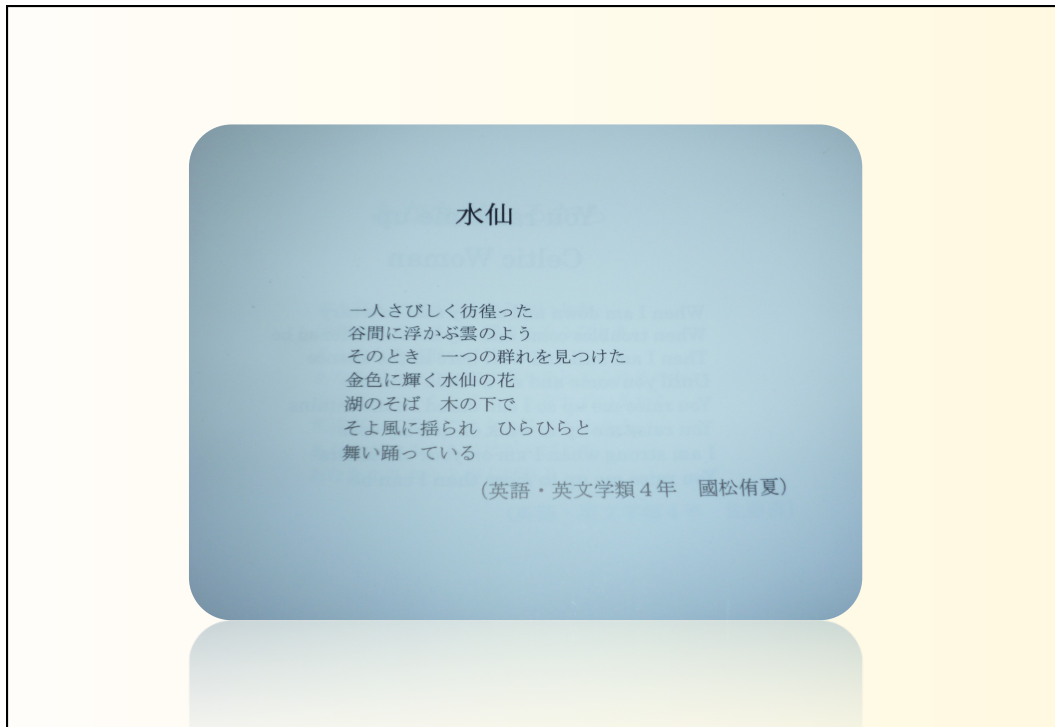
Every year, the Department of English runs a “Reading Poetry Seminar” in collaboration with the Department of Japanese Literature and Culture. Here, English-major students are expected to select their favourite poem from English poetry and to read out in front of professors, students or general audience; some of them receive an award according to their performances. Then students who major in Japanese calligraphy select their favourite poem and copy them in calligraphy. The seminar provides an opportunity for the participants, the audience and viewers to recognize the power of English poetry, especially of its sounds and words, and visual stillness of Japanese calligraphy. Thus, the seminar is the site of self-expression for students from the departments above.

“The Daffodils” William Wordsworth

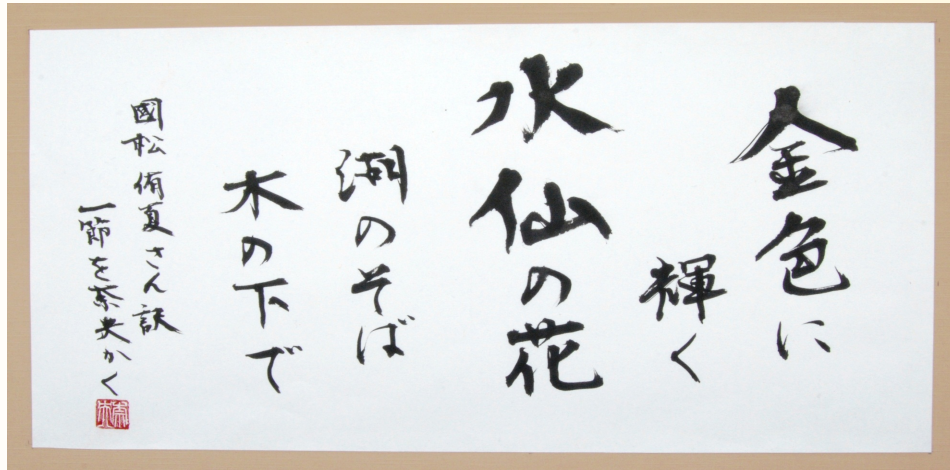


“The Daffodils” William Wordsworth

I wander'd lonely as a **cloud**
That floats on high o'er vales and **hills**,
When all at once I saw a **crowd**,
A host of golden **daffodils**,
Beside the lake, beneath the **trees**
Fluttering and dancing in the **breeze**.

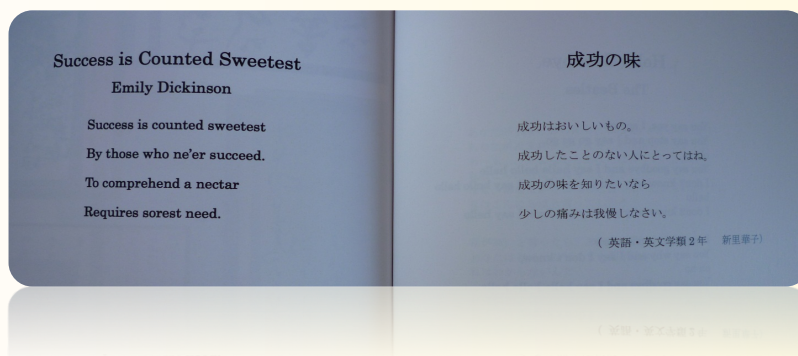


- In the Japanese translation, the student tries to make up a rhyme: 「彷徨った」と「見つけた」。
- In Japanese, the pronunciation “ta” means the past tense. So, it is relatively easy to make a rhyme with past-tense verbs.
- In contrast, it is very difficult to make up any rhyme with nouns: here, we do not have proper synonyms in Japanese.
- Neither “cloud” and “crowd” nor “trees” and “breeze” rhyme in the Japanese translation here.



Despite the difficult issue of making up a rhyme in the Japanese translation seen above, the Japanese calligraphy seems excellent. We can capture the image of a host of golden daffodils beside the lake, under a tree.

“Success is Counted Sweetest” Emily Dickinson



“Success is Counted Sweetest” Emily Dickinson

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er **succeed**.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest **need**.

成功の味

成功はおいしいもの。

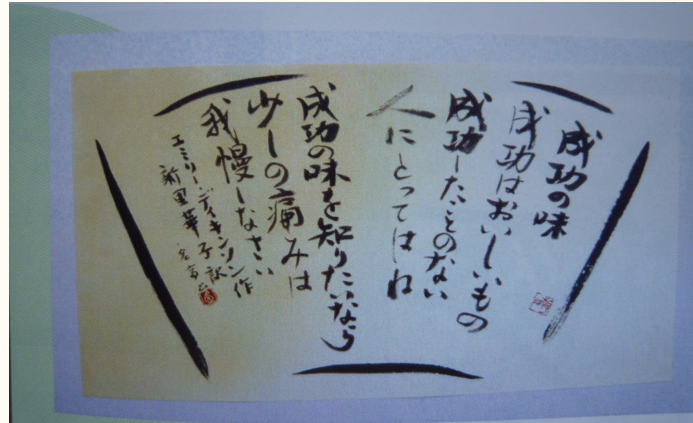
成功したことのない人にとってはね。

成功の味を知りたいなら

少しの痛みは我慢しなさい。

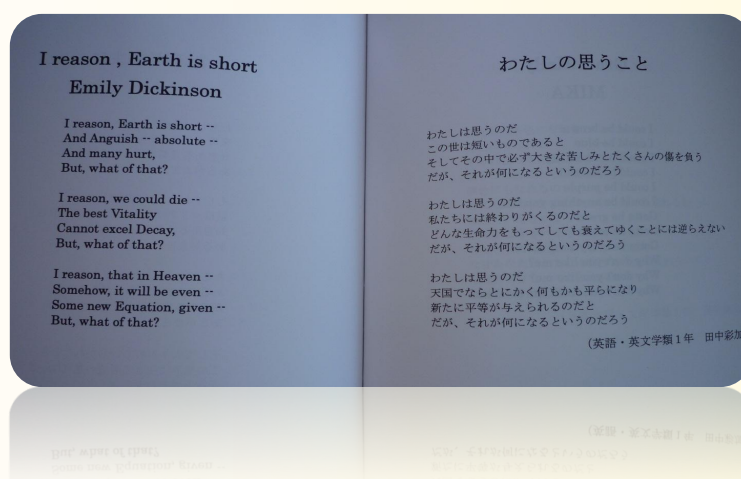
(英語・英文学類 2 年 新里華子)

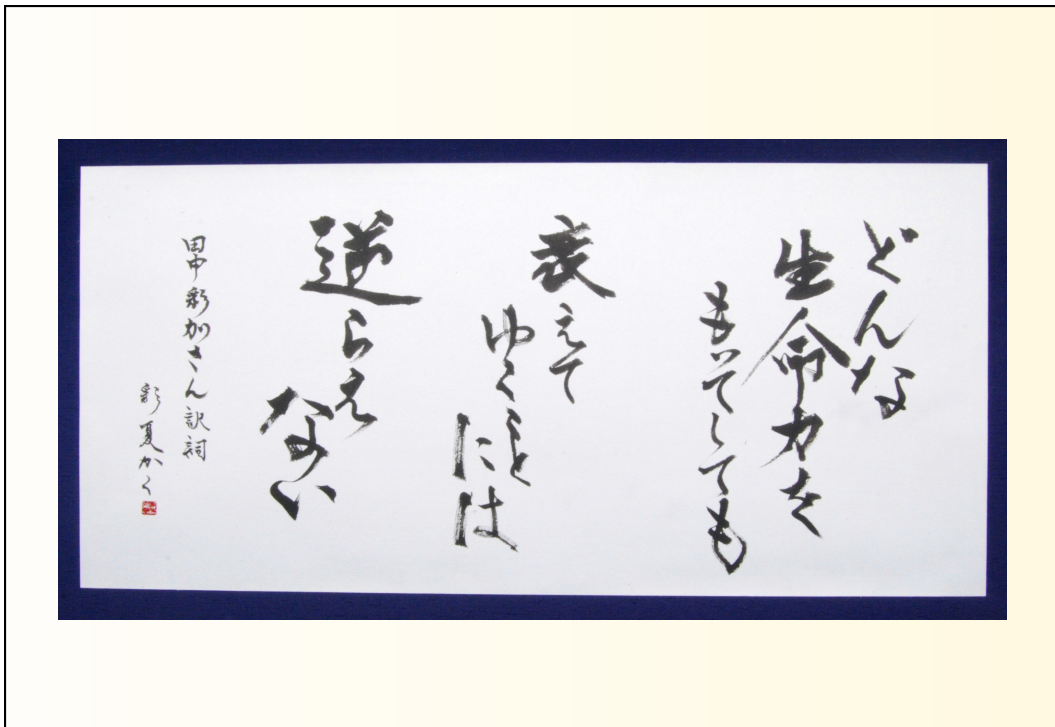
Here, the student does not make up a rhyme, but she could do if she had added one Japanese word “ne”「ね」 at the end of her translation. The second line starts:「とってはね。」 and if we put “ne” at the very last part of the last line:「我慢しなさいね。」 we would create a rhyme. The Japanese word “ne”「ね」 is an interjection. We can add interjections relatively easily.



Here is the calligraphy. Please notice the shape of this: it looks like a fan. A fan is a kind of lucky charm. It shows a human's development from a small child to a grown up adult. A fan is often used as decoration in a traditional Japanese wedding ceremony. In this example of calligraphy, the student attempts to express that if you want to succeed in your life, you need to endeavor now for a while. This calligraphy is an example in which the content of the English poetry and the style of the Japanese calligraphy achieve harmony.

"I reason, Earth is short" Emily Dickinson





Teaching Caribbean Poetry in my Class: in the Case of Una Marson

- Her background
- Characteristics of her poetry
 1. appropriation of traditional English poetry
 2. position of a black feminist in the metropolis
- How to translate English poems into Japanese without spoiling of such characteristics as colloquialism or rhythm?

In order for the poetry seminar to succeed, professors help students to select a piece by introducing a variety of poems in their classes. Since professors are members of the Department of English Literature, most of their students choose such canonical poets from English and American Literature as Wordsworth, Keats, W. H. Auden or Emily Dickinson.

This year, however, in my class on "Gender and Cultural Studies," I have tried introducing the work of Una Marson to my students. Marson was a Jamaican woman poet, as well as an activist for racial and sexual equality. She is now regarded as the first black woman employed by the BBC; she is especially recognised as the "originating force behind the now famous BBC Radio programme, *Caribbean Voices*, that launched the career of so many of the Caribbean's 'great' male literary figures" (Alison Donnell, "Introduction" to *Una Marson: Selected Poems*, Peepal Tree Press, 2011, pp.11).

In my class, I have paid especial attention to the following three points:

1. Her background: students are not familiar with Una Marson; they need basic information about her.
2. Characteristics of her poetry:
 - (1) Appropriation of traditional English poetry seen in "To Wed or not to Wed," "In vain," or "If."
 - (2) position of a black feminist in the metropolis seen in "Nigger," "Little Brown Girl" or "Quashie Comes to London."
3. The issue of translation: How to translate English poems into Japanese without spoiling characteristics such as the spoken word, colloquialism or rhythm?

1. Her background

From "Jamaica" in *Tropic Reveries* (1930)

Thou Fairest Island of the Western Sea,
What tribute has the Muse to pay to thee?
Oh, that some tender lay she could inspire
That we might sing thy praises and ne'er tire.
西の海で一番美しい島よ、
詩の女神はお前に何を与えたのだろうか？
ああそれは、女神にできる最高のこと、
私たちが飽くことなくお前のすばらしさをたたえ続
けること。

This early poetry of Marson needs to be explained in full context to the students in my class. First of all, I need to show my students the location of Jamaica. Sometimes I even have to explain that Jamaica was a former British colony. I then point out the poet's emphasis on the Edenic landscape of this island. The Jamaican scenery is placed in opposition to an English scene as we will discuss later. In my Japanese translation, I try to keep the prelapsarian atmosphere intact.

2.(1) appropriation of traditional English Poetry

From "To Wed or Not to Wed" in
Tropic Reveries (1930)

To wed, or not to wed: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The fret and loneliness of spinsterhood
Or to take arms against the single state
And by marrying end it?

結婚するかしないか、それが問題だ。

独身の焦燥感や孤独に耐えるのと、それとも結婚して独身に終わりを告げるのと、一体どちらが高尚なことなのだろう？

This poem shows both elements of mimicry or pastiche, and of orthodox poetic forms. Like in "In Vain", where we observe many echoes of Elizabethan and courtly love poetry, we also notice differences from them. Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be: that is the question" is subverted by this Jamaican woman poet. By placing the poem within the Jamaican context, the poem becomes what Alison Donnell calls "an unwarranted poem" (Donnell, *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, 189) that occasions a fighting back to the Eurocentric sonnet tradition. Marson thereby playfully shifts the poetic axis from a discussion of "man's condition to an exploration of woman's" (Donnell 190). At Wayo, which is a women's university, "to wed or not to wed" is a serious question to the students. Students seemed to enjoy this poetry.

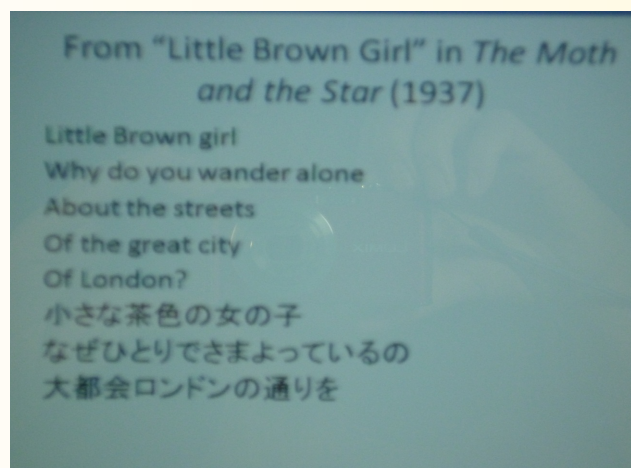
Dejection Caused by Racism

From "Nigger" in *The Keys*

They called me "Nigger"
Those little white urchins.
They laughed and shouted
As I passed along the street,
They flung at me:
"Nigger! Nigger! Nigger!"
あの子たちはわたしのことを「黒んぼ」と呼んだ
小さな白人の少年たちは。
あの子たちは笑って叫んだ I
わたしが通りを通ったとき
そしてわたしに飛びかかってきた
「この黒んぼ、黒んぼ、黒んぼが」

The despair and anger Marson felt as a black Caribbean in the metropolis led her to choose several strong words in the poem. The history of colonialism caused her to recognize the reality of discrimination in England. She expresses the themes of non-belonging to and dis-identification with the metropolis and its people. My translation contains a politically incorrect word, “nigger”, in Japanese 「黒んぼ」, which we hardly say nowadays.

Impossibility of Communication?



This poetry consists of two voices; that of the little brown girl and a white English subject, and this part is from the latter. As we read this poem, we will find that the persistent second-person questioning of the white English person produces a kind of intimidating atmosphere. In spite of rapid-fire questions, the white English person does not expect answers from the little brown girl. And the response from the brown girl is as good as a monologue rather than an answer to the English person. The poetry seems to present the impossibility of the communication of the two.

The Issue of Translation

This poem shifts the poetic focus from the colonial version of black people's experience seen in "Little Brown Girl" to that of the black girl narrator Quashie's Jamaican perspective on English society. The most important task and challenge for a Japanese student is how one can preserve this black girl's voice during the translation of her spoken word into Japanese. I tried not to lose the vividness of the girl's voice, rhythms, or liveliness of the poem. This is my sample translation.

The Issue of Translation, continued

From "Quashie Comes to London" in
The Moth and the Star (1937)

I gwin tell you 'bout de English
And I aint gwine tell no lie,
'Cause I come quite here to Englan'
Fe see wid me own eye.

これからイギリス人のことを話したげる
嘘はいわないよ。

だってあたしはここイングランドを
あたし自身の目でよく見るためにやってきたんだ
から。