

The Reception of Max Weber's Cubist Poems (1914) in Taishō Japan

Pierantonio Zanotti, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

In this paper,¹ I analyse the Japanese reception of *Cubist Poems*, a collection of experimental poetry published in 1914 by the American painter Max Weber (1881–1961).² First, I provide information on this little-known collection and its author, before offering a general description of the field of cultural production in 1910s and 1920s Tokyo, a period that roughly corresponds to the reign of Emperor Taishō (1912–1926). I employ a number of theoretical tools drawn from the works of Pierre Bourdieu. Part 2 of the paper is structured as a historical survey of the presentation of *Cubist Poems* in 1914–1925 Japan. In the Japanese cultural world, Weber's collection attracted an interest that was unparalleled in any other country, perhaps even in the English-speaking world. Finally, I offer interpretations of the causes and characteristics of this reception.

1. *Cubist Poems*

A brief account of the life of Max Weber was provided by his friend, American photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), in his short foreword to *Cubist Poems*:

Max Weber is an American of Russian descent. He received his first art training at the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, New York, became a teacher of art for several years, and on his savings went to Paris to study. Here he came in touch with Matisse, and became one of his first pupils. El Greco, Cezanne [sic], Henri Rousseau, and Picasso, are the painters with whose work he is most in sympathy; but best of all he likes to study the art of primitive peoples, the sculptures of Egypt and Assyria, the great simple things that have come down to us in stone from the past.

Recently, within the last year or so, he has written poetry, and this is his first published collection.³

1 I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and comments.

2 Max Weber, *Cubist Poems* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1914).

3 Alvin Langdon Coburn, "Foreword," in *Cubist Poems*, 7.

Weber was born in 1881 into a Jewish family in Białystok, a Polish city that was then a part of the Russian Empire. He immigrated to the United States in 1891.⁴ The Parisian sojourn noted by Coburn took place between 1905 and 1908. Back in the United States, Weber became one of the pioneers of American avant-garde painting, a role for which he is widely recognized today. In the first years after his return to New York, he established his reputation as “an important—if controversial—artist,” and by 1912, he was “interchangeably referred to as a cubist, a futurist, and a post-impressionist” by American critics.⁵ According to Percy North, by 1915, Weber “had developed a distinctly personal form of cubism informed by a dynamism and spirituality that reflected a particularly American consciousness.”⁶ While Weber’s position in the canon of modern American painting is well-established today, his poetic oeuvre appears to have received very little attention.

With the help of Coburn, Weber’s debut collection, *Cubist Poems*, was published in 1914 in London by Elkin Mathews—who also published W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and Noguchi Yonejirō (1875–1947).⁷ Not all of the thirty-eight poems collected in this book are “cubist,” in the sense that they implement some kind of “ekphrasis” of cubist painting “at the level of methodology.”⁸ In fact, traditional syntax and constructions are prevalent in many of them. Some of the themes,

4 Biographical sources on Weber include Alfred Werner, *Max Weber* (New York: Abrams, 1975) and the catalogue of the exhibition *Max Weber: The Cubist Decade 1910–1920* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1991). A sourcebook is available in R. Scott Harnsberger, *Four Artists of the Stieglitz Circle: A Sourcebook on Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Max Weber* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 223–276. For Weber’s involvement with the American avant-garde, see John R. Lane, “The Sources of Max Weber’s Cubism,” *Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 231–236; Dominic Ricciotti, “The Revolution in Urban Transport: Max Weber and Italian Futurism,” *American Art Journal* 16, no. 1 (1984): 47–64; Margaret Burke, “Futurism in America 1910–1917” (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1986), 149–171; and Lisa Panzera, “Italian Futurism and Avant-Garde Painting in the United States,” in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2000), 235–238.

5 Percy North, “Max Weber: The Cubist Decade,” in *Max Weber: The Cubist Decade 1910–1920* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1991), 25.

6 *Ibid.*, 21.

7 Noguchi, who is now considered a significant biliterate (English/Japanese) poet, occupied at that time a somewhat eccentric position with respect to the Japanese world of letters. He briefly discussed Max Weber’s works and poetry in “Rondon de mita shinpa no kaiga” [Paintings of the new schools I have seen in London], an article in the March 1915 issue of the Tokyo literary journal *Mita bungaku* [Mita literature]. Like Weber, Noguchi was also acquainted with Coburn. For details of Noguchi’s second English sojourn (1913–1914), see Omuka Toshiharu, “Futurism in Japan, 1909–1920,” in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2000), 257.

8 Leonard Diepeveen, “The Visual Arts,” in *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, ed. David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald (Oxford: Wiley & Sons, 2014), 35. It must be noted that John R. Lane reports that “in his *Memoirs* Weber disclaims any responsibility for the title of *Cubist Poems*” (Lane, “Sources of Max Weber’s Cubism,” 236n14).

such as the representation of speed or the exaltation of life force and energy, may be considered possessing an avant-garde flavour, and the poems' diction often draws on the domains of science and technology, in a way similar to Futurist poetry. However, many of the poems are permeated by an optimistic and at times exotic spiritualism. Some present African, Pre-Columbian, and Orientalist motifs and other allusions to what Coburn calls "the art of primitive peoples."

Only a minority of poems, like the two printed below, are characterized by techniques that may somehow be associated with cubism, such as asyndetic accumulation (omitting the usual conjunctions in a series of words); iteration, often with anadiplosis (repetition of the last word of the preceding clause); or verbal ellipsis (omitting verbs or verb phrases).

HAZE

Haze, haze, haze,
 Warmed, heated, dried, burnt
 Blurred by wind-mist seething the air,
 Air hanging air wet over the hills,
 Air moist, damp, pressing air,
 Gray molten hills and valleys
 Contours, masses, finesses, gone,
 Haze, haze, haze.⁹

WEATHER REPORT

Swaying breezes
 Earlier hours, hazed, pressed, sweated,
 Breezes cooling the air,
 Nature's ambition waiting,
 Breezes, breezes, cooler,
 Breezes, wind mist,
 Contours distinct,
 Cooler, delightful,
 Sun struggling and appearing,
 Growing pale, faint, fainter,
 Life easier delightful.¹⁰

9 Weber, *Cubist Poems*, 27, lines 1–8.

10 *Ibid.*, 32.

These techniques may have something in common with Gertrude Stein's experiments in prose, such as those presented in *Tender Buttons* (1914),¹¹ and with futurist "words-in-freedom."

In this respect, the single most famous piece in the collection is probably "The Eye Moment," a poem which, according to Susan Krane, reveals Weber's tendency to "anthropomorphiz[e] the city in his writings: windows become eyes, chimneys the nostrils of the metropolis."¹² As the most radical poem in the collection, it may have been intentionally placed at the book's opening.

THE EYE MOMENT

Cubes, cubes, cubes, cubes,
 High, low, and high, and higher, higher,
 Far, far out, out, out, far,
 Planes, planes, planes,
 Colours, lights, signs, whistles, bells, signals, colours,
 Planes, planes, planes,
 Eyes, eyes, window eyes, eyes, eyes,
 Nostrils, nostrils, chimney nostrils,
 Breathing, burning, puffing,
 Thrilling, puffing, breathing, puffing,
 Millions of things upon things,
 Billions of things upon things
 This for the eye, the eye of being,
 At the edge of the Hudson,
 Flowing timeless, endless,
 On, on, on, on...¹³

Elaborating on the title of this collection by a "more impressive painter than poet"¹⁴ and on this "pretty terrible poem," Leonard Diepeveen writes:

Through its title, *Cubist Poems* announces itself not just as poetry but as a project, one that conducted itself theoretically, analogically:

11 E.g., "Pot, tea-pot, Chinese tea-pot, / Chinese, red sienna clay tea-pot, / I love thee so!" ("The Chinese Tea-Pot," in *ibid.*, 33, lines 1–3).

12 Susan Krane, "Introduction," in *Max Weber: The Cubist Decade*, 16.

13 Weber, *Cubist Poems*, 11.

14 Diepeveen, "The Visual Arts," 34.

words understood through the medium of paint. *Cubist Poems'* ekphrasis has a peculiarly modernist focus. Not directed at a specific artwork, this is ekphrasis at the level of methodology, directed toward a contemporary genre or movement. "Cubism," the book announces, isn't just for painters. And with that assertion comes the implication that "The Eye Moment" recreates not just a depicted art form, but its methodology, and in so doing points to painting and poetry as a shared project, with a shared sense of the new. The poem also implies a common stance toward subject matter, an attempt to recreate the visual immediacy of urban life, as many early Cubist painters were doing. The repetitions, the listing, the present progressive verbs, the ending ellipsis, the fact that the poem is not a sentence—these are all ways of removing hierarchies, of creating immediacy and representing the visual excess of the city. In so doing, the poem both dissolves and exalts the observer and ego.¹⁵

However, the experimental flair of "The Eye Moment" is not so apparent in the rest of the collection. In general, we can subscribe to Percy North's judgment: "His *Cubist Poems* of 1914 reflect Weber's painterly interests, although the language of the poems is archaic and the forms are not particularly progressive. Gertrude Stein's cubist writings were more adventurous, if less readable, than Weber's dreamy, evocatively personal poems."¹⁶ This evaluation was echoed by Susan Krane, who describes the language as "surprisingly archaic."¹⁷

Weber's debut effort was followed by a second collection, *Primitives: Poems and Woodcuts*, which was published in New York in 1926. However, it seems that this work did not attract the kind of interest in Japan that its predecessor had, and the same seems to have happened to Weber's *Essays on Art* (1916).

2. Translation and discussion of *Cubist Poems* in Japan (1914–1925)

Articles and translations of selected pieces from *Cubist Poems* appeared in Tokyo literary and art magazines as early as 1914–1915, shortly after the publication of the original collection in London.¹⁸ In 1914 and 1915, Nakada Katsunosuke (1886–1945), Kawaji Ryūkō (1888–1959), Shirotori

15 Ibid., 35.

16 North, "The Cubist Decade," 29.

17 Krane, "Introduction," 16.

18 A general outline of the reception of *Cubist Poems* in Japan can be found in the timeline that appears as an appendix in this paper.

Seigo (1890–1973), and an anonymous contributor to the art magazine *Kensei bijutsu* (Detailed studies of fine art) known as “Keitarō” published a dozen translated poems in total. The English literature scholar and literary theorist Matsuura Hajime (1881–1966) discussed *Cubist Poems* in his 1915 book *Bungaku no honshitsu* (The essence of literature; 1915), and provided influential translations of three poems: “The Eye Moment,” “Buddhas,” and “Silence.”¹⁹

Weber’s poems continued to be unsystematically translated in the later years of the 1910s by Sangū Makoto (1890–1967)²⁰ and in the early 1920s by Urase Haku’u (1880–1946)²¹, so that by 1923 more than half of the collection was already available in Japanese, though not in collected form.

Finally, in a span of less than two years, not one but two complete translations were published. The first was by Nogawa Takashi (1901–1944), published as a special issue (March 1923) of the Tokyo art and literary review *Epokku* (Epoch). The second was by Shinozaki Hatsutarō (dates unknown), published in Osaka in August 1924 as a volume entitled *Zen’yaku Rittaiha no shi* (Cubist poems: Complete translation).²²

The Japanese cultural field’s interest in Weber’s collection is particularly striking.²³ Why did a collection so neglected elsewhere enjoy such an active reception in Japan? In addressing this question, I provide a description of some

19 Matsuura Hajime, *Bungaku no honshitsu* (Tōkyō: Dai Nihon Tosho Kabushiki Kaisha, 1915).

20 I follow Sangū’s Virtual International Authority File (VIAF). A number of sources, including Kōdansha’s *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* [Great dictionary of modern Japanese literature], report 1892 as Sangū’s year of birth.

21 See Appendix.

22 Shinozaki Hatsutarō, *Zen’yaku Rittaiha no shi* [Cubist poems: Complete translation] (Ōsaka: Itansha, 1924). In the frontispiece of the book, the *furigana* reading “kyūpizumu” is placed above “rittaiha.”

23 On the other hand, the evidence suggests that Weber’s painterly production remained ignored in Japan. Apart from the information reported in Coburn’s introduction to *Cubist Poems* (duly translated or reprised by a number of Japanese commentators), and Noguchi Yonejirō’s sparse notes on the paintings he saw at Coburn’s home in London, I have no knowledge of any other discussions of Weber’s painting in Japan. This is perhaps due to the fact that while Weber’s poetry offered possible answers to technical questions pertaining to avant-garde poetry, the reception of his visual works reproduced the dominant Eurocentric discourse on the new art, in which Weber occupied a marginal, if not negligible, position. It may also be that the Japanese commentators simply lacked access to the reproductions of Weber’s works that would have been necessary to express their opinions. The only work known to have been reproduced in Japan in those years seems to be the stylized drawing of a tree on the cover of the original *Cubist Poems*. A reproduction of this work accompanied Nogawa Takashi’s translation.

of the dynamics at work in the Japanese cultural field, followed by an account of the discourses on cubism and the characteristics of the agents involved in the introduction of Weber's poems to Japan.

2.1 The field of cultural production in Tokyo (1910s–1920s)

To describe the Japanese context into which *Cubist Poems* was introduced, I use a combination of established descriptive categories in Japanese cultural historiography and a number of theoretical tools that draw on Pierre Bourdieu's research on cultural production.

In self-representations articulated by individuals and groups of the Tokyo cultural scenes, as well as in the Japanese academic tradition of cultural historiography,²⁴ cultural and artistic activities are usually conceived of as being divided into different domains that are centred on a specific art or discipline. Among the best-established categories are the *bundan* (variously translated as the “field/scene/world of letters,” either seen in their totality or, in a narrow sense, as focused on narrative prose, which was the dominant genre in modern Japanese literary discourse) and the *gadan* (literally, the “field/scene/world of painting,” which was the most visible and widely debated category of the pictorial arts, but often included all visual arts).

These fields can be further divided into subfields. In this paper, I take into account two such subfields: the *shidan*, a part of the world of letters corresponding to the field of *shi* (a term that includes all modern poetry in non-traditional forms, often in free verse), and part of the *gadan* that specialized in the broad genre of “western-style painting” (*yōga*); this included paintings in forms and techniques inspired by European models, which were taxonomically distinct from “Japanese-style painting” (*nihonga*).

William Gardner succinctly summarized these fields:

The hierarchical system of prose writers referred to as [in its narrow sense] the *bundan* (which might be translated as the “literary world,” “literary circles,” or the “literary establishment”) was an imagined community governed by the editors and senior writers of major literary journals. The institutions collectively referred to as the *bundan*, almost exclusively based in Tokyo, were another aspect of the metropole's domination of modern Japanese literature...

²⁴ For instance, this tradition is well represented by the monumental 24-volume *Nihon bundan shi* [History of the Japanese literary world; 1953–1978], edited by Itō Sei and Senuma Shigeki.

The Japanese poetry world, though it operated on a smaller scale, was also governed by centralizing institutions perceived as the *shidan* (the *haidan*, or haiku world, and *kadan*, or tanka world, were for the most part separate entities)...

In a parallel fashion, the Japanese art world was referred to as the *gadan* and, by the 1920s, had its own journals... and its own regulating institutions, such as the semi-governmental Imperial Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition (Teikoku Bijutsuin Tenrankai, or Teiten) and the independent Nikakai's Nikaten exhibition.²⁵

Such distinctions served as tools for defining one's own activities and produced effects of collective identification with an imagined community that shared a "tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game" (*illusio*)²⁶ that were implied in the socialized practice of a certain art. At the same time, they reflected empirical networks of relations, which were more or less formal, institutional, and hierarchical, between cultural producers, critics, magazine editors, cultural journalists, publishing houses, cultural institutions, and so forth, each of whom was involved (according to its position in the field) in the administration of the various forms of capital—cultural, social, economic, symbolic—that were connected to the production of specific genres like novels, *shi*, poetry in traditional forms (*tanka* and haiku), western-style painting, etc.

The general, non-connotative meaning of *bundan* and *gadan* as the whole of the "world of letters/art" is intended in categorizations—disseminated in contemporary cultural journalism as well as in later literary historiography—such as *chūō bundan* ("central *bundan*," or Tokyo's literary scene), a label generally opposed to *chihō bundan* ("provincial/regional *bundan*," or the local literary scenes of less important centres), and in expressions such as *Doitsu bundan* ("German literary world"), *Furansu gadan* ("French art world"), etc., which were used to designate the broad national literary or artistic fields of other countries.

In addition to this general meaning, in which concepts such as *bundan* and *gadan* tended to coincide with the entire field of the agents involved in a certain creative activity, those terms could also be understood in a more polemical sense—especially by the new entrants into such fields and those who occupied

25 William O. Gardner, *Advertising Tower: Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 20–21.

26 Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 117.

marginal positions in them—as the “entrenched, exclusive, and hierarchical”²⁷ establishments for each art form; they represented, in other words, the status quo of the power relations within each specific scene. Accordingly, they could become the target of the polemical discourses of those who occupied “avant-garde” positions in the field.

In this paper, I attempt to juxtapose the concept of *dan* with that of “fields” as theorized by Pierre Bourdieu:²⁸ “relatively autonomous social microcosms, i.e., spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are *specific and irreducible* to those that regulate other fields.”²⁹ As analytical pertinentizations of social activities, Bourdieu’s fields are characterized by higher or lower levels of “autonomy” and by the existence of internal “logics” that are not necessarily acknowledged outside of them (in fact, they may even lose any validity outside those fields). Similarly, a given *dan* is delimited by the effects of its internal logic. For instance, the limits of the *shidan* exist where the material and symbolic profits connected to the production, distribution, and circulation of *shi* cease to be meaningful or relevant.

As noted by Gennifer Weisenfeld, however, the categories of *bundan* and *gadan* “were applied to amorphous, highly porous communities that were not nearly as monolithic as their critics implied.”³⁰ Though perceived as distinct cultural spaces, they in fact shared a number of what Bourdieu calls “principles of vision and division” of artistic practice, and were also characterized by mutual exchange and overlapping. Drawing on this “highly porous” reality, I demonstrate that the reception of a cultural object like Weber’s *Cubist Poems*—a collection of poetry allegedly connected to one of the most discussed trends in the fine arts—did involve the *gadan*, even though it largely took place within the *shidan*, and activated exchanges between the two fields. As the argument below makes clear, since they were a collection of modern poetry (*shi*), Weber’s poems primarily provoked the interest of those involved in the *shidan*. At the same time, the category of “cubism” that was

27 Gennifer S. Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905–1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

28 Attempts to use Bourdieu’s field theory in the study of cultural production in twentieth-century Japan include Joseph Murphy, “Economies of Culture: The Taishō Bundan Dallies with the Movies,” *Japan Forum* 11, no. 1 (1999): 5–22, and Morishita Masaaki, *The Empty Museum: Western Cultures and the Artistic Field in Modern Japan* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). While not introducing the specific issue of subfields, Murphy provides an accurate reconstruction of some of the general dynamics within the Taishō cultural field. Morishita approaches his subject with a combination of field theory and transculturation theory (21–29).

29 Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation*, 97; italics in the original.

30 Weisenfeld, *Mavo*, 2.

attached to them made them an object of interest for agents who were also active in the *gadan*, or who were able to appropriate and mobilize the *gadan*'s specific cultural and symbolic capital. My reconstruction of the reception of *Cubist Poems* will help illuminate the connections between the two fields and the significant role played by individuals, periodicals, and groups who were active in both.

Proceeding further in adopting a Bourdieuan framework, I postulate that, despite the fact that the internal logic in the Japanese cultural field might be described as more “static” and “sectionalized”³¹ than the French cultural field that he analysed in *The Rules of Art*, by the early 1910s there were sectors in the field of cultural production in Tokyo that had already attained a stage in which the “idea of a party of novelty which would come to be called the avant-garde,” and the inherent “logic of permanent revolution”³² were increasingly operative. Signs of the establishment of such logic included the following: the 1914 secession of the most advanced painters from the state-sponsored Imperial Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition (an event that marked the birth of the Nikakai, or Second Division Society of painting); the gradual spread of the works and theories of the so-called “historical avant-gardes”; and the consolidation of a generation of well-educated, urban intellectuals who were not only conversant with the intricacies of the latest European and North American trends, but also progressively inclined to embrace their most radical achievements and make available and occupy avant-garde positions in relation to what they perceived as mainstream Japanese art and literature.

In addition to these similarities with the fields of cultural production in other contemporary capitalist countries, the Japanese field of cultural production was characterized by the implementation of a double logic of legitimization, local and foreign. Japan was perceived by many of its own intellectuals as occupying an increasingly integrated but still marginal position within the international networks of cultural exchanges (this view was empirically supported by an asymmetrical flow of information in which the Japanese cultural press was extremely eager to register, present, or translate the latest developments from Europe's cultural fields, while the converse was not true). Accordingly, a certain amount of symbolic capital could be attached to products perceived as both “western” and “new.” Obviously, this was not always and automatically true, but it is hard to deny that modern urban intellectuals in Tokyo were inclined to accumulate cultural capital connected

31 Morishita, *The Empty Museum*, 69.

32 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 91, 124.

to the latest trends in “western” culture and that this cultural capital, along with the material and symbolic profits related to its appropriation and use, could be employed to propel one’s own trajectory into the field.

Finally, it must be noted that, in the years on which this paper is focused, the different subfields of cultural production in Tokyo were not all at the same level. For many historical and social reasons, some of them were endowed with more symbolic legitimacy and prestige than others. This was certainly true of sectors in the literary field centred on narrative prose. Their importance was such that, as noted above, they were often designated as the *bundan* (“world of letters”) as such. This was likely due to the following factors: the established centrality of the novel (*shōsetsu*) as the modern genre *par excellence*; the focus of critical discourse on narrative genres; the size of the publishing market; and the connections of practitioners with the major university, publishing, and newspaper milieus. These sectors were more relevant than the *shidan* both empirically and in the perception of the agents involved in the field. The relatively marginal position of the practitioners of poetry in modern forms likely explains their interest in new and not yet established literary practices; when compared with authors of narrative prose, who administered a larger amount of consecrated and recognized genres and styles, they tended to study and adopt riskier experimental, non-established positions more frequently, including those represented by the “historical avant-gardes.” The established narratives about the avant-gardes in Japan generally report that such movements dramatically developed after—and, to a certain degree, as a consequence of—the Great Kantō Earthquake and Fire that devastated Tokyo in September 1923 because it opened new spaces for the reconfiguration and further modernization of the city.³³ However, some Japanese poets who proclaimed themselves to be Futurist and Dadaist or who consciously experimented with techniques and tropes deriving from cubism and expressionism had already appeared in the *shidan* before the earthquake struck.³⁴ According to most histories of modern Japanese literature, the same process was significantly slower in prose genres, where the first avant-garde current is canonically considered to be the Shinkankakuha (the Neo-Sensationalist School, active from late 1924 onwards).

If the *shidan* tended to be the most “avant-garde” sector in the literary field, its reputation as cutting-edge paled in comparison to what was happening in

33 On this point, see Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 22–25.

34 A concise presentation of the avant-garde trends of Taishō-era poetry is provided in Hosea Hirata, *The Poetry and Poetics of Nishiwaki Junzaburō: Modernism in Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 131–148.

the *gadan*, where young generations of painters had begun to experiment with radical post-impressionist, futurist, and cubist styles as early as the 1910s. Milestones of Japanese avant-garde painting, such as Yorozu Tetsugorō's (1885–1927) *Akai me no jigazō* (Self-portrait with red eyes; 1912–1913) and *Motarete tatsu hito* (Leaning woman; 1917) and Tōgō Seiji's (1897–1978) *Parasoru saseru onna* (Woman with a parasol; 1916), functioned, in many respects, as pioneering models for the appropriation of avant-garde materials in other local fields of cultural production.

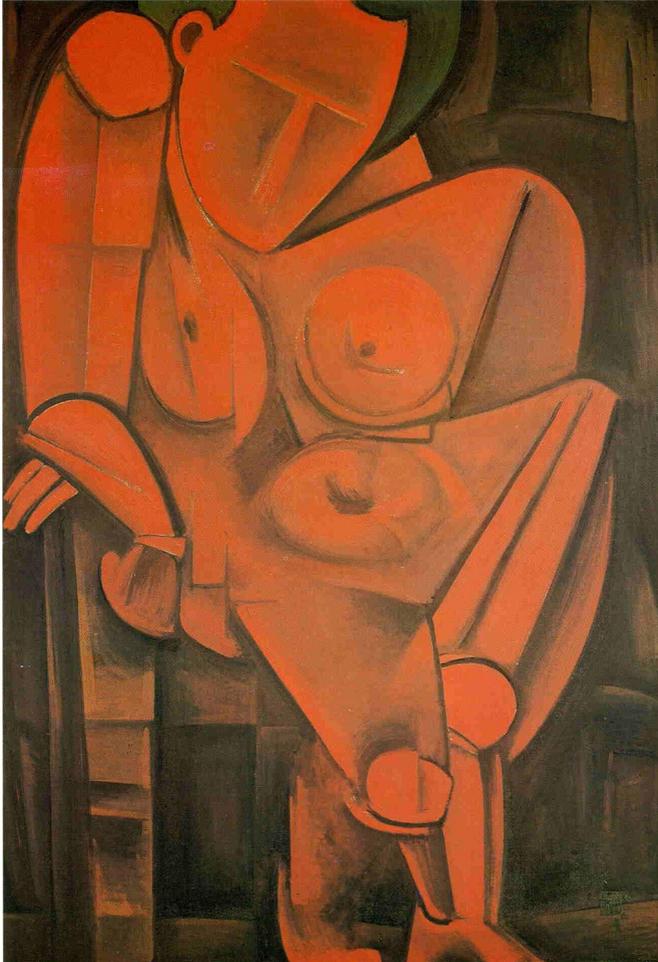


Fig. 1: Yorozu Tetsugoro, *Motarete tatsu hito* (Leaning woman), 1917. Oil painting, 162.5 × 112.5 cm. Tokyo, National Museum of Modern Art.

The primacy of the *gadan* in avant-garde matters, both in terms of theoretical discourse and creative practices, was further established as the Taishō period progressed, when a flow of information related to early twentieth-century avant-gardes reached Japan. The fact that the *gadan* was more advanced than other fields in its localization and elaboration of avant-garde poetics and practices is confirmed by the numbers of articles, translations, and essays dealing with futurist, cubist, or expressionist visual arts that were published during the early Taishō period, which were far more numerous than those dealing with products of the same movements in the domains of prose or poetry.³⁵ Similarly, the activities of groupuscules and associations of visual artists engaged in the production of avant-garde “modern art” (*shinkō bijutsu*) became more and more conspicuous during the Taishō period.

The avant-garde nature of the *gadan* was also perceived by members of the *shidan*, who came to see it as an attribute that connoted risky perspectives and potential gains of symbolic legitimization for those who tried to appropriate it in their own works. For instance, Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886–1942), today considered one of the most important Japanese *shi* poets, lamented in a 1916 article that “in Japan, painting is one step ahead of the other arts. At least, the minds of those who paint are more perceptive than the minds of those who write poetry, and understand new things better.”³⁶ This statement is particularly revealing when one considers that in the same article, Hagiwara undertook a polemical defence of his colleague Yamamura Bochō (1884–1924), the author of *Seisanryōhari* (The holy prism; 1915), a collection of verses that, though widely ignored or panned by his contemporaries, is today considered among the first experiments in Japanese avant-garde poetry, as the following excerpt attests:³⁷

35 This can be seen in two collections: *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho kanpon hen* and *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho shinbun zasshi hen* (hereafter KSGS-SZ) [Collection of works on the new foreign art, books/newspapers and magazines series], ed. Hidaka Shōji and Omuka Toshiharu (Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō, 2003 and 2005), which contain reprinted pre-war books and articles devoted to the presentation of the historical avant-gardes in Japan.

36 Hagiwara Sakutarō, “Nihon ni okeru miraiha no shi to sono kaisetsu” [Futurist poetry in Japan and its explanation], *Kanjō* [Sentiment] 5 (November 1916): 27. Reprinted in KSGS-SZ, vol. 2, 1916–1921, 26.

37 For the circumstances surrounding Hagiwara’s article, see Omuka, “Futurism in Japan,” 253–254. In his 1916 article, Hagiwara argued that Yamamura’s poetry was an example of “Futurism” (*miraiha*). In a commemorative article on Yamamura published in 1926, when a fuller knowledge of cubist poetry had established itself in the *shidan*, he changed his judgement by labelling Yamamura the “father of the Japanese school of cubist poetry (*rittaishihha*).” In these discussions of Yamamura’s work, Hagiwara never mentions Max Weber. Hagiwara Sakutarō, “Yamamura Bochō no koto” [On Yamamura Bochō], *Nihon shijin* [The Japanese poet] 6, no. 2 (February 1926): 18–31.

Rape-flowers everywhere
 Faint fluting with a wheat-blade
 Rape-flowers everywhere.³⁸

2.2 The reception of pictorial cubism in Japan

The reception of pictorial cubism in the Japanese cultural field set the stage for the reception of Weber's collection.³⁹ The flow of information on this subject was not limited to periodicals and authors that specialized in the fine arts, but also involved the literary world (*bundan*). It must be remembered that, dating from the establishment of anti-naturalist groups in Japan in the last years of the Meiji period (1905–1912), a demonstrated capacity among writers to be knowledgeable about the latest trends in modern European art had become an important asset in terms of cultural and symbolic capital. Meditations on art, conducted in the context of a solid knowledge of European aesthetics and art history, can be found in novels such as *Kusamakura* (Grass pillow; 1906) and *Sanshirō* (1908) by the major Meiji writer Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916). Gatherings of aesthetes and “decadent” authors, such as the Pan no Kai (Pan Society, established in 1908 in Tokyo), were inaugurated on the premise that the cooperation and exchange between writers and artists, as exemplified by the café scene in Paris, was an essential prerequisite for authentically modern cultural production. Following that same logic, the literary magazine *Shirakaba* (White birch, 1910–1923) was tremendously influential, especially

38 Yamamura Bochō, “Fūkei” [Landscape; 1914], lines 1–9, as translated in Graeme Wilson and Ikuko Atsumi, “The Poetry of Yamamura Bochō,” *Japan Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (Oct./Dec. 1972): 466. See also Pierantonio Zanotti, “Aborted Modernism: The Semantics of the Avant-garde in Yamamura Bochō's ‘Prismism’,” in *Rethinking Japanese Modernism*, ed. Roy Starrs (Leiden: Global Oriental, 2011), 286–309. It might be that Yamamura, as an active member of the *shidan*, was aware of Weber's collection or at least of the early translations of some of its poems. However, the possible influence of *Cubist Poems* on his *Seisanryōhari* [The holy prism], a collection that some of his peers occasionally labelled “cubist,” has not been fully investigated.

39 Concise overviews of the reception of pictorial cubism in Japan are available in Asano Tōru, “Nihon to kyubisumu [Japan and cubism],” *Kindai bijutsu* [Modern art] 56 (January 1980): 75–88, and Ōtani Shōgo, “Cubism and Japan,” in *Cubism in Asia: Unbounded Dialogues*, ed. Miwa Kenjin et al. (Tōkyō: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and The Japan Foundation, 2005), 254–256.

among urban bourgeois youth, in implanting the idea that the study and connoisseurship of western art was vital for gaining access to a modern sensibility. In its early years, *Shirakaba* featured important articles, translations, and reproductions of the works of Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, and Rodin, who became virtual deities in the Japanese post-impressionist canon. Books such as Richard Muther's *The History of Modern Painting* (revised English edition, 1907) and C. Lewis Hind's *The Post Impressionists* (1911) became popular among urban literary youth (*bungaku seinen*) and a certain amount of competence in contemporary art trends became *de rigueur* for even minor and peripheral authors. Partly stimulated by the example of *Shirakaba*, other major literary journals devoted increasing space to the discussion of the new trends in art, while the editorial boards of a number of coterie magazines and small cultural periodicals established in those years included both visual artists and writers.⁴⁰ Painters and printers trained in the major schools of art increasingly cooperated with literary periodicals as illustrators and contributors, as well as in the creation of book and cover designs, often for poetry collections.⁴¹ The introduction of pictorial cubism was inserted in these interrelations between the *gadan* and the *bundan*.⁴²

Ishii Hakutei (1882–1958), a Pan no Kai and Nikakai member who sojourned in Europe between 1911 and 1912, is generally recognized as the first presenter of pictorial cubism in Japan, with his articles covering the 1911

40 Examples include Tokyo's *Mozaiku* [Mosaic; 1912–1914], *Seihai* [Holy chalice; 1912–1913] *Kamen* [The mask; 1913–1915], and *Takujō* [Tabletop; 1914–1915]. See also Teraguchi Junji and Inoue Yoshiko, “Taishō shoki no zasshi ni okeru hanhyōgen: *Tsukuhae* tanjō no haikai o sagutte [The art of priting in early Taishō journals: Investigating the context behind the birth of *Tsukuhae*],” in *Taishōki bijutsu tenrankai no kenkyū* [Study on the art exhibitions of the Taishō period], ed. Tōkyō Bunkazai Kenkyūjo Bijutsubu (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2005), 689–740.

41 The classic study on this subject is Takumi Hideo, *Kindai Nihon no bijutsu to bungaku: Meiji Taishō Shōwa no sashie* [Fine arts and literature in modern Japan: Illustration in Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa] (Tōkyō: Mokujisha, 1979). A well-studied case is the collaboration between Hagiwara Sakutarō and the artists gathered around the coterie magazine *Tsukuhae* [Moonglow; 1914–1915], Tanaka Kyōkichi (1892–1915) and Onchi Kōshirō (1891–1955), who are today often considered part of the canon of Japanese avant-garde painting. See Tanaka Seikō, *Tsukuhae no gakatachi: Tanaka Kyōkichi, Onchi Kōshirō no seishun* [The *Tsukuhae* painters: The youth of Tanaka Kyōkichi and Onchi Kōshirō] (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1990), 184–198, 227–261.

42 On the early reception of cubism in Japan see Asano Tōru, “Rittaiha miraiha to Taishōki no kaiga [Cubism, Futurism, and Taishō era painting],” *Shōwa 51 nendo Tōkyō Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan nenpō* [Annual report of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tōkyō] (1978): 85–107, Ōtani Shōgo, “Itaria miraiha no shōkai to Nihon kindai yōga: 1912nen zengo no dōkō” [The presentation of Italian Futurism and Japanese modern painting: Trends around 1912], *Geisō: Bulletin of the Study on Philosophy and History of Art in University of Tsukuba* 9 (1992): 105–126, and Ijiri Raku, “Kandinsukū juyō saishoki no kōsatsu: 1912/Taishō gannen koro no uchi to soto” [On the early period of Kandinsky's reception: Inner and outer aspects of around 1912], *Kyōto Sangyō Daigaku ronshū—Jinbunkagaku keiretsu* [Acta humanistica et scientifica, Kyōto Sangyō University] 36 (March 2007): 62–92.

Salon d'Automne and the 1911 and 1912 Salon des Indépendants, published in Tokyo's *Asahi* newspaper and in *Waseda bungaku* (Waseda literature), a major literary journal.⁴³ The poet and art connoisseur Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885–1945), another Pan no Kai member, also disseminated his influential insights on the new school in both art and literary journals.⁴⁴ In December 1913, Kimura Shōhachi (1893–1958), a post-impressionist painter and critic, published a timely translation (itself from an English translation) of Jean Metzinger and Albert Gleizes's *Du "Cubisme"* in *Waseda bungaku* and in the same month unsympathetically discussed cubism in another literary magazine, *Sōzō* (Creation).⁴⁵ Beyond those reproduced in literary and art periodicals, a small contingent of cubist works or reproductions (by Lhote, Metzinger, Laurencin, and Léger) are reported to have been on display in Tokyo in the 1913 *Shirakaba* annual fine art exhibition,⁴⁶ and in the 1914 "Der Sturm mokuhanga tenrankai" (Exhibition of *Der Sturm* woodblock prints), also known as "Miraiha, rittaiha, hyōgenha mokuhanga tenrankai" (Exhibition of futurist, cubist, and expressionist woodblock prints). Both exhibitions reportedly attracted visitors from the ranks of the Tokyo literary world, including *Shirakaba* associates.⁴⁷ The painter, critic, and writer Arishima Ikuma (1882–1974), a *Shirakaba* and Nikakai member, translated a chapter from Umberto Boccioni's *Pittura scultura futuriste: Dinamismo plastico* (1914) as early as 1915 and provided a complete translation of Léonce Rosenberg's *Cubisme et Empirisme* (1921) in 1922.⁴⁸

Cubism consolidated its position as a major topic in discourses on modern art as the Japanese debate on it progressed in the 1920s with translations

43 Ishii Hakutei, "Andepandan no tenrankai to Fan Dongen no shosaku" [The Salon des Indépendants and Van Dongen's works], *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*, 21–22 July 1911; Ishii Hakutei, "Saron dōtonnu o miru" [Visiting the Salon d'Automne], *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*, 9–11 November 1911; Ishii Hakutei, "Fōvizumu to anchinachururizumu" [Fauvism and anti-naturalism], *Waseda bungaku* 85 (December 1912): 2–16.

44 Kinoshita Mokutarō, "Yōga ni okeru hishizenshugiteki keikō" [Anti-naturalist trends in Western-style painting], *Bijutsu shinpō* [Art journal], February, March, and June 1913; Kinoshita Mokutarō, "Rittaiha no ga" [Cubist painting], *Bunshō sekai* [The world of texts], June 1916. Reprinted in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 93–107; vol. 2, 1916–1921, 4–14.

45 Kimura Shōhachi, "Rippōha" [Cubism], *Waseda bungaku*, December 1913; Kimura Shōhachi, "Rippōha ni tsuite" [On cubism], *Sōzō*, December 1913. Reprinted in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 133–146, 147–155.

46 Asano, "Rittaiha miraiha," 93.

47 For more information on this exhibition see Omuka Toshiharu, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō no kenkyū* [Study on the modern art movement of the Taishō era] (Tōkyō: Sukaido, 1998), 67–73.

48 Arishima Ikuma, "Inshōsha tai miraiha" [Impressionism versus Futurism], *Bijutsu shinpō*, April 1915; Arishima Ikuma, "Byakuya ukō [White nights and rain] (2–3)," *Shinchō*, July–August 1922. Reprinted in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 312–319; vol. 3, 1922, 139–150.

and contributions, often book-length studies, by art historians, critics, and painters such as Moriguchi Tari (1892–1984), Ichiuji Yoshinaga (1888–1952), Kuroda Jūtarō (1887–1970), Nakagawa Kigen (1892–1972), and Kanbara Tai (1898–1997).⁴⁹ Starting with a special section in 1923 featuring works by Picasso, Dufy, Braque, Lhote, and others, the Nikakai annual exhibition also began to host works by French cubist painters.

2.3 Cubist Poems as material in the Japanese discourse on new art and new poetry

As noted above, Matsuura Hajime (1881–1966), associate professor (*jokyōju*)⁵⁰ at the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University, from whose English Department he had graduated in 1905, discussed *Cubist Poems* in his magnum opus *Bungaku no honshitsu* (The essence of literature; 1915). He linked Weber's poetry to *Creation: Post-impressionist Poems* (1914) by Horace Holley (1887–1960), an even more conventional (and little-known) collection with a strongly suggestive title, and discussed both collections providing an interpretation resonating with Bergsonian and vitalist ideas.⁵¹ “While presenting Max Weber's cubist poems,” Omuka Toshiharu notes, “Matsuura analyzed the world of new art using an interpretive framework based on the concepts of ‘life’ (*seimei*) and ‘flow’ (*ryūdō*),”⁵² two keywords that punctuated the Japanese reception of Bergson and other exponents of European *Lebensphilosophie*.

Even though his readings significantly influenced the interpretation of *Cubist Poems* in Japan, Matsuura Hajime can be considered the only translator and commentator of this collection who was organically and primarily part of the academic world. It seems, in fact, that the remainder of those involved in the reception of Weber's poetry were exponents of the *shidan*, the *gadan*, or figures who were active in both.

This is retrospectively confirmed by the way in which they are qualified in the *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* (Great dictionary of modern Japanese literature; 1977–1978), an authoritative compilation of biographical data on Japanese authors. Matsuura Hajime appears as a “scholar of English literature”

49 See note 33.

50 Kanbara Tai, “Miraiha ya rittaiha ga torai shita jidai” [The period when Futurism and cubism were introduced], *Hon no techō* [Books cahier] 5 (May 1963): 137.

51 Matsuura Hajime, *Bungaku no honshitsu*, 15–53.

52 Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 335.

(*eibungakusha*); Nakada Katsunosuke as an “art historian” (*bijutsushika*); Kawaji Ryūkō as a “*shi* poet” (*shijin*) and “art critic” (*bijutsu hyōronka*); and Sangū Makoto as a “*shi* poet” and “scholar of English literature.” Noguchi Yonejirō, Shirotori Seigo, and Nogawa Takashi are all presented as “*shi* poets,” while Kanbara Tai appears as a “*shi* poet,” “painter” (*gaka*), and “art theorist” (*geijutsu rironka*).⁵³ The biographical information on these authors presented below provides a description of their positions in the Japanese cultural field and indications of the reasons for their involvement with the introduction of Max Weber’s poetry to their country. These details offer a starting point to account for the “objective relations between positions occupied by individuals and groups placed in a situation of competition for legitimacy,” and contain elements for “the analysis [of] the genesis of the habitus of occupants of these positions, that is, the systems of dispositions which, being the product of a social trajectory and of a position within the literary (etc.) field, find in this position a more or less favourable opportunity to be realized.”⁵⁴

Nakada Katsunosuke (1886–1945) published the earliest known translation of a poem by Weber (“I Wonder”) in the May 1914 issue of the literary journal *Seikatsu to geijutsu* (Life and art).⁵⁵ Born in Tokyo, Nakada graduated from the English Department of Waseda University and the Aesthetics and Art History Department of Tokyo Imperial University. A prominent figure in cultural journalism with strong ties to both the literary and fine arts scenes in Tokyo, in 1914 he was a columnist for the *Yomiuri shinbun*, a major daily newspaper, and covered both traditional arts and the latest European trends. He later moved to another major newspaper, the *Asahi shinbun*, and reported on some of the avant-garde painting exhibitions that were held in Japan in the early 1920s. A number of his articles published in the 1910s in the *Yomiuri* and various art and literary journals introduced the European avant-gardes to Japanese readers; they are also noteworthy because of his sympathetic attitude.⁵⁶ For instance, in a mix of uncredited translations and personal additions that was characteristic of Japanese cultural journalism in those years, Nakada discussed cubism and other “most recent painterly schools” (*saishin gaha*) in his free adaptation

53 Nihon Kindai Bungakukan, ed., *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* [Great dictionary of modern Japanese literature] (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1977–1978), *ad vocem*. Most of the information on these authors presented below is based on this source.

54 Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 214.

55 Nakada Katsunosuke, “Kyubisuto no shi: Makkusu Wēbā” [Cubist poems: Max Weber] *Seikatsu to geijutsu* 1, no. 9 (May 1914): 26–27. Nakada did not add any comments. Nakada’s source may have been Bernard Lintot, “At Number 1, Grub Street,” *T. P.’s Weekly* XXIII, no. 586 (30 January 1914): 137, in which the same poem is featured.

56 Some of these are available in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915.

of Gelett Burgess's "The Wild Men of Paris" (originally published in the *Architectural Record* in May 1910), a semi-serious reportage on the Paris art scene that had a certain resonance in the United States.⁵⁷ Titled "Futsukoku saishin gaha" (The most recent painterly schools in France), Nakada's article was published in January 1912 in *Zanboa* (Pomelo), a literary journal with a strong focus on *shi* poetry, run by former Pan no Kai associate and poet Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942). Nakada was also the elder brother of Nakada Sadanosuke (1888–1970), an art critic and member of the Tokyo avant-garde scene who, after his stay in Germany from 1922 to 1924, contributed to the Japanese presentation of Bauhaus and other new German trends.⁵⁸

Shirotori Seigo (1890–1973) discussed *Cubist Poems* in a February 1915 article in the magazine *Shiika* (Poetry), where he also presented his translations of "Oh Sun," "Sun Rhythm," "To a Butterfly," "Love Refreshed," and "The Summer Moon."⁵⁹ Shirotori came from a family of farmers from Miyazaki Prefecture in Kyushu. He moved to Tokyo to study English literature at Waseda University and graduated in 1913. He was active in the late- and post-naturalist literary coteries in Tokyo. His debut collection of *shi*, *Sekai no hitori* (A man in the world; 1914), established his reputation as a practitioner of what was called "poetry in free verse and colloquial language" (*kōgo jiyūshi*). He became one of the leading figures in what was known as the "populist current" (*minshūshiha*), which became prominent in the *shidan* in the late 1910s. In 1919, he published an influential selection of poems by Walt Whitman, one of that school's leading foreign models. Despite his interest in the latest trends (a trait structurally shared by many modern poetry practitioners, as seen above), Shirotori is not considered a part of the canon of Japanese avant-garde poetry because of his involvement with "populist poetry."

Kawaji Ryūkō (1888–1959) is among those who best represent the permeability between the *gadan* and the *shidan*. He was born in Tokyo into a notable family of samurai origin but spent his early years away from the capital, following the appointments of his father who, before becoming an educator, school manager, and scholar specializing in western culture, had worked as a public servant. In 1907, Kawaji attracted the attention of the Tokyo *shidan* because of his experiments in free verse and modern diction, which also marked the beginning of his career as a *shi* poet. However, Kawaji was an artist by

57 Gelett Burgess's article and the illustrations that accompanied it may have played some role in awakening Max Weber's interest in cubism (North, "The Cubist Decade," 23–24).

58 Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 868.

59 Shirotori Seigo, "Rittaiha no shi" [Cubist poems], *Shiika* 5, no. 2 (February 1915): 1–8; reprinted in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 297–304.

education. He studied at the Kyōto Bijutsu Kōgei Gakkō (School of Fine and Applied Arts, present day Kyoto City University of Arts) and later at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō (Tokyo School of Fine Arts, today's Tokyo University of the Arts), graduating from the latter's Japanese-style painting section (*nihongaka*) in 1913.⁶⁰ He published several collections of *shi*, but his primary influence on the *shidan* was as a cultural journalist, critic, and translator, especially of French poetry. As a leading figure in the Taishō *shidan*, he organized groups and coteries, founded new journals, such as *Bansō* (Accompaniment, 1916–1917), *Gendai shiika* (Contemporary poetry, 1918–1921), and *Taimatsu* (Torchtlight, 1921–1923), and discovered new talents, such as the futurist poet Hirato Renkichi. Kawaji's activities as a painter were practically nil, but he maintained a strong interest in the latest art trends, which he often discussed by combining the domains of literature and art. Books such as *Gendai geijutsu kōwa* (Lectures on contemporary art; 1924) and *Machisu igo: Furansu kaiga no shinseiki* (After Matisse: The new century in French painting; 1930) are among his most notable efforts in this field.

Kawaji was one of the first Japanese presenters of Weber. His translations of “The Eye Moment,” “Winter's Come,” “Oh Sun,” and “Who is There?” were all published in the February 1915 issue of the literary journal *Bunshō sekai* (The world of texts).⁶¹ In those years, like many other literary magazines, *Bunshō sekai*'s pages also hosted contributions by art critics and experts on the latest European trends: for instance, in June 1916, Kinoshita Mokutarō discussed cubist painting, with Guillaume Apollinaire's influential book *Les Peintres cubistes: Méditations esthétiques* (1913) among his sources.

Years later, Kawaji was also among the first to discuss the “cubist” poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire and other French poets in two articles; each was extremely rich in original insights. The first, “Miraiha oyobi rittaiha to sono shiika: Marinettī to Aporinēru ni tsuite” (The poetry of futurism and cubism: On Marinetti and Apollinaire), appeared in the April 1922 issue of *Nihon shijin* (The Japanese poet), which was probably then the most authoritative magazine in the *shidan*. The second, “Toppi-naru shiha ni tsuite: Miraiha, rittaiha, dadaha, shashōha no shi” (On the eccentric poetic schools: The poetry of Futurism, cubism, Dada, imagism), was published in the July 1922 issue of

60 It was not uncommon for the students who were not accepted to the “western painting” (*seiyōga*) section of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts to enrol in the *nihonga* section, as Kawaji did; information on his early life and activities as an art student can be found in Tanaka Atsushi, “Kōki inshōha—kō—1912nen zengo o chūshin ni (jō)” [Considerations on post-impressionism: Focus on 1912, part 2], *Bijutsu kenkyū* [Art studies] 368 (December 1997): 160–172.

61 Kawaji Ryūkō, “Rittaiha no shi (Makkusu Wībā)” [Cubist poems (Max Weber)], *Bunshō sekai* 10, no. 2 (February 1915): 46–49.

Waseda bungaku.⁶² Ironically, it was Kawaji's articles on Apollinaire and other French "cubist" poets such as Jean Cocteau that contributed to the eclipsing of Weber's position in the Japanese cultural world as the leading representative of cubist poetry.

Kawaji, like Nakada Katsunosuke, mobilized his cultural and symbolic capital on the latest European trends to address a general readership along with the *gadan* and the *bundan*. Nakada and Kawaji's articles on *Cubist Poems* appeared in literary journals. This does not mean that they were below the radar of the *gadan*, because, as seen above, these were literary journals with a strong tradition of interconnectedness with the world of fine arts. Most contributions to the knowledge of Weber's poetry appeared in similar periodicals. One remarkable exception is Keitarō's translations of six of Weber's poems that were published in June 1915 in the art magazine *Kensei bijutsu*.⁶³ Keitarō's real identity is not known, but his remarks on the necessity of "seriously studying" cubism and futurism, despite the controversy they raised and their reputation for "folly" (*kichigai*), denote a neutral or even mildly sympathetic attitude.⁶⁴

Sangū Makoto and Urase Haku'u, two scholars of English literature, provided a more academic approach to Weber's poems. However, their contributions also reflect the aesthetic and technical issues raised by *Cubist Poems* in Japan, and appear to be part of the contemporary network of informational exchange between the *gadan* and the *shidan*.

A native of Yamagata, Sangū Makoto (1890–1967) graduated in English literature from Tokyo Imperial University in 1915. Around the time that he first translated five of Weber's poems, published in *Shiika* (January 1917), he was also establishing his reputation as a translator and scholar of English literature. In the late 1910s, he started a teaching and academic career that later culminated in his appointment as a professor at Hōsei University, Tokyo. Sangū also published his own poetry, which was influenced by the post-symbolist school of Miki Rofū (1889–1964), with whom he and Kawaji were both associated. He translated Blake and Yeats, among many others, and played an important role in the presentation of imagist poetry in Japan. His interpretive approach

62 Both articles are now available in KSGS-SZ, vol. 3, 1922, 31–53, 251–259. The second article was also reprinted in *Gendai geijutsu kōwa*.

63 Keitarō (pseud.), "Kyūbisuto-ha no shi" [Poetry of the cubist school], *Kensei bijutsu* 98 (June 1915): 26–30. *Kensei bijutsu* acquired its name in 1913 after beginning publication in 1902 as *Kensei gashi* [Review for the detailed study of painting], and was the organ of the Bijutsu Kensei Kai [Society for the detailed study of art].

64 *Ibid.*, 26.

to Weber's poems, expounded in the notes that accompany his translations, appears to be strongly influenced by Matsuura's writings on the subject. Sangū also contributed to the canonization of Weber in Japan as a representative English-language poet, as he regularly reprinted these translations in the collections and handbooks of English verse that he published during the 1920s.

Like Sangū, Urase Haku'u (1880–1946) also had professional connections with the academic world. He came from a Kyushu samurai family that had started a mining business. After graduating (1907) from the English Department of Tokyo Imperial University, he held teaching positions at a number of provincial schools and universities while maintaining his contacts with the literary coteries of his alma mater. He emerged mainly as a translator of English poetry. Like Sangū, he is often remembered for his role in the presentation of imagism in Japan.⁶⁵ His translations of *Cubist Poems* were featured between 1921 and 1923 in a number of Tokyo literary journals (*Shinbungei*, *Nihon shijin*, *Shisei*, *Shi to ongaku*, and *Myōjō*).⁶⁶ None of these are considered avant-garde magazines today, but they not infrequently featured “avant-garde” material in their pages in that period. The original *Myōjō* (Morning star, 1900–1908) in particular was one of the most influential literary magazines in early twentieth-century Japan, and had an important role in the dissemination of neo-romantic and art nouveau tastes in the Japanese *bundan*. Its second series (1921–1927) maintained this tradition of collaboration and exchange between *gadan* and *bundan* members,⁶⁷ as attested for instance by Tōgō Seiji's contributions. During 1922, Tōgō, whose reputation in Japan at the time was that of a Futurist/cubist painter, published his accounts from the Parisian avant-garde scene in *Myōjō*, including the chronicles of his interactions with F. T. Marinetti and the French Dadaists, and even two “Futurist poems” (*miraihashi*).⁶⁸

65 For more on Urase's life and career, see Itō Yuki, “Hyōden Urase Haku'u: Imajizumu shi no hon'yaku shōkai no kōseki o chūshin ni” [Urase Haku'u: A critical biography of an early translator of imagist poets], *Hikaku bungaku—bunka ronshū* [Comparative literature and culture] 24 (March 2007): 22–47. This article also features a synoptic table of Urase's translations.

66 *Nihon shijin* [The Japanese poet; 1921–1926] was by all accounts the most institutional among the *shidan* magazines of those years. Kawaji Ryūkō was a major force in its foundation and management. This explains why the most significant poems and Futurist writings by Hirato Renkichi (one of Kawaji's protégés) appeared there in 1921–1922. *Shi to ongaku* [Poetry and music; 1922–1923] was edited by Kitahara Hakushū.

67 The inaugural number of *Myōjō*'s second series (November 1921) featured a quasi-integral translation of F. T. Marinetti's manifesto of “Futurist Dance” (1917) by Hirano Banri (1885–1947). Tanaka Kisaku (1885–1945) provided a translation of André Lhote's “Ingres vu par un peintre” (1921), in the September and November 1922 issues, now in KSGS-SZ, vol. 2, 1916–1921, 319–323; vol. 3, 1922, 292–308. The art historian Tanaka had studied at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts with Kawaji Ryūkō (Tanaka, “Kōki inshōha,” 161).

68 Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 103–128.

2.4 Cubist Poems as a reference for avant-garde poetry in Japan

While the authors discussed above were all members of the generation born between 1880 and 1890, the early 1920s in Japan saw the emergence of a younger generation of artists and poets who were inspired by European avant-garde movements, especially in the fields of western-style painting and *shi*. Two authors actively involved in the reception of Weber's poetry, Nogawa Takashi and Kanbara Tai, can be considered as full-fledged members of a "notional community of self-consciously aesthetically radical artists"⁶⁹ in 1920s Tokyo, and are today part of the Japanese avant-garde canon. Little is known about Shinozaki Hatsutarō, who published a complete translation of *Cubist Poems* in 1924. Unlike the other presenters of Weber's poetry, he was active in the relatively peripheral city of Osaka. The information available on him suggests that he too was interested in the avant-garde, but it is not known if he was part of a larger network.⁷⁰

Nogawa Takashi (1901–1944), also known as Ryū, emerged in the early 1920s as an avant-garde poet with Dadaist leanings. The son of a physician, he was born in Chiba and attended Tōyō University in Tokyo, though he did not complete his studies. Together with his elder brother Hajime (dates unknown) and Tamamura Zennosuke (1893–1951), a *nihonga* painter who, as noted by Omuka Toshiharu, "later became one of the most radical members of the modern art movement in the Taishō

69 David Cottington, *The Avant-Garde: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

70 Given Shinozaki Hatsutarō's (dates unknown) physical distance from the Tokyo cultural field that is the focus of my discussion, I will provide the available information on him in this note. Most of it is summarized by Ishida Hitoshi in a short profile accompanying the reprint of Shinozaki's translation of *Cubist Poems*: Ishida Hitoshi, ed., *Miraishugi to rittaiishugi* [Futurism and cubism] (Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō, 2007), 769–770. Shinozaki is credited with *Yume no kenkyū* (1925), a translation of Bergson's essay *Dreams* (from an English version published in New York in 1914). He also published a personal collection of *shi*, *Haito o yuku* [Walking through a deserted capital; 1923], and a collection of three expressionism-tinged plays entitled *Senkōtei* [The submarine; 1925]. Three upcoming books by Shinozaki were announced at the ending of the latter book: another personal collection of *shi*, an anthology of Belgian poetry in translation, and a translation of Oskar Pfister's *Expressionism in Art*, presumably from its 1922 English translation. However, it seems that none of these works was ever published. Ishida reports that in 1927–1928 Shinozaki translated and published some excerpts from Francis Picabia's *Unique eunuque* and Jean Cocteau's *Le Coq et l'arlequin* in *Kindai fūkei* [Modern landscape], a Tokyo literary journal edited by Kitahara Hakushū. In his afterword to *Cubist Poems* (ibid., 709–711), Shinozaki states that he has not yet attained a sufficient grasp of cubism. This might be a display of modesty, but in any case he seems to favour a Bergsonian and vitalist reading of the collection (not unlike Matsuura's reading), as testified by his usage of categories such as "spiritual revolution" (*tamashii no kakumei*), "cry of renewal" (*kōshin no sakebi*), and "rhythm" (*inritsu*) in the afterword.

period,”⁷¹ he was one of the core figures in the Epokku-sha (Epoch Society). They published the eponymous *Epokku*, an avant-garde magazine that ran from October 1922 to March 1923. *Epokku* and the next magazine published by the Epokku-sha, *GE•GJMGJGAM•PRRR•GJMGEM* (June 1924–January 1926), which saw the addition of the leading figure of Kitasono Katsue (1902–1978) to its editorial team, are regarded as among the most representative magazines of a camp in the Tokyo avant-garde scene whose members were influenced to greater or lesser degrees by Dadaist tendencies.⁷² During its run, *Epokku* printed articles, reproductions, and translations dealing with the historical avant-gardes, including German Dada and German expressionism,⁷³ and ended with an issue devoted entirely to Nogawa’s complete translation of *Cubist Poems*. In the previous issue (February 1923), which focused on the “latest art trends,” Nogawa’s brother had published an essay entitled “Rittaiha igo no geijutsu” (Art after cubism). It appears therefore that Nogawa’s translation of Weber’s poems dovetailed with the editorial line of the journal,⁷⁴ which, in Nogawa’s own words, “put [its] efforts into introducing the latest artistic trends from abroad.”⁷⁵ Nogawa’s connection with Tamamura and an interest in creative interactions between different arts, an interest that was shared at that time by the Tokyo avant-garde sectors in the *shidan* and the *gadan*, may explain his decision to translate Weber’s collection.

Despite his efforts in translation, however, it is not clear whether *Cubist Poems* influenced Nogawa’s own poetry to any extent. In fact, having absorbed almost ten years of further avant-garde experiments, Nogawa’s most representative poems make Weber’s verses look rather conventional and tame in comparison:

71 Omuka Toshiharu, “Tada=Dada (Devotedly Dada) for the Stage: The Japanese Dada Movement 1920–1925,” in *The Eastern Dada Orbit: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Europe, and Japan*, ed. Gerald Janecek and Toshiharu Omuka (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), 232.

72 Omuka, “Tada Dada,” 275–277. See also John Solt, *Shredding the Tapestry of Meaning: The Poetry and Poetics of Kitasono Katsue (1902–1978)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 23–45.

73 Omuka, “Tada Dada,” 232–233.

74 Wada Hirofumi, “Toshi no hakai to, seishin no kaihōku: 1920nendai no avangyarudo” [Destruction of the city and liberated zones of the spirit: The avant-garde in the 1920s], in *Nihon no avangyarudo* [The avant-garde in Japan], ed. Wada Hirofumi (Kyōto: Sekai Shisōsha, 2005), 9.

75 From Nogawa Takashi’s editorial statement in the first issue of *GE•GJMGJGAM•PRRR•GJMGEM*, translated in Solt, *Shredding the Tapestry*, 26, 28.

CRUSTACEAN CONSTRUCTION [*Kōkakurui kenchiku*]⁷⁶

Crustaceans are logarithmic

Something like $\text{Sin } \pi/2 \text{ Sin}^a?$ Since π is a circleWill it be $3^3?$

No

Isosceles is a battle monad of wire and steel cable

The external combustion engine is heavy on the barometer

Heavy on the winter solstice

Nothing to do with the circle

 $A + B = A + 1 + \pi.$

According to scholars of modern Japanese poetry, Weber's poems (especially as read along the interpretive lines of Matsuura Hajime in *Bungaku no honshitsu*) actually influenced two other earlier experimenters in avant-garde poetry: Hirato Renkichi (1893–1922)⁷⁷ and, to a greater degree, Kanbara Tai.⁷⁸

A full analysis of Hirato's poetry is well beyond the scope of this paper,⁷⁹ but even though he pledged allegiance to Futurism with a manifesto distributed in late 1921, Hirato also wrote two poems that he himself labelled as "cubist." They are included in the mini-anthology "1921 nen ni okeru waga shinshi undō no yonshu no tenkai" (The four developments of my movement for new poetry in 1921) that was included in the 1922 collection *Nihon shishū* (Anthology

76 Lines 1–10, as translated by Dennis Keene in *Yokomitsu Riichi, Modernist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66. Keene's translation is based on the text in Onchi Terutake's *Gendai Nihonshi shi* [History of Contemporary Japanese poetry; 1958]. However, it appears that this text differs slightly from the original, first published in August 1925 in the first issue of *Sekai shijin* [World poet], a Tokyo Dada journal.

77 Chiba Sen'ichi, *Gendai bungaku no hikakubungakuteki kenkyū* [Comparative literary studies on contemporary literature] (Tōkyō: Yagi Shoten, 1978), 71, 119.

78 Hatori Tetsuya, "Kanbara Tai no kōki rittaishi" [The post-cubist poems of Kanbara Tai], *Seikei Daigaku Bungakubu kiyō* [Bulletin of the Faculty of Humanities, Seikei University] 26 (1990): 37–50; Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 332–339; Ikeda Makoto, "Kanbara Tai no shi to shisō" [Kanbara Tai's poetry and poetics], *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* [Studies on Shōwa literature] 40 (March 2000): 13–23; and Thomas Hackner, *Dada und Futurismus in Japan: Die Rezeption der historischen Avantgarden* (Munich: Iudicium, 2001), 46–48, 59–70.

79 See Hatori Tetsuya, "Hirato Renkichi, shi no tenkai" [Hirato Renkichi, the evolution of his poetry], *Seikei Daigaku Bungakubu kiyō* 34 (March 1999): 33–61.

of Japanese poetry).⁸⁰ As a contributor to Tokyo's *Chūō bijutsu* (Central art), one of the major art journals of the Taishō period, Hirato was also well-informed about the latest trends in both local and international fine arts. Hirato probably knew Weber's collection (or at least the poems available in Japanese, especially Matsuura's versions), but his most famous "spatial cubist poem" (*kūkanteki rittaishi*) is also tinged with suggestions from Futurist "words-in-freedom" and Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*.⁸¹

FLYING BIRDS [*Hichō*]⁸²

Bird flies

Their hearts their shapes

Dark

Black birds

Frail and thin

They fly!

In a swastika-like whirl

All mixed up

Above the chasms of magnetism

Swallowed by the vortex

They dance!

They dance!

Their wings, waterwheels

80 In "Yonshu no tenkai," Hirato provided seven exemplary poems that he deemed represented: 1) "temporal futurist poetry"; 2) "spatial cubist poetry"; 3) "four-dimensional" or "Dadaist" or "expressionist" poetry; 4) "post-expressionist" or "analogistic" poetry. See Hackner, *Dada und Futurismus*, 70–76, for a complete translation and discussion of these seven pieces. The annual collective anthologies *Nihon shishū* were published by the Shiwakai (Poetry Discussion Association), the same society that presided over the journal *Nihon shijin* and one of the most powerful institutions in the Taishō *shidan*.

81 I am inclined to disagree with Chiba's claim that this poem is more indebted to Weber's "The Eye Moment" than to Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* (Chiba, *Hikakubungakuteki kenkyū*, 119). The repetition of words in "Hichō" may well be reminiscent of Weber's most famous poem, but their mimetic arrangement, which represents the trajectory of flying birds, suggests the influence of Apollinaire's visual poetry. Articles on Apollinaire published in the months before and after by Hirato's acquaintances Kawaji Ryūkō and Komaki Ōmi (1894–1978) suggest a strong interest in the French poet. Hirato himself published a translation of a poem by Apollinaire ("Salomé," in the March 1922 issue of *Chūō bijutsu*), though that appears in Apollinaire's earlier collection, *Alcools* (1913).

82 My translation. Original text in *Nihon shijin* 1, no. 2 (November 1921): 40–41. An early French translation of this poem, titled *Oiseau volant*, appeared in the 1939 *Anthologie des poètes japonais contemporains* edited by Matsuo Kuni[nosuke] and Emile Steinilber-Oberlin.

Picasso's works quickly became a major topic in the Japanese discussions of cubism. Kanbara himself was to devote a book to the Spanish artist in 1925, titled simply *Pikaso*. His friend and fellow painter Nakagawa Kigen (1892–1972) did the same; he published a monographic study on Picasso in 1922, *Pikaso to rittaiha* (Picasso and cubism), shortly after his return from France, in the same period in which he and Kanbara briefly intensified their interactions with Hirato Renkichi.⁸⁵

Despite his involvement in the Tokyo art scene, Kanbara was, technically speaking, a dilettante and a largely self-taught painter. He came from a well-to-do family: his father was a graduate of the Imperial College of Engineering and had worked for the Ministry of Finance and the Nippon Railway, and his mother was of aristocratic descent. Kanbara studied commerce at Tokyo Chūō University and began working in an oil company in 1920.⁸⁶

In 1917, before his debut as a critic, Kanbara published a series of poems that he labelled as “post-cubist” (*kōki rittaiishi*) in two Tokyo literary journals.⁸⁷ Kanbara certainly knew Weber's poems, as he recollects in his autobiographical writings, which regularly associate them with Matsuura's *Bungaku no honshitsu* and Horace Holley's poems.⁸⁸ The label “post-cubist poems” signals both an intertextual relationship with *Cubist Poems* and the ambition to go beyond them. According to Hatori Tetsuya, Kanbara may have been inspired by a passage in the 1916 Japanese translation of Arthur Jerome Eddy's *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (1914), where “post-cubism” is associated with authors such as Francis Picabia. “Perhaps,” Hatori elaborates, “Kanbara attributed to the words ‘post-cubist poems’ the meaning of going beyond cubism after destroying all expressive conventions.”⁸⁹

85 Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 275.

86 Biographical information on Kanbara is taken from Kanbara Tai, “Kanbara Tai, oitachi to Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō o kataru” [Kanbara Tai talks about his life and the Taishō modern art movement], interview conducted and edited by Asano Tōru and Omuka Toshiharu, in *Akushon ten: Taishō shinkō bijutsu no ibuki* [Exhibition of the group Akushon: The breath of Taishō modern art], exhibition catalogue (Tōkyō: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1989), 5–11, and Ishida, *Miraishugi to rittaiishugi*, 755–756.

87 The number of “post-cubist poems” may vary slightly in primary and secondary sources (Hatori, “Kanbara Tai,” 50n1). Kanbara says there are eight, “Oitachi,” 7.

88 For instance, in Kanbara, “Miraiha ya rittaiha,” 136–137. Matsuura's brother Kaname (1889–?), an economist at Chūō University, was one of the founders of *Waruto*, one of the two journals in which Kanbara's “post-cubist poems” were originally published.

89 Hatori, “Kanbara Tai,” 39. “Cubism will pass away, but the spirit of change will not pass away. One enthusiasm will follow another enthusiasm so long as men possess ambition. Already there are signs that Cubism is passing. Some of the men are calling themselves Neo-Cubists and Post-Cubists, and they are painting in very different manner” (Arthur J. Eddy, *Cubists and Post-Impressionism*

“Mahiru no shigai” (City street in broad daylight), which was originally published in the magazine *Waruto* in September 1917, is one of the best-known poems in the series, and one in which the intertextual connection with “The Eye Moment” is clear; both poems resort to a string of nouns and verbal ellipsis in order to express the impressions of an urban landscape as captured by the poet’s subjectivity.

CITY STREET IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

Red, Black, Yellow, Indigo, Green

Automobiles, Cafés, Parasols

Colours, Lights, Rhythms, Noises—O all these egoist’s splendours!

Flowing, Fusing, Rotating now — In broad daylight⁹⁰

According to Japanese scholarship, Kanbara’s post-cubist poems derive from an amalgamation of cubist, vitalist, and Futurist elements,⁹¹ respectively detectable in the way in which the objects of perception are analyzed, broken up, and then reassembled, in the emphasis on individual and universal life force (frequently expressed through the image of the sun), and in the appearance of motifs related to modern urban life, technology, and dynamism, such as cars, city streets, scientific terms, etc. Matsuura’s *Bungaku no honshitsu* is thought to have influenced Kanbara’s understanding of avant-garde poetry. As Omuka notes, “Kanbara was elaborating on his own original vision of life by receiving important theoretical stimuli not only from the reception of Italian Futurism, but also from Matsuura.”⁹² The new art, according to Matsuura, was able to grasp the musical and painterly essence of reality, which he saw as a holistic symphony of all living things, resonating with mechanical and inorganic matter (hence the emphasis on rhythm and dance that can also be found in the post-cubist poems). This peculiar blend of suggestions coming from Futurist dynamism, Bergson’s theory of *élan vital*, and optimistic individualism (which Matsuura also applied to Weber’s poems) can also be found in Kanbara’s poems. Accordingly, in the treatment of their subjects, they show a coexistence of analytical and synthetic compositional methods, as well as a lingering

(Chicago: McClurg, 1914), 67). “Therefore, he [the painter] has cut loose from cubism, and is what ... may perhaps best be called ‘post-cubist’” (Picabia’s reported words, in *ibid.*, 82).

90 Lines 1–4, my translation. Original text in Hatori, “Kanbara Tai,” 44. In August 1923, this poem was published with a slightly different title (“Mahiru no gaidō—Poème musical”) in *Noi*, an Italian Futurist magazine edited by Enrico Prampolini. There, the text appears untranslated but transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

91 Ikeda, “Kanbara Tai,” 19–21.

92 Omuka, *Taishōki shinkō bijutsu undō*, 336.

persistence of sentimental and spiritualistic tones. Their heterogeneous nature can be grasped in another post-cubist poem, *Manatsu* (Mid-summer), which was originally published in the magazine *Shinchō* (New tide) in August 1917.

MID-SUMMER (POST-CUBIST POEM)

oxygen, nitrogen, argon

the trembling of the atoms who dance frantically

and in disarray

air, factories, plants, and roads too

come together, unify, then separate to dance to the rhythm of the sun

now

every colour, every light, every moment infused with life

the suffering life of automobiles, cars, airplanes, and bombs

all

become ours.

Oh Mid-Summer, Oh Mid-Summer, Oh the Midday of Mid-Summer

thus, Oh Sun

now, every living thing, every breathing thing, every moment

that will be filled

listen to my humble plea and drink them all up.⁹³

As typical of the “post-cubist poems,” Kanbara’s verses show a certain amount of formal experimentalism (in this case, the fragmentation of syntax and the accumulations and iterations of nouns, all expressive devices that might well have been inspired by *Cubist Poems*). At the same time, this experimentalism appears to be counterbalanced by an order-restoring principle, a confidence in the ultimate, quasi-mystical fusion of “every living thing, every breathing thing.” Similar tones are also present in some poems by Weber, like “Buddhas,” which was discussed and translated by Matsuura Hajime as a poem that “sings the praises of the Buddha, who is one with the spirit of the Universe (*uchū no rei*):”⁹⁴

93 Quoted in Suzuki Sadami, “Rewriting the Literary History of Japanese Modernism,” trans. Miri Nakamura, in *Pacific Rim Modernisms*, ed. Helen Sword, Mary Ann Gillies, and Steven G. Yao (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 81–82.

94 Matsuura, *Bungaku no honshitsu*, 35.

BUDDHAS

Buddhas, Buddhas, Buddhas

Buddhas of hell, Buddhas of fire, Buddhas of heaven,

Buddhas of every abode,

Your attitude, your innerness, your absoluteness,

Binds time and mood to no end.

Stillness, super stillness, innerness

Deep, deep innerness,

Of rhythm of energy,

Invisible without,

Living stirring within.

Buddhas, Buddhas you eliminate,

To make peace more than it is,

To make stillness and rest more than it is.

What is this mood?

What is this placid sweetness?

What is this silence?

What is this awe?

Will I know when I am a Buddha?⁹⁵

3. Features of the Japanese reception of *Cubist Poems*

In what follows, I recapitulate and analyse the features that characterized the reception of *Cubist Poems* in Japan, with particular focus on indicators that are useful in explaining the interest of the Japanese cultural world in this collection.

First, Japanese cultural journalism was particularly eager to chronicle and map out all recent trends coming from “western” fields of cultural production. This eagerness may partly be explained as a manifestation of the logic of the field (discussed above), where cultural products coming from the “West” were the object of practices of accumulation of cultural capital and also potentially rich in intrinsic symbolic capital. Accordingly, the discussion and presentation of *Cubist Poems* in Japanese periodicals can be at least partially explained as the result of an encyclopaedic and taxonomic attitude toward the mass of materials continually coming from Europe and North America. In other

95 Weber, *Cubist Poems*, 16.

words, it responded to a structural need to examine, catalogue, and classify an immense amount of cultural capital of foreign origin. This may also explain why *Cubist Poems* attracted the attention of academically qualified experts and translators of Anglophone poetry, such as Matsuura, Sangū, and Uruse.

Second, the effects of the circulation and dissemination of discourses and representations of the new art movements must be taken into account. The year 1909, which saw the first translation of Marinetti's inaugural *Manifesto of Futurism* by Mori Ōgai, traditionally marks the beginning of the discourse on the "historical avant-gardes" in Japan. As seen above, the presentation of pictorial cubism had begun in Japan in 1911 with Ishii Hakutei's reports from that year's Paris salons. In 1914–1915, when the first Japanese translations of Weber's poems were published, the local debate on cubism had already developed. It had been fuelled by a number of translations and original contributions by Japanese artists and critics. In a parallel fashion, as documented by research conducted on primary sources and materials (for instance, collected in the *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho* [Collection of works on the new foreign art] series), other avant-garde movements, such as Futurism and expressionism, had been presented and discussed in the same years via a number of translations, articles, and books.

Multidisciplinarity among the arts was one of the elements that likely emerged from the growing acquaintance of Japanese intellectuals with Futurism and expressionism. In the case of Futurism, this aspect had been discussed in those articles that, starting in 1912, had presented to Japanese audiences the painting, poetry, theatre, architecture, and music produced by Marinetti and his associates, though the same amount of space or emphasis was not necessarily devoted to every single branch of the Futurist enterprise.⁹⁶ Though in a less organic way, the same thing happened with German expressionism, which stirred the interest of Japanese intellectuals not only in the visual arts but also in literature, theatre, music, and, especially during the 1920s, film.

I argue that a multidisciplinary paradigm according to which the general principles of a certain movement could be equally embodied by works produced by working with different media, or extrapolated from a certain art form (e.g., painting) and transitively applied to another (e.g., poetry), was therefore firmly established in Japanese representations of European avant-garde movements. Accordingly, in the same way that Futurist or expressionist painting *and* literature were already known, expectations of

96 See, in European languages: Omuka, "Futurism in Japan," 244–270, Hackner, *Dada und Futurismus*, 38–50, and Nishino Yoshiaki, "F. T. Marinetti and Japan the Futurist," in *F. T. Marinetti = Futurismo*, ed. Luigi Sansone (Milan: Motta, 2009), 326–331.

cubist poetry to go along with cubist painting must have looked like a logical consequence to many.

These elements suggest that Japanese expectations related to the interdisciplinary nature of the various “isms” were combined with an objective lack of available models of actual cubist poetry. To quote Noguchi Yonejirō's mention of Weber's collection found in one of his 1915 correspondences on the art scene in London, *Cubist Poems* were eminently perceived in Japan as “poems in a sort of cubist-school style” (*isshu no rippōhashiki no shi*).⁹⁷ This produced a peculiar interest in this collection, which was the only available instantiation at that time of an application of the principles of cubism to literature. This happened independently from the orthodoxy or pertinence of the “cubist” label that was attached to Weber's collection.

It was likely due to their being qualified as “cubist” that *Cubist Poems* sparked the interest of educated Japanese readers in the first place. This is also indirectly corroborated by the fact that Weber and *Cubist Poems* practically disappeared from the Japanese cultural debate after 1925, once a new canon of “French cubist poets” (comprising Jean Cocteau, Guillaume Apollinaire, André Salmon, and Max Jacob) was established, effectively displacing Weber's collection from its formerly prominent position.⁹⁸

Cubist Poems attracted the attention of those who wondered what cubist poetry would be like. It is reasonable to assume that Matsuura Hajime, who intended to provide an exhaustive survey of the different ways to conceive literature in his *Bungaku no honshitsu*, was attracted to *Cubist Poems* (and to Holley's *Post-impressionist Poems*) because their titles signalled that they were embodiments of the new schools' ideas on literature.⁹⁹ Similarly, in 1917, Sangū Makoto wrote in the commentary to his translations of *Cubist*

97 Noguchi Yonejirō, “Rondon de mita shinpa no kaiga” [Paintings of the new schools I have seen in London], *Mita bungaku* 6, no. 3 (March 1915): 185. This article is briefly presented in Omuka, “Futurism in Japan,” 257 and is mentioned in Hackner, *Dada und Futurismus*, 48n44. In this article, which also features the English text of “The Eye Moment,” Noguchi mentions having seen Weber's paintings (many of which “could be called cubist or futurist”) while visiting Coburn's home in London.

98 A landmark moment in this process was the publication of *Gekka no ichigun* [A moonlit gathering; 1925], an influential anthology of recent French poetry in translation edited by Horiguchi Daigaku (1892–1981). It was followed by *Aporinēru shishō* [Poems of Apollinaire, trans. Horiguchi Daigaku; 1927], *Jan Kokutō shishō* [Poems of Jean Cocteau, trans. Horiguchi Daigaku; 1929], *Saikorozutsu* [a translation of Jacob's *Le Cornet à dēs* by Kitagawa Fuyuhiko; 1929], and *Sandorarusu shō* [Selection of Cendrars, trans. Iijima Tadashi; 1929].

99 In fact, in the same chapter, Matsuura also briefly discusses Futurism, listing Huntly Carter's *The New Spirit in Drama and Art* (1912) among his sources.

Poems that “Rossetti transplanted the Pre-Raphaelite artistic style into English poetry before, and now we have this new attempt by the painter Weber. Let us see how his pictorial techniques are applied to poetry and what effects they produce.”¹⁰⁰ Shirotori Seigo opened his 1915 review with an allusion to potential comparisons with the experiments of the new movements in the field of painting: “When I read Max Weber’s collection titled *Cubist Poems*, I had in mind the painting of cubism, post-impressionism and futurism, which are the latest trends in the art world (*gakai saishin no keikō*); so, I had the presentiment that Weber’s poetry too, in its content and expression, might have some novelty.”¹⁰¹ However, *Cubist Poems* did not live up to Shirotori’s expectations.

Widespread interest in the applications of the principles of cubist painting to a piece of poetry is further suggested by the recurring presence of “The Eye Moment,” the most radical among Weber’s poems, in the discussions and translations of *Cubist Poems*. Eight of the ten individuals who introduced *Cubist Poems* to Japan commented on or translated this poem, which, in Sangū’s words, “sings the instantaneous impressions of seeing at a glance the city of New York from the banks of the Hudson River.”¹⁰² Kawaji, Matsuura, Keitarō, Sangū, Urase, and, obviously, Nogawa and Shinozaki provided translations; Noguchi, Matsuura, and Sangū each transcribed the original text.

Within that framework, discussing *Cubist Poems* called for the mobilization of competences specific to the *gadan* and the *shidan* and required by the nature of the collection, which participated simultaneously in the domains of pictorial cubism and modern poetry. Be they painters-turned-poets (Kawaji), art critic-journalists (Nakada), literary theorists with an interest in new art (Matsuura), poets with a *Shirakaba*-like attitude towards the pictorial arts (Shirotori, Sangū), or self-conscious avant-gardists involved in a multidisciplinary project of artistic renewal (Kanbara, Nogawa, Shinozaki), nearly all of those who introduced *Cubist Poems* to Japan possessed such competences, if to different degrees, or at least tried to present such credentials in their writing. In doing so, they contributed to reinforcing the conceptual reception of *Cubist*

100 Sangū Makoto, *Gendai eishishō: Yakuchū* [Contemporary English poetry: Annotated translations] (Tōkyō: Yūhōkan Shoten, 1917), 98. In the 1925 revised edition of this anthology, Sangū reformulates his judgment more explicitly: “Weber has extended the spirit of the modern currents of painting (*shinkō gaha*) to English poetry.” Sangū Makoto, *Eibei shinshisen: Yakuchū* [New selection of English and American poetry: Annotated translations] (Tōkyō: Hōbunkan, 1925), 210.

101 Shirotori, “Rittaiha no shi,” 1; KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 297.

102 Sangū, *Gendai eishishō*, 82.

Poems as a hybrid object, whose complete understanding and appreciation required similarly combined competences. Therefore, to speak about such an object, or even just linguistically localize it through competent translations, became tantamount to occupying a position in the cultural field in which the two subfields of the *gadan* and the *shidan* intersected.

The reception of *Cubist Poems* also showed that the Japanese cultural field already possessed a certain degree of autonomy with respect to the “West.” Despite the interest provoked by Weber’s collection and a number of favourable comments, such as those by Matsuura and Shinozaki, some Japanese presenters articulated reservations about the value of *Cubist Poems*, not only in pure aesthetic terms, as Shirotori did when he accused some poems of being plainly “mediocre” (*heibon*),¹⁰³ but also through claims that *Cubist Poems* was not, in the end, sufficiently “cubist,” or at least innovative. After remarking that Weber’s poems were more moderate than both “Futurist poetry” (*miraiha no shi*) and Emile Verhaeren’s *Les Villes tentaculaires* (1895), Shirotori concludes: “To sum up, this collection lacks boldness in its contents and shows no particular inventiveness in its expression. Even though it is called ‘Cubist Poems,’ if we had to find out its merits, they would be its simple descriptions and lively rhythms. It is undeniable that it is the collection of a dilettante, lacking seriousness somehow.”¹⁰⁴

On the same note, Kawaji Ryūkō, who possessed a solid knowledge of the latest European trends, obliquely expressed his scepticism about Weber’s *soi-disant* “cubist poems” by pointing out that “the very fact that this collection is called *Cubist Poems* is less to designate a school of poetry, than the poems of a cubist painter.”¹⁰⁵ Not only is Weber not a representative of an organized school of poetry, Kawaji seems to argue, but the “cubist” attribute of his poems descends solely from their circumstances: they are the product of a poet who also happens to be a cubist painter.

Matsuura Hajime, discussing “The Eye Moment,” even pointed out some possible methodological contradictions in Weber’s poetry. If it were not for the fact, he wrote, that the cubists—as Gleizes and Metzinger stated in their theoretical works—had rejected the impressionists’ pretence of realism, it would perhaps be more appropriate to define this poem as an “impressionist

103 Shirotori, “Rittaiha no shi,” 3; KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 299.

104 Shirotori, “Rittaiha no shi,” 8. KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, 1909–1915, 304. For a summary of Shirotori’s article, see also Hikita Masaaki, “Makkusu Webā-cho Nogawa Takashi-yaku *Rittaiha shishū*” [Max Weber’s *Cubist Poems*, translated by Nogawa Takashi], in *Nihon no avangyarudo*, 40.

105 Kawaji, “Rittaiha no shi,” 49.

poem,” for it expresses “the impressions gathered by the poet just as they are.”¹⁰⁶

Finally, Kanbara Tai’s intention of going beyond the instances of “cubist poetry” that were known at the time with his “post-cubist poems” of 1917 can be interpreted as a manifestation of the same critical autonomy.

Japanese reviewers thus felt confident enough to criticize a “western” cultural product in the name of theoretical orthodoxy and in compliance with a logic of the “party of novelty,” known as the *avant-garde*, that was shared by the most advanced sectors of the *gadan* and the *shidan*. In a parallel fashion, Japanese poets, such as Kanbara, could also propound something more advanced than their supposed “western models.” It is noteworthy that in the case of *Cubist Poems*, no Japanese critics explicitly resorted to arguments against this collection that had been previously produced (and therefore authenticated) in the “West,” or chose to counterpoise a set of “Oriental” or “Japanese” values to Weber’s work. This reveals the fact that the Japanese cultural field was already representing itself as on a par with an international network in which it could participate as an increasingly equal and autonomous player.

4. Conclusions

The attention that *Cubist Poems* received in Japan was unparalleled in any other country, even in the Anglophone world.

To explain this phenomenon, I have provided a reconstruction of the key dynamics at work in the cultural field centred around Tokyo during the Taishō period. This field was marked by a cultural logic of the reception and classification of information—a widespread taxonomic and encyclopaedic attitude of local cultural journalism—on the latest products coming from the “West,” which constituted a powerful form of cultural capital. This cultural capital could also be endowed with symbolic capital, as its appropriation could be used by agents in the field to establish legitimacy and propel their own careers. This process partly explains why an object connoted as one of the products of the foreign “latest schools” (as the foreign *avant-gardes* were often called) received such substantial attention in Japanese literary and art periodicals. *Cubist Poems* was configured as an object that simultaneously mobilized competences administered in the two subfields of pictorial arts (*gadan*) and modern poetry (*shidan*), two subfields that, historically and structurally, were oriented to localize, implement, and produce “*avant-garde*”

106 Matsuura, *Bungaku no honshitsu*, 33–34.

positions and practices. My overview on the introduction of *Cubist Poems* in Japan confirms that this process principally involved individuals that, as confirmed by their biographies, were active in the *shidan*, in the *gadan*, or in both, and that it did not involve other more established and dominant areas in the cultural field, such as the sectors centred on narrative prose.

Another factor that stimulated the Japanese discourse around *Cubist Poems* was the fact that, within the paradigm of the “new movements” in art that stressed multidisciplinary among the arts—a paradigm that was largely established by the journalistic reception of the historical avant-gardes in Japan—*Cubist Poems* constituted in those years an almost unique opportunity to clarify what was at the time the relatively urgent formal question of what cubism applied to poetry could be like. The emergence of this topic in itself illuminates the interactions between the *gadan* and the *shidan*, as its articulation required competences from both fields and subscription to the logic of “permanent revolution” and innovation that Pierre Bourdieu associates with the avant-garde sectors of the cultural field. We might argue that the discursive and symbolic hegemony of the *gadan*, which was perceived as more advanced in the discussion and research of the newest trends and provided many discursive tools to examine them, was confirmed in this process, because the chronological and theoretical primacy of painterly cubism (to which *Cubist Poems* was judged as indebted, to various degrees) was never seriously challenged. In Japan as elsewhere, then, pictorial cubism—as confused and vague this category might be—could be invoked as the model against which to judge or explain cubist poetry, but not the opposite.

The Japanese reception of *Cubist Poems* also revealed a certain amount of autonomy in the Japanese field of cultural production. Despite being affected by the hegemony of the modernist “West,” the Japanese field was able to articulate both a critical reception to a “western” product like *Cubist Poems* (as in the comments by Shirotori and others), and the confidence (expressed by Kanbara’s “post-cubist poems”) in Japanese writers’ ability to go beyond “western” cultural products as equal members of an international network of modern art scenes.

Appendix: Timeline of the translation and discussion of Weber's *Cubist Poems* in Japan

Besides primary sources, the timeline offered below is based on the following secondary sources:

Chiba, Sen'ichi. *Gendai bungaku no hikakubungakuteki kenkyū* [Comparative literary studies on contemporary literature]. Tōkyō: Yagi Shoten, 1978.

Gonda, Hiromi. "Tenkai suru dai yojigen: Hirato Renkichi no gendaisei to saihyōka" [Developing the fourth dimension: 'Re-evaluating the modernity of Hirato Renkichi']. *Nihon kindai bungaku* [Modern Japanese literature] 78 (May 2008): 165–179.

Hackner, Thomas. *Dada und Futurismus in Japan: Die Rezeption der historischen Avantgarden*. Munich: Iudicium, 2001.

Hidaka, Shōji, and Omuka Toshiharu, eds. *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho. Shinbun zasshi hen* [Collection of works on the new foreign art: Newspapers and magazines series]. Vol. 1, 1909–1915. Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō, 2005.

Hikita, Masaaki. "Makkusu Webā-cho Nogawa Takashi-yaku *Rittaiha shishū*" [Max Weber's *Cubist Poems*, translated by Nogawa Takashi]. In *Nihon no avangyarudo* [The avant-garde in Japan], edited by Wada Hirofumi, 40. Kyōto: Sekai Shisōsha, 2005.

Ishida, Hitoshi, ed. *Miraishugi to rittaiishugi* [Futurism and cubism]. "Korekushon modan toshi bunka" [Collection: Modern city culture], 27. Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō, 2007, 768–770.

Itō, Yuki. "Hyōden Urase Haku'u: Imajizumu shi no hon'yaku shōkai no kōseki o chūshin ni" [Urase Haku'u: A critical biography of an early translator of imagist poets]. *Hikaku bungaku—bunka ronshū* [Comparative literature and culture] 24 (March 2007): 22–47.

Nakamura, Fujio. *Yamamura Bochō ron*. Tōkyō: Yūseidō Shuppan, 1995.

Omuka, Toshiharu. "Futurism in Japan, 1909–1920." In *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, edited by Günter Berghaus, 244–270. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2000.

Tanaka, Seikō. *Yamamura Bochō* [Study on Yamamura Bochō]. Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1988.

Urase, Haku'u. *Watakushi no kokoro to sono kankyō* [My heart and its ambiance]. Tōkyō: Ryūbunkan, 1922.

I have not personally examined the items marked by (*).

1914

May: Nakada Katsunosuke, “Kyubisuto no shi: Makkusu Wēbā” [Cubist poems: Max Weber], *Seikatsu to geijutsu* [Life and art] 1 (9): 26–27. Features one poem in translation: “I Wonder.”

1915

February: Shirotori Seigo, “Rittaiha no shi” [Cubist poems], *Shiika* [Poetry] 5 (2): 1–8. Features Coburn’s foreword, five poems in translation (“Oh Sun,” “Sun Rhythm,” “To a Butterfly,” “Love Refreshed,” and “The Summer Moon”), and excerpts from two others: “Winter’s Come” and “A Frozen Universe.”

February: Kawaji Ryūkō, “Rittaiha no shi (Makkusu Wībā)” [Cubist poems (Max Weber)], *Bunshō sekai* [The world of texts] 10 (2): 46–49. Features four poems in translation: “The Eye Moment,” “Winter’s Come,” “Oh Sun,” and “Who is There?” and a rough translation of Coburn’s foreword.

March: Noguchi Yonejirō, “Rondon de mita shinpa no kaiga” [Paintings of the new schools I have seen in London], *Mita bungaku* [Mita literature] 6 (3): 175–186. Features the English text of “The Eye Moment.”

June: Keitarō (pseud.), “Kyūbisuto-ha no shi” [Poetry of the cubist school], *Kensei bijutsu* [Detailed studies of fine art] 98: 26–30. Features six poems in translation: “The Eye Moment,” “The Signal,” “Timelessly More,” “The Summer Moon,” “Namelessness,” and “The Prophetic Call.”

November: Matsuura Hajime, *Bungaku no honshitsu* [The essence of literature] (Tōkyō: Dai Nihon Tosho Kabushiki Kaisha). Features three poems—both original texts and translations: “The Eye Moment,” “Buddhas,” and “Silence.”

1916

January: Sangū Makoto, “Taishō yonen no shidan” [The poetry scene in the fourth year of the Taishō era (1915)], *Shiika* 6 (1): 2–9. Reviews Kawaji’s and Matsuura’s translations of Weber’s poems published in 1915; criticizes Kawaji’s translations and praises those by Matsuura.

1917

January: Sangū Makoto, “*Rittaiha no shi yori*” [From *Cubist Poems*], *Shiika* 7 (1): 44–46. Features five poems in translation: “The Eye Moment,” “Buddhas,” “To a Butterfly,” “Night,” and “The Spider.” Reprinted in the same year in Sangū Makoto, *Gendai eishishō: Yakuchū* [Contemporary English poetry: Annotated translations] (Tōkyō: Yūhōkan Shoten), 81–98, with the addition of a rough translation of Coburn’s foreword, one more poem (“Silence”), and the original texts of the poems.

1921

January: Sangū Makoto, *An Anthology of New English Verse = Gendai eishi senshū* (Ōsaka: Suzuya), 179–188, 221. An anthology in English featuring the original texts of the poems previously translated by Sangū, with the exception of “To a Butterfly.”

March: Urase Haku’u, “Kyūbisuto pōemuzu” [Cubist poems], *Shinbungei* [New literature] 1 (6). Features six poems in translation: “The Eye Moment,” “The Signal,” “To a Butterfly,” “The Old and the New Me,” “Buddhas,” and “The Dead Bird.” (*)

December: Shirotori Seigo, “*Rittaiha no shi*” [Cubist poems], in *Shi ni tessuru michi* [The way of devotion to poetry] (Tōkyō: Nihon Hyōronsha Shuppanbu), 150–160. Reprint of the article published in 1915.

1922

February: Urase Haku’u, “Kyūbisuto pōemuzu” [Cubist poems], in *Watakushi no kokoro to sono kankyō* [My heart and its ambiance] (Tōkyō: Ryūbunkan), 305–317. Collects the six poems previously published in 1921.

1923

January: Urase Haku’u, “Makkusu Wibā” [Max Weber], in *Gendai eibei shisen* [Selection of contemporary English and American poetry] (Tōkyō: Kōgyokudō), 29–40. Features seven poems and Coburn’s foreword in translation: “The Silhouette,” “Weather Report,” “Sun Rhythm,” “Night,” “No End, No Beginning,” “Haze,” and “I Am Drinking Tea.”

February: Urase Haku’u, “*Gendai eibei shika*” [Contemporary English and American poems], *Nihon shijin* [The Japanese poet] 3 (2): 79–82. Features “Silence” in translation.

March: Urase Haku’u, “Kyūbisuto shishō” [Cubist poems], *Shisei* [Great masters of poetry] 18. Features two poems in translation: “Who is There?”

and “Suffering to Sleep.” (*)

March: Max Weber, “Rittaiha shishū” [Cubist poems], translated by Nogawa Takashi, *Epokku* [Epoch] 6. First complete translation in a literary journal.

May: Urase Haku'u, “Imajisuto no shi to kyūbisuto no shi” [Imagist poetry and cubist poetry], *Shi to ongaku* [Poetry and music] 2 (5): 37–39. Features two poems in translation: “The Prophetic Call” and “Timelessly More.”

September: Urase Haku'u, “Kyūbisuto no shi” [Cubist poem], *Myōjō* [Morning star] 4 (3): 410–411. Features “Winter's Come” in translation.

1924

August: Max Weber, *Zen'yaku Rittaiha no shi* [Cubist Poems: Complete translation], translated by Shinozaki Hatsutarō (Ōsaka: Itansha). First complete translation published as a book.

1925

February: Sangū Makoto, *Eibei shinshisen: Yakuchū* [New selection of English and American poetry: Annotated translations] (Tōkyō: Hōbunkan), 195–210. Collects the six poems previously translated in 1917, along with the original texts.

April: Sangū Makoto, *Benisuzume* [Strawberry finch] (Kyōto: Naigai Shuppan), 191–205, 279–280. Collects the six poems previously translated in 1917.