

*Collection UTCP-2*

*Transcendental Descent*

*Essays in Literature and Philosophy*

COLLECTION UTCP

# TRANSCENDENTAL DESCENT

Essays in Literature and Philosophy

*Yasunari Takada*

## Contents

Foreword	7
Acknowledgements	9
<b>I. Prelude</b>	
1. Against the Grain of Tragedy: A Provocation	13
2. The Brooch of Thebes and the Girdle of Venus: Courtly Love in an Oppositional Perspective	29
3. A Shakespearean Distance: Europe, Modernity and Traditional Values	51
4. A Pocockian Moment	77
5. Supreme Emptiness and Temporal Fulfillment: Two Versions of Political Failure?	85
<b>II. Classical-Medieval</b>	
6. Vulcan Cuckolded by Mars: Archetypal Adultery and Its Subsequent Undercurrents	107
7. “Hevene” in Criseyde: Dante’s “Festa” and Chaucer’s “Feste”	129
8. Chaucer’s Use of Neoplatonic Traditions	137
9. From the <i>House of Fame</i> to Politico-Cultural Histories	145
10. “Common Profit” and Libidinal Dissemination in Chaucer	159
<b>III. Renaissance-Modern</b>	
11. Leonardo Bruni’s <i>Cicero Novus</i>	181
12. Shakespeare’s Cicero	201
13. How to Do Things with “Fall-Out” Systems in “ <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> ”	211
14. Caesarean Operation: <i>Romanitas</i> , Politics and History	233
15. An Augustan Representation of Cicero	243
16. The Illusions of the Modern and the Pleasures of the Pre Modern	265
17. Shuzo Kuki: or, A Sense of Being In-between	281
Note about the author	295

Copyright © 2007 by Yasunari Takada

Sponsored and published by UTCP (The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy).

Correspondence concerning this book should be addressed to:

UTCP

3-8-1 Komaba, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-8902, Japan

Edited by: Koichi Maeda, Yuko Yabuki, and UTCP

Book Design: Kei Hirakura

Printing: DIG Inc., 2-8-7 Minato, Chuo-ku Tokyo104-0043, Japan

ISSN 1881-7637

Printed in Japan

## Foreword

The present volume is a collection of my essays written during the period between 1984 and 2006. I made my scholarly debut as a student of medieval and Renaissance English literature in the early 80s. Since then, however, I have never failed to take advantage of every possible occasion, whenever it presented itself, to expand my intellectual horizon both backward and forward, i.e., towards Classical Antiquity and Western modernity. Negatively do they say “Jack of all trades, and master of none,” and yet the delightful memory of the classical literature and philosophy to which I had been introduced during the process of my intellectual formation in my undergraduate days has never ceased to haunt me while the philosophical endeavours of European modernity have also continuously been my keen interest. In due course of time—and for reasons a little too complicated to state—the former extended concern came to find its axis in Cicero and the latter in the philosopher émigré Karl Löwith. It is through Karl Löwith, a guest professor at one of the Imperial universities in pre-war Japan, that my intellectual concern has come to entertain a yet wider perspective, i.e., that of comparative culture and thought.

As a self-styled intellectual expansionist alias Jack of all trades, I have followed my interest as it has cropped up and with little regard to any systematic concerns. Much to my surprise and unexpected delight, however, I have come to find, in the process of selecting my essays for the present collection, a certain more or less consistent theme that cuts across what has so far appeared (even to the author himself) to be the outcomes of various concerns. That consistent theme made apparent on this occasion can be termed the matter of the transcendental. By this is meant the problematic that comprises the fate and traces in modern secularized societies of absolute transcendental power and the values associated with it. Concrete subject matters indeed vary from classical myth, through the medieval and Renaissance Troy legend, to the modern reception of Cicero

or a comparative critique of the quest topos, but behind all these runs a consistent thematic undercurrent, which I name here “Transcendental Descent.”

The present volume would not come into being without the help and encouragement of my present and former colleagues. My particular thanks are due to Dr. Graham McMaster (of Tohoku University, now retired), Prof. George Hughes (of the University of Tokyo, Hongo, now retired), Prof. Paul Rossiter, Prof. Brendan Wilson and Mr. Thomas Gally.

January 2007

*Yasunari Takada*

## Acknowledgements:

1. “Against the Grain of Tragedy: A Provocation” was given as a lecture at the British Council Seminar “Japan English Literature Seminar 1986: ‘English Drama: Theory, Writing and Performance,’” held at Hakone, Japan, 25-27 September and published with revision in the *Proceedings of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature*, College of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo, vol. 39. no. 3, 1991.
2. “The Brooch of Thebes and the Girdle of Venus: Courtly Love in an Oppositional Perspective” was given as a lecture at the British Council Seminar on “Courtly Love” held in Hakone, Japan, 27 March 1987 and published in a revised form in *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies*, 29/30 (1989).
3. “A Shakespearean Distance: Europe, Modernity and Traditional Values” was published in *Shakespeare Studies*, XLIII (2005).
4. “A Pocockian Moment” was given as a lecture “Reading Pocock Reading Gibbon” at the international symposium “The Cambridge Moment—Virtue, History, Public Philosophy,” at Chiba University on 11 December 2005.
5. “Supreme Emptiness and Temporal Fulfillment: Two Versions of Political Failure?” was given as an Inaugural Lecture at the Nissan Foundation, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. on 25th November, 2003, and has since been revised for *Humanitas Asiatica: An International Journal of Philosophy (Philosophy and Praxis)* but the publication has been delayed due to an editorial technical problem.
6. “Vulcan Cuckolded by Mars: Archetypal Adultery and Its Subsequent Undercurrents” was given as a lecture at the Harvard Seminar on Medieval Literature (at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass) held on 3 February 1986 and published in the *Proceedings of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature*, College of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo, vol. 38. no. 3, 1990.
7. “‘Hevene’ in Criseyde: Dante’s ‘Festa’ and Chaucer’s ‘Feste’” was given as a paper at the Fifth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society held in Philadelphia, March 1986 and published in *Philologia Anglica* (Tokyo: Kenkyu-sha, 1988).
8. “Chaucer’s Use of Neoplatonic Traditions” was published as Chapter 5 of *Platonism and the English Imagination*, eds. A. Baldwin & S. Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1994).
9. “From the *House of Fame* to Politico-Cultural Histories” was given as a paper at the Sixth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society, August 9–13, 1988, Vancouver and

- published in *Chaucer to Shakespeare*, eds. T. Takamiya & R. Beadle (D. S. Brewer, 1992).
10. “‘Common Profit’ and Libidinal Dissemination in Chaucer” was given as one of the J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures (The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature), Perugia, 21 April 1998 and published in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, eds. P. Bortolotti & A. Torti (D. S. Brewer, 1999).
  11. “Leonardo Bruni’s *Cicero Novus*” was given as a paper at the Fourth Conference of the International Society for Classical Tradition held at the University of Tübingen on 30th July, 1998 and published in a revised form in *European Studies* (University of Tokyo), I (2002).
  12. “Shakespeare’s Cicero” was published in *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies*, 48 (1997).
  13. “How to Do Things with ‘Fall-Out’ Systems in ‘Troilus and Cressida’” was published in *Shakespeare Studies*, XXII (1984).
  14. “Caesarean Operation: *Romanitas*, Politics and History” was given as a paper at the Fifth World Shakespeare Congress, Tokyo, 16 August 1991 and published in *Surprised by Scenes*, ed. Y. Takada (Tokyo: Kenkyu-sha, 1994).
  15. “An Augustan Representation of Cicero” was given as a paper at the Second Congress of the International Society for Classical Tradition, Boston University, U.S.A., 20 March 1995 and published in a fully revised form in *Enlightened Groves*, eds. P. Robinson et al. (Tokyo: Shohakusha, 1996).
  16. “The Illusions of the Modern and the Pleasures of the Pre-Modern” was given as a lecture at the Department of Comparative Literature, Stanford University, 7 December 2000 and published in *Overcoming Postmodernism: “Overcoming Modernity” and Japan*, eds. K. Doak & Y. Takada (Tokyo: Shubun-Kan, 2002).
  17. “Shuzo Kuki: or, A Sense of Being In-between” was given as a paper at the International Conference “Dialogo filosofico sul pensiero del XX secolo fra Europa e Giappone” at the Prada Foundation, Milano, 14 March 2006.