What makes a reading more or less true is the necessity of its occurrence, regardless of the reader’s or of the author’s wishes... It depends, in other words, on the rigour of the reading as an argument... Reading is an argument... because it has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen.1

By faith is meant not an intellectual assent to, or an unquestioning acceptance of a prescribed code of doctrines and rituals, but a humble openness to an unparaphrasable reality, an openness characterized by vulnerability, dissolution, love, freedom and abandonment. By power is meant the desire to assert and create a self in opposition to others, by manipulating others, and by mainly relying on external props and means. This power induces narcissism and diminishes the life-possibilities of others.2

Introduction

This chapter examines the manner in which Jennifer L. Anderson presents her 1991 claim that tea is not a cult. The intention is to identify the sorts of authority Anderson invokes to sanctify and protect the subject of her text, the grand master system that underpins the international success of the Urasenke school of tea.

In the course of positioning tea as pedagogical power, the external support that endorses her argument with additional authority is made explicit. Scrutiny of the texts Anderson criticizes is used to ask ques-
tions about her description of the Urasenke iemoto system and to demonstrate how the institutionalization of tea practice in that grand master system partially compromises espoused tea values. In addition to showing the gap between what is said and done by teachers of tea, I will also argue that the professionalization of tea discourse marginalizes the experience of tea students.

The argument begins by critically reading within *Introduction to Japanese Tea Ritual*, reading the text against itself to demonstrate how that text has been shaped by history and power. The 1985 taxonomy of textual strategies proposed by Scholes (reading: reading within a text; interpreting: reading one text upon another text; criticizing: reading one text against another text), alluded to in the opening quotation of Franco and Ramanathan, is adapted to answer questions fundamental to critical pedagogy: Who speaks? On whose behalf? Who is textually silenced?

This is my interim report from the field of tea learning. I write about my experience at the intersection of the corporeal discourses of tea and the critical discourses of analysis. In the course of outlining this juncture, several questions emerged. What sorts of accounts can explain the efficiency of tea pedagogy in transmitting tea values and practices? How are desire, the body and the subjectivity of individual tea practitioners implicated in this transmission of a systematic aesthetic response that has been codified into an orthodoxy? Underlying these questions is the fundamental issue of whether the Urasenke iemoto system needs semantic protection. It is around this set of questions that I explore how tea practitioners create their identities, often defined in nuanced opposition to other tea schools.

In terms of the definitions proposed by Franco and Ramanathan, it is my experience that power shapes faith. Anderson is absolutely correct when she argues for the power of the grand master system to influence what orthodox tea people see. For my first decade as a student of tea, I felt the force of the official template when I watched tea being served. When I sit in front of the steaming kettle, the evaluative impulse of some guests is keenly felt. Flowing in and out of the tea moment during the serving procedure, I often silently chide myself for a sloppy execution that subjects the guest to the staccato of a lumpy flow. Occasionally host and guest are happy to sit and share their time together, beyond the territory of appraisal.