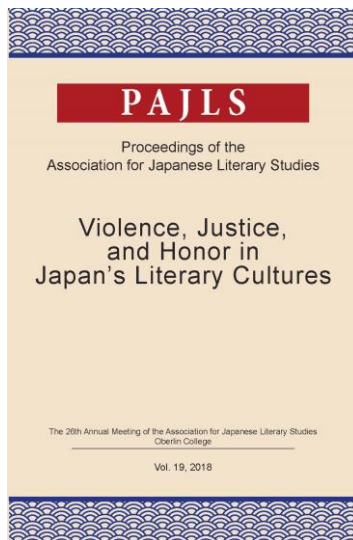


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Violence, Justice, and Honor in Japan's Literary Cultures

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The theme of the 26th Annual Conference of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies (AJLS) held at Oberlin College on February 16 & 17, 2018, was “Violence, Justice, & Honor in Japan’s Literary Cultures.” This theme was intended to promote broad participation by scholars of modern and pre-modern Japanese literature. The conference featured 12 panels with 47 presenters—with a balance of graduate students, junior and senior scholars from across North America, Europe, and Japan—and approximately 110 participants. Intellectually stimulating presentations addressed representations and discourses of violence spanning Japanese cultural history, from 21st century virtual reality, gaming, and anime to ancient mytho-histories and classical poetry. While most panels featured scholars of Japanese literature, the multi-disciplinary keynote panel on “Atomic Cultures” included specialists in art history and music.

On Saturday evening, participants visited a touring public history exhibit, “Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American World War II Experience” held in Oberlin’s Baron Art Gallery. One section of the exhibit used archival materials from the Oberlin College Libraries to tell the story of how the community of Oberlin, Ohio responded to the discriminatory government policy that led to internment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-American citizens in wartime. At the banquet, we paid tribute to Professor Eiji Sekine, founder of AJLS, on the occasion of his retirement.

Violence—war and violence elsewhere in society—is rarely separated from Japan’s literary and cultural histories. Violence has also proved polysemic, highly mutable in its occurrences, meanings, and effects, at the intersection of literature and social justice, or claims to honor. Violent manifestations in literature and other cultural fields may discredit—or sanction—forms of bodily, ecological, and psychological harm. The aim of this AJLS gathering was to re-examine our ethical, imaginative, political, and creative engagements with violence in expressive cultures.

As this volume goes to press in the contexts of global pandemic and racialized terrorism, the ways that cultural discourses and social imaginaries of violence can fuel physical violence have become shockingly clear. We dedicate this volume to the memory of Congressman John Lewis (1940–2020), who advocated for non-violent direct action as the most potent process for fighting injustices. Congressman Lewis’s life-long message was “There’s not anything more powerful than the marching feet of a determined people . . . Find a way to get in trouble, good trouble,

necessary trouble. Be prepared to speak up and speak out, be courageous. When you see something that's not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to get in the way and make some noise."

We are deeply grateful for the contributions, critical readings, and leadership at the conference, and over the years, of our valued colleagues: Ken K. Ito, Norma Field, Keith Vincent, James Dobbins, Suzanne Gay.

Generous funding for the conference was provided by the Association for Asian Studies (Northeast Asian Council), Oberlin College Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Oberlin College Dean of the Conservatory of Music, Office of the President, Departments of East Asian Studies (Bennett Fund), Art History (Baldwin Fund), Comparative Literature, and History, and Oberlin Shansi.

The conference would not have been possible without the energetic support of many people at Oberlin College. We especially thank Sachiko Kondo, Bonnie Cheng, Aoma Caldwell, Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, Daniel Evans, Nicholas Gallitano, Elizabeth Hamilton, Liam Hefta, Melissa Karp, Julie Min, Emer O'Dwyer, Renee Romano, Amy Redden, Rex Simmons, Pam Snyder, Leonard V. Smith, Grace Ting, Will Tokunaga, Kelly Viancourt, Shang Yasuda, Sandy Zagarell, Xun Zheng, and Students in EAST118.

We thank these people for their conference presentations and encourage readers to seek their work elsewhere: Jonathan Abel, Jeffrey Angles, Davinder Bhowmik, Kirsten Cather, Rachel DiNitto, Linda Flores, Stephen M. Forrest, Andrew Haag, Andrew Harding, Phillip Kaffen, Chris Lowy, Victoria Oana Lupascu, Shelley Fenno Quinn, Noriko Reider, Paul Roquet, Yukiko Shigeto, and Christina Yi.

AJLS is a network of committed volunteers. We especially recognize the leadership of Emeritus Professor Eiji Sekine of Purdue University, who started AJLS and sustained it for 25 years. Hats off to Matthew Fraleigh (Brandeis University), Professor Sekine's successor as AJLS Secretariat. As he stepped into that role, Professor Fraleigh demonstrated his spirit of service to the field and commitment to AJLS by commencing digitization of past PAJLS issues, facilitating PAJLS authors' registration in ORCID, a unique, open digital identifier that distinguishes her from every other researcher, and making numerous contributions as managing editor of this volume. Keep your helmets on!

Ann Sherif, Organizer, AJLS 26th Annual Meeting
September, 2020