### Front matter for

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Including a Foreword by Rebecca Copeland D Marvin Marcus and Elizabeth Oyler



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**PAJLS PUBLICATION:** All papers presented during the annual meeting can be included in the PAJLS. All contributors are allowed to revise their papers after their presentation. The proceedings of the annual meeting are published the following year.

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# PAJLS

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**ACTS OF WRITING** 

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#### FOREWORD

Language is the writer's tool, and every writer, regardless of historical context, confronts many choices. For the exile there are political considerations. For the woman there is the question of voice. Others must confront issues of class, gender, style, and dialect. The Japanese writer faces a particularly difficult challenge. The very history of written expression in Japan can be viewed as a complex negotiation among different languages and writing systems, each with unique cultural and national nuances. Firmly rooted in an indigenous language and culture, early Japanese writers adopted the written script of another, linguistically unrelated language. The introduction of Chinese forms and styles generated a new cultural awareness, which obliged the Japanese author to confront the shifting cipher of "Japanese-ness." Japan's first written records reflect this new awareness. Should the text be composed in Chinese or in some form that more closely represented spoken-Japanese? If the latter, how should this Japanese variant be defined and Such questions have been repeatedly raised in turn represented? throughout the history of Japanese writing. In the Heian period, the emergence of the kana syllabaries and the codification of kanbun generated a new set of possible answers, each complicated by a mix of referential indices. The arrival of the Roman alphabet in the sixteenth century added new possibilities. With the opening of Japan to Western civilization, writers confronted not only new languages but radically new approaches to writing, self-expression, and negotiations of meaning.

What does it mean to "write Japanese?" The availability of numerous linguistic alternatives has played an important role in defining the literature of Japan and situating the writer in the ever-shifting arena of cultural and national identities. The "wa-kan" dichotomy of Chinese and Japanese forms has long been conceived as a division between public/private, male/female, and to an extent "factual" versus "fictional" modes of discourse. This assumed bifurcation has profoundly influenced historical interpretations of Japanese writing and of "Japanese-ness."

Writers of the newly modernizing nation were similarly beset with questions of style and national polity. Pitting the modern idiom against strong traditional precursors, writers and intellectuals engaged in debates that polarized past and present in ways not unlike the earlier contestations between public and private. The international context of modern and contemporary literature further complicates the interaction of specific languages and discursive modes as they pertain to personal and even national identity. This issue is particularly relevant for *zainichi* writers whose national identities are unstable. Similarly Japanese nationals who write in other languages and thereby experiment with alternative identities must also confront the resistance their choices invite. This is as true of Nitobe Inazô and Mori Ôgai at the beginning of the twentieth century as it is of Mizumura Minae and Tawada Yôko at the dawn of the twenty-first. The corollary phenomenon of the non-Japanese writing *in* Japanese further complicates the vexing issue of what it means to be Japanese.

The papers assembled in this volume were originally presented at the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Association for Japanese Literature Studies, held at Washington University in St. Louis, November 10-12, 2000. The conference brought together twenty-two presenters from across the United States, Canada, and Europe. We were particularly fortunate to have two distinguished keynote speakers. Dr. Zdenka Svarcova of Charles University, Czech Republic, spoke on "Semiotic Aspects of the Refined Expression in Classical Japanese Language and Literature." A broad-ranging scholar of literature and linguistics, Dr. Svarcova considered the dynamic relationship between the vocalization of poetry and the scripting of prose as a fundamental factor in the creation of Japanese literature in her analyses of the Ise monogatari, Izumi Shikibu nikki, and Oku no hosomichi. Yoshihiro Ohsawa spoke on "Sôseki's Writing in Kokoro." A member of the English and comparative literature and culture faculty at Tokyo University, Mr. Ohsawa has published New Paradigms of Texts (Tekusuto no hakken, 1994) in addition to numerous works on comparative literature and issues In his keynote address Mr. Ohsawa highlighted the of translation. conscious artificiality of both style and structure in Sôseki's Kokoro, arguing that Sôseki's narrative innovations succeeded in moving modern Japanese literature to a new level of literary sophistication.

The conference and the present publication were made possible by generous contributions from the Japan Foundation, the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies, and by financial assistance from Washington University. We are grateful as well for the support of Mr. Steven Owyoung of the Saint Louis Art Museum who organized an exhibit of Japanese calligraphy in conjunction with the conference. We are also indebted to the dedicated efforts of our graduate students and administrative staff, who helped make the conference a success. Likewise, the compilation of this volume reflects the labors of our graduate students. Lane Harris, Master's student in East Asian Studies, took responsibility for the logistics of the printing; Mark Woolsey, Master's student in Japanese, assisted with the copyediting and proofreading; and Glynne Walley, Master's Candidate in Japanese, provided invaluable assistance as the chief production editor. Finally, thanks go to Jo Ann Achelpohl, Administrative Assistant for East Asian Studies, for pulling it all together and paying the bills.

Rebecca Copeland Marvin Marcus Elizabeth Oyler