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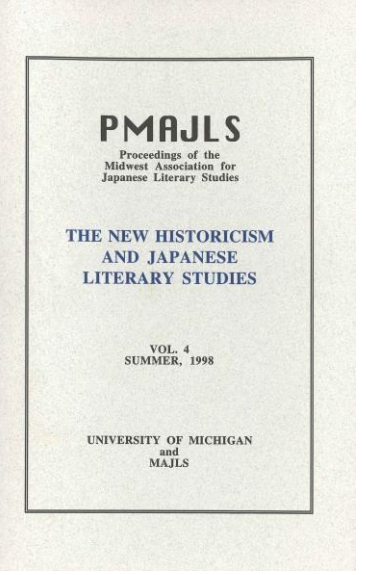
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The New Historicism and Japanese Literary Studies

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Introduction

ESPERANZA RAMIREZ-CHRISTENSEN
University of Michigan

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.
>
> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"[1]

Though we may not mirror the horror-stricken face of the angel of history at the sight of the wreckage that was Europe--and by contagion, Japan and Asia--surely we share at least a sense of discomfort at the new technologies that ever more rapidly propel

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[1] In *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 257-58.

us to a future whose ends we suspect only too well. The complacent belief in the superiority of the modern in the relentless march of progress daily leads to a state of cultural amnesia that heralds what Francis Fukuyama has called "the end of history and the last man." And this was before the latest breakthrough in genetic engineering. Is it still possible, nevertheless, to arrest the deadly engine and "awaken the dead, make whole what has been smashed"? Stop "the violence of the new" and practice "the hermeneutics of slenderness"--as Michele Marra proposes in his paper? Where might an alliance of the Japanese premodern and a European overcoming of the modern lead us? To a bare confrontation with the Real and eventually a new wo/man? Or is it a case of *apres moi le deluge*? What are we teaching anyway?

And so the 1997 MAJLS conference at the University of Michigan--it was in fact the graduate students who suggested it--decided to invite its members and guests to explore anew the old fundamental question of the relevance of history to the study of literature. It is part of the Association's ongoing project of stocktaking and revisioning of the field in light of new (that suspect word) developments in the academy, the theoretical turn taken by the humanities in response to the crisis of modernism. The "new historicism" in the conference title was meant both to signal that there is out there a distinct movement sprung from English Renaissance studies, and to suggest that there might be other ways of reading history in literature.[2] It was by no means intended to circumscribe the path speakers took to the fundamental

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[2] A good introduction to the principles and practice of this movement are the following: H. Aram Veeser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989) and Brook Thomas, ed., *The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).

question, although it was assumed that they would be aware of the methodological issues raised by postmodernity in general. Below I shall merely sketch the main features of the approach, suggest its applicability to the field of Japanese literary studies, and raise doubts about its assumptions.

Stated simplistically, the new approach emphasizes the historical situatedness of literary texts as opposed to various idealist formalisms (philology, Romanticism, New Criticism, structuralism) that regard them as autonomous entities possessing intrinsic and universal value, more or less adhering to the classic western dictum that literature embodies "the good, the true, and the beautiful." In the new historicist formulation, what literature embodies are the sociopolitical and material circumstances of its production. Goodness, truth, and beauty, and meaning itself, are mere abstract conceptions--or as the new idiom would have it, essentialist and metaphysical notions--unless understood within the concrete historical situation in which they were spoken or written. In sum, the text is practically meaningless outside its context. The good may be evil from another perspective; the true is an interpretation; and beauty is never simply its own excuse for being. There is here a radical relativism, but also a principled attempt to restore the literary text to the ineluctable temporality of history.

It is clear then that the new historicism participates in that momentous deconstruction of the integrity of the literary work that marks the theoretically self-conscious methodologies of contemporary criticism. It is a set of methods that allows sociohistorical, political, and economic phenomena to come to the foreground and interact with the broken text in newly illuminating ways, thus enabling also the practice of interdisciplinarity of which it is a primary example. This event, the breaking of the heretofore orthodox protocol of reading the literary work as an

integral entity, will probably not be much lamented in the field of Japanese literature. Few could ever have read that way without the philological and historical groundwork necessary for the competent comprehension and translation of texts that have constituted its major task. And although the field is beginning to engage the implications of theory on its own practice, it is yet too young to have even debated and measured in principled terms what is at stake in deconstruction, both for the western field of literary criticism as a branch of knowledge and for western japanology's similar claims to knowledge of an eastern civilization. An argument could also be made that the New Critical assumption of the organic unity of the literary work was founded on the centrality of poetry in the work of Anglo-American critics. It has limited uses for Japanese prose genres like *monogatari* and even some modern *shōsetsu*, which evolved outside the Aristotelian unities and progresses by agglutination, or for the form of the poetic anthology whose arrangement has only superficially to do with the spatiality of structure.

In other words, to understand Japanese literature as a historically situated sociocultural practice is in the first place to recognize its difference as the product, until the nineteenth century, of a non-western, specifically Asian (or Sino-Japanese and Korean) cultural development, and thereafter as the complex field of a struggle of competing ideologies with Japan's entrance into a still larger Euro-centered world. Consequently, it seems necessary to reexamine the concept of "literature" (*bungaku*) itself in the premodern historical context. The modern--also Japanese--understanding of *bungaku* as artistic work in the medium of language, or as expression of the author's thought and feeling mediated though a constructed world, is a fairly recent concept, in part a product of the homogenizing advance of western conceptualization. The ancient usage of the term *bungaku*

indicates that it meant "learning" or the study of writing in the Heian period and applied specifically to the Confucian classics. If the term was not otherwise used, what was the status and function of those texts (the *Genji*, the *Heike*, the *Nō* "plays") that we now teach as examples of great Japanese literature? Who were their producers, promoters, and consumers? What needs did they satisfy in their time and afterwards? What is the genealogy of their reception and transmission through various periods and by various social classes? What is the relation between these texts and the phenomenon of *michi* or *geidō*, the name for a variety of performative cultural practices each with its own local history, teachers and disciples, traditions and rituals? When did the material products of these practices acquire the status of canonized classics and under what historical, economic, and ideological imperatives? How did they negotiate the tension between discursive conventions, the coveted language of the old aristocracy, and self-expression?

Needless to say, the pursuit of the context--economic, political, sociological--is by no means unknown in orthodox literary research. What is new is the implicit bracketing of the author's meaning or intention as ultimately indeterminate and therefore not a fruitful subject of study, particularly within a larger framework where individual intentions are easily appropriated to the needs of other discourses. Similarly, and more crucially, the "new" in this historicism indicates that what was once taken for granted, the validity of an objective and unified narrative of history, is now in principle impossible. Not only due to the always imperfect state of empirical or material evidence from the past, but also the inexhaustible multiplicity of viewpoints registered there, the various retrospective readings they are given, and presumably the impossibility of capturing the dynamic movement of events as they unfold. Structuralists had already

shown the operation of linguistic codes in all discourse. In *Metahistory*, Hayden White's analysis of the leading nineteenth century historiographers and philosophers of history confirmed that events do not spontaneously emplot themselves into a narrative. Rather the historian constructs them as such in a prefigurative process similar to the poetic act, construing the objects of his narrative and the relationships among them according to the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony.[3] The intimate links to the poetic process of the historian's mode of constituting his data into an explanatory narrative can be taken as evidence of the "textuality" of history. It seems to confirm the classification of historiography as a humanistic practice distinct from the positivist empirico-instrumental sciences, and suggests the fruitfulness of a combined study of the two fields under the slogan, "the historicity of the text and the textuality of history."

Now, orthodox literary histories as well as course curricula here and in Japan are founded on a division between premodern (classical, traditional) and modern that locates the 19th century opening to the West--the so-called *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) movement--as the single most decisive boundary in Japanese history. This narrative construction cannot but lead to the instant marginalization of centuries of sociocultural formations except as they legitimize the dominant discourse of modernism. What texts and producers of texts, what lives and dimensions of human cultural practices, are excluded from such a literary history? When a Western journalist construes the "contradictions"

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[3] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 29-38.

of Japanese capitalism that has led to the present slowdown and regards it as a problem that the people still function as in a premodern village community, he is clearly following the narrative of modernization. But what local continuities are thus negated, and whose interests are served by his discourse? In what way is pre-Meiji history elided by this master narrative, and is this the gap that gave birth to Japanese "postmodern" urban consumer culture, including the aesthetic fetishization of cultural artifacts of the past? How representative, or even illuminating, is a literary history whose periodization is tied to the rise and fall of dominant power structures? As Komori Yōichi's keynote address, "Literature as History/ History as Literature" shows us, these questions are enabled by the new historicist principle that "history" is like "literature" in being a discursive construction of the past. Indeed the *Genji* long ago proposed in the "Hotaru" chapter that official histories like the *Nihongi* contain only a part of what happens; it is *monogatari* that supplies the rest. As a symbolic mode of discourse, "Japanese history" cannot be an objective account of facts; it is a product of modes of selection/exclusion based on ideological priorities and beliefs about the nation's past, present, and future. From this standpoint, there is theoretically no single Japanese history but only various narratives from different perspectives. The issue is one of which or whose history becomes the dominant and established version and so comes to constitute the "truth" about a people's self-identity and destiny.

That "history" is a contested site and can always be reconstituted according to the needs of the present is richly articulated by Komori's reference to recent revisionist attempts to suppress from middle-school history textbooks accounts of the forcible procurement of Korean "comfort women" by the army during the war. The overwhelming popularity of the works of the

historical novelist Shiba Ryōtarō (d. 1996) may be read in the same vein. In justifying Japan's 19th century wars against China and Russia by deploying an anti-colonialist discourse vis-à-vis the Western colonial powers in Asia or glorifying the struggles of Meiji figures like Sakamoto Ryōma in the task of modern nation-building, Shiba's stories tapped into the popular fiction genre that identified self-building with the national enterprise. It is part of a whole discursive formation of nationalism that also inspires the business sector in its pursuit of international economic dominance. And it feeds into revisionist attempts to construct a new narrative by absolving the Japanese people of war responsibility and construing Japan's aggression in World War II as an anomaly in the drive to consolidate a unified and courage-inspiring history of the modern nation. It is, in the meanwhile, important to note that the popularity of Shiba's historical fiction from the late sixties to the nineties is related to Japan's emergence as a global economic power and more recently serves to alleviate popular anxiety in the face of such calamities as the collapse of the "bubble economy," the Kōbe earthquake, and the Aum subway poisoning incidents. Komori's account of the variety of discourses that together construct a new history in the service of the dominant power structure is a fine demonstration of the interplay of history, literature, educational and media institutions, business, and politics.

It was possibly Michel Foucault more than any other among the Continental philosophers whose work wielded a decisive influence on the practice of interdisciplinarity or the breaking down of modern categories of knowledge. His rather dizzying reconfiguration of the old history of ideas--a teleological and linear account of the dominant products of western rational inquiry--into an "archeology of knowledge" abolishes old notions of historical period and relativizes it according to the temporality

of whatever history or "genealogy" (of madness, of sexuality) is under analysis.[4] Similarly, his method casts a wide net over what constitutes an object of inquiry, that is, namely, discursive formations that can be identified across a variety of fields (religion, medicine, law) over an undetermined span of time, whose elements might participate in other formations in other ways, and which might sooner or later crystallize into the definitive concept and methods of a new discipline (an academic field, a set of epistemological "truths" and disciplinary methods), a new science. Tracing relations across discontinuities, isolating the transformations that give a set of social practices a new inflection (the medieval confessional transformed into the psychiatrist's couch), this archeology seems to be governed by the law of ahistorical structures, except that it gives the phenomenon of chance or contingency its proper value and thus endeavors to preserve the specific historicity of its objects in a totality less linear than geological. Here, objects do not die; they live an afterlife in altered forms.

A key element in Foucault's intellectual legacy is his analytics of power. Conceived particularly in the Freudian hypothesis as "repressive" and commonly understood to be localized in source and object, power in Foucault is a ubiquitous phenomenon. It is better understood as a network of mobile differential forces operating within and across the various institutions of a society, interpellating everyone in its web in a reciprocal relation of pressure and resistance. There is perhaps no outside to power, since there exists neither absolute sovereignty nor obedience. The exercise of power, always aimed at a set of objectives whose

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[4] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

execution works on people's minds and bodies, compelling their obedience or manipulating their resistance, sooner or later, by circuitous routes through various levels of an institution, feeds into a grand strategy. While power is in and of itself the evidence of unequal relations, it is also the site of various points of resistance that, mobilized and codified into a larger strategy, hold the potential for radical change. Discourse likewise can promote or hinder power, again depending on its imbrication in a larger strategy designed to achieve a set of objectives. It is not discourse per se, but its tactical appropriation in the strategies of domination that is important in the analysis of the formation of the disciplines of knowledge. For "between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority."[5] Sooner or later, discourse (what is said and practiced), transformed into the controlled procedures of a discipline and so assuming authority, become employed in the economic and ideological requirements of power. This is because, simply, knowledge invests power. Genetics can exacerbate the discourse and practice of racism, and genetical engineering control the selection of races. Or to take another extreme example, nuclear physics developed the machine with power over the life and death of whole populations. It legitimized the rhetoric of the cold war as well as the actual wars deployed over the minds and bodies of people in the Third World. It stimulated the learning of critical or "less commonly taught" foreign languages while investing their native cultures with the face of otherness. And the cold war rhetoric saturated all the mass media, including popular fiction. The source of power is itself often faceless and diffused, but its effects are visible and enable a reading and analysis of its mechanisms.

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[5] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 98.

In what way does literature reproduce the dominant beliefs and master narratives, the institutions and social practices of a culture during a particular conjuncture? One way of investigating this question is obviously to sift through the non-literary texts and artifacts in search of records that might relate to the literature by addressing the same concerns but transposed in a different field, the law, for instance, or a book of etiquette; a medical treatise or a portfolio of erotic pictures. By this drawing of a correlation among a body of texts (literature being only one among them), a description possessing the density of material facts restores to the text its status as a product of a specific geography and time. But what does it mean to say that literature is a product of its culture? Does it supinely mirror the culture's dominant codes? Or use the ambiguity of poetic language to subvert them? How does it position the characters, narrators, and readers in relation to the codes? If literature is not the uncomplicated verbal icon of a culture, in what consists its potential power of social critique?

As would have been evident from the account above, the theoretical influences on the new historicist critical practice have been largely poststructuralist with a significant dose of structuralism, as evident in the alternative name of "cultural poetics," an analysis of the ideological codes that structure the beliefs, practices, and institutions that constitute a culture. This is another way of saying that a cultural poetics studies what makes a culture intelligible, and it assumes a paradigmatic or synchronic relationship among its various regions. In the case of the link between art or literature and social practices, this can be characterized as a mimetic economy wherein the same ideas circulate among various cultural institutions and are transformed according to both the formal and the contingent requirements of each. On the one hand, art is inevitably fashioned by social practices and beliefs although it obviously does not simply

"reflect" but rather "registers" social reality. On the other hand, art also shapes and alters, by force of its poetic or aesthetic character, and by the artist's relation to his world, the social phenomena it depicts. In other words, it is the writer's fictional construction of history. How can this relation between reality and art to be defined? Cultural poetics describes it as a structured negotiation and exchange from one region to another. The relation between the past and the present can perhaps be similarly named; the literature of the past reaches us through a continuous tradition of transmission and transformation to which the present adds a new layer of interpretation.

The place of postructuralist theory and methods in the study of literature and history is not without its problems. It is true that in dislodging the *telos* and the integral subject from their commanding place in history, poststructuralism also authorizes the validity of plural interpretations: diverse ethnicities, canonicities, and temporalities. In the U.S., this has had salutary effects in liberating American history from the dominance of the master narrative and the academy from its Euro-centered orientation, so that a theoretical place opens up for the study of non-western cultures. Nevertheless it is surely important to point out that the concept of organic unity and its protocol of reading go hand in hand with the doctrine of individual integrity and freedom, no less than the single most influential ideology of the West--and more and more of the world after the demise of the old socialist bloc. And the reason that deconstruction and other poststructuralist approaches are deemed radical, if not subversive, is because they mount an assault on this most cherished humanistic ideal, the same that until the sixties legitimized the authority of the humanities in the university and society at large.

Again, it might be well to consider that the doctrine of the autonomy of the literary work has historic affinities with the

ancient belief, be it in Greece or Yamato, in the sacred inspiration of the words of the poets. And that the privileged place given to poetry--and by extension literature and the belles lettres, and the "priesthood" that interpreted them--is owing the belief (or the desire to believe) that literature speaks from a site outside the contingent wars for power through the ages, if only to trace, in the language of the good, the true, and the beautiful that is its own, or in hyperbolic accents calculated for the greatest affect, the lived experience of men and women of the past, to testify that what they said and did mattered and matters, and that the word wherever it is spoken can still be mightier than the sword, the machine, and the death they deal. And yes, that in dismantling the integrity of the poetic word, and shedding the code of disinterest that legitimizes our profession, it is well to appreciate historicistically the genealogy of the humanist and his/her shamanic function of mediatory transference from the unseen realm of spirit to that of the mundane, which can also be phrased as the power to inspire the mundane.

What indeed do we owe to the cultural monuments of the past? Do we still owe respect to the dead? What authorizes the scholar to overstep his/her function as keeper and performer of the word from one age to the next, as the teacher and student of values upheld by people of various genealogies and histories? Such questions must be raised because contemporary criticism's destruction of the integrity, meaning, and intention of the work, its depersonalization through the removal of its author/authors from the scene, seems oddly like the colonial appropriation of native resources for its own purposes. The claim that a text has no intention, means something other than what it intends, or is no more than a site where language or culture writes itself despite the author's struggle to constitute a meaning, bespeaks a high degree of dehumanization once associated only with the dissection of

plants and animals in the laboratory, creatures with neither integral self nor language nor rights and therefore amenable to exploitative dissection. In other words, the humanist appears to have turned against the very resource that justifies his place in society and appropriated it for his own political or ideological agenda. Where his historic mission had been to inspirit the words of the dead, to read them to make them live again, he now turns a deaf ear, a blind eye, and uses the words of the dead as currency in the ideological and power struggles of his own time.

The lack of tact and reserve in this endeavor is evident in the fact that the text has to suffer a deconstructive violation in order to render service to the inquiry. The practice becomes even more questionable when the object is the artifacts of another culture, with whose values the literary scholar presumably nourishes special sympathy beyond the bald fact that knowledge is power. And yet the practice might yet be justified if this knowledge is employed for worthy purposes, such as the interpretation of a system of beliefs different from one's own, and if the dissection is undertaken to facilitate comprehension of the work on its own terms. How impoverished they become when construed wholly as occasions for unmasking the ideology of the writer instead of showing how other peoples have responded in varied ways to the conditions of their existence in different climes and in different sociohistorical conjunctures. Does not the student's exposure to different cultures provide him with terms to distance himself and so to understand that there are others equally rich and to be appreciated as his own? Is this not an imperative particularly for the American student, given the sorry history of the abuses of American power in the Third World during the Cold War? Would the military-industrial complex have had the unrestrained power to wage war and prop up dictatorships in Southeast Asia and Latin America if the American populace was as sympathetic and

informed about these cultures as it has been about the European? Or the Japanese taught about the peoples and island cultures of Southeast Asia in terms other than the debasing one of underdevelopment within the master narrative of modernization? A consequence of dealing with literature as fields of power struggle is the essentializing reification of the far from absolute validity of social Darwinism in the realm of human relations, if only because the doctrine is such a perfect justification for the rule of the powerful. The discourse of power struggle casts everyone as victors and vanquished. It is difficult to square with a sense of affection for or of belonging to the various cultures of the world which we must foster in order to prevent their reduction into the univocity of one.

There is, admittedly, that enormous qualification that history has so far stranded us all, victors and vanquished alike, on a dry and hostile wasteland uninhabitable by gentle souls. For never before has daily life been subjected to this degree of relentless control by various technologies of knowledge and profit-oriented management systems, now operating even in the ruined towers of the university. The quiet space for reflection required by the so-called human sciences shrinks at an ever accelerating pace. The moving television image assaults the eye and stupefies the mind. The blatant exercise of power in the name of the law and "the truth" makes a farce of the nation's political institutions. And the mass media, secure in the arms of affluent conglomerates, mocks us all by endlessly reproducing its inanities in massive numbers. One may very well ask how the pure ideality of mathematics turned to this empty dictatorship of the number. The reduction of minds and bodies to number, of history and literary work to a dead letter; the compression of time to the eruption of the next technology, underscores the ideology of the new and novel that is so perfectly congruent with the mode of production that compels

more and more populations under its empire. Under these conditions, indeed, the belief in individual autonomy and freedom can only be viewed with ironic scepticism. Power, indeed, seems to be the name of the game.

For Frederic Jameson, the foremost Marxist literary critic in the U.S., past and present are linked by a monumental project, "the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity," and history remains a narrative, the single, vast, and unfinished story of the class struggle between oppressor and oppressed.[6] Consequently, he argues for the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts as an absolute horizon. It may well be that the radical posthumanist and political critique of the past, its works and its authors, is a monumental evasion of our own predicament by a retrospective projection. And it could also be that the Marxist project will ever prove to be a grand illusion. But even if it were, it is a noble one, and it is difficult to see how the new historicist practice can be justified on other grounds than the necessity to keep faith with the struggle. Nevertheless, it seems important to keep in mind that reading and writing, and the habit of thinking *otherwise*, constitute the one area of freedom that always remains with us. And when we presume to interrogate the texts of the present and the past, they must also be allowed to put us on trial. For that is perhaps the way to awaken the dead. And to keep the living from joining the debris that keeps piling skyward before the horror-stricken eyes of history's angel.

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[6] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 19.

How can one name everyone who contributed in preparing the scene for this meeting of minds in the exploration of a fundamental question and a set of methods? James Reichert and Patricia Welch began the conversations that led to the choice of topic. Lili Selden rose to the major challenge of mulling complicated issues of budgetary constraints and travel arrangements in Ann Arbor while the conference chair was in Tokyo. And she recruited Sarah Hashimoto and Timothy Van Compernolle to configure the unfamiliar logistics of food and lodging for a hundred people. It was the indefatigable efforts of the graduate student staff that created the sense of excellent planning and organization, as well as warm hospitality, which so impressed the participants of the conference. I thank them for their unfailing reliability and good humor in an undertaking of so grand a scale--so far the largest of the MAJLS conferences--that it sorely taxed the meager resources of the Asian Languages and Cultures department, and could easily have turned into a debacle. That it did not is due also to the department's staff--particularly Karen Munson, and our Chair, Shuen-fu Lin. We might not have been so ambitious, had we realized the countless hours it involved, and find it still incredible that we brought it off.

To Brett de Bary, Norma Field, Mack Horton, and William Sibley, we give thanks for that spirit of intellectual responsiveness that enabled them to lead and carry on from the floor absorbing discussions of the panels in the deliberate absence of prearranged assignments. This was an innovation meant to generate a more participatory informality, and it worked. Bill Sibley also helped us through the difficult moments of remembering our dear colleague, Robert Danly, with his outrageously witty takeoff on Cole Porter. And we are grateful also to Ken Ito, Mark Nornes, and Leslie Pincus for being there to step into the breach when the spirit of improvisation flagged over the grueling three-day sessions.

To Karatani Kōjin and Komori Yōichi, Kawazoe Fusae, Tsurusaki Hiroo, Suzuki Jun, Itō Moriyuki, Handa Atsuko, Kimura Saeko, and other honored guests from Japan, thank you for cheerfully undergoing the taxing hours of travel across the ocean in order to present your varied perspectives and engage in dialogue with U.S. colleagues and students. The Michigan conference was intended to emphasize the need for direct bilingual occasions of this kind, and your enthusiastic participation has helped incalculably in setting a new norm for international conferences in japanology.

The University of Michigan's Rackham School for Graduate Studies was the first to commit funding for this project, followed by the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies. We appreciate their early recognition of its merit. As we had hoped, the Japan Foundation then came through with a major contribution, after which the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, the Office of the Vice-President for Research, and the International Institute lined up behind it as well. The final and decisive contribution came from the Center for Japanese Studies. Under the advice of its director, Hitomi Tonomura, the Center waited to see what gaps remained in the budget and duly came through with the means to fill them. To all these institutions, we express our appreciation for recognizing the value of an undertaking so crucial to liberating Japanese literary studies from the obscure ghettos of the academy. It is collaborative efforts like this one that will enable the field to play a broader role in the movements of cultural diversity animating the humanities today.

To all the talented participants from both coasts and the great midwest, your enthusiasm and adventurousness in exploring a topic both difficult and controversial cannot but summon our admiration. As readers will observe, there is rich material here for stimulating our teaching both on the graduate and undergraduate

level, and to generate further research for dissemination in articles, books, and dissertations.

I have saved the name of Eiji Sekine for the last and most honored place in this introduction. Eiji, as most of the members know, is the prime mover behind MAJLS. It is he who summoned us to the first seminar at Purdue that later grew into the Midwest Association and has now swelled to such proportions that plans have been laid to go national (it was international from the first) by year 2000. As always, he has generously taken over the task of editing the Proceedings, despite the sudden change in plans that necessitated his organizing the 1998 conference as well. The Association is extremely fortunate to have a scholar of such unstinting generosity in its ranks.