
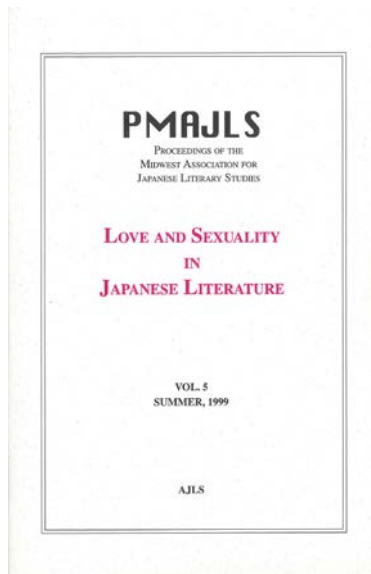


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LOVE AND SEXUALITY IN JAPANESE LITERATURE

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FOREWORD

This volume includes papers presented at the seventh annual meeting of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies. The conference, which was held November 6–8, 1998, at Purdue University, highlighted the issues of love and sexuality in Japanese literature. The call for papers stressed the importance of these issues as consistently highlighted topics throughout the history of Japanese literature and encouraged proposals which would examine them from a variety of perspectives. Possible topics suggested by the conference chair included: examination of traditional notions of love and sexuality associated with terms such as “koi” and “irogonomi” in Heian court literature and culture and “tsū” and “iki” in Edo literature; examinations of eroticism and erotic other in both classical and modern texts; questions related to the politics of sexuality in conjunction with the construction of self, gender, and national identities and in conjunction also with such notions as family, mother, and father; questions pertaining to the issues of body and visibility in texts, in particular, in film, theater, and *manga*; and questions in terms of the conference theme’s religious, mythological, aesthetic, and ethical implications. The call for papers also solicited examinations and applications of different theoretical approaches to the issues, specifically indicating psychoanalysis, semiotics, feminism, queer theory, deconstructive reading, and new historicism.

Researchers of diverse regional and disciplinary affiliations excitedly responded to our call for papers. Apart from the two keynote speakers from Japan, we had a variety of international participants (one from Europe, three from Australia, and three from Japan). As for US/Canadian participants, we had an increasing number of participants from outside the Midwest region. In terms of content also, we witnessed a rich diversity of proposals in their selection of topics, as well as their choice of theoretical standpoints. You will find that the topics and theoretical approaches suggested in the call for papers are all insightfully discussed and examined by the variety of essays included in this volume.

As you can see in this volume’s table of contents, we lack, however, a historical diversity: Only one chapter of this volume is dedicated to the study of classical Japanese literature and the rest of the papers deal with modern texts. Also note that this volume contains a record number of graduate students’ essays. The chosen issues, together with the call for theoretical approaches, seem to particularly attract younger researchers. Interactions during the conference proved that we had a number of ambitious scholars who displayed fresh and insightful understandings of the issues.

We were fortunate to have two promising keynote speakers from Japan. Both Professors Inaga Shigemi and Saeki Junko were the latest winners of the prestigious Suntory Academic Research Prize. Professor Inaga's book, *Kaiga no tasogare (Twilight years of the painting: the posthumous battle of Edouard Manet)*, (Nagoya University Press, 1997) was awarded the prize in 1997, while Professor Saeki's book, "*Iro*" to "*ai*" *no hikaku bunkashi* (a comparative cultural history of "iro" and "ai," Iwanami Shoten, 1998) was a 1998 winner. Professor Saeki's paper in this volume closely examines the nature of the change of the notions of love and sexuality in Japanese literature in the transition from Edo to Meiji. Her essay in our volume, as well as her above mentioned book, which examines the same issues more extensively and diversely, provide us with a basic set of criteria for the understanding of the modern Japanese literary notion of love. Professor Inaga's paper focuses on an aspect of the contemporary Japanese understanding of sexuality by examining a variety of reviews of a 1996 best seller book, which consists of interviews with different adult video actresses. He sheds a thought-provokingly new light on the nature of the discursive formation among contemporary Japan's intellectual community, and how it effects the ways in which this community manages to digest a new aspect of sexuality. His paper, together with some of the other papers included in this volume which deal with modern Japanese pop culture, expresses well one of the current interdisciplinary interests in the study of Japanese literature.

We appreciate the continuous support of the North East Asia Council of the AAS, which, this time again, partially funded the conference. Our acknowledgment also goes to internal support from Purdue University. Special thanks are due to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, which not only supported the conference, but also has provided consistent support to our publication activities from the initial foundation of our study group to the present. As for this volume's publication, I am thankful to Jim Drummond, who has recently joined our team as a production editor for our proceedings publication and helped complete the final manuscript.

Let me finish with an additional note. As has been announced, our association has changed our name to the Association for Japanese Literary Studies in order to further develop our horizon beyond our regional Midwestern boundary. Please know that since our publications are mostly supported by the membership drive, it is imperative that you continue to support us by joining us.

Eiji Sekine
Conference Chair, 1998
Purdue University