

AJLS Newsletter

Association for Japanese Literary Studies

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Edited by Eiji Sekine

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<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/fl/AJLS> (Web site)

TWENTIETH ANNUAL MEETING

The Poetics of Aging:
Confronting, Resisting and Transcending Mortality
in the Japanese Narrative Arts

November 4-6, 2011
Tufts University

Call for Papers

The Japanese Program at Tufts University will be hosting the annual meeting of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies (AJLS) on November 4-6, 2011. Our keynote speaker will be the Nobel Laureate Ōe Kenzaburō.

Japanese society is rapidly aging, and related topics are on everyone's mind. As literary subjects and themes, however, aging and the human struggle with mortality are hardly new. *Hakanasa* and *mujō* force the issue of all things coming to an end, as voiced in Okura's lament: "Upon the locks that glistened/black as a snail's gut/in an unknown hour/descends the frost of winter." Knowing the high and returning to the low, Bashō discovered *karumi*. In his final months, Issa found joy in full surrender to Buddha. Higashiyama Kaii came to talk with the trees in his backyard garden. Ohno Kazuo danced himself into a space where life and death are one and the same.

Who is old? And what do the old do? For Kenreimon'in, a quiet life in Ōhara was a forced retirement. For Goshirakawa, the institution of *insei* was a way to keep a hand on power.

The Heike warriors who challenged the retired emperor were not necessarily meant to grow old; and the same can be

said of their enemies. Yoshitsune is always played by a young boy on the Noh stage. Kusunoki Masasue wished only to have eight lives to sacrifice in service of his emperor. His violent samurai death was much to Mishima's liking. What are we doing, living past the age of forty?

Perhaps women and men age differently. In Saikaku's floating world, the "woman who loved love" gradually slides into desuetude, while Yonosuke gets a free pass to the Isle of Women. Centuries later, Ariyoshi Sawako writes of heroic women changing diapers for "ecstatic" men, while Tanizaki and Kawabata persist with their geriatric fantasies—a perfect thigh here, a severed arm there.

In contemporary Japan, the aged are both nearer and farther from our minds. Oshii Mamoru's omniscient Puppet Master denies aging by merging with the beautiful though self-doubting Kusanagi Motoko, while Takita Yojirō's *Okuribito* infuses our sober thoughts into rags moving deftly over dead skin.

Understandably, aging is an important theme in Ōe's latest work, which we hope to hear about in full force when he visits Medford. In *Torikae ko*, he converses with his deceased brother-in-law, the famous director and actor Itami Jūzō. In a recent (August 6) *New York Times*

article, he marked the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing by registering the “silent protest” of “an old Japanese man.” Are these T.S. Eliot’s ignorable rantings of the aged? “As we grow older the world becomes stranger/ the pattern more complicated/ of dead and living.”

The tentative schedule for the conference is as follows.

TUFTS CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

November 3, Thursday: Lecture by Ōe Kenzaburō (open to the public)

AJLS CONFERENCE ON THE POETICS OF AGING

November 4, Friday: Lecture by Ōe Kenzaburō (AJLS participants only), banquet (for registered participants)

November 5, Saturday: papers and panels/luncheon/a round-table discussion on Ōe’s later work/dinner/performance

November 6, Sunday: breakfast/round-table discussion

We are calling for papers that focus on a work, or an author, or a theme related to the general notion of aging. Some possible themes might be senescence, experience and wisdom, generational change, shamanism and ancestor worship, age and eroticism, illness, mortality and immortality, death and dying, the aesthetics of aging, care of the aged, and so forth.

Please submit proposals individually or in groups (for panels and round-table discussions). In all cases, please send a paper abstract and a cv for each person. All accepted papers must be written and circulated prior to the conference. During the conference, we prefer that you discuss your ideas rather than read your papers. Finally, we reserve the right to re-arrange papers in altered groupings, should that seem conducive to the flow of the conference. It might be appropriate to add a paper to a proposed panel, for instance, or to move one from one group to another.

Panels and round-table discussions should be led by a moderator, who will be expected to orchestrate the contributions of selected participants, draw in the audience, and keep everyone on topic. To this end, a successful group proposal

will include the following.

- A theme and rationale for the panel or discussion (two paragraphs)
- A moderator (please include contact information)
- A brief statement from each participant about their level of interest in the discussion and what they might contribute to it
- A cv from each participant
- An abstract of each paper

We already know that one round-table will discuss Ōe’s later work, and that he will be present! If you would like to write a paper for this event, a few spots are still available.

We are planning a few meals and a performance. As always, there will be a registration fee. See you in November.

Send your paper, panel, and round-table discussion ideas to charles.inouye@tufts.edu with **ajls** in the subject line. The deadline for proposals is June 30.

Respectfully,
Hosea Hirata
Charles Shiro Inouye
Susan Napier, Chair

AJLS Activities

Annual Meeting

An annual meeting is organized by an elected Conference Chair(s) and held at the host institution. A call for papers is announced in the spring issue of the AJLS Newsletter. A program of the meeting is published in the fall issue of the Newsletter.

PAJLS Publication

All papers presented during the annual meeting can be included in an officially registered serial titled PAJLS (Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies).

Membership

The annual fee is US\$25.00 for regular, student, and institution members (US\$35.00 for overseas members outside North America). Membership provides you with:

- Panel participation for our annual meeting (if your proposal is selected).
- Two newsletters
- One copy of our latest proceedings.
- One free copy of a back or additional current issue of the proceedings if you are a student member.

Inquiries and orders (with checks payable to AJLS) should be sent to the AJLS office. **All annual meeting participants must become members in order to present.**

Proceedings Back Issues

Our 2009 conference proceedings (PAJLS, vol. 11) has been published. Each back issue is \$10.00 for AJLS members and \$15.00 for non-members. Orders should be sent to the AJLS office. (Add \$15 for mailing if you order from outside the North American area.) Tables of contents of our back issues are posted on our web site at: www.cla.purdue.edu/fll/AJLS. The following back issues are available:

Japan from Somewhere Else, PAJLS 3, 2002.

Japanese Poeticity and Narrativity Revisited, PAJLS 4, 2003.

Hermeneutical Strategies: Methods of Interpretations in the Study of Japanese Literature, PAJLS 5, 2004.

Landscapes Imagined and Remembered PAJLS 6, 2005.

Reading Materials: The Production of Narratives, Genres, and Literary Identities, PAJLS 7, 2006.

Travel in Japanese Representational Culture: Its Past, Present, and Future, PAJLS 8, 2007.

Literature and Literary Theory, PAJLS 9, 2008.

Parody, PAJLS 10, 2009.

Rethinking Gender in the Postgender Era, PAJLS 11, 2010.

Call for 2012 and Later Host

We are looking for people who will be willing to chair our 2012 and later conferences. If you are interested in hosting our meeting, please contact Professor Ann Sherif at: ann.sherif@oberlin.edu.

AJLS Membership Form

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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Status:

() Regular () Student

If you are a student, indicate which free copy you would like:

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PAPER/PANEL PROPOSAL FORM

Poetics of Aging

DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 2011

Title (Panel or Paper):

Name (Moderator or Panelist):

Status: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Fax:** _____

E-mail: _____

Please attach your proposal to this form and send to charles.inuye@tufts.edu or mail to: Olin 306, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155

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