

# AJLS Newsletter

Association for Japanese Literary Studies

No. 25 (Spring, 2007)

Edited by Eiji Sekine

AJLS • Purdue University • 640 Oval Drive • W. Lafayette, IN 47907-2039 • USA  
765.496.2258 (Tel) • 765.496.1700 (Fax) • esekine@purdue.edu (Email)  
<http://www.sla.purdue.edu/fl/AJLS> (Web site)

## The Sixteenth Annual Meeting Literature and Literary Theory

November 2-4, 2007  
Princeton University

### Call for Papers

"What is literature? What is literary theory? What are the boundaries of *Japanese* literature? *Japanese* literary theory? Discussions on these questions are inexhaustible yet unavoidable in our study. These basic questions govern our practices because they define our discipline as well as our approaches to our objects of inquiry. In Japan and elsewhere, historical contingencies have defined and redefined "literature" and "literary theory"; numerous theoretical trends have further configured and reconfigured the contours of "literature." The categories "Japan" and "Japanese" too have gone through much transformation, further complicating this line of inquiry. This three-day conference will revisit these basic questions and attempt to rigorously explore the foundation of our study.

As Michel Foucault has shown, literature as we know it now is a 19<sup>th</sup> Century invention. But works we categorize under the rubric "literature" have existed since time immemorial and across the globe. Various approaches have been taken to theorize literary works: in premodern Japan, we have, for example, a variety of *karon* (poetic theories) such as the fa-

mous "Preface" to the *Kokinshū* by Ki no Tsurayuki and other genre-specific treatises such as those on *renga* (linked verse) and *haiku*. Discussions of prose narratives have also appeared throughout history. Western literature, aesthetics, and philosophy entered Japan of the modern period, and literature took a dramatic turn: the discipline of "literature" was produced, along with a new sense of aesthetics and new attitudes toward expression and form. Whether in the premodern or modern era, theories thus not only offered paradigms by which to compose and interpret their putative literary objects, but they often arose out of complex negotiations with the varying forces of history.

The above questions cannot be divorced from the more recent theoretical trends, evidenced in the surge of theories that we often categorize under the blanket term "postmodernism" that have further reconfigured our literary practices: these include post-structuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, queer theory, and other theories of gender and sexuality to name a few. Many such movements have questioned the basic tenets of our past and present literary studies and hence the boundaries of "literature." How do these

theoretical perspectives define Japanese literature? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are the main theoretical issues governing our study for literature today? This conference hopes to address such issues and more.

The scope of inquiry will range from ancient writings to contemporary texts. We hope the participants will explore a variety of issues, including but not limited to:

- Recent theoretical trends: their possibilities and limits
- Historical changes in how we perceive literature and literary theory in Japan
- The transformation of the role of the author and his/her relation to the literary production in the history of Japanese literature
- Historical development of literary theory from the premodern to modern times.
- Shifting boundaries of “Japan” and “Japanese-ness”
- The mutual relationship between theory and practice and how they have evolved in the history of Japanese literature
- The relationship between a chosen mode of discourse and its “object”
- How theories of translation, cultural studies, and nationalism engage with the production of Japanese cultural and literary boundaries
- Relationship between history, memory, and literature in Japan
- Relationship between politics and literature in Japan
- “Anti-theory” and “pro-theory” in the study of Japanese literature

Deadline for receipt of abstracts of no more than 250 words is **May 15, 2007**. We welcome individual submissions as well as 3 or 4 person panel proposals. To facilitate maximal audience participation, there will be no formal discussants. Conference languages are English and Japanese.

Proposals should be submitted electronically to the conference website: <http://www.princeton.edu/ajls/>

All other correspondence may be directed to the organizers Richard H. Okada and Atsuko Ueda via the contact information listed below:

AJLS 2007  
Department of East Asian Studies  
211 Jones Hall  
Princeton University  
Princeton, NJ 08544  
[ajls2007@princeton.edu](mailto:ajls2007@princeton.edu)

### **2006 Meeting Report**

The fifteenth annual meeting of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies was held at the Tokyo campus of Josai International University on the first and second of July, 2006. On the theme of “Travel in Japanese Representational Culture,” 59 panelists presented their papers. The keynote addresses by a noted SF novelist, Komatsu Sakyō and Professor Yoshiaki Shimizu of Princeton University, together with the major address by Professor Herbert Plutschow of Josai International University, offered the conference attendees further understanding of Japanese travel literature and culture. Over 120 people attended the association’s first international conference held outside the States. The conference was chaired by Professor Mizuta Noriko, Chancellor of Josai University Corporation, organized by Professor Miki Sumito, his administrators (Professors Kawano Yuka, Okada Miyako, and David Luan), and Josai Corporation staff. Their meticulous organization and warm hospitality were highly appreciated by all attending members. Professor Mizuta was interviewed by the Daily Yomiuri and talked about our conference. The article was published on August 4, 2006.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## **AJLS Membership**

The annual fee is \$25.00 for regular, student, and institution members (\$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. Further information on our activities is available on our website: [www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/AJLS](http://www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/AJLS).

## **University of British Columbia will host 2008 AJLS**

University of British Columbia will host our next year's conference in the Fall of 2008. If you are interested in hosting an AJLS meeting for 2009 or later, please contact Professor Ann Sherif at: [ann.sherif@oberlin.edu](mailto:ann.sherif@oberlin.edu) or 440.775.8827.

## **New Proceedings and Back Issues**

The new issues of our proceedings, *Reading Material: The Production of Narratives, Genres and Literary Identities* (PAJLS, vol. 7) and *Travel in Japanese Representational Culture: Its Past, Present, and Future* (PAJLS, vol. 8), will be published this summer. The following back issues are available. Each copy is \$10.00 for AJLS members and \$15.00 for non-members. Orders should be sent to the AJLS office. (Add \$10 for mailing if you order from outside the North American area.)

*Poetics of Japanese Literature*: vi, 207pp, 1993.

*Revisionism in Japanese Literary Studies*, PMAJLS, vol. 2: vi, 336pp., 1996.

*Issues of Canonicity and Canon Forma-*

*tion in Japanese Literary Studies*, PAJLS, vol. 1: vi, 532 pp., 2000.

*Acts of Writing*, PAJLS, vol. 2: ix, 428 pp., 2001.

*Japan from Somewhere Else*, PAJLS, vol. 3: vi, 158 pp., 2002.

*Japanese Poeticity and Narrativity Revisited*, PAJLS, vol. 4: vi, 344 pp., 2003.

*Hermeneutical Strategies: Methods of Interpretation in the Study of Japanese Literature*, PAJLS, vol. 4: xiii, 517 pp., 2004

*Landscapes Imagined and Remembered*, PMAJLS, vol. 6 : vii, 215 pp., 2005

### **AJLS Membership Form**

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**City**

**State**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Country**

**Zip**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Tel:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Institution:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Status:**

(        ) Regular    (        ) Student

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

AJLS Newsletter Sponsor: FLL, Purdue University

**PAPER/PANEL PROPOSAL FORM**  
*Literature and Literary theory*  
**DEADLINE: May 15, 2007**

Title:

---

Name and Status:

---

Institution:

---

Address:

---

Telephone:

Fax:

---

E-mail:

---

Please attach your 250-word proposal to this form and send to: <http://www.princeton.edu/ajls/>

AJLS  
Purdue University  
640 Oval Drive  
W. Lafayette, IN 47907-2039

Non-Profit Organization US Postage PAID
---