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In Memory of Mitani Kuniaki
(1941–2007)

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Introduction: Overthrowing the Emperor in Japanese Literary Studies

Michael K. Bourdaghs

By the mid-1980s, the world of literary studies in Japan had been hearing rumbles of revolt for some time. For more than a decade, a new generation of scholars and journalist-critics (*hyōronka*) had been chipping away at many of the foundational assumptions that governed the study of literature, especially modern Japanese literature. Academics who preferred the old ways, however, could still dismiss the upstarts as mere journalists interested more in keeping up with fashionable trends in theory than in serious scholarship, or, better yet, they could simply ignore them.

But in 1985 the rebels showed up at the main gate to the palace, battering ram in hand. A group of younger scholars—most notably Komori Yōichi (b. 1953) and Ishihara Chiaki (b. 1955)—launched a radical rereading of Natsume Sōseki’s 1914 novel *Kokoro* (The Heart), a work that had long been central to the canon of modern Japanese literature. This marked the onset of what came to be known as the “*Kokoro ronsō*” (*Kokoro* debate), a multipronged dispute that would occupy center stage in the discipline for several years to come.

Where did the challengers come from? As scholars, both Komori and Ishihara were trained in institutions that in some ways were peripheral to the institution of literary studies in Japan, a position that likely predisposed them toward innovations in approach.¹ While it would be overly simplistic

1. Komori was a student at Hokkaido University, a prestigious national university yet one without the long tradition in literature studies that marked more central institutions such as Tokyo University or Kyoto University. Ishihara was trained at Seijō University, a private university in Tokyo. As Atsuko Sakaki notes, it is symptomatic that while the radical new readings were published in fairly obscure journals the response by establishment critics tended to be published in the most widely respected journals in the field. See her *Recontextualizing Texts: Narrative Performance in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge: Asia Center, Harvard University, 1999), 29–53.

to suggest some sort of institutional determinism as an explanation for their work, clearly institutional positioning played a role in the debate.

But what really separated the two sides in the debate were fundamental differences in theoretical and methodological grounding, especially in their basic stances regarding the nature of communication, the structure of linguistic and semiotic processes, and the relationship between politics and language. As a result, the debate provides a convenient entryway into a discussion of the theoretical issues and historical events that link the essays presented in this volume.

The new readings of *Kokoro* were deliberately provocative. Ishihara accused previous scholars of misreading the novel, of mistakenly lionizing the character known as Sensei. Whereas Sensei had long been celebrated for his ethicality in the face of modern alienation and egotism, in fact—according to Ishihara—his ethic was implicitly murderous, an infantile narcissism that aimed primarily to destroy the Other in order to preserve its fantasy notion of the self.² Komori in his readings went even farther and directly accused establishment scholars of murdering the text, of stabbing it in the heart.³

Response to these accusations was swift in coming. In particular, Miyoshi Yukio (1926–90), professor emeritus at Tokyo University—the heart of the scholarly establishment—became the central voice in defending the established readings and methodologies. Space constraints do not allow me to rehearse in any detail the course of the debate over *Kokoro*, and other scholars have provided useful accounts, including Atsuko Sakaki and Oshino Takeshi.⁴ I will merely summarize a few of the positions that marked the new readings of the novel by Komori and Ishihara, as well as the responses made by their critics, especially those that are relevant to a reconsideration of the “linguistic turn” in recent Japanese literary criticism.

Whereas standard readings had always stressed the second half of the novel, the section titled “Sensei and His Testament,” the new readings tended to focus on the first half, the two sections narrated by the nameless student, who refers to himself using a polite form of the first-person pronoun in Japa-

2. Ishihara Chiaki, “Manazashi toshite no tasha: *Kokoro*,” originally published in *Tōkō Kokubungaku* in March, 1985 and reprinted in Ishihara Chiaki, *Hanten suru Sōseki* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1997), 155–80.

3. Komori Yōichi, “‘*Kokoro*’ wo seisei suru haato,” originally published in *Seijō Kokubungaku* in March 1985 and revised and reprinted in Komori Yōichi, *Buntai toshite no monogatari* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1988), 293–317.

4. See Sakaki, *Recontextualizing Texts*, 29–53; and Oshino Takeshi, “*Kokoro* ronsō no yukue,” in *Sōryoku tōron: Sōseki no Kokoro*, edited by Komori Yōichi, Nakamura Miharuru, and Miyagawa Takeo, 12–27 (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 1994). The latter volume contains a number of useful essays that take up the *Kokoro* ronsō.

nese: Watakushi. The revisionist readings stressed Watakushi’s ethicality over that of Sensei, and—perhaps the real source of outrage on the part of the establishment—they speculated on the possibility of an erotic relationship between Watakushi and Shizu, Sensei’s wife, after Sensei’s suicide. Miyoshi Yukio titles one of his response pieces “Was Sensei a Cuckold?” a rhetorical question that hints at the sense of outrage the new readings provoked.

In terms of methodology, Komori’s radical new readings were also marked by an insistence on calling *Kokoro* a “text” (*tekisuto* in katakana) as opposed to a “work” (*sakuhin*). As Oshino notes, this methodological conflict was at the core of the debate. In using the term *text*, Komori meant in part to stress the openness of *Kokoro* to its outside both in terms of its insistence on intertextuality and in terms of its narrative incompleteness, the open-endedness of its story that seemed to require active intervention by the reader. By insisting that literary value lay not so much in the text itself as in the relationship between the text and its reader, Komori’s stance challenged not only the position of *Kokoro* as an anchor securing the national canon, but also that of Sōseki as its author, who was no longer positioned as the guarantor of value standing behind the text. This novel about the death of father figures—including, notably, the Meiji Emperor—was transformed in the *Kokoro* ronsō into a topos for debating the death of the author in Japanese literary studies.

Komori’s insistence on calling *Kokoro* a text was specifically a challenge to the widely used methodology of *sakuhinron* (studies of a single work), an approach closely identified with the figure of Miyoshi Yukio. Komori’s attack on orthodox *sakuhinron* was in some ways ironic because Miyoshi himself had been perceived as a Young Turk in the 1960s and 1970s when he first advocated for the (then) new methodology. Miyoshi’s earlier advocacy of *sakuhinron* had involved him in, among other things, a fierce debate in 1976–77 with Tanizawa Eiichi (b. 1929) over methodology and its place in literary studies.⁵ By the time of the *Kokoro* debate, however, *sakuhinron* had won wide acceptance as one of the standard methodologies in the field and hence presented a prime target for a rebellious generation of younger scholars.

In some ways similar to American New Criticism, *sakuhinron* stressed the primacy of the individual literary work and its internal structures and hence challenged methodologies, such as literary history, that had previously held sway. The relationship between *sakuhinron* and another dominant methodology, *sakkaron* (author studies), is more complex and became a question debated in the *Kokoro* ronsō. *Sakuhinron* shifted scholarly focus

5. On Miyoshi’s debate with Tanizawa, see Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, *Was heisst: Japanische Literatur verstehen?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 188–210.

from author to individual works, but, as Miyoshi himself argued, it ultimately aimed to return its readings of individual texts back to some sort of authorial intent.⁶ The problem, as Reiko Abe Austead notes (paraphrasing Maeda Ai), is that “*sakuhinron* as an alternative for *sakkaron* does not touch the heart of the problem, which actually lies in the choice of method rather than in the subject of discussion.”⁷ Moreover, as Tanizawa Eiichi argued, Miyoshi’s stress on *sakuhinron* as a quasi-scientific methodology concealed its grounding in an implicit worship of the author as a semi-mystical, transcendent “prophet,” a stance that mystified the actual historical position of the literary work and its author.⁸ The rejection of *sakuhinron* by Komori and Ishihara was in part an attempt to demystify the position that earlier methodologies had assigned to the author as the final guarantor of meaning of literary texts.

Nonetheless, in their attempt to replace *sakuhinron* with new theories and methodologies, the younger scholars who launched the *Kokoro ronsō* were in large measure repeating the tactics by which the old guard (Miyoshi et al.) had established its position a generation earlier when its members had used the seemingly abstract and obscure methodology of *sakuhinron* to critique the existing field of literary studies in Japan. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, “permanent revolution” is characteristic of the field of cultural production in which newcomers, in order to “occupy a distinct, distinctive position,” must “assert their difference, get it known and recognized,” a process they carry out “by endeavoring to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and with the doxa, and therefore bound to disconcert the orthodoxy by their ‘obscurity’ and ‘pointlessness.’”⁹

As the *Kokoro ronsō* progressed, the revisionists would in some ways back down, distancing themselves from positions they had taken earlier in the dispute.¹⁰ Yet it was clear that, at least in part due to the debate itself, they had emerged as the leading force in the field of Japanese literature studies. “One of the difficulties of orthodox defense against heretical transformation of the field,” to quote Bourdieu again, “is the fact that polemics imply a form

of recognition; adversaries whom one would prefer to destroy by ignoring them cannot be combated without consecrating them.”¹¹ Ishihara and Komori went on to become editors of the influential journal *Sōseki kenkyū*, and Komori was already a faculty member at Tokyo University, taking up institutionally a position similar in prestige to that held earlier by Miyoshi. In many ways, the rebels were now the establishment.

The *Kokoro ronsō* helped establish a new set of critical methodologies, many of them adapted from linguistics and semiotics, as the new methodological standard for literary studies in Japan. By the time the *Kokoro ronsō* had reached its (ultimately inconclusive) conclusion, literary scholars and critics in Japan were more likely to read “texts” than “works.” It became, then, one of the culminating moments in what might be called the “linguistic turn” in Japanese literary studies. As in the American academy, the rise of “theory” in literary studies in Japan was often propelled by the adaptation of concepts and methodologies originally developed in the realm of linguistics, be it in the structuralism of Saussure, the dialogism of Vološinov and Bakhtin, the theories of linguistic subjectivity derived from the work of Benveniste, or the analyses of codes, message, and poetic function carried out by Jakobson and the Prague School.

Moreover, while Komori’s and Ishihara’s linguistics-informed readings of *Kokoro* enraged many establishment scholars, they were attacked by younger scholars for not going far enough. These objections, too, were often grounded in concepts derived directly or indirectly from linguistics and the philosophy of language. Kōno Kensuke, for example, noted that behind Komori’s critique of modernity and capitalism (and of the debased form of language that Komori thought they had introduced) lay the utopian fantasy of a prelapsarian community, one marked by perfect communication, for which the mother-infant relationship served as the model. This view, grounded in Jakobson’s notion of the circuit of communication, ignores the noise, the discommunication, that is an inherent part of any process of communication and that alone renders possible some sort of encounter with the Other, the self-proclaimed goal of Komori’s ethical stance. Instead of an encounter with Otherness, Komori’s implicit communication model results in what Brian G. Chang calls the “transcendence of difference” that inadvertently results in the “unquestioned valorization of identity over difference, of the selfsame over alterity.”¹² Komori has mounted an impressive

6. See Miyoshi Yukio, “Watonson wa hainshinsha ka: *Kokoro* saisetu,” *Bungaku* 56:5 (May 1988): 7–21.

7. Reiko Abe Austead, *Rereading Sōseki: Three Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Novels* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 18.

8. Tanizawa Eiichi, “*Bungaku kenkyū ni taikai mo hōhōron mo arienai*,” *Bungaku* 45:1 (January 1977): 108–13. This passage appears on page 113.

9. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, translated by Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 52, 58.

10. See, for example, Komori Yōichi, “‘Watakushi’ to iu ‘tasha’sai: *Kokoro* wo meguru ōtokuritokku,” *Bungaku* 3:4 (Autumn 1992): 13–27.

11. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 42.

12. Brian G. Chang, *Deconstructing Communication: Representation, Subject, and Economies of Exchange* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xi.

critique of the utopian fantasies that reigned in previous literary studies, Kōno concludes, only to replace them with another potentially solipsistic utopian fantasy.¹³

Oshino argues likewise and proposes replacing the symmetrical model of communication that Komori implicitly relies on with an asymmetrical model, such as Wittgenstein proposed in his philosophy of language games, in which no presumption is made of a preexisting shared linguistic code between sender and receiver.¹⁴ Suga Hidemi, in turn, argued that Komori had mistakenly equated narrative (*monogatari*) with prose fiction (*shōsetsu*) and ordinary spoken language with the specific deconstructive force of writing (*écriture*). This confusion risked co-opting whatever might be radical in *Kokoro* into the conventional genre of the psychological novel in which words are taken as expressions that are ultimately anchored in certain ideal character types rather than as openings for exploration of the constant unraveling of meaning and identity.¹⁵ Suga's critique in some ways paralleled recent developments in linguistics, where such figures as S. Y. Kuroda had begun to explore the specific linguistic properties of fictional narratives. These scholars were fascinated by the realization that certain sentences—those written in *style indirect libre*, for example—which would be considered ungrammatical and/or impossible if spoken in ordinary conversation, were nonetheless considered quite proper when they appeared within the context of a novel or short story.¹⁶ When one adapted concepts from linguistics for use in literary criticism, one had to keep in mind that the language of fiction did not necessarily follow the rules for language usage in general.

On top of this, the linguistic turn in Japan was complicated because of the uncomfortable co-presence of competing disciplinary forms of linguistics. In addition to departments of Western-style linguistics (*gengogaku*), Japanese universities typically also included departments of "national language studies" (*kokugogaku*) where scholars studied the Japanese language using what are believed to be a largely homegrown set of tools and methodologies. *Kokugogaku* traces its lineage back to premodern scholars of the Japanese language that worked outside the traditions of Western linguistics such as Fujitani Nariakira (1738–79) and Suzuki Akira (1764–1837). But the

modern discipline of *kokugogaku* was established in the 1890s with the work of Ueda Kazutoshi (1867–1937), who established the department at Tokyo Imperial University at the same time as his faculty colleague Haga Yaichi (1867–1927) was establishing the first modern department of "national literature studies" (*kokubungaku*).

This co-presence of competing forms of linguistics meant that the linguistic turn in Japanese literary studies involved turns in more than one direction. This provided some unusually complicated vectors of development. For example, while many of the literary critics and scholars involved in the linguistic turn invoked various forms of structuralism derived directly or indirectly from the work of Saussure, in fact the implicit theory of language underlying the work of many scholars in orthodox *kokubungaku* lineages was derived from a post-Saussurean critique of structuralism. Establishment scholars often explicitly or implicitly turned to the theories of *kokugogaku* scholar Tokieda Motoki (1900–1967) whose work provided one of the first sustained critiques of Saussure's central notions of *langue* and *parole*. In the 1930s and 1940s, Tokieda developed a brilliant critique of Saussure's model of language, proposing in its place what Tokieda called "language process theory," which rejected the entire notion of *langue* as an abstract structure of rules governing language usage. Linguistic expressions were always utterances spoken in a specific place and time, by a specific someone, addressing a specific someone else, Tokieda argued. Only by taking up language from the situation of concrete utterances and the intersubjective relationships they brought into being could one hope to begin to understand its true nature. The essay by John Whitman in chapter five of this volume takes up the work of Tokieda, especially examining its legacy for postwar linguistics in Japan.

In other words, in the linguistic turn in Japanese literary criticism, one sometimes encountered the odd situation in which one form of linguistics (Saussurean structuralism) was perceived as a new methodology that critiqued another form of linguistics (*kokugogaku*), a form that—at least in its Tokieda-derived lineage—had begun as a critique of that first form of linguistics.¹⁷ On the other hand, critics advocating the new methodologies were often criticized for merely borrowing foreign-originated (*gaizaiteki*) theories and methodologies and applying them blindly to a Japanese reality that was supposedly ill suited to them. Ishihara Chiaki, for example, in a 1987 article written at the height of the *Kokoro* ronsō, directly challenges accusations that he employs too many *katakana* (i.e., foreign-originated) words

13. Kōno Kensuke, "Komori Yōichi-shi no nicho wo megutte: Yūtopia no kanata e," *Bai* 5 (December 1988): 92–99.

14. Oshino, "Kokoro ronsō no yukue," 21–24.

15. Suga Hidemi, "Shōmetsu suru shōkei moji: Kokoro wo yomu," *Shinchō* 86:6 (June 1989): 194–205.

16. S. Y. Kuroda, "Where Epistemology, Style, and Grammar Meet: A Case Study from Japanese," in *A Festschrift for Morris Halle*, edited by Stephen R. Anderson and Paul Kiparsky, 377–91 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

17. To complicate matters further, many of the critics and scholars associated with the linguistic turn also expressed a sympathetic interest in Tokieda's linguistic theories. Whitman's chapter, for example, discusses how Kamei Hideo and Karatani Kōjin view Tokieda.

in his articles.¹⁸ Whitman argues in his chapter that in fact the reaction that Tokieda's *kokugogaku* provoked on the part of many linguists was evidence of a turf war over which discipline was going to control the linguistic capital that accompanied the power to produce authorized translations of concepts from Western linguistic theory. Scholars trained in Western linguistics were offended that someone from the *kokugogaku* lineage would presume to possess the competency to critique the basic concepts of Western traditions. Beneath this outrage lay another paradox as well: if Tokieda's native *kokugogaku* was produced in response to Saussure's theories, what precisely was "Japanese" about it?

As we have seen, the scholars and critics involved in the linguistic turn were often accused of blindly borrowing foreign theories and forcibly applying them to a Japanese reality that was intrinsically foreign to them. In some ways, this was a replay of the debates that nearly a century earlier had led to the dual structure of linguistics/*kokugogaku* in Japanese academia in the first place. It is a debate, too, that has seen its counterpart in many other non-Western countries when scholars have confronted the claims of universal validity made on behalf of Western forms of knowledge.

But a glance at the actual examples of criticism from the 1970s and 1980s translated in part one of this volume, four essays written in the midst of the linguistic turn, serves as a persuasive rebuttal to this charge of overly facile borrowing. For example, in chapter one the criticism of Noguchi Takehiko, one of the most influential scholars of literary and intellectual history in contemporary Japan, clearly takes hints from Jakobson and Saussure as he explores the semiotic codes and poetic functions at work in Japanese literary works. But Noguchi consistently uses the frameworks of semiotics as a kind of sounding board against which he can discover not only aspects that Western semiotics would expect but also aspects of Japanese literary texts that cannot easily be identified with existing Western terms, poetic tropes, for example, that cannot be classified according to such conventional categories as metaphor, metonymy or synecdoche. Likewise, in the essay translated here (chapter one), Noguchi uses ideas from semiotics and structuralist narratology to trace the development of a new form of literary criticism in the Japan of the 1850s, a development that likely could not be perceived without the framework of narratology. In reading through a commentary on *The Tale of Genji* by one Hagiwara Hiromichi (1815–63),

18. Ishihara Chiaki, "Seido toshite no 'kenkyū buntai,'" *Kindai Nihon bungaku* 37 (October 1987): 114–18.

Noguchi uncovers a remarkable attempt to theorize the poetic functions of language and their role in constructing the threads of fictional narrative, functions that Noguchi notes foreshadow Jakobson's ideas about the paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects of speech. In other words, Noguchi uses his remarkable fluency in Western-originated forms of linguistic and literary theory to render visible for the first time elements of literary and linguistic practices specific to Japan. In this way, Noguchi works to reveal the limits both of existing forms of literary theory in Japan and of supposedly universal Western theories.

Likewise, the other essays from the linguistic turn translated here demonstrate that the word *borrowing* hardly describes the relationship between Western-originated linguistic theories and the new generation of scholars that appeared in 1970s and 1980s Japan. In chapter two, "The Embodied Self," an essay taken from his 1977 book *Koga no shūgōsei: Ōoka Shōhei ron* (The Collectivity of the Individual: On Ōoka Shōhei), Kamei Hideo situates Ōoka Shōhei's war literature from the late 1940s and early 1950s in a revised version of modern Japanese literary history, one focused not on the rise of the "modern self" (*kindai jiga*), a shibboleth of conventional literary history in Japan, but on the deployment of intersubjectivity and intertextuality as keys to self-understanding. Along the way, Kamei uses linguistic theories of expression, in particular theories that insist on the dialogic nature of language, to mount an explicit challenge to the author-oriented methodologies (*sakkaron*) that dominated modern literature studies in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁹

Hirata Yumi in a 1984 essay translated in chapter three uses tools from structuralist linguistics and narratology, especially theories of the relationship between linguistic expression and subjectivity, to analyze the shifting structure of narrative discourse (in particular, the gradual splitting off of fictional "narrator" from "author") in late Edo and early Meiji fiction. In turn, Mitani Kuniaki, a highly respected scholar of classical Japanese, provides in chapter four a rebuttal to the work of both Kamei and Hirata, arguing that the rise of the narrator characteristic of modern Japanese fiction in fact represented the loss of a variety of possibilities that were inherent in the linguistic expressions of classical literature, in particular markers of perspective that fit only loosely the categories of linguistic aspect or tense and express

19. The chapter provides a kind of first draft of issues Kamei would explore at greater length in his major study, *Kansei no henkaku* (1983), available in English translation as *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, translation edited by Michael Bourdagh (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002).

a multiplicity of possible subjective relationships to temporality. For Mitani, the key to understanding the modern novel lies in its unification of the text around the past-tense marker auxiliary verb *-ta*, one that signals the presence of a single author whose perspective dominates the entire text.

These scholars are not mere imitators or borrowers—any more, that is, than are all scholars and critics. One of the great motivating factors that has led us to organize the present volume is the desire to bring their remarkable work to a wider audience.

To introduce a theme that links the essays contained in part two, let me return to the *Kokoro* ronsō. In a later reflection on the debate, Komori Yōichi would trace the origins of his radical rereading of the novel back to his own experiences in high school. Komori was a leader in the student protest movement in Japan, a movement that successfully shut down many university and high school campuses for extended periods, including the high school Komori attended, where classes were suspended for more than a year. After classes resumed, on his first day back in school, his lessons began with *Kokoro*, long one of the centerpieces of the pedagogical canon used in secondary education, especially in ethics and *kokugo* (“national language,” meaning Japanese language) classes. Komori began to wonder about what happened after the events narrated in the novel. What, for example, happened to Watakushi and Shizu after Sensei’s suicide? When he raised these questions with his teacher, he was rebuffed; those topics were not directly written about in the novel and hence did not “belong” to the range of legitimate topics of discussion about it.²⁰

The anecdote is telling for several reasons. For starters, it situates the origins of the *Kokoro* ronsō specifically in the collapse of the student protest movement and the fall of the New Left after 1970 in Japan. Moreover, it reveals that the debate was as much about politics and ideology as it was about linguistic methodology and literary hermeneutics. The crucial issues under dispute in the *Kokoro* ronsō, in fact, revolved largely around the ideological issues of ownership. Who did the novel belong to, the author, its original readers in early Taishō, or the contemporary critic? And what contents could properly be said to belong to it? Could, for example, apparent gaps within the text legitimately be filled in and, if so, by whom? Ultimately, the *Kokoro* ronsō represented a struggle over ownership of Sōseki and his works: which

20. Komori Yōichi, transcription of symposium opening remarks, in *Sōryoku tōron: Sōseki no Kokoro*, edited by Komori Yōichi, Nakamura Miharuru, and Miyagawa Takeo, 9-11 (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 1994), 10.

school of interpretation was going to win the right to legitimacy for its readings of the novel?

In one of his earliest salvos in the debate, Miyoshi Yukio surveyed notable events that occurred in 1985 in the field of modern literature studies in Japan, one of them being, of course, the publication Komori’s revisionist reading of *Kokoro*. Leading up to the discussion of Komori, Miyoshi describes an essay by Tanaka Minoru (who would later be an active participant in the *Kokoro* ronsō) that provided a new rereading of Mori Ōgai’s 1890 story “Maihime.” Miyoshi disagrees with Tanaka’s reading, and concludes:

This sort of nearly arbitrary “reading” of a modern literary work has all of a sudden begun to spring up everywhere lately. It is an inescapable byproduct of the boom in such methodologies as structuralism, cultural semiotics, and theories of the body.²¹

Miyoshi then moves into a discussion of Komori’s new thesis on *Kokoro*, complaining that it and other new interpretations of canonical texts (interpretations that Miyoshi insists on calling *sakuhinron*) try too hard to create new readings—or misreadings—by concentrating excessively on only one specific aspect of the text at hand, an approach that Miyoshi thinks can only lead into an unproductive vicious cycle.

Miyoshi then moves on to discuss a new edition of the collected works of the novelist Ibuse Masuji (1898–1993), for which the author had substantially revised works that had already attained canonical status. Miyoshi defends Ibuse’s right to engage in this sort of self-revisionism.

As something written by the author, a work is clearly owned by the author (*sakuhin wa akiraka ni sakka ni yotte shoyū sareru*). At the same time, however, through the medium of industrial capitalism in the form of publishing houses, as something sold to an indeterminate number of readers, a work also in part is something that belongs to readers (*sakuhin wa nakaba dokusha no shoyū ni zoku suru*).

Readers are free to choose between the old and new versions of the work, Miyoshi argues. “This is not a problem relating to evaluation, nor is it a problem relating to copyright,” he writes. For researchers in modern Japanese literature, it only becomes a problem in that it “presents an aporia that

21. Miyoshi Yukio, “Kokubungaku: kindai gendai,” in *Kokugo nenkan: Shōwa 61-nen ban*, edited by Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo (Tokyo: Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo, 1986), 44–45.

cannot be solved by the methods of classical bibliographical methods (*koten bunkengaku*).“ What is the real text (*honbun*)?”²²

In this passage, Miyoshi clearly deals with literary texts in terms of property. Authors have certain rights of ownership over literary works, as do readers. But there seem to be no rights of ownership granted to literary scholars; they must simply respect—perhaps even police—the property rights of the other two parties in the exchange.²³ Miyoshi portrays literature as a closed economy, an equal exchange of value between producer and consumer in which each can claim certain legitimate ownership rights and in which interference by a third party can only be something arbitrary and illegitimate, a form of theft. Such scholars, with their forced interpretations, resemble Sensei’s uncle, who cheated Sensei out of his proper inheritance. They deprive readers of the value that the author intended to bequeath to them. Or, as Miyoshi maintained a decade earlier, in the essay that set off the 1976 *ronsō* over methodology, literary scholarship (*kenkyū*) must be distinguished from literary criticism (*hihyō*) on grounds of propriety and ownership. “Whereas criticism always possesses the freedom to pursue creation (*sōzō e no jiyū o shoyū suru*),” he wrote, “scholarship is always blocked from the road followed by the object of its study, literature.” The work of a literary scholar can be considered a literary work only if it stops being literary scholarship and crosses the boundary to become a literary work (*sakuhin*) itself because literature is the “object” (*taishō* and *kyakutai*) of literary studies, not its “subject” (*shutai*).²⁴

As veterans of the Japanese New Left and its critiques of modern capitalist alienation, Komori and Ishihara in their readings explicitly work

through different models of readership and ownership.²⁵ Komori argues that, in Miyoshi’s charge that the new readings have rendered Sensei a cuckold, the very notion of “cuckoldry” depends on the modern patriarchal view of women as pieces of property exchanged between men, a view that Komori’s reading aimed to undermine.²⁶ (Miyoshi somewhat sarcastically responded to their accusation, “I accept the charge that, in my daily life, I am caught up within the framework of a capitalist system.”)²⁷ Komori insists that while Watakushi and Shizu may have had a sexual relationship after Sensei’s death, and may even have produced a child as a result, they would never marry since that would co-opt the radical ethicality of their relationship back into bourgeois norms of patriarchy and property.

For Miyoshi, literary scholarship is a kind of science, concerned with proving and disproving hypotheses. But for Ishihara and Komori literary scholarship is a mode of ideology critique. It might be helpful to reconsider the economic model that underlies their work in terms of Marcel Mauss’s theory of the gift and especially Jacques Derrida’s critical rewriting of that theory.²⁸ A social formation organized around and by the gift takes a spiraling, open-ended form, and in it the role of a third party is crucial. Gift exchanges between two parties have a tendency to decay into simple bartering, a closed-circle economy in which goods of equal value are exchanged. A third party guarantees, to borrow Lewis Hyde’s somewhat problematic but still useful formulation, that the gift keeps moving along an unending chain, that it never comes back in the same form to the original donor, and that its value remains arbitrary and incalculable. Such an approach shifts our focus from the sociological search for value to an ethical probing of relationality. The gift establishes an erotics of sociality with others in which one constantly gives oneself away with no guarantee of anything like equal value in return. A gift that stops moving, that is not

22. Ibid., 45. Emphasis in the original.

23. We see a similar stance in Miyoshi’s critique of the playwright Hata Kōhei’s stage adaptation of *Kokoro* in which Watakushi and Shizu end up together after Sensei’s death. Miyoshi criticizes the reading of the novel that Hata uses to justify his revisionist play. But, Miyoshi notes, he is not denying Hata’s freedom as an author to create a new fictional work using the characters and situations from *Kokoro*, writing, “I repeat, I have no intention of disputing Hata in his drama creating a new possible narrative based on *Kokoro*. Rather, it is when it is brought back to being a problem of a reading of *Sōseki’s Kokoro* that I raise my objection.” As an author (*sakka*), Hata has free rights of ownership over his play, but as a critic he must respect certain preexisting norms of ownership. Miyoshi Yukio, “Sensei’ wa kokyu ka,” *Kaie* 5:11 (November 1986): 190–91, emphasis in original.

24. Miyoshi Yukio, “Bungaku no hiroba,” *Bungaku* 44:11 (November 1976): 52–53. In the article Miyoshi critiques recent scholars who rely on theories of expression (*hyōgen*), arguing that the path to independence for modern literature studies in Japan from its reliance on classical literature studies is to develop a methodology that uses empirical evidence in a logical manner to prove or disprove hypotheses.

25. While the Japanese New Left was highly critical of the orthodox Left represented by, for example, the Japan Communist Party and the Japan Socialist Party, it nonetheless shared with the old Left a critical stance toward capitalism and its effects on modern society. This critique at times arose from Marxist and anarchist philosophical roots and at other times from sometimes utopian versions of folklore studies, which stressed the communal solidarity of premodern Japanese folk culture.

26. Komori Yōichi, “Kokoro no yukue,” *Seijō kokubungaku* 3 (March 1987): 55–61.

27. Miyoshi, “Watoson wa hainshinsha ka,” 13.

28. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by W. D. Halls (New York: Routledge, 1990); Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). I have explored these issues at greater length in my “Property and Sociological Knowledge: Natsume Sōseki and the Gift of Narrative,” *Japan Forum* 20:1 (March 2008), 79–101.

continuously passed on through an endless string of third parties, is instead transformed into capital or other form of stable property, and it loses its quality of being a gift.²⁹

The notion of an open-ended, spiraling, and constantly moving social formation, one in which giving and movement are stressed over owning and stability, is the implicit model underlying the new readings of *Kokoro* proposed by Komori and Ishihara. As Atsuko Sakaki has argued, each attempted a performative intervention in the field of modern literature studies. Whatever surplus values are produced through the intervention of the critic, moreover, must not accumulate in any one location in the social formation—be it the location of the author or of the critic—but rather must be continuously redistributed throughout the community of singular readers.³⁰ Komori's and Ishihara's readings stressed not only the ethicality of relating to Otherness but also the ways in which the novel violated hegemonic norms of property, propriety, and patriarchy. As such, they deliberately challenged existing interpretations that attempted to locate a stable value in the text, a value that could then be traced back to a legitimate owner, the author. To push their readings farther in the directions suggested by Kōno, Oshino, and Suga, this ethical stance implied a rejection of a simple communicative model of transmission between sender and receiver and instead insisted that all linguistic exchanges are mediated by one or more third parties—akin to Ludwig Wittgenstein's work on language games—and the semantic value of any utterance is never stabilized into identity.

This reformulation of the problem of ethicality can be traced back, in part, to the politics of New Left activism, the breeding ground from which many of the scholars of the linguistic turn emerged. The essays collected in part two of this volume explore in particular the politics of the linguistic turn. The linguistic and poetic theories that Yoshimoto Takaaki developed in the

29. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage, 1979), esp. 11–24. Hyde's formulation is problematic because he remains fully under the spell of literature and conceives the social order of the gift in terms of a closed-circle, static economy, precisely the mode of structuralist sociology that Derrida is at pains to reject. This leads Hyde to assert problematically that the disembodied rationality of the social sciences (especially ethnography) can provide a full understanding of the gift (see esp. 74–92) despite his assertions elsewhere that the gift can only be understood through the body (through the “heart” and “feelings”). This is to say, his stress on eros in discussing the politics of economics gives way to a stress on logos when he turns to the politics of knowledge. The model of erotics that I am using here is adapted in part from William Haver, *The Body of This Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of AIDS* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

30. Here I am adapting ideas from José Gil, *Metamorphoses of the Body*, translated by Stephen Muecke (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), esp. 45–52.

1960s were crucial to this: in many ways, the linguistic turn was a response to the theory of “expression” that Yoshimoto had unfolded in a series of influential works. As Richi Sakakibara argues in chapter seven, Yoshimoto's work involved an attempt to develop a new form of political critique that rejected orthodox Marxism, which also meant rejecting the Stalinist version of linguistics that had been so influential in Japan since the early 1950s.

In chapter six, Kamei Hideo carries forward this exploration of the connection between the Japanese New Left and philosophies of language in a new essay. He analyzes the model of communication used by student radicals in 1960s Japan, one that rejected linguistic rules because they were perceived to be one component of the corrupt “everydayness” of modern society that the students vowed to overthrow. This led, not surprisingly, to breakdowns in communication when the students attempted to negotiate their demands and also to unexpected complicity between the language of the student movement and that of advertisement copywriting in the increasingly consumerist Japan of the period. Kamei traces how philosophers of language in 1970s Japan reacted to this situation as they tried to mount a new philosophy of language that saw in Saussure's notion of *langue* a site of ideological reproduction that had to be overthrown before a new society—and a new mode of communication—could arise.

Hence, the linguistic turn sought in language the means for radical political practice. Yet the rise of “theory” in Japanese literary scholarship has also been frequently criticized for both its conservatism and its co-optation by the market. The linguistic turn introduced a new concern with linguistic and literary form, a form whose materiality was often linked to the materiality central to historical materialism. But, as Norma Field writes in chapter 8, “Designating form as itself material—part of a broad tendency over the past quarter century to reclassify as material anything deemed consonant with revolutionary aspirations—assuredly revitalizes both the reclassified entity and the category of the material itself but necessarily at a cost.” Field explores this cost as she traces the debate between Kamei and Mitani in an attempt to link “politics” as understood by the “Old Left,” especially the proletarian literature movement of the 1920s and 1930s, and the new theoretical tools developed in the 1970s and 1980s.

The essays contained in part three are marked by a shared interest in the literature of the Meiji period (1868–1912). It is hardly surprising that the scholars and critics involved in the linguistic turn often focused on Meiji works. For starters, these works had been largely ignored or denigrated by previous scholars (with some notable exceptions), making them ripe for re-discovery and reevaluation by the rising generation. Moreover, the legacy of

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writer-activists from the people's rights movement of the 1870s and 1880s, which met with brutal suppression at the hands of the Meiji state, held obvious appeal for young scholars who had so recently lived through the fall of the New Left.

Most important for our purposes here, works from the Meiji period were characterized by remarkably diverse linguistic experiments. In the 1880s and 1890s, Japanese novelists and poets toyed with multiple new forms of written expression in their attempt to produce novel sorts of literary effects: third-person omniscient narration, interior monologue, and so on. Some of the experimental forms were fleeting; others eventually coalesced into *genbun itchi* (the unification of spoken and written languages), the writing style that finally gained hegemony around 1905 and is still the predominant form used in Japanese fiction today. These experiments in literary language were bound to attract the attention of a generation of scholars that was already captivated by the mechanics and politics of linguistic expression. As a result, one of the richest harvests of the linguistic turn was a still ongoing rediscovery of the literature of early Meiji, a fact well evidenced by the newly translated essays from the 1970s and 1980s that we have included in part one of this volume, all but one of which focus on that period.

The essays collected in part three, in turn, represent some of the latest developments in this continuing reevaluation. Each turns to some aspect of Meiji literature and builds on the work of scholars from the linguistic turn, especially the way in which they subjected the basic categories of literary studies—"literary value," "canon," "aesthetics"—to a rigorous interrogation, one that aimed to historicize and thereby relativize those categories. In chapter nine, Kōno Kensuke (who was, as we have seen, a participant in the *Kokoro* debates) explores the literary prize contests sponsored by commercial publishers in the years around 1900, especially the role they played in establishing new ideas about authorship and literature. Kōno demonstrates how prize contests lured aspiring writers with promises of fame and fortune even as they participated in the creation of a new discourse of literature that claimed it was immune to market forces.

Likewise, in chapter ten Guohe Zheng explores how the concept of literature held by Western scholars, along with their problematic assumptions about the Japanese language, have led to the exclusion of the political novel—perhaps the dominant genre of Japanese fiction in the 1880s—from the canon of modern Japanese literature. This exclusion has relied on an ideology of the aesthetic to produce the image of a supposedly apolitical modern Japanese literature, erasing the otherwise clearly evident traces of the entanglement of Japan's modern literature with the history of Japanese imperial expansion. Joseph Essertier in chapter eleven revisits the various

proposals made for the reform of literary language in the 1880s, using a sociolinguistic approach derived from Bourdieu to unpack the implicit social hierarchies that were at stake in various assertions made during the period about what constituted "tasteful" or "vulgar" language. Finally, Leslie Winston in chapter twelve revisits the problem of subjectivity and narrative, one of the driving concerns of the linguistic turn, but introduces a gender-specific perspective that has too often been missing from Japanese literary scholarship. In exploring how two female writers from mid-Meiji produced the "voice of sex" in their narratives, Winston demonstrates that their strategies of linguistic expression were aimed at performing into being new forms of agency, forms that amounted to interventions in the field of gender politics.

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