Recent and Current Studies of Japan in the United States: Reflections of a Rip Van Winkle

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A famous American historian of twentieth-century Japan remarked a few months ago that it is conventional for Japanese to begin talks with an apology and Americans with a joke. He suggested that a middle position is to begin with a joke so bad that you end up having to apologize for it. I will start with neither a joke nor an apology, but with a disclaimer. But I am aware that simply by repeating this humorous contrast, I flirt with danger. The proposition that there's a Japanese type and an American type contains one of those facile pairings of opposites or mirror images that have so often been used to compare and contrast Japan and the West. The dichotomy is all too easily drawn, and obscures more than it clarifies.

Here's my disclaimer: This discussion today is based on incomplete investigation, and is as an inevitable result impressionistic. Moreover there is too little time in this seminar to probe deeply into recent trends.

Despite the shortness of time, I should say a word to explain my subtitle. I came to Nichibunken April 1, 1999, after living for a decade and a half in the Hudson Valley, near the home of Washington Irving and the site of Irving's famous story of Rip Van Winkle. Rip, you'll remember, fell asleep just before the American Revolution, and when he awoke, discovered that years had passed and the world was a very different place. My own story parallels Rip's, in a certain respect. After graduate school at Harvard and several years of teaching at the University of Virginia, I spent the years 1983 through 1998 outside academe, working in the banking industry. For several of those years, I busied myself with work and paid no attention at all to Japanese studies. Then in 1992 a letter from the editor of Harvard's East Asian Monographs series stimulated me to turn once again to scholarship. To make a living, I spent several more years in banking, but gradually I began to take note of work currently being done in Japanese studies. This year I returned to the academic world by taking this post at Nichibunken, and I have begun more seriously to try to catch up on recent develop-

ments. I find myself still in process of discovery that the field of Japanese studies has changed a great deal during the period I was working in New York (when I was, if you will, in a deep slumber not unlike Rip's).

One significant change was simple growth. There was considerable expansion in Japanese studies during the late 1980s and the 1990s. This is clear from some of the numbers reported in Patricia Steinhoff's 1996 report for The Japan Foundation and the Association for Asian Studies, *Japanese Studies in the United States: The 1990s*:

Programs in Japanese studies: Availability of Japanese studies, 1989 and 1995:

Degree level	1989	1995	No. of institutions
B.A.	16.5%	23.5%	1,627
Ph.D.	45.5%	53.8%	336

Graduate programs, 1977 and 1995:

Degree level	1989	1995	Percent change
M.A.	16	17	6.3%
Limited Ph.D.	14	15	7.1%
Complete program	15	19	26.7%
Total	45	51	13.3%

Institutions with at least one Japan specialist, 1970-1995:

Year	No. of institutions	Pct. chg.
1970	139	----
1977	196	41.0%
1984	185	-5.6%
1989	292	57.8%
1995	388	32.9%

Courses on Japan: Professor Steinhoff's survey found that 4,506 courses dealing with Japan were offered in U.S. colleges and universities in 1995. Some 35% (1,580) of those were in Japanese language, and over 20%, or 922 courses, were multinational or comparative and not exclusively focused on Japan. But if we restrict ourselves and look only at area courses focusing exclusively on Japan, we see that they more than doubled in number from 1977 to 1995. On an annualized basis, the rate of increase in courses over that 18-year period is 3.9%, a figure that would be good for a mature economy. The main point I want to make in citing this number—and all these numbers—is that the size of the Japanese studies field grew considerably during the fifteen-plus years I was away.

	1977	1995	Pct.chg.(annualized)
No.of courses	998	2,004	13.9%

Scholars: The population of Japan specialists in American institutions of higher education was 332 in 1970. By 1984, one year after I had subtracted myself from this statistical universe, it was 841. In 1995, the most recent year for which the AAS-Japan Foundation study has a number, it was 1,544. Again the numbers indicate rapid growth. But we should note that not all these were in regular academic positions, and some were retired. Opportunities for Japan specialists apparently ceased to grow—"flattened out"—in the 1980s. Institutional support for programs correlates highly with government, foundation, and private philanthropic support, perceptions of economic opportunity. Those in turn are affected by business cycles. The bursting of Japan's economic bubble has had a negative impact in the nineties, and one should not make the mistake of projecting growth trends from the 1984-95 period into the years after 1995.

Locations: Turning to the major U.S. centers of Japanese studies, universities with graduate programs and library resources, we find that there has been a good deal of stability even during the period of high growth. The top twenty have been at the top for a long time, and they continue to be the principal centers of Japanese studies.

Cumulative Numbers of Ph.D. Degrees in Japanese Studies Conferred up to 1970, 1977, 1984, and 1995				
Institution	**1970**	**1977**	**1984**	**1995**
Harvard	54	102	89	129
Columbia	16	101	63	102
Michigan	47	90	60	82
Chicago	8	31	48	78
Stanford	19	38	33	73
California, Berkeley	37	53	44	64
Yale	15	30	32	58
U. of Washington	17	34	22	33
Wisconsin	11	20	23	32
Pennsylvania	8	15	10	29
UCLA	4	14	15	27
Princeton	4	13	13	27
Cornell	3	—	8	23
Illinois	4	16	15	21
Hawaii	0	—	12	20
NYU	6	12	8	16
Indiana	8	17	14	15
USC	4	13	6	13
Minnesota	3	10	7	13
Johns Hopkins	4	—	6	12

Source: Japanese Studies in the United States: The 1990s (The Japan Foundation and Association for Asian Studies, 1996). p.219.

With that brief sketch of growth as background, let me go on to talk about some developments in scholarship in the last decade-and-a-half. For specialists on Japan, the principal academic controversy of the late 1980s and the 1990s was cast in terms of an opposition of area studies and disciplinary studies. Critics of area studies approaches charged that specialists

on particular cultures such as Japan were mere collectors of data. The critics, proponents of disciplinary studies, claimed that they had a more important goal, which was to discover and articulate theory.

Another major phenomenon that occurred (or at least generated a lot of talk) during the late '80s and the '90s was a paradigm shift. Studies of Japan reflect the larger U.S. academic world on this. Certainly many Japan specialists in the U.S. came to question a "mirror images" paradigm that had emerged from World War II, a view that believed cultures to be "monolithically knowable." "The Japanese" were seen as unitary, static, and homogeneous by the light of this paradigm. Edward Said's famous 1979 book *Orientalism* was important in alerting American scholars of Asia to the pitfalls of such a view. Another very influential paradigm in the Japan field, in the sixties and early seventies, was modernization, with its subthemes differentiation and convergence. Critiques of modernization studies, however, undercut the influence of the paradigm, and these days there are only a few scholars who continue to apply and refine it. Postmodernism offered a paradigm to many American scholars, including many in Japanese studies, in the '80s and '90s. But no conceptual scheme, no one approach, dominates. In her review of the *The Cambridge History of Japan* volume on the medieval period, Mary Elizabeth Berry identified "the collapse of paradigmatic analysis." What we have today in the field of Japanese studies in the U.S. is fragmentation.

It might help people outside the U.S. to understand the controversy that opposes area studies to theory-oriented disciplinary studies if we place ("situate," to use the vogue word) the debate within the larger phenomenon that came to be commonly identified as the "culture wars" in the U.S. in the '80s and '90s. Some people say those wars are over, others say they continue. In one description, these culture wars were (or are) basically, "conservatives against liberals, those concerned with the preservation and development of western civilization against those eager to allow the new multicultural society to create its own norms." In large measure, the hottest areas of these so-called "culture wars" were conflicts between people on the right outside academe, and people on the left in academic professions. But within the world of universities and colleges, also, there were bitter battles over the form and substance of what should be considered appropriate in education. Let me cite a couple of distinguished scholars'

reflections on the culture wars:

- Annette Kolodny, a professor of comparative cultural and literary studies and former dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Arizona, expressed a worried view in an essay written in March 1998: "For the past 30 years, almost every discipline in the humanities, arts, and social sciences has incorporated, in one form or another, gender, race, ethnicity, and class as legitimate categories of analysis. Rigorous scholarship has battled against -- and defeated -- monolithic notions of 'Western civilization.' Scholars have depicted European and U.S. cultures as dynamically interacting with -- and influenced by -- not just one another but also African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures. Against this backdrop, the culture wars have been a ruse.

  "By endlessly entangling the professoriate (and schoolteachers and local school boards) in what appeared to be battles concerned only with curricula, a coalition of fiscal conservatives, right-wing ideologues, and religious fundamentalists effectively deflected attention from everything else that they were trying to accomplish. Their underlying goals were cutting funds for public education at all levels, tightening control over who could enter the higher-education pipeline, and -- in public colleges and universities -- shifting authority for decision making from faculty members and administrators to boards of regents and elected officials.

  "That agenda has prevailed."
- Todd Gitlin, a professor of culture, journalism, and sociology at New York University, famous for his study of the 1960s, had a different view. Less alarmed than Prof. Kolodny, he argued (also writing in March 1998): "So who won and who lost the culture wars? In matters of curriculum, the reactionaries lost, as they repeatedly have lost throughout American history. A few will try to roll back the changes in the canon, partly for principle's sake and partly because they can detect no other bugbear that promises to unify their forces nationally. But I will be surprised if their numbers or their successes grow. To paraphrase the sociologist Nathan Glazer, we are almost all revisionists now."

Kolodny and Gitlin are only two voices, and there is no consensus on the outcome of the culture wars. For purposes of my survey of Japanese studies

in the U.S. in the last decade-and-a-half, however, it is enough to note that those culture wars formed the background, and they influenced the discourse.

With that in mind, let me move on to touch on some recent and current research themes in Japanese studies in the U.S. In the course of this I'll offer some further musings about the conflict over area studies and disciplinary theory-driven research.

Anthropology is certainly a field that illustrates the coming into the mainstream of topics and approaches that in the 1970s were marginal or unrepresented. Let me illustrate with reference to a few people to whom I have spoken, or whose work I have looked at, in the last few months.

- One influential scholar in the field is Jennifer Robertson, a professor at the University of Michigan. An anthropologist with a strong background in history and a sense of history, her earlier work was on *machizukuri* and indentity, and in 1991 she published *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*. Since then she has done a lot of research on gender, gender ambiguity, "gender-bending," and what she calls the politics of androgeny. Last year her book *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, won widespread attention and also a prize. Most recently she is researching colonialism and the culture of Japanese imperialism. She has organized a group that is looking at comparative non-Western imperialisms. In an important state-of-the-field essay published last year, Robertson argues forcefully that Japan has been ignored as a site of theory in social science research. This is regrettable and must be changed. Theory is parasitical, she observes; it depends on fact. There is no reason for evidence from Japan to be excluded as a source of theory-building in anthropology. Scholars working on Japanese anthropology should, she maintains, more assertively engage in theory construction. Any marginalizing, within the discipline, of field work on Japan as "mere fact collection" is a mistake.
- Another important anthropologist who is doing work that likely would not have been done in the '70s or early '80s is William Kelly. A Yale professor who earlier studied early modern social relations, what might be called "class" relations, and in 1985 published *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Kelly more recently has been

examining sports and recreation culture. In a 1998 article, "Blood and Guts in Japanese Baseball" (in *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, edited by Sepp Linhart and Sabine Fruhstuck [SUNY Press], he contrasted Japanese and American practices and behaviors but offered a strong warning against "the national stereotyping of 'sporting styles.'" Such stereotyping, for instance in talk about U.S. baseball, Dominican baseball, and Japanese baseball, "is a pervasive and powerful rhetoric for reifying intersocietal differences . . . while masking intrasocietal differences of gender, class, ethnicity, and region," he said. Kelly has nearly completed a book on the Hanshin Tigers, a work that will appeal not only to baseball fans like me, but also to anyone seriously interested in Kansai popular culture.

- Anne Allison, an anthropologist at Duke University, has devoted most of her attention to matters related to gender and sexuality. Going a step further—or adopting a more extreme strategy—than Liza Crihfield Dalby (who served as a geisha in Pontocho in the seventies, and wrote well about the life she experienced), Allison worked as a bar hostess in Tokyo. Her observations of *mizushobai* became the basis *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*, published in 1994. Subsequently she has worked on comics, gazing at sexuality, gender roles, and incest (*Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*, 1996). Among other things, Allison discusses male homosexuality, a subject also taken up by several historians in the 1990s.
- Another subject for recent work in anthropology is sentiment and emotion. Chris Yano of the University of Hawai'i can be taken as representative of this. Another anthropologist with a historical bent, she has written "Shaping the Tears of a Nation: An Ethnography of Emotion in Japanese Popular Song," a book about the interwar period that is soon to be published by Harvard's Asia Council.

It is not quite the case that topics such as Robertson, Kelly, Allison, Yano, and their colleagues treat were not imagined or could not have been treated fifteen years ago. But they have gained prominence, indeed moved to the forefront, of American studies of contemporary Japanese culture.

Literature:

This is a field that offers much material for analyzing the controversies

within the U.S. academy, not to mention only Japanese studies, over the last fifteen years. There has been a lot of discussion of, and application of, Western theory. There has been debate—and sometimes a bit of agonizing—over the degree to which it is appropriate or legitimate to analyze literatures from different ages and different cultures in terms of one's own present political concerns and political values.

- Norma Field of the University of Chicago has been one of the most influential scholars during this period, and I will begin my comments on the discipline of Japanese literary studies with her. Having begun her professional career as a student of classical literature, focusing on the Tale of Genji (*The Splendor of Longing in the "Tale of Genji,"* 1987), recently she has concentrated on modern and contemporary literature, and on theory. Her publications in the 1990s include an article on cultural studies co-authored with Naoki Sakai (in Shiso, 1992); "Beyond Envy, Boredom, and Suffering: Toward an Emancipatory Politics for Resident Koreans and Other Japanese" in *positions* (1994); and "Texts of Childhood in Inter-Nationalizing Japan" in *Text and Nation: Cross-disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities* (1996). For the last two years she has taught a course on Western theory in Japanese texts. Translator, two decades ago, of Natsume Soseki's *Sore kara*, she is now seeking to revise translation as a legitimate scholarly activity, seeing this as "part of an effort to gain historical self-consciousness about Japanese studies in the U.S." She is also examining "the relationships between various aspects of Japanese modernity and global capitalism." For all her own concentration on theory in recent years—and at the University of Chicago, there is considerable peer pressure to talk about theory—she has articulated a concern that some people in the field have prized theory so highly that they have undervalued reading literature itself. Moreover, acquisition of language skill, without which real understanding and appreciation of literature is impossible, has been underemphasized in some U.S. graduate schools.
- Richard Okada of Princeton University has interests that range from studies of Genji (*Figures of Resistance: Language, Poetry, and Narrating in The Tale of Genji and Other Mid-Heian Texts*, published in Duke University Press's Post-Contemporary Interventions series in 1991) through studies of comfort women and sexuality to studies of Yamada

Eimi and her exoticization of the black body and commodification of the "other." Professor Okada is highly attuned to Western literary theory and his work is well regarded by others who stress theory. Yet he also has expressed concern about the possibility for undervaluing and consequently giving too little attention to literature itself. What interests him most, he has made clear in conversations, is advancing our understanding of literature, and he is open to a variety of approaches for doing that and is not insistent on adherence to one brand of theory or one standard of political correctness.

- I have heard such views from several other scholars who have been identified in the '80s and '90s with studies that apply Western theory. Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, a *waka* scholar at the University of Michigan and author of a fine study of the work of a fifteenth-century priest-poet called *Heart's Flower: The Life and Poetry of Shinkei* (1994), is another example. Now translating and annotating Shinkei's Sasamegoto and also writing a book on certain Buddhist concepts in what she calls the "symbolist poetry" of the 12th to 15th centuries in Japan, she has tried to incorporate postmodernist Western theoretical discourses into her research. Such theory, she has written, has an "uncanny affinity" to medieval Japanese thought. In her teaching and in her participation in meetings of the group of scholars now known as the Association for Japanese Literary Studies (AJLS), she has engaged heavily in a dialogue with current literary theorists. Though keenly interested in theory and active in applying it in her own work, she has gone on record as concerned that overstress on theory may not be appropriate for the field of Japanese literature outside Japan at this time. She wonders whether there may be "a critical time lag" in the study of Japanese literature, a lag caused by the necessity to spend many years in translating a sufficient number of basic (or canonical) works so that students can "analyze them with the confidence that they [are] not speaking in a total vacuum." Parallel to this, at the level of the individual student, the time needed for a Westerner to master a body of literature in Japanese almost inevitably brings him or her into an uncomfortably tense situation precisely because in many American universities today, there is a strong outside pressure to concentrate more on theory than on literature itself.

I should make a couple of remarks, at this point, to qualify what may sound like an unsympathetic portrayal of scholarly approaches that stress theory. It is, I realize, easy to caricature academic discussions. The New York Times, for example, regularly makes fun of the panel themes and paper titles at the Modern Language Association's annual meeting. To a lot of non-academics, paper titles at conventions of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies offer the same kind of targets for caricature. In fact, however, if one reads some of the articles published in the proceedings of this group's annual meetings, one finds not only lots of reference to theory, but also serious attention to texts.

The AJLS Eighth Annual Meeting, in November 1999, will benefit from the sponsorship of the Japan Foundation and the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies, in addition to local organizers the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the same university. Professor Suzuki Sadami of this Center will be one of the keynote speakers at this November meeting. Such support and the participation of distinguished outside scholars such as Prof. Suzuki clearly indicate that the studies AJLS members are doing are recognized as important. A few of the titles of panel titles at the AJLS annual meeting will give you a sense of the range of these studies, a range that has political and theoretical as well as purely literary dimensions: "Outsiders on the Inside--Okinawan, Resident Korean, Colonial, and Buraku Literature and the Canon," "Genre, Poetics, and Modernity in Construction of Japanese Literary Tradition," "Concealment of Politics/Politics of Concealment," "Counterfeits, Cannibals, and Crusaders: Reinventing 'Classics' from the Inside Out," "Nuns, Farmers, and Chocolatiers: Adaptations of the Canon Across Time and Space in Japanese Poetry." I cite only a few.

A couple more scholars who might be taken as representing the changes in Japanese studies in the last fifteen years, Nina Cornyetz, now of New York University, and Paul Gordon Schalow, of Rutgers University, occupy themselves with gender and sexuality. Stanford University Press just this year brought out Cornyetz's *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words: Phallic Fantasy and Modernity in Three Japanese Writers.* This book is described as "a materialist-feminist, psychoanalytic analysis of a modern Japanese literary trope—the dangerous woman-in the works of three twentieth-century

writers: Izumi Kyoka (1873-1939), Enchi Fumiko (1905-86), and Nakagami Kenji (1946-92). Linked to archaisms and magical realms, the trope of the dangerous, spiritually empowered woman culls from and commingles archetypes from throughout the Japanese canon, including mountain witches, female shamans, and snake-women."

Cornyetz, like Richard Okada, has given serious critical consideration to Yamada Eimi, whose writing some consider pornography and not literature. Schalow is one of several Americans who have focused attention on homosexuality in Japan, and brought discourse about homosexual sensibility into the mainstream of recent scholarship. Some significant examples of this work are Schalow's translation (with an introduction) of *The Great Mirror of Male Love* by Ihara Saikaku, published by Stanford University Press in 1990, and an introduction to *Partings At Dawn: An Anthology Of Japanese Gay Literature*, published by Gay Sunshine Press in 1996. Not restricting his attention to male homosexuality, Schalow also edited, with Janet Walker, *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (1996).

History: Turning to my own field, history, I am fortunate to be able to begin with an observation by Carol Gluck of Columbia University—an observation that applies to studies of Japan and also to other areas of specialization. In an essay entitled "Paradigms Lost," Professor Gluck wrote, "The experience of politics and paradigms lost is not unique to Japan; it is a widespread advanced-country dis-ease. What has driven the dynamic of history elsewhere is not politics per se, but social empowerment. What I call the 'new new social history' in the West wields history to advance the cause of women, ethnic and gay minorities, and the whole multicultural gamut which seeks to relocate difference in the social, and therefore political, center, effacing the old center, which insisted on homogeneity and exclusion of difference. Whatever their success in their various causes, there is no doubt that these adherents, as well as their counterparts in the post-colonial world, have the fire in the belly that makes history worth writing and fighting for."

As you may know, history is the largest of all fields of Japanese studies in the U.S., as measured by numbers of specialists. The discipline offers great variety, as I have time only to hint. The briefest of descriptions of two historians at the same university might serve to suggest to you the diversity of

interests and concerns within this field.

- In ancient history, Joan Piggott, a Cornell University professor, has worked her way forward in time and is now focusing on the Heian period. Earlier she studied prehistory through Nara, and the major product of that research was *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (1997), in which she speaks of Japanese rulers—both male and female—as "kings." Basically her emphasis was on institutional history, but the essence of her approach is to combine archaeology with intense examination of documents. For years she has had a strong relationship with the Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo (Shiryo Hensan Jo). It is not only as a researcher and writer but also as an educator that Prof. Piggott deserves the attention of people (not just Americans) in Japanese studies. As a teacher in one of the top American universities, she has grown extremely concerned about the nature of materials available to teach pre-1600 Japanese history to students who cannot read Japanese. To fill the gap she has been developing a collection of translations of original documents (mostly her own translations), and she uses these in her own classes. Believing that the most widely used texbook on premodern Japanese history, a thirty-year-old survey by John Hall, is badly out-of-date, she would like to see a new introductory book in English, and has been contemplating ways of getting scholars to collaborate on such a work.
- Another Cornell historian can be taken as representative of a different set of concerns. Naoki Sakai, who specializes in the intellectual history of Tokugawa and modern Japan (*Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse*, 1991), and also writes on modern Japanese literature (*Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism*, 1997), is focused on a different range of issues from those that occupy Prof. Piggott. Prof. Sakai is one of the foremost exponents of applying postmodern cultural theory to the study of Japan. A gloss of his *Translation and Subjectivity* by his publisher University of Minnesota Press describes his approach: "An excursion across the boundaries of language and culture, this provocative book suggests that national identity and cultural politics are, in fact, 'all in the translation.' Translation, we tend to think, represents another language in all its integrity and unity. Naoki Sakai turns this thinking

on its head, and shows how this unity of language really only exists in our manner of representing translation."

I personally find that the thickness of the rhetoric and the emphasis on theory make Sakai hard to understand. I am not alone. I hasten to point out that others have only the highest praise for Prof. Sakai. Samuel Yamashita of the Claremont Universities, for instance, placed Sakai at the top of the heap of Japanese intellectual historians, in a famous survey review. But he has also been severely criticized, for example, by Herman Ooms and Harold Bolitho. Bolitho characterizes Sakai as a representative of an approach that ironically ends up treating Japan as "'the Other' (understandable only through the interpretive apparatus and with the vocabulary of Western postmodern theory." The effect of this, on some readers, is exactly the opposite of the author's intent: Sakai's intention is to interpret Japan and render it understandable, but the devices of rhetoric and theory end up interfering and making Japan seem more exotic and less comprehensible. Possibly extensive citations of such writers as Jacques Derrida, Jurgen Habermas, Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and David Pollack make Japan seem less foreign to a few specialists deeply versed in literary theory, but for the rest of us, they make Japan once again into an opaque "Other."

There are many more historians of Japan doing many different things in the United States today. What they show about Japanese studies in that country is, on the one hand, lack of a clear shared sense of priorities, lack of agreement, absence of common standards. At the same time, and more positively, they manifest great diversity and vigor. Unfortunately the time that I have been given for this talk is almost over, and there is no way I can begin to do justice to the many fine scholars (not to mention those with only ordinary talent) in the field. And I am aware that I have failed to mention the fields of political science, economics, linguistics and language teaching, sociology, art history, and religious studies. I regret, and apologize for, my superficiality.

Do I have a generalizing conclusion to offer you, a definitive statement about the condition and prospect of Japanese studies in the U.S.? Sort of. You may have caught on to me and observed that I have a tolerance for ambiguity and a tendency to see the world, including scholarship, in tones

of gray rather than in black and white. And you know because I offered a little autobiographical information that I have had a fairly long experience in what business people like to call "the real world." It is difficult for me to feel comfortable with the kind of rhetoric that reduces all interpretations of relationships to power relations, or hegemonic relations, or the kind of analysis that insists that everything is (merely) discourse. Anyway, upon my reentry into academe, I find Japanese studies in the United States to be flourishing and diverse. Many very bright and well trained scholars are working on interesting topics, and more good work is being produced in English than I, at least, have time to read and assimilate. That's the positive side of my on-the-one-hand-this, on-the-other-hand-that conclusion. The negative side is this: At the same time I see Japanese studies as troubled and under attack from formidable critics on both the left and the right. The fields (plural) of Japanese studies are threatened from outside the academy by the opponents of multiculturalism (actually, opponents of an oversimplified, caricatured version of multiculturalism). They are also threatened from within, by academics who prize this or that theory but disprize what they dimissively regard as mere collection of data. I think people in Japanese studies occupations have to take the opponents of area studies seriously. They (and we also) cannot afford to behave, effectively, like ostriches, and occupy themselves (ourselves) exclusively with what is merely interesting.