

In This Issue

In the first article of the new year, MELINDA TAKEUCHI combines an examination of Japanese artistic theory with a demonstration of the ways this theory was put into practice. She traces the development of the concept of *shinkeizu*, “true-view pictures,” in the work of the literatus artist Ike Taiga. Her analysis suggests not only that Taiga’s *shinkeizu* were at the forefront of eighteenth-century empiricism and its veneration of artistic personality but also that the values they embodied came to be hailed as the standards for excellence in painting.

The next three articles offer a variety of approaches to three topics in postwar Japanese literature. JOHN WHITTIER TREAT explores three of Ōta Yōko’s book-length works in an attempt to understand what happens when such literary subgenres as the testimonial novel, the documentary novel, and the imaginative novel are asked to accommodate the theme of atomic bombing. He examines Ōta’s reconstitution of the relationships among author, narrator, characters, and readers in each of these forms. Because of the extraordinary violence of her theme, he concludes, she ultimately reserves solely for herself—the victim-author—the moral prerogative to represent and judge the events she and her fellow *hibakusha* lived through.

CHIEKO IRIE MULHERN turns to the popular-fiction form of Sanrio romances, which she sees as a new genre of woman’s writing in Japan, relatively uninfluenced by indigenous literary conventions. She sees this form, which originated in the Harlequin romances of North America, as formulaic literature comparable to the myths of oral culture. In presenting the elements of these stories, she is particularly concerned with their adaptation of transcultural themes, which, she suggests, reflect the universality of postwar women’s worldviews and experiences.

Focusing on a specifically Japanese institution, SUSAN J. NAPIER discusses the role of the emperor in the fiction of Mishima Yukio and Ōe Kenzaburō. Although these writers occupy opposing political positions, they share a fascination with the emperor system. Napier argues that the views of the emperor that emerge are remarkably similar because they reflect some of the contradictions found in postwar Japan.

The last two contributions are responses to a discussion of William Skinner’s macroregional approach to Chinese history that appeared in *JAS* in August 1986 (Barbara Sands and Ramon H. Myers, “The Spatial Approach to Chinese History: A Test,” *JAS* 45, no. 4). Both DANIEL LITTLE and JOSEPH W. ESHERICK, in the first article, and WILLIAM LAVELY, in the second, contend that Sands and Myers’s test is defective and that in fact additional data accord faithfully with Skinner’s conception.