Introduction
Scenes from within the Fold

Every perception is hallucinatory because perception has no object.
—Gilles Deleuze

This is the story of the changing but still vital collusion between privilege and knowledge, possession and display, stereotyping and realism, exhibition and the repression of history.
—Mieke Bal

This locality [of culture] is more around temporality than about historicity…. The focus on temporality resists the transparent linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes; it provides a perspective on the disjunctive forms of representation that signify a people, a nation, or a national culture…. It is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy—and an apparatus of power—that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or "cultural difference" that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation.
—Homi Bhabha

In this study, I shall discuss several aspects of Japan’s literary negotiations with China that have been evident in texts from the tenth to the twentieth centuries. I shall focus on how Japanese writers and readers revised or in many cases even devised rhetoric to present “Chineseness” and how this practice has helped form and transform the discursive self-fashioning of the Japanese. In so doing, I hope to reveal that contrasts between China and Japan that had been tenaciously drawn out in Japanese literature were contingent and yet haunting. That is, even though the referents that bear the names of China and Japan have been diverse and ever
changing, the desire to propose and/or authenticate the binary between the two seems to be explicit and persistent. Rather than simply renouncing the stability of the ethnic/national essence that Japan or China was thought to embody, I examine the way that the dialectic formulation of the subject-object dyad was validated. I do this within a framework inspired by the theories of Mieke Bal, among others. I argue that the China/Japan polarity, manifested in a variety of contrastive images, persists throughout the period with which I deal. The force behind these comparative representations is the subject of this study.

This focus may appear to have much in common with what David Pollack maps out in the introduction to his study of the Sino-Japanese literary relationship, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries*:

For the Japanese, what was “Japanese” had always to be considered in relation to what was thought to be “Chinese”—and I must stress from the outset that I am not dealing here so much with the “objective” facts of cultural influence so much as with the history of its interpretation, with what was “thought” to be. In other words, this study falls within the field of critical interpretation, of the ways in which men have represented their cultures to themselves. If I say that the notion of Japanese-ness was meaningful only as it was considered against the background of the otherness of China, then, it is clear that I am no longer speaking of “China” and “Japan” in the usual senses of those words. Rather, I am considering them only as they existed in relation to each other as the antithetical terms of a uniquely Japanese dialectic to which the Japanese gave the name *wakan*, “Japanese/Chinese.”

Whereas I acknowledge the imagined-ness of the “Japanese” and “Chinese” dialectic that is apparent in the above quotation, I do not acknowledge Pollack’s subsequent definition of the essence of the dialectic as “form (Chinese) versus content (Japanese).” Pollack’s efforts to unravel the heterogeneity in Japanese culture during the period of the purported isolation, while rightly intended, result in much too neat a polarization of the perceived Chineseeness and Japaneseeness in the Japanese cultural products he analyzes. By assigning the former to form and the latter to content, Pollack seems to be entrapped in the nativist dichotomy of “Japanese spirit, Chinese art” (*wakan kansai*), on the one hand, and the structuralist binary (content versus form) on the other. I intend instead to complicate the binary, while acknowledging its persistence, by at-
tending to Japanese writers of the past who sought to advance and showcase the rhetoricty and figurativeness of Japanese written discourse. Some of them took China or Chineseness as their theme (i.e., “content”), while others engaged with Chinese discourse (“form”) to the effect of blurring lingual boundaries. The ubiquitous dialectic had many facets that cannot be reduced to a unitary and sustaining contrast between form and content.

Many have criticized the arbitrariness, as well as the persistence, of the \textit{wa/kan} dialectics. Thomas LaMarre, a recent example, successfully reveals the contingency of the dyad, demonstrating instead a “coordination” of “Japaneseesness” and “Chineseness” that was not originally contrastive, let alone competitive.\(^3\) LaMarre’s argument becomes particularly persuasive when it comes to an examination of the art of calligraphy, which exemplifies the materiality and technicality of the text. He points out that the Japanese script \textit{(kana)} and Chinese script \textit{(mana)} were not distinct from each other—as if the former represented orality/immediacy/emotions and the latter, conceptuality/mediatedness/intellect—for two reasons. First, characters in calligraphy were selected as much for graphic effect as for representation of the text (its pronunciation and meaning) and were coordinated with the quality of paper and placement of visual design. Second, many \textit{mana} were interspersed with \textit{kana} not because they represented concepts that were essential to the texts but often because they stood for sounds and looked nicer than the corresponding \textit{kana}. Thus, the neat contrast drawn between \textit{kana} and \textit{mana} needs to be eliminated because they are only two of the players in the game where many other factors (tactile, visual) participate and also because they have different functions from those ordinarily imagined. By locating both the Japaneseesness (ordinarily thought to be manifested in \textit{kana}) and Chineseness (ordinarily so thought in \textit{mana}) within the art/practice of calligraphy, where the significance of materiality has been more obvious than in the art/practice of literary composition, LaMarre effectively dismisses the pat association between the Chinese exterior and the Japanese interior. Inasmuch as LaMarre’s work engages technical specifics, his thesis inspires us with a different model for the way in which Japanese and Chinese elements are identified, arranged, and associated with each other.

In the 1970s, Imai Yasuko traced the origins of the term \textit{wakon kansai} and revealed its contingency.\(^4\) In more recent years, Nakajima Wakako titled an essay “Karafû ankoku jidai” (The Dark Ages for the Chinese style), a play on “Kokufû ankoku jidai” (The Dark Ages for the Japanese
style), a catchphrase for the ninth-century heyday of *kanshibun* in Japan. Her point was, first, to renounce the dominant/conventional theory that the primacy of indigenous Japanese literature (*kokufû* or *wabun*), had been temporarily obscured by Chinese literature’s claim of canon, and, second, to undermine the contrast itself between Japanese and Chinese (*karafû*) literature. Hasegawa Michiko problematizes the pat contrast between Chinese instrumentality (*kara-zae*) and Japanese spirituality (*yamato-gokoro*) by swapping the idiomatic combinations of ethnicity and essence in the title of her book, *Karagokoro: Nihon seishin no gyakusetsu* (The Chinese sensibility: The paradox of the Japanese spirit).

Stefan Tanaka has written on the modernity and constructedness of Japanese views of China. Japan’s autonomy from China was established in academic discourse as that of a modern nation-state that rewrote or invented the perceptions of its past relationship with China. Naoki Sakai, in his rigorous study of the implications of questioning the phonetic aspects of Chinese writing, suggests that the questioning process was first set in motion in eighteenth-century scholarship in philosophy and philology. The convention of privileging the original sound of language, and thus an imagined interiority and immediacy, which was first theorized by scholars such as Ogyû Sorai, needed only to be politicized in the wake of the modern nation-state of Japan. That brings us back to LaMarre’s above-cited work, in which he—inspired by Benedict Anderson—invalidates the premises of the national imagination, including linguistic homogeneity, in the modern enterprise of inventing early Japan. The ethnicization of the Chinese language inevitably entails conscious and systematic differentiation of Japanese from Chinese, which has led to the objectification of China in the name of scientific research.

**Structure and Methodology**

Japanese literary writers/readers employed a number of metaphors for China; against these—and almost exclusively against them, in the imagined vacuum of other countries—all things Japanese had to be defined as representative of Japan. The following four such metaphors, which qualified China not as just another country, but also as the cultural Other, seem particularly dominant, sustaining and thus deserving extended attention: the foreign and exotic (as opposed to the domestic and indigenous); the intellectual, conceptual, and abstract (as opposed to the sentimental, spontaneous, and material); the masculine (as opposed
to the feminine); and the traditional and rigid (as opposed to the modern and variable). For this study I have selected topics that should permit us to review the validity of such metaphors and to articulate the mechanisms that promote them in order to produce specific interpretations of the cultural identity of Japan. Thus, chapter 1 examines imaginary portraits of China and the Chinese presented by Japanese characters either traveling in China or hosting Chinese guests in genres written in wabun—specifically fiction and theater, which were less codified by the Chinese lexicon and less informed by the empirical knowledge of historical returnees from China, who composed primarily in Chinese. Chapter 2 turns to the emergence of the Japanese attention to the material aspects of Chinese culture, which used to be taken as ideological and intellectual, and to the subsequent negotiations with the codified material and materially informed and formed text, that undermine the simple binary between form and content. Chapter 3 explores women Sinophiles who fashioned themselves and were received by their colleagues according to Chinese (i.e., then universal and cultural) standards and then were scrutinized according to non-/anti-Chinese (i.e., nationalistic and essentializing) standards. Chapter 4 looks at the function of the Chinese canon in Japan in the wake of nationalism. I have selected cases that best demonstrate the configurations involving China and Japan in Japanese rhetoric. Hence, this is neither a survey nor an inventory in the sense of an extensive enumeration of facts that prove Chinese elements in Japanese literature—an approach that has been taken by many scholars, especially in Japan, and that has produced substantial results. Instead, this is a showcase of outstanding examples that I hope will offer readers formulae that they will be able to apply to other cases.

For several reasons I have not shaped this study as a succession of chapters recounting what transpired during a given historical period. One reason was to avoid duplication. One can find many books in Japanese that chronologically list Chinese writers, Sinophiles, and books on China and hypothesize or confirm Chinese sources for Japanese writers. While such painstaking and informative works help substantiate my work, here I do not offer my version of this type of enterprise. Another and more compelling reason for my decision not to “survey the field” is that I wish to nuance chronology. Whereas periodization has been viewed as contingent, chronology has been taken for granted as a property of knowledge shared by the subjects, objects, and audience of any historical analysis, as though it were tangible, coherent, and static.
Instead of the concept of chronology as an evenly paced and unidirectional template for time—a transparent measure that goes unnoticed by the participants in and observers of all events—I suggest that it is pliable, its pace, direction, and density subject to variance at any time.

While this work slowly shifts toward the contemporary, the movement is neither entirely linear nor even paced, as each theme requires a varied amount of time that may overlap with the time needed for another issue. Even within chapters, selected texts are not placed at equal distance from one another. Furthermore, the narrative present in which I write does not form a static relationship with the moment of production or reception of a given text, let alone all of the texts discussed here. The way I am connected with one text that inspired another is informed by my relationship with the latter, which is informed by my relationship with the former. It is not only impossible to draw a straight line of evenly spaced texts, but it is simply pointless to envision one. As Walter Benjamin puts it,

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.9

Linda Hutcheon also articulates the contingency of history writing by encapsulating a historian’s active involvement in the making of historical “facts” out of “events”: “Events are configured into facts by being related to ‘conceptual matrices within which they have to be imbedded if they are to count as facts.’...Historiography and fiction...constitute their objects of attention; in other words, they decide which events will become facts.”10 I thus resist identifying the “past” as a unified entity distinct from the “present.” I refrain from privileging contemporaneity over antiquity or vice versa as though they were two distinct entities and critiquing reworkings of earlier texts uniformly as the homogenization of a national culture and construction of its continuity. Instead, I let engagements with the past emerge at various historical points; these may all have occurred in the “past” from where I stand, but each was in “the present” vis-à-vis its own “past.” As Benjamin puts it, “History is the subject of a structure
whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now \textit{Jetztzeit}.\footnote{11}

I also illustrate the conditions under which the subject of cultural analysis presents an object under investigation from the past and the effects of such an action. Chino Kaori, in her highly acclaimed essay on engendering in Japanese art history, comments on the perceived neutrality of the historian: “None can represent history ‘objectively.’ The scholarship of art history does not exist in a vacuum or germ-free room that is ‘objective,’ ‘universal,’ and evenly distanced from every object of study.”\footnote{12} Rather than purporting to observe and articulate chronology at a distance and in the right perspective, as though it were an autonomous artifact, I propose to look at chronology as something that we all sense and yet cannot quite figure out, as we are all caught up within it. This study is not written from the height of the omniscient narrator but “from within the fold.”

\textbf{Negotiation with Archival Fallacies}

Inasmuch as China was and still often is equated with the past, whether simply as a forerunner that set a standard for the rest of East Asia or as a representative of an abstract entity vaguely called “tradition,” I will have to discuss the newer (mostly Japanese) writers’ attention to the older (mostly Chinese) texts. Even so, my interest is more in the vector (constituted by force and direction) of such approaches than the respective locations of the origins and offspring. It is my aim to frame the traces of the past as forces, or enactments of desire, rather than as archived facts. In Mieke Bal’s words,

\begin{quote}
Instead of “influences,” the past is present in the present in the form of traces, diffuse memories. The stake of the productive, ethically responsible, and politically effective baroque aesthetics, then, is cultural memory as an alternative to traditional history. Memory is a function of subjectivity. Cultural memory is collective yet subjective by definition. This subjectivity is of crucial importance in this view, yet it does not lead to an individualist subjectivism.\footnote{13}
\end{quote}

I also hope that my study will sufficiently show the presentness of the reworking of the past. It goes without saying that what may be termed a nostalgic gesture belongs to contemporaneity rather than antiquity, as it reveals as much of the subject of the gesture as its object. Bal again has a guiding remark on “conservation”: “The inevitable inscription of the
present in what is taken to be the conservation of the past as past is more often than not obliterated.”¹⁴ I would like to save the work of the later artists/critics from said obliteration.

In her articulation of “preposterous history,” Bal, in a position distinct from traditional iconographic art historians, distinguishes between their practice of source studies and her theory of intertextuality. I validate two of her three points in the study of literature as I envision and undertake it. First, while in the former framework, the new artist “implicitly or explicitly declares his allegiance and debt to [his] predecessor,” the latter reverses “the passivity” and “consider[s] the work of the later artist as an active intervention in the material handed down to him or her.”¹⁵ Second, source studies more often than not avoid “interpreting the meaning of the borrowed motif in their new contexts,” whereas intertextuality implies a transmission of the sign’s meaning—not in the sense that the later artist has to “endorse” it but that “he or she will have to deal with it.” In this view, “the process of meaning-production over time (in both directions: present/past and past/present)” is traced as an “open, dynamic process” instead of “map[ping] the results of the process.”¹⁶ In deconstructionism, “what the quoting subject does to its object” is emphasized, as “reaching the alleged, underlying, earlier speech” is impossible. Bal cites Derrida and paraphrases his argument that the quoted word “never returns [where it was before it was quoted] without the burden of the excursion through the quotation.”¹⁷ This view of the reworking of an earlier work in a newer work has two advantages. First, it neutralizes the unidirectional chronology that locates the “origin” and the “offspring” in static positions and defines the latter’s approach to the former only as regressive. It also alerts us to the slippery hierarchy between the subject and the object being constructed on the site of such reworkings.

The Japanese literary imagination tried to objectify China, the hegemonic other; it was a conceptual attempt at toppling the political and cultural hierarchy of power. I have found that postcolonial theories are not parallel to but chiasmatic with the paradox that Japan saw itself in relation to China, simply because the Japanese were able to take recourse to Japanese, a language that their cultural Other did not and would not understand. Thus, Japanese perceptions of China did not engage any response or reaction from China not because it was deprived of power, but because it was deprived of access to the texts written in Japanese. Even when the Japanese wrote in Chinese, their texts were rarely distributed to Chinese readers. The overwhelming hierarchy of value in
which China could afford not to know anything that Japan produced worked in favor of Japan’s intent to comment on and devise China as it saw convenient. Thus, the “descendants” were in control of the “ancestors,” as they should always be in ontological terms.

**NEGOTIATION WITH ANTHROPOLOGICAL FALLACIES**

Precisely because of the contemporaneity of quotation and historicization, we should be careful not to claim the authenticity of our discourse over the past. Knowing is not a state in which one possesses facts that are transmitted from the referent to the referee. Knowing instead is a dynamic process that involves staging, framing, and displaying by the subject of knowledge production.

Joan Scott cuts directly into the self-righteousness of the subject of analysis who authenticates “experience” as autonomous from the politics surrounding the production of his/her text. She begins with a quotation from Theresa de Lauretis: “Experience [de Lauretis writes] is the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed”:

The process that de Lauretis describes operates crucially through differentiation; its effect is to constitute subjects as fixed and autonomous, and who are considered reliable sources of a knowledge that comes from access to the real by means of their experience. When talking about historians and other students of the human sciences, it is important to note that this subject is both the object of inquiry—the person one studies in the present or the past—and the investigator him- or herself—the historian who produces knowledge of the past based on “experience” in the archives or the anthropologist who produces knowledge of other cultures based on “experience” as a participant observer.18

Scott elaborates on her definitions of subjectivity, agency, and discourse as follows:

Subjects are constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects have agency. They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them. Being a subject means being “subject to definite conditions of existence, conditions of endowment of agents and conditions of exercise.” These conditions enable choices,
though they are not unlimited. Subjects are constituted discursively, experience is a linguistic event (it doesn’t happen outside established meanings), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning. Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience is a subject’s history. Language is the site of history’s enactment. Historical explanation cannot, therefore, separate the two.19

The subjectivity of engagement in a process has been foregrounded in metacritical studies in anthropology, among other fields. An increased awareness of the narrative agency helps problematize authentication of the content of stories. Telling the other’s story in the third person, for example, neutralizes the position of the narrator and thus is authenticated as scientific, while the confessional mode of telling tends to be granted “naturalness.” Mieke Bal, in her metacritical study of museums, exhibitions, and anthropological discourse, cogently argues that “expository writing” exposes the subject of writing as well as the object. One of the theorists whom Bal engages is Karen J. Warren, who comments justly on the use of “we,” employed by critics to uncritically assume a shared privileged status between the writer and reader of cultural analysis, distinct from the object of analysis:

The pronoun appeals to a solidarity between the speaker, the “I” who is a member of the group, and the other members. Thus it absorbs the position of the “you.” The addressee is no longer the “you” whose task it is to confirm the “I”’s subjectivity, but who might also take his or her distance from what the “I” is saying. Instead the “you” becomes “one of us,” a member of the group. The “I” no longer speaks to the “you” but in “you”’s name. The addressee loses the position from which he or she could criticize or disavow the speaker’s utterance and is thereby manipulated into accepting the speech as her own. That acceptance is not rational but subliminally emotional; moralistic discourse works primarily through sentiment. The vague “we” is more often than not semantically fleshed out with moral superiority. The discourse of “we,” lacking a “you,” becomes binary, and the structure of “us” versus “them” is in working order.20

It would be presumptuous of “anthropologists” to assert that they themselves are exempt from the objectification that is conducted upon the objects of analysis. This very writing should not be exempted from this principle. I thus define my study not as a work of annotation, or “show-
ing,” but as one of argumentation, or “telling.” I do not purport to esoterically present a body of knowledge that has been safely restored and retrieved as though I were a select mediator. I instead try to reconfigure information that has been known to many, in the hope of identifying several apparatuses in operation that produce and promote some perceptions of China and repress others. The narrative presented below is not monolithic, as it consists of several stories corresponding to the apparatuses that partly conflict with or are irrelevant to one another. Instead of matching each chapter to a distinct historical period and proposing a metanarrative overarching all the chapters, I resort to a network of subjects that are defined and act according to different variables, while I am invariably concerned with an imagined dyad between China and Japan in Japanese literature. Consider the chapters that follow to be “scenes” witnessed from within the fold where I am also caught up.

**Negotiation with Comparativist Fallacies**

This study is not meant to compare Japanese literature with Chinese literature in order to uncover similarities and differences between the two, although it traces many attempts at such bifurcation. Such a comparison would necessitate essentialism, presuming, on the one hand, a distinct and sustained essence of each “entity” to be compared with the other, and, on the other hand, a contextual vacuum in which I would assume a position transcending the respective conditions that informed Japanese and Chinese literary theories and practices. The binary maintains a strong presence in this study, but it is not because I myself believe in its validity; it is because the persistence and ubiquity of the binary as a working hypothesis in Japanese literature is such that ignoring it would only do injustice to the texts. It is not “polarity” itself that I maintain; it is a sense of “twosomeness” in the texts themselves that needs to be acknowledged. I am not contradicting myself; I am simply willing to negotiate with the textual instances that contrast with my own beliefs.

Karen J. Warren has succinctly identified the problems of comparative rhetoric. She elaborates on the vital effects of binarism, or what she terms “value dualism and subsequent disjunctive argumentation,” as follows: “First, the multiple issues and positions, values and possibilities involved in a debate are reduced to two groups (reduction). Second, these are polarized into two opposites (polarization). Third, the opposites are hierarchized into a positive and negative (hierarchization). None of these three moves is ‘natural’ or inevitable, yet all three are so commonly
applied that they easily appear so.”21 Another problem of the pervasive and yet arbitrary Sino-Japanese contrast is that it is placed in a contextual vacuum. The perceived wa/kan contrasts are so pervasive that they more or less exclude other players in the field such as Korea or Vietnam (to name two of the most relevant examples in the Japanese literary imagination) from the network of cultural exchange.22 Furthermore, if there has to be a contrast, it does not have to involve competition. Binary oppositions are not givens; they are envisioned and proposed by agency. However, when one chooses to focus on a pairing and perceives a difference, it tends to be defined as a contrast, though it does not have to be. Instead of envisioning China and Japan as two discernible and opposing entities, I opt to imagine them as “two mobile positions,” as Mieke Bal puts it, in an “entanglement”23—two processes of self-fashioning with or without constantly varying degrees of consciousness of the imagined cultural other(s), or, to put it differently, objectifications (including a lack thereof) that, in effect, invent self-consciousness and self-definition.

Such positioning of the self and the other precedes the establishment of identity on either side. Indeed, the desire to envision, evaluate, and relate (in both of the meanings of “relate” suggested by Ross Chambers—“connect” and “narrate”)24 seems to me primary, while the substance of the subject and object becomes secondary, constructed, and contingent. The “essence” of the subject does not precede its “entanglement” with the object but is only imagined from the operation of the contrasting act. Gilles Deleuze notes the following regarding the historical Baroque, and it is applicable to operations from any historical period: “The Baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds....Yet the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other. The Baroque fold unfurls all the way to infinity.”25 The subject of observation is always already enfolded within the object, which presents itself invariably with the subject within it. Or one might echo Emmanuel Levinas and state that the Other, as opposed to the other, is not autonomous from the self, as alterity is supposed to be within the self.26 The contrast between China and Japan should not be envisioned as a distance between two distinct entities but rather as an entanglement from which the subject and object are constructed as identifiable a priori.

Inspired by Bal’s model of “two mobile positions in an entanglement” and drawing upon Gilles Deleuze as she does, I propose that Japan is like a sensitive subject wrapped in a blanket; it can and does change the shape
of the blanket, its temperature, smell, and shade. It is hard to determine where the warmth and other sensual effects come from—whether from “China,” the blanket, or “Japan,” the body. Though it may feel as though the sensual effects are produced by the blanket and that these effects define the blanket, in fact they are coproduced by the blanket and the body—the object/subject. As the body tosses and turns, folds are made and unmade in the blanket. While the blanket might be feeling the warmth, sensing the smell, and seeing the color of the body (who knows?), its inanimate state is taken for granted and is not questioned.

A valid question is why I do not deal with perceptions of Japan in Chinese literature when I am inspired by Bal’s metaphor of “two mobile positions in an entanglement.” I do not do so precisely because of Bal’s warning in *Double Exposures* against the complacent assumptions of neutral spectatorship; I resist the position of an omniscient and objective narrator of stories that both Japan and China have to tell about each other. Instead, I confirm my location on the plane of Japan (which itself is moving and changing), from where I look at “China” in its various and varying manifestations. Since “Japan” views its relationship with “China” while enclosed within “China,” rather than standing at a point from which it commands an unrestricted and “perfect” view, its observations are not even, smooth, or structured so as to conform to one single norm. I am mindful of the disparity of the themes of the four chapters and the transactive nature of the Sino-Japanese knot.

Above I mentioned studies of the China-Japan binary, but I wish to stress that this work does not aspire to become their descendant and that there is no predecessor for what I am trying to achieve in this study. I do not contest any specific scholar’s past work so as to draw attention to my work. Instead, I have listed a variety of possible approaches that I could have taken and decided not to take owing to the limitations that I illustrate. Contrasts are hypothetically made in order to define my work against what it is not. Furthermore, while I have strived to stay away from chronicling, archivalization, anthropologization, and comparison, I need to deal with numerous and recurrent such attempts throughout the Japanese literature that I tend to cover. There are constant references to Chinese influences, Chinese stereotypes, and comparative definitions of Japanese and Chineseness. Hence, the title “Obsessions with the Sino-Japanese Polarity in Japanese Literature.” I suggest that it is not I (Sakaki) who is responsible for archivalization, anthropologization, or comparison. To differentiate myself from the speakers, narrators, and
authors that I discuss, I hope that it will be sufficient if I simply identify
the agents of such attempts. Since I quote frequently from the texts
under discussion and cite the exact locations of the quotations, I trust
that concerned readers will be able to see that I am no ventriloquist.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 1 examines how Japanese travelers in China and Chinese travel-
ers in Japan are portrayed, viewed by other characters, and in turn ob-
serve themselves and members of their respective host countries in
literary works by writers who did not themselves travel to China. We will
see how contrasts and comparisons are made on little factual ground, to
some epistemological effect, intended or otherwise, in texts such as *Tosa
nikki* (A Tosa Journal, 935); *Hamamatsu chûnagon monogatari* (The tale of
Middle Councilor Hamamatsu, ca. 1060); *Matsura no miya monogatari*
(The tale of Matsura, 1201); *Kôkusen’ya gassen* (The battles of Coxinga,
1715); and *Honchô Suikoden* (the Japanese version of *Shuihu zhuan* [The
water margin], 1773). The Sino-Japanese dyad, we will see, is at times
presented in hierarchical or confrontational terms to serve Japan’s claims
to cultural autonomy and at other times to highlight its resilience in and
adaptability to cultural transactions. The constructed contrast or alliance
is constantly modified as the Chinese reception of Japan, as imagined by
the Japanese authors, changes from sheer ignorance/indifference to an-
tagony to competitiveness. What is almost intrinsically involved in this
bifurcation is the making and unmaking of the masculine/feminine dyad.
Since the above-mentioned works center on Japanese male protagonists
who encounter Chinese men and women, the last being potential roman-
tic objects, they challenge the conventional contrast between the Chinese
language as masculine and the Japanese language as feminine. Stories
allow a variety of configurations of gender and ethnic elements as op-
posed to the stable dyad. When the theme of miscegenation in particular
is introduced, the validity of specifying the two ethnic poles is itself rad-
ically put into question. I will show textual evidence of the concern with
hybridity, even though the theme may appear to be typically contempo-
rary, addressed by modern theorists such as Homi Bhabha. While the
writers’ notions of boundaries between China and Japan are obviously
not informed by the modern ideology of nationalism or the modern disci-
pline of geography—and it is important to note the epistemological
difference—a distinction between the two countries, often (and aptly)
visualized as the two shores of an ocean, had already been encoded in the minds of the authors from the tenth through the eighteenth centuries. The above-mentioned texts were already concerned with Chineseness and Japanese. An increasing awareness of the diversity of Chinese culture on the part of the Japanese forms a premise for chapter 2, which investigates Japan’s objectification of the Chinese and their works of art from the eighteenth century onward. The Japanese gaze—scholarly or consumerist—is more noticeable when the focus of observation is not the literary canon, which had been taken as synonymous with Chinese culture. We will see how China, which had taught the Japanese how to fetishize objects of art, was itself changed into the object of fetishist adoration. In turn our study will illustrate both the changes and the persistent effects of the past in Japan’s self-definition vis-à-vis China. With the introduction of a new element, the “West,” into the entanglement, China became equated with the historical past, making the Japanese connoisseurs’ position even more ambiguous regarding the conservation of literary topoi and the development of tourism. We will briefly examine the case of Aoki Masaru, a modern scholar of Chinese material culture who unveiled the slippery footing of the Japanese observer of China. The irony of the subject-object relationship is most eloquently captured by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s work in the early twentieth century; it actively involves the fetishization of the Chinese female body as well as material goods. We will see that opportunities to visit and travel in China, which were not available to the authors examined in chapter 1, called for a revision rather than a renunciation of rhetorical configurations of Chineseness.

The intervention of gender as an inevitable factor in the formation and transformation of the Sino-Japanese dyad, which occasionally surfaces in chapters 1 and 2, is the theme of chapter 3. The chapter reveals how women Sinophiles were misrepresented or underrepresented in modern Japanese literary scholarship and journalism in order to establish a nativist and essentialist view of women’s literature in accordance with nationalism, anti-intellectualism, and the male centrism of the time. I first examine both contemporary and later receptions of three women of Chinese letters—Murasaki Shikibu, Arakida Reijo, and Ema Saikō—who were active in fiction, historical narrative, and Chinese verse respectively, representing some of the fields in which women were not necessarily expected to be competent. In contrast with their contemporary male Sinophiles, who responded positively to their accomplishments, the nativist
and nationalist reception of their work shows how Chineseness became engendered as masculine in the process of the formation of the literary canon as indigenous, natural, and feminine. We will then see how Mori Ōgai, a modern Sinophile, took advantage of the new equation of the feminine with the indigenous and painted a picture of the “New Woman” by drawing upon the legends of a Chinese intellectual woman. In the 1980s, when the engendered China/Japan dyad was almost neutralized, quotations from Chinese texts became instrumental to Kurahashi Yumiko, a contemporary female novelist who resisted the literary establishment’s bias against women writing eruditely and engaging foreign literatures. A variety of factors surrounding female intellectuals and their positions vis-à-vis Chinese literature reveals both the contingency and tenacity of the Japanese association of Chineseness with masculinity.

While the dynamics of the Sino-Japanese dyad might have changed over time, the Japanese reception of Chinese literature does not necessarily rest upon the nostalgic glorification of a thing of the past. In fact, some Japanese took recourse to the Chinese literary tradition in order to resist modern nationalism’s insistence upon the state’s monopoly of culture and language. Chapter 4 focuses on early modern and modern Japanese representations of male and female intellectuals who would have been central in premodern cultural production and consumption but who were marginalized because of their insistence on the value of the classical Chinese canon and literary Chinese. The title of the chapter, “The Transgressive Canon?” aims at a displacement of the common definition of the canon—namely, the textual corpus that conforms to and confirms the establishment’s doctrine. Once legitimized as such, the classical Chinese canon was dismissed in modern Japan as irrelevant to changing reality and as incommensurate with its mimetic representation, which was now defined as the mission of literature. However, the classical Chinese canon was exploited, effectively in some cases, by those who resisted the nationalist discourse and transcended national boundaries, now (unlike in the period covered in chapter 1) drawn by territorial consciousness. The term “transgressive” in the chapter thus suggests resistance both to the political institutional power that is normally thought to help form the canon and to the dominant rhetoric of “one nation, one language” that was behind canon formation in Meiji Japan. Shiba Shirō’s Kajin no kigû and Nakamura Shin’ichirō’s Kumo no yukiki are representative works of transnationalist intellectuals in the modern nation-state of Japan, both within and outside the text, whose diasporic positions are best mani-
fested (rather than checked) by their mastery and exhibition of the classical Chinese heritage. They reveal the awareness of literary composition as a cultural, and thus transnational, practice rather than a transparent representation of “the natural” in one’s mother tongue.

In place of a conclusion I offer a fast-paced coda to revisit the critical points I made in chapters 1–4 and to relocate them in yet another possible venue to test their validity—namely, in several pieces of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s fiction that are better known than the short stories covered in chapter 2 or, for that matter, than any other text I visit in this study. The formulae showcased in the preceding chapters will shake the kaleidoscope, if you will, and will paint a different picture of these familiar texts. I expect the reader to realize that the functions of quotations from Chinese sources have been largely ignored or inaccurately labeled as part of Tanizaki’s appreciation of the quintessential Japanese literary and artistic tradition. Instead of being noncodified references to things that happen to fill the backdrop of a story, Tanizaki’s choice and use of Chinese sources prove to be strategic and ready to be theorized. The discovery of the production of effects in those well-known texts should lead the reader to review other examples with which he or she is familiar in order to renounce the widely accepted assumptions based on the Sino-Japanese dyad. The coda is thus intended as an invitation to a journey that each reader can now take in his or her own direction with the map that I have provided.