

Summation of the NASSS International
Graduate Student Seminar
Literature and Culture Workshop
July 28, 2009

NAGAHATA Akitoshi and NAGASAWA Tadashi (SECTION MENTORS)

The International Graduate Students Literature and Culture Workshop was led by Professor Werner Sollors. Nagahata Akitoshi served as the moderator in the morning session and Nagasawa Tadashi in the afternoon session. A total of ten graduate students presented their papers in this workshop. Each of the presentations was followed by comments by Professor Sollors and Professor Qian Mansu, and there was a Q&A time after the comments.

In the morning session, five students presented papers on their work in progress. First, Mr. Harry Thomas, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, presented a paper entitled "The Spectre (and Spectacle) of the Sissy: Male Femininity in 20th Century American Literature and Culture." Mr. Thomas pointed out that the U.S. both loves and loathes effeminate men, and then he argued that this loathing and loving of male femininity has been a productive force in American literature and culture. As possible texts to be discussed in his project, Mr. Thomas referred to works by such authors as Carson McCullers and Gore Vidal.

Ms. Imai Shoko, of the University of Tokyo, then talked about her dissertation project, entitled "Nobu's Americanized Japanese Food: Cuisine, World Cities and Globalization." Ms. Imai analyzed the worldwide expansion of Nobu's, or Matsuhisa Nobuyuki's Japanese restaurant chain. In her analysis, she emphasized the role of the "global world city geography" in affording a sense of authenticity to his dishes, which, she argued, contributed to the dissemination of his own cuisine as well as the popularity of Japanese food around the world.

Next, Ms. Shakouchi Yuri of Nagoya University presented her paper, "Who Are the Modern Beats?: Reevaluation of the Beat Generation." In this paper, Ms. Shakouchi discussed *Mr. Beat*, Chris Yambar's comic book, which was first published in 1997, as an example of the recent re-evaluation of the Beat Movement. Demonstrating the way Yambar carries out revision of the historical representation of the Beat, such as replacing drugs with coffee, Ms. Shakouchi pointed out the conservative nature of Yambar's re-evaluation of the Beat culture in his comic.

Ms. Shahida Asghar, of Quaid-i-Asam University, next presented her paper entitled "Holy Grail: Catalyst for Contemplation in American Literature." Ms. Asghar first discussed the importance of the Holy Grail motif in Dan Brown's *The*

Da Vinci Code. Then tracing the history of the Grail myth that appeared in literature, from the Medieval to the modern period, with a focus on American literature, she stressed the significance of this symbolism as a “‘catalyst’ for promoting people to produce more literature.”

The last speaker in the morning session, Mr. Akedo Takahiro, of the University of Tokyo, presented his paper entitled “The Rise of ‘the Liberal Majority’ in 1960s America: The Claims of Minorities and the Responses of the Majority concerning the Civil Rights Movement.” Mr. Akedo, by analyzing white liberal intellectuals’ responses to an article by Stokely Carmichael published in the *New York Review of Books* in 1966, demonstrated how the liberal people, standing for the people in the minority, were made aware of their position of being the majority. He argued, as a conclusion, that the radicalization of the civil rights movement was not the beginning of the collapse of the liberal, but actually the critical momentum for its establishment.

After a lunch break, the afternoon session started with Nagasawa as moderator. Five students read their papers on their dissertations in progress or focusing on some topics relating to their Ph. D theses. Along with Prof. Sollors and Prof. Qian, Prof. Rukhsana Qamber from Quaid-i-Azam University of Pakistan attended the afternoon session, all of them giving comments and suggestion helpful to the students.

The first presentation was entitled “From the Federalist to Facebook: Friendship and New World Democracy” by Ms. Laura Zebuhr of the University of Minnesota. Ms. Zebuhr analyzed how the United States appropriated discourses of personal friendship for framing democratic politics based on social friendship. Citing from Thomas Jefferson, Tocqueville to slave narratives, she revealed that such friendship discourses might have obscured economic or racial inequality. On her presentation, Prof. Sollors advised Ms. Zebuhr to take into consideration the difference between the Romantic notion of friendship, which is of “the very-much-alikes,” and the Post-Romantic friendship, which is formed between “the different.”

The second presenter, Mr. Yamane Ryoichi of Keio University, read his paper “*Pylon* as Aesthetic Spectacle.” Mr. Yamane focused on the spectacular society of the early twentieth century America represented in the novel by William Faulkner, referring to Guy Debord’s “spectacle” theories. As a conclusion, he argued that the novel is a “counter-ideological spectacle” in the context of the New Deal period, filled with motifs of “looking” and “spectacles” along with the propagandist images of the day.

Ms. Aleksandra Majstorac-Kobiljski, of The City University of New York, then presented her dissertation topic in her paper entitled “From Beirut to Kyoto: How American Missionaries Became English Teachers: Historical Drama in Three Acts.” Ms. Kobiljski’s uniquely-titled presentation showed the relation between the well-known story concerning the foundation of Doshisha University

of Japan and the foundation of a university in Beirut, Lebanon, which is rather obscure to most Japanese. Prof. Sollors commented that her informative study would shed new light on the American missionaries' history.

After a few minutes' break, the session resumed with the presentation entitled "Fictions of Ranald MacDonald," by Ms. Kato Yukari of Keio University. Ms. Kato introduced the little-known writer of Native American descendant, who was imprisoned for a short period in the Edo-era Japan and later wrote a memoir based on the experience. According to Ms. Kato, several contemporary writers on both sides of the Pacific mention MacDonald in their books because MacDonald's story has inspired them to imagine the historical relationship between Japanese and Native Americans.

Daryl Lynn Dance of the University of Kansas made the last presentation of the day, entitled "Students' Right to Their Own Language." Starting with the 1974 text on students' right to speak their own dialects, and listing the affluent examples of dialects in the United States, Ms. Dance asked us what "authentic English" is in a country where you have no "official language." She also pointed out the recurring attempts by officials to repress certain variants, arguing they are highly problematic in terms of social justice. After Prof. Sollors's comment, Prof. Qian showed how diverse the languages are in China, following Prof. Rukhsana, who referred to the Pakistani linguistic situation concerning the political difficulties.

After the last presentation, there was not enough time for our concluding remarks. But we believe that all the participants were fully satisfied with the day-long workshop. The moderators express deepest appreciation to all the participants for their active and devoted participation in the discussion, hoping the experience will contribute much to the students' academic career in the future.