

## This Chaos Called Reality, Or: What is a Handbook? (Review Article)

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Rachael Hutchinson and Leith Douglas Morton (eds.) (2016): *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*. London, New York: Routledge.<sup>1</sup>

A *Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature* is certainly a superb idea. Not least because, as the editors state in their “Introduction”, “There are of course many books available on the topic of modern Japanese literature” (p. 1). So in order to assess the particular usefulness of this work, we will have to ask: What is new about this publication? What do we find here that we do not find elsewhere? And how does it function as a “handbook”? Let us first examine its structure or architecture and screen its “contents”.

### 1

After an introduction by the editors, the volume offers 23 chapters by 23 authors, grouped by three or four in altogether seven sections. The sections are “Literature, space and time”, “Gender and sexuality”, “Literature and politics”, “Writing war memory”, “National and colonial identities”, “*Bunjin* and the *bundan*”, and “Literature and technology”. While many scholars and students may find their research interests mirrored in one way or another in these headings, we have to admit that the section formation is relatively contingent, situated on different axes. Some of these are thematic, others theory-driven, or related to framing conditions such as the media change from the late 20<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries subsumed under “Literature and technology”, a title which, of course, could as well suggest a thematic concern. In this section, however, dealing with the “rise of the Japanese cell phone novel” (ch. 21), “Japanese Twitterature” (ch. 23), and the transition “from light novel to web serial” (ch. 22), the focus is clearly on the refashioning of “content creation through participation” (p. 326) in the age of digital dissemination.

The single sections could have profited from a brief introduction explaining the overarching concepts or theoretical approaches for the various contributions lumped together under the respective heading. Instead, it is left to the readers to find out what connects essays on *haiku* and *tanka* (ch. 2), a novel by Kawabata Yasunari (ch. 3), and

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<sup>1</sup> ISBN 978-1-13-879229-6, 354 pages.

“isolation, inclusion, and interiority in modern women’s fiction” (ch. 4) to the framing topic of “Literature, space and time”. Fortunately, in the case of this section, we do have the first contribution titled “Space and time in modern Japanese literature” (ch. 1) addressing in a systematical manner “theoretical approaches to space and time” (pp. 14–16) and touching on the “broader Japanese cultural genealogy” before presenting “modern Japanese literary theories of space and time” (pp. 17–20) and giving a close reading of a particular early 20<sup>th</sup> century text as a case in point. Most sections, however, may not share more than a set of keywords like “politics”, “identities”, or “*bundan*”. But then it is also obvious that the editors did not aim at a consistent use of central terms or concepts within or beyond the sections. While it comes as a surprise that they call the handbook a “study” repeatedly, it is, after all, their aim to “look at literature in a number of different ways” and to “present a multifaceted picture to the reader” (p. 2).

The articles show great variation in scope and focus. They may deal with broad issues such as genres or modes of writing like the last three chapters on new narrative forms resulting from digital media, or with topical issues such as war memory, with a chapter on “Critical Postwar War Literature” (ch. 12), and another one introducing and discussing fictional and non-fictional writing about the battle of Okinawa (ch. 13). Other essays in chapter 12 (“Writing War Memory”) and in other sections concentrate on one author or even a single work, such as in chapter 17, in the section on “National and colonial identities”, when a discussion of the “languages of the body in Kim Ch’ang Saeng’s novella ‘Crimson Fruit’” is to serve as an example for the topic of *zainichi* literature.<sup>2</sup> The first chapter in this section goes as far as to introduce reverberations of “The Japanese Empire and its aftermaths in East Asian literatures” (ch. 15) and thus transcends the realm of “Japanese” literature. To measure out the extreme range of mode and scope in the chapters, let me mention just two more sets of examples. One is the chapters on “Feminism and Japanese literature” (ch. 6), and on “Queer reading and modern Japanese literature” (ch. 5), both appearing in the section on “Gender and sexuality.” The other set is a chapter focusing on the writings of a single author, the philosopher-poet Kuki Shūzō (ch. 18), and a chapter on a literary dispute known as the Akutagawa/Tanizaki debate (ch. 19). The difference in scope strikes the reviewer as unusual for this kind of work.

Few articles give systematical overviews over the research history or sketch the whole terrain of their topic before turning to a particular example. Most chapters assume a pre-knowledge of their central notions or refer the reader more or less explicitly to previous research. All chapters end on “Notes” and a “Bibliography”, which may comprise several

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<sup>2</sup> *Zainichi* writers are explained in the “Glossary” as „authors resident in Japan, and writing (mostly) in Japanese, who are descendants of Koreans brought to Japan in the prewar and wartime eras” (p. 345).

pages in one particular case, and only a few titles in the other. The “Bibliographies” do not distinguish between sources and research literature.

The “Handbook” comes with a “Glossary”, comprising roughly 3 pages, and one single “Index” on 7 pages.

## 2

Now, after briefly screening the “contents” of the “Handbook”, let us discuss its setup. In spite of its at first sight neatly arranged and balanced content, it is not easy to navigate due to the diverse nature of the individual chapters and the lack of additional explanations such as instructions on its use. We also look in vain for a mapping of the fields covered (and omitted) or even charts and tables that would guide us into and through what the editors and article authors regard as modern Japanese literature. If we want to get hints at how to understand “modern”, “Japanese”, and “literature” and other key words and learn how to use the *Handbook*, the “Introduction” is the only clue, so we will have to read it carefully.

The first thing that we learn in the “Introduction” is that the *Handbook’s* title is to be understood in a specific way. The wording “Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature” makes us expect an orientation of a basic nature by experts in the field, an exploration, with sub-divisions, of the vast terrain outlined in the title’s key words or a more or less systematic introduction into selected paradigmatic sections. Interestingly enough, the flip text and “Introduction” modifies the title’s general claim by announcing “a comprehensive overview of *how we study* Japanese literature today” (p. 1, emphasis added). The focus thus shifts from “modern Japanese literature” as ‘object’ to “the ways in which it is possible to read modern Japanese literature and situate it in relation to critical theory” (p. 1). Is it then a book on different approaches, which introduces its readers to a wider representative set of theories and analytical methods as applied to “modern Japanese literature”, with a view to their histories, applicability, and reception? Are we being attuned to a meta-critical level on which to reflect the study of “modern Japanese literature” as its own history of knowledge, taking into account its implications and its capacities for a wider scholarly and non-scholarly context? Not really, even though the editors mention, on the first page of the “Introduction” alone, a number of approaches which they attest to be in need of assessment “with respect to the impact on the field and its usefulness in understanding modern Japanese literature” (p. 1) such as “feminism, queer literature, the impact of colonialism, or fluidity between Japanese and other literatures” or “identity and representation studies, as well as history and memory studies” (p. 1). It is all rather bewildering that they mention Donald Keene’s voluminous 1984

literary history *Dawn to the West*<sup>3</sup>, which, they write, “set the mold for critical surveys”, but is “now outdated” (p. 1), as well as the *Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*<sup>4</sup>, as more or less alternative works to their *Handbook*, rather than referring to these two tomes as complementary material with distinctly different purposes. Thus it is not even clear from the context whether the editors speak of the *Columbia Anthology* or their own *Handbook* when they write: “The aim of this book is thus to provide an overview of major authors and genres by situating them within broader themes that have defined the way writers have produced literature in modern Japan [...]” (P. 1).

One reads through the rest of the “Introduction”, which, with only 9 pages, is astonishingly brief for a work of its scope and ambition, with rising confusion, as the editors proceed to substantiate their concept. In meandering prose, interspersed with embarrassingly empty phrases such as “there is still much work to be done in these areas” (p. 2), they declare that “there is no one overarching mode of understanding that will apply to the whole of modern Japanese literature” (p. 2), for, as the next sentence informs us: “The twentieth century itself is extremely disjunctive by nature, and literature written in that time period cannot be treated as a unified discursive structure.” (P. 2). Do we expect this of any other century? At least we get a clue from this statement concerning the underlying periodization. But is “modern Japanese literature” confined to the twentieth century? One looks in vain for a clear outline of what is to be understood as the historical-chronological and terminological framework of “modern Japanese literature”. Is there a meaningful grid to apply in order for the implied readership to make comparisons and carve out possible developments on a “national” (provided that “Japanese” here applies to “nation” at all) and a trans-national level? The authors of the “Introduction” work with much verbal hullabaloo to sketch the book’s subject as untamable: “Even though human beings construct continuity and themes out of chaos, it remains the fact that *chaos is still the reality*” (p. 2, emphasis added). The word “construct” is a clue here. Should it not be the task of the editors of a *Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature* to offer orientation in full awareness, made available also to their readership, of the arbitrariness and “constructedness” of all attempts at understanding and interpreting the world? And yet, this is what scholarship is all about, and the humanities in particular, precisely because they are and must be highly self- and meta-reflexive, dealing, as they do, with “soft” objects such as culture and society and thus with “interpreted facts” as opposed to the deductive-nomological approach of empirical sciences. To “encourage the reader’s own thoughts and interpretation, while also suggesting further avenues of research” (p. 2), is an all-too commonplace evasion from the task of offering, with all the necessary precaution

<sup>3</sup> KEENE, Donald (1984): *Dawn to the West. Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*. 2 vols. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

<sup>4</sup> RIMER, J. Thomas, Van C. GESSEL (eds.) (2005–07): *Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press.

and restraint, models for the configuration of their topic, which are, as we all know, models and not representations of reality.

What is more, these nebulous statements serve to obfuscate the fact that the editors do have firm ideas about their topic, yet they convey them mainly *ex negativo*. “In terms of structure”, they write, “we believe it is necessary to *deconstruct the privileged position that prose fiction has held over the critical imagination with respect to modern Japanese literature*” (p. 2, emphasis added). This statement, however, should not be understood as pointing to a substantially diminished portion of contributions on prose fiction in the volume, which still occupies the majority of them. In a somewhat contradictory move, the “Introduction” then explains: “The book will focus mainly on fiction and poetry, with some consideration of the critical essay.” (P. 2). Other textual forms “such as drama and manga will not be considered in the volume, since they include a significant visual and performative aspect” (p. 2). While editors are, of course, free to and actually have to define their conditions, this blunt statement comes as a surprise to readers who expect a mapping of “modern Japanese literature”. Can literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and Japanese literature for that, really be conceived of without “significant visual and performative aspects”? This would have deserved more than one sentence in the “Introduction”, as well as many other tacitly postulated decisions concerning the affiliation or non-affiliation of genres with “literature”. As the decision stands, it smacks of a fairly conventional and static definition of “modern Japanese literature”, quite in opposition to the declared fluidity and disjunctive nature of the period under discussion.

Speaking of genres, the editors announce that they would rather “avoid genre categories”, as “genres of writing in modern Japanese literature overlap and cross boundaries” (p. 3), a statement in which we might detect something of a fallacy. Yes, they contend, “genres as a category of literary criticism or history (and we should add: as a marketing tool) have [not] disappeared completely. Japanese critics still use categories like historical fiction, mystery, science fiction and romance” (p. 3). The editors suggest not to pursue the topic of genre further but rather to examine works “in terms of their fundamental themes, as commentaries on Japanese society, or in relation to discursive practices of patriarchy or the literary establishment” (p. 3). The alert reader will register with astonishment here that the editors’ agenda, time-bound and contingent as it is concerning possible approaches to “modern Japanese literature”, clearly limits the claimed variety of “approaches to this dynamic and exciting subject” (p. 2) and obviously privileges non-Japanese accesses. But the editors provide yet another “good reason” for avoiding genre categories, as “significant works of literature, in a sense, create a category of their own” (p. 3). The more serious question as to what genre theory can and has so far contributed to our understanding of the literary system and whether it can be disposed of

without collateral damage for the field of literary study is buried under painfully banal everyday wisdom.

Some aspects of the *Handbook* that the editors proudly proclaim to be innovative, widely unnoticed or underrated so far are not quite as unique as they want us to think. That Kawabata Yasunari and Ōe Kenzaburō “operated in multiple modes of literary production, including poetry, ‘palm-of-the-hand’ short fiction, the novel, the essay, and journalistic reportage” and Murakami Haruki “is equally adept at novelistic fiction, critical essays and translation” (p. 3) is taken, on the one hand, as evidence that “in many ways the aspect of literary production in Japan is like that of France” (p. 3). Should we then compare famous Meiji writers like Mori Ōgai or Natsume Sōseki, who likewise excelled in various fictional genres as well as critical and theoretical writing and translation (and classical Chinese as well as *haiku* in the case of Sōseki) with early 20<sup>th</sup> century French literature? But why not to other literatures, where “operating in multiple modes of literary production” is equally commonplace? Or is this fact perhaps not that remarkable at all?

There is some curious reasoning in the “Introduction” as to why Murakami “missed out” on the Nobel prize in 2013, before the editors state that Murakami’s work “is perhaps the most translated of any contemporary author” (do they mean Japanese author or any author in the world?).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, they conclude this paragraph by letting us know that they “have not included a full chapter on Murakami here, but interested readers will find much on Murakami in the bibliography” (p. 3). It is unclear which bibliography is meant here, as the *Handbook* does not contain such a device. Is this an indication that there was more of an apparatus planned for the work?

This could be the right moment to abandon the “Introduction” and take a closer look at the rudimentary apparatus which the book offers.

### 3

As mentioned before, there is a glossary and an overall index. As in the case with monographs, index, glossary, and bibliography as well as the notes are a convenient “backdoor entrance” into a scholarly work in order to assess its substance, rigidity and sophistication. This should apply much more so in the case of a handbook which addresses a wide variety of users with different backgrounds and purposes.

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<sup>5</sup> Why not consult translation bibliographies in order to be a little more precise? The United Nation’s *Index Translationum*, for all its problematic sides (as discussed, e.g. by Wolfgang SCHAMONI as well as by myself for the case of Japanese literature), lists, as the top ten authors Agatha Christie, Jules Verne, William Shakespeare, Enid Blyton, Barbara Cartland, Danielle Steele, Vladimir Il’ič Lenin, Hans Christian Andersen, Stephen King, and Jacob Grimm. (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx?crit1L=5&nTyp=min&topN=50>, retrieved Feb 4, 2017.)

Unfortunately, since no explanation is given, the reader has to find out by him- or herself what should and can be found in the index and glossary. In a work that covers so many diverse areas, genres (yes, genre names do occur in many of the chapters), authors, and works, over more than a century, with reference to geographical, historical, socio-cultural and other facts specific to Japan, index and glossary can substantially facilitate the book's use. Needless to say, a person in charge of index and glossary must have command of the subject area, or have support and control from a specialist.<sup>6</sup> As is, both index and glossary are thoroughly disappointing. They are selective, almost completely lacking cross-references, sometimes erratic, highly unsystematic, and in part nonsensical. Who would, for example, look up the name of a Japanese journal under its *ad hoc* English translation (without a due cross-reference to the Japanese original)?<sup>7</sup> The same applies for literary works, translated or untranslated, which feature under an English title, again without a cross-reference.<sup>8</sup> Why do we find sub-entries such as Neo-Classicism under a personal name (Maekawa Samio)? Or Kawabata and New Art School under Marxism (p. 349)? Index and glossary are not matched, so many a literary term from the glossary is not to be found in the index, e.g. *jibunshi*. Obviously compiled without a specialist's eye for meaningfulness, the glossary includes one-time occurrences of Japanese lexemes such as *bōkūzokin*, explained as "protective fire-hood", when one would rather expect and appreciate aesthetic and literary technical terms such as *mitate* (p. 29) or *zange* (p. 51), which are listed neither in the glossary nor in the index. The (mostly very meager) word explanations in the glossary are sometimes embarrassingly wrong and often seriously defective<sup>9</sup>, and one wonders about the unhelpful explanations of words like *bunkashugi* ("culture-ism"), "cross-border literature" ("literature written in Japanese by non-Japanese"), *higaisha* ("victim"), *iki* ("a type of stylishness cultivated during Japan's premodern times"), or *kokubungaku*, explained as "*national literature*, a term that eventually came to mean Japanese literature" (pp. 342–343). Let these few examples suffice to show the painful lack of professional execution of these important apparatuses, which can therefore not be used in a meaningful way. It is also out of the question to analyze the index statistically, which could otherwise have been an attractive way of finding out more about the *Handbook's* approaches and preferred topics.

<sup>6</sup> It is not uncommon to give the name of the person in charge of index and glossary in a scholarly book, thus pointing out the necessary competence and responsibility.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., "The Magazine of Books" for *Hon no zasshi*, or "Literature Yearbook" for *Bungei nenkan*, p. 349.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., "May darkness" (for *Satsuki yami*), p. 349. We have to look into the respective chapter to find out whether it is a novel or a story contained in a collection as is the case here. A more professional index would have indicated its author as well as the year it was written (or published).

<sup>9</sup> Cf., e.g., *shi-shōsetsu*, *tengu*, *tanpen shōsetsu*, *tennōsei*, "Orientalism" or "plurilingualism".

One service to the users could have been fulfilled by providing separate indexes: for example, an index of authors (including biographical dates)<sup>10</sup> and titles<sup>11</sup>, and a subject index<sup>12</sup>. Needless to say, there are many other possibilities of enhancing the practical value of a “handbook of modern Japanese literature”. From a Japanese Studies viewpoint, providing the Japanese original spelling of names, titles, and terms in the text would have been a welcome addition; if not throughout the whole book, this could have easily been realized in the index and glossary, at the very least. Other handbook-like publications also indicate whether there exist (English) translations of a Japanese work. This could have been accomplished in different ways. Once you start thinking about desirable information in a *Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, ideas begin to swarm, and one need not even consult the existing materials for pre-modern Japanese or other literatures to find inspiration.

But let us be realistic and not make up wish lists, although these may be helpful in outlining the potentials of a work like a handbook, which is to serve many different uses. Let us therefore first of all set down minimum prerequisites:

1. A handbook needs a systematic approach, which is transparent to its users and well-adopted to its topic.
2. A handbook needs professional copy-editing in its entirety<sup>13</sup>, including the glossary and index.
3. A handbook’s usefulness is defined by the practical value of all its respective parts.
4. The practical value of each part is determined, among others, by consistency and comprehensiveness (or well-defined selectivity).

Embarrassing as these platitudes may sound, they do help us to focus on the vital capacities of the type of a book which we are discussing: a handbook or manual for an

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<sup>10</sup> Biographical dates are given in many cases in the text, but not consistently, so it would make sense to create consistency in the index.

<sup>11</sup> It goes without saying that it would be desirable to identify the author of a work title immediately in the index, without further search. This and many other obvious necessities seem not to have been considered.

<sup>12</sup> Again, there are professional rules for compiling a subject index, which seem not to have mattered here.

<sup>13</sup> The lack of professional copy-editing is striking from the beginning of the book. One would have wished that a knowledgeable copy-editor had corrected obvious mistakes such as a wrong referral (to “Section IV” instead of “Section V” on p. 8) as well as repetitions and empty jargon in the “Introduction” (“fluid boundaries”, “liminal spaces between chapter content”, p. 2). This should also include the correction of romanizations of Japanese, e.g. *Tade kū mushi* > *Tade kuu mushi*, 49; *syōben* > *shōben* (37), or consistent, but unsubstantiated deviation from transliteration rules: Touno Mamare > Tōno Mamare.

avowedly wide range of uses and users, who look for non-selective and reliable information and who may be inspired by different forms of presentation. Let me therefore suggest a few alternative ideas.

A comprehensive and thematically subdivided bibliography<sup>14</sup>, which would begin by listing relevant dictionaries, bibliographies, biographical dictionaries, etc.,<sup>15</sup> and a timeline would be among the most desirable assets for this kind of publication.<sup>16</sup> Reference to such works and major studies offering overviews and in-depth research on certain styles, artistic movements, groups of authors or other research could help fill the lacunae that are unavoidable in a work of this kind and should be announced more prominently, e.g. in the “Introduction”.

As for the main body of the book, there are, of course, alternative ways of organization. The editors decided on a mixture of topical, close-up and wide-angle articles, many of which, however, give the impression of being tailored not so much according to an overall handbook scheme, but rather following the authors’ own current research agenda. References are mainly made to the English-language research, and less so to the existing Japanese scholarship. What is more, many chapters are still informed by the conventional thematic and writer/work approach to a considerable degree.

In the “Introduction”, the editors address a number of topics which crisscross the beaten tracks. They mention *ronsō* or literary debates and suggest looking into “the production and dissemination of literature” (p. 9). It would have been innovative indeed, had they pursued these ideas more systematically. One could think here of quite a few more: literary-sociological issues such as prizes, censorship, literature before the court (privacy or obscenity libel suits), the publishing industry with its diverse actors and means. Other crisscrossing topics could be literature and its neighboring media and modes of expression, from film – what would the Japanese cinema be like without literature from its very beginning? – to video games. Or one could take up the topics more affine to literary theory and consign sophisticated articles on issues such as the relationship between fact and fiction, orality and scripturality, visual elements in literature, or translation in its diverse functions for modern Japanese literature (into and from Japanese as well as intra-lingual, in respect to the huge amount of modern translations of classical literature), to name just a few. This wish list is, of course, as arbitrary as any other setup. Its rationale

<sup>14</sup> One could also think of an annotated bibliography with standardized information.

<sup>15</sup> It seems to this reviewer that such a general list of reference works could be enhanced by including not only English and Japanese, but also materials in other languages, which could complement this list by other kinds of bibliographies.

<sup>16</sup> The timeline could take the multipartite chronological tables for the Shōwa period (“Shōwa bungaku dainenpyō”) in the supplementary volume (*bekkan*) of the *Shōwa bungaku zenshū* as a model.

would have to be carefully argued, but it seems to bear the chance of covering issues that are of relevance to many readers of a *Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*.

Models for a consistent and at the same time creative organization of chapters and articles can be found in many languages, first of all of course in Japanese with its myriad of reference works, its literary dictionaries and *hikkei* (“Companions”) of all sorts. It is a pity indeed that so much of what is contained in the *Handbook* will probably not be retrieved because of the book’s poor organization. Most of the chapters seem misplaced in the context of the *Handbook*, as one would not normally look for the information they offer here. In and by themselves, many of them are instructive and inspiring, but they would have been better placed in a relevant, thematically focused context.

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In closing, it has to be admitted that this review has not done justice to the many contributions in the book’s main body, leaving them undiscussed and without pointing out their respective achievements or problematic aspects. To give a fair assessment of each of the 23 chapters would, however, explode the frame of this article and certainly cause a certain fatigue to the readers.

To the reviewer, this kind of critical discussion is not at all the gratifying task that it may seem to some. It is always painful to criticize a work which, no matter how it is executed, costs lots of time, effort, and all its editors’ and authors’ blood, sweat and tears. Would it then not have been wiser in this case to do without a review altogether? From a psychological standpoint, the reviewer’s answer can only be “yes”. If this book was a less visible one, this would certainly have been the better solution. But if we take seriously our profession – and the *Handbook* functions as its showcase –, we should not shirk the responsibility to discuss in order to improve in the long run. We cannot discuss desirable or alternative concepts for a handbook without considering the constantly changing conditions for such an endeavor. Our age is fast-paced, and it seems that neither scholars nor publishers have the patience and long breath that is required to compile solid and comprehensive scholarly tools like those from the earlier generations. I am thinking of a number of volumes in Section 5 of Brill’s *Handbuch der Orientalistik* or *Handbook of Oriental Studies*<sup>17</sup>, most of which only have one author; the *Princeton Companion to*

<sup>17</sup> BLUM, M., R. KERSTEN *et al.* (eds.) (1988-): *Handbook of Oriental Studies / Handbuch der Orientalistik*. Section 5 Japan. Series. Leiden and Boston: Brill. In this context, volume 7 is of particular interest: KORNICKI, Peter (1998): *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century*.

*Classical Japanese Literature*<sup>18</sup>; or some German efforts such as the monumental *Japan-Handbuch*, edited by Martin Ramming (1941)<sup>19</sup> and its successor, the *Japan-Handbuch*, edited by Horst Hammitzsch (1981)<sup>20</sup>. Lewin's *Japanische Chrestomathie* (1965)<sup>21</sup>, the bibliography of modern Japanese literature in German translation, 1868-2008,<sup>22</sup> or the full-text bibliography of "Japanese literature as mirrored in German-language newspaper reviews"<sup>23</sup> are examples of work which had required many years and patient publishers during a time when economic considerations and the pressure for scholars to "produce" were less overriding. It seems that the *handbook* format is still marketable, as we see all kinds of titles in the series announced from the same publisher, be it an *International Handbook of Sandplay Therapy* or a *Handbook of Talent Identification and Development in Sport*, all with roughly the same scope and the same price. It is difficult for a reviewer to judge whether the responsibility for some of the *Handbook's* perceived shortcomings, such as the insufficient effort to mold the contributions into an overall handbook concept or the sloppy editing, lies more with the editors or with a publisher's demands. Publishers, too, have their constraints. In an academic context, however, it must be permitted to point to the problematic consequences of some developments in the publishing industry for our field. After all, a handbook is expected to set and maintain standards.

These critical considerations will certainly not impede the *Handbook's* circulation in any way. It will find its place in the libraries worldwide and will surely be consulted by a wide range of professionals and non-professionals who will be attracted by its very title. Many readers will find in it not the announced "overview of major authors and genres" (p. 1), but perhaps an unexpected inspiration and a plethora of detailed if not entirely well-systematized information about the wide area that is labeled "modern Japanese literature". Perhaps we can hope for another "Companion" to the field in the future to balance and supplement the *Handbook's* scope, not least by reaching out and integrating more international research to lead our field out of the 'prison-house of language' and incorporate research in idioms other than English and Japanese.

<sup>18</sup> MINER, Earl Roy, Robert E. MORRELL *et al.* (1985): *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press.

<sup>19</sup> RAMMING, Martin (Hg.) (1941): *Japan-Handbuch. Nachschlagewerk der Japankunde*. Im Auftrag des Japaninstituts Berlin. Berlin: R. Hobbing.

<sup>20</sup> HAMMITZSCH, Horst (ed.) (1984): *Japan-Handbuch*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

<sup>21</sup> LEWIN, Bruno (1965): *Japanische Chrestomathie*. 2 vols. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

<sup>22</sup> STALPH, Jürgen, Christoph PETERMANN *et al.* (2009): *Moderne japanische Literatur in deutscher Übersetzung. Eine Bibliographie der Jahre 1868-2008*. Munich: Iudicium; with 7 indexes.

<sup>23</sup> ANDO, Junko, Irmela HIJYA-KIRSCHNEREIT *et al.* (eds.) (2006): *Japanische Literatur im Spiegel deutscher Rezensionen*. Munich: Iudicium; featuring reviews of Japanese literature in full text from newspapers and journals with nation-wide and international distribution in (former) West- and East Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, with 4 indexes, from 1968 through 2003.