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SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

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Introduction to the Special Issue "Takeuchi Yoshimi, Chinese Literature, and Japanese Modernity"

> *The absence of resistance means that Japan is not Oriental, but at the same time the absence of the wish for self-preservation (the absence of the self) means that Japan is not European. That is to say, Japan is nothing.*[1]

Since Takeuchi Yoshimi's (1910–1977) sarcastic judgment of Japanese modernization in 1948, scholars have sought to reexamine problems concerning Japanese modernity, the peculiar social regime of post-war Japan, and alternative modernities in Asia from different perspectives in terms of culture, politics, economics, etc., explicitly or implicitly trying to respond to Takeuchi's striking claim. While usually recognized as a scholar and translator of modern Chinese literature, especially a scholar of Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), Takeuchi's socio-political engagements as well as his politico-philosophical analysis of modern Japanese and Chinese thoughts provide a significant clue for investigating the revolutionary potentials underlying those modern Japanese thoughts that were deemed as dangerous in the post-war period of Japan, and, at the same time, exploring possible connections between Japan and other Asian countries, especially those who suffered from Japanese imperialism in the past, via his idiosyncratic readings of modern Chinese literature. Takeuchi's

[1] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "What Is Modernity?" trans. Richard Calichman, in Takeuchi Yoshimi, *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi,* ed. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 63.

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difficult intellectual position of "resistance" and his emphasis on "conversion" are still worth revisiting in the present-day, if only because nation-states over the world are increasingly closing in on themselves, strengthening their supposedly determinate boundaries and prejudices.

Undoubtedly, as a scholar in literature, Takeuchi's personal viewpoints on specific politico-historical affairs might not be of importance when we are confronted with urgent socio-political issues; but the historical and intellectual distance between Takeuchi and us in no way detracts from the significance of his thoughts. On the contrary, Takeuchi's writings may still provide us with potentials for thinking about a future that lies beyond any positivist analysis of cultural-political possibilities or programs that seem available to us. Along with Takeuchi's critical examinations of nationalism, revolution, and modernity, we wish to ask: Is it possible to draw a determinate line between Japanese modernity and Chinese modernity, as Takeuchi attempts to do? How to situate Takeuchi's thoughts within the specific Japanese intellectual context during and after the war? What is to be imagined, literarily and philosophically, after Japan's modernity or postmodernity?

The articles collected here take a wide range of methodological approaches to reread Takeuchi's discussions of modern Japanese thoughts, modern Chinese literature, and contemporary socio-political problems. Of course, these papers do not aim at giving a definite answer to these questions, not to mention trying to resolve them once and for all on Takeuchi's behalf. Rather, as we understand it, Takeuchi's constant intellectual movements between China and Japan give rise to a conceptually unstable yet politically radical space, a space of literature and communicability. Insofar as the shadow of modernity still haunts Japan and other Asian countries, we believe that Takeuchi's arguments are worth a recast in responding to theoretical as well as practical urgencies.

This special issue on Takeuchi Yoshimi will be divided into two parts, with three articles respectively.

In the first part, Nakajima Takahiro, Suzuki Masahisa, and Qin Wang focus on the problematic of eschatology and Asianism in Takeuchi's writings. While Takeuchi's so-called "Asia as method" has been almost

accepted and used as an intellectual slogan, Suzuki's article attempts to reconsider its literary as well as historical implications in connection with Takeuchi's sympathetic reading of modern Chinese literature and his political engagement in reality, arguing that Takeuchi's imagination of an political-cultural association of the weak people, here symbolically represented by "Asianism," cannot do without his literary practice. On the other hand, both Nakajima and Wang try to clarify the significance of "eschatology" in Takeuchi. While Wang argues that it is not so much a theory as an "aesthetic viewpoint," Nakajima holds that the problematic of eschatology is implicitly connected with Takeuchi's understanding of civilization and Japanese modernity. Both Nakajima and Wang compare Takeuchi's "eschatology" with the eschatological aesthetics of Yasuda Yojūrō, an indispensable comparison for understanding Takeuchi's paradoxical relationship with Japanese Romanticism.