



Waseda University Brussels Office
早稲田大学ブリュッセルオフィス

New Directions in Modern Japanese Culture:

Comparativism, Translation, and
Nation-Building in the Age of Empire

Monday 4 September to Wednesday 6 September 2023

WORKSHOP
SERIES





New Directions in Modern Japanese Culture: Comparativism, Translation, and Nation-Building in the Age of Empire.

This workshop aims to explore new possibilities in the study of modern Japanese culture within current scholarly debates on comparative modernity beyond the Japan/West dichotomy. Our project aims to bridge the disciplinary gap between Edo and Meiji, attempting to integrate early-modern cultural formations in an organic view of the development of discourses on Japanese modernity. We also intend to open up new spaces of dialogue beyond Japanese Studies, through the participation of invited presenters from the European Research Council project “Modernizing Empires: Enlightenment, Nationalist Vanguards and Non-Western Literary Modernities”, that is conducting a comparative look at the cultural reforms, linguistic renewal and literary renaissance in the empires of Russia, Turkey and Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Through a series of case studies around aesthetics, visual culture, literature, art, performance, media and publishing culture, we will question how emergent notions of aesthetics were articulated and formally registered around the formation of cultural fields such as literature or art in modern Japan. These processes are important not only to trace the formation and dissemination of new aesthetic idioms, but also to bring out the fault lines and temporalities of political imaginaries that the discourse of modernization created and sustained for Japanese culture, as well as to understand how they shaped both ideological discourses and communities of practice among artists, critics, and the nascent modern mass audience.





SCHEDULE

Monday September 4th

10:15 - 10:30	Welcome & Introduction
10:30 - 12:00	Özen N.S. DOLCEROCCA (University of Bologna) “Literature and Nation-Building in the Age of Empire: Comparative Questions, Methodological Challenges”
12:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:15	Irena HAYTER (University of Leeds) “Visual Modernization and Militarism in 1890s Japan”
15:15 - 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 - 16:45	Pau PITARCH (Waseda University) “Networks of Cosmopolitan Sensibility: Changing Discourses of Authorship in Modern Japan”

Tuesday September 5th

09:15 - 10:30	Taka OSHIKIRI (University of Bologna) “Translating Fùryù in Meiji Japan: Nation-building, Imperialist Ambitions and Cultural Modernisation”
10:30 - 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 - 12:00	Lucas MILASI (Sapienza University) “Modernizing Passion: Male Nostalgia, Chinese Allusions, and Women’s Aspiration for Independence in Late Meiji Prose Fiction”
12:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:15	Naomi FUKUZAWA (University of Bologna) “The ‘submerged ideals’- debate (Botsurisôrônsô) by Tsubouchi Shôyô and Mori Ôgai”
15:15 - 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 - 16:45	Doreen MUELLER (Leiden University) “Fabricating Authenticity around an Allusive Subject: Representations of the Buddhist Nun Otagaki Rengetsu in 1930s Japan”

Wednesday September 6th

10:30 - 12:00	Final Roundtable
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Seminar
Organizer



Pau PITARCH (Waseda University)

Bio Pau Pitarch Fernandez is Associate Professor at the Waseda University School of Culture, Media and Society. He holds a MA in Language and Information Sciences from the University of Tokyo (Japan), and a PhD in Japanese Literature from Columbia University. His current project examines how interactions between literature, psychology, and publishing culture configured a new concept of authorship and artistic value, as fiction writing became professionalized in early twentieth-century Japan.

Title “Networks of Cosmopolitan Sensibility: Changing Discourses of Authorship in Modern Japan”

Abstract In modern Japanese literary studies, few categories have been more thoroughly naturalized than the idea of the “author” as stable origin for the text, unifying principle behind the oeuvre, and reliable source of the text’s meaning and value. And yet, far from being an a-historical natural phenomenon, the modern notion of an “author” can be traced to a particular confluence of aesthetic, legal, and psychological discourses that interacted with each other in the process of configuring the literary field and the marketplace for literary works in Meiji and Taishō.

My presentation will focus on biographical narratives about literary authors as sites where this new concept of the modern “author” was being negotiated. I will examine both how “authors” were narrativized as the heroes of a particularly modern developmental story, and how the creators and publishers of these biographical narratives used them to brand either themselves or the literary commodities they distributed. To trace this process, I will look at biographical materials in early “complete works” compilations, as well as in contemporary memorializations of tragically-deceased Meiji writers, and in the first specialized collections of biographies of modern foreign and Japanese writers in the Taishō era.

In contrast with memorializations centered around relationships of personal acquaintance, emphasizing tightly knit networks around coterie journals and other similar venues for and by writers, Taishō-era biographies of writers (as well as of other artists) emphasize the value of their objects’ lives as models, if not always for behavior, very often for a modern cosmopolitan artistic sensibility that the public could participate in through their life and work. I believe that this process is not unrelated to the development of book publishing into a mass commodity, and the incorporation of modern literature (especially prose fiction) into the cultural repertoire of the educated middle class.



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Speaker



Özen N.S. DOLCEROCCA (University of Bologna)

Bio Özen N. S. Dolcerocca is Associate Professor at the University of Bologna, Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from NYU. She is the recipient of an ERC Grant for her project *Modernizing Empires: Enlightenment, Nationalist Vanguard and Non-Western Literary Modernities*. Her research focuses on literary theory, comparative literature, modernism, nineteenth-century cultural history, narratology, and digital humanities. She is the author of many scholarly articles and book chapters, The Oxford Handbook of Decadence. She is the editor of the special issue "Beyond World Literature: Reading A.H.Tanpınar Today".

Title "Literature and Nation-Building in the Age of Empire: Comparative Questions, Methodological Challenges"

Abstract Sometime in the late 18th through 19th centuries, intellectuals across Eastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East discovered to their great astonishment how 'backward' they were, compared with Western Europe. As the cultural hegemony of the West grew, they addressed questions of national self-definition, debating how to revive their past glory and reform their authentic culture to catch up with Western modernity, and how to emulate European literary models and create a native canon. They started asking similar questions: How do we redefine our literature with respect to Western European forms? Are we backward, and if so, what are we missing? How did we lose our past glory? How do we revive our authentic and traditional culture, while reconciling with Western modernity? These debates then sparked a set of cultural reformation projects, including language reforms and systematic translation of European literatures. While some authors took up new Western genres and styles, such as novel and short story, others undertook vast translation projects to indigenize European literature and thought. This resulted in cultural reformation projects which came to be known as national renaissance, enlightenment or awakening movements, with common cultural vocabulary and literary typologies shared by otherwise hugely diverse cultures and societies. This talk will explore this peculiar period in the history of literature in Japanese and Ottoman contexts, drawing historical and aesthetic parallels between these cultures, and ask methodological questions on approaching this history comparatively.

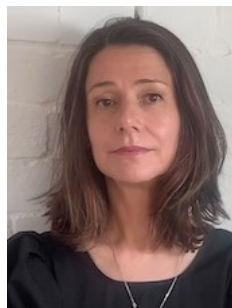


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Irena HAYTER (University of Leeds)

Bio Irena Hayter is Associate Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Leeds where she teaches and conducts research on Japanese literature, cinema and cultural history. Situated at the intersection of these fields, her work combines theoretical inquiry with historically grounded textual readings. Articles in positions: asia critique, Japanese Language and Literature and Japan Forum, amongst others, have explored the effects of urban and technological changes during the Japanese interwar years not only on cultural practices, but also on the politico-ideological domain. She is the co-editor of "Tenkô: Cultures of Political Conversion in Trans-war Japan" (Routledge 2021). Her current monograph project is a media-historical investigation of urban consumer spectacle, women and cinema in imperial Japan.

Title "Visual Modernization and Militarism in 1890s Japan"

Abstract This paper explores new, Western-derived visual media in 1890s Japan and specifically the panorama, the diorama and the magic lantern. Using literary texts and other sources, my analyses trace the new visual logics associated with these devices, as well as their acculturation through Japanese traditions of popular spectacle. In the diorama and especially the panorama, the techniques of Western realist painting and the careful manipulation of props, space and lighting blurred boundaries between representation and reality, creating effects of immersion and emotional involvement. Both featured overwhelmingly military themes and aestheticized war. This made them powerful technologies for the promotion of militarism and the production of imperial subjects. Edogawa Ranpo (1894–1965) was a writer fascinated by visual devices and keenly aware of their ideological work on perception. Ranpo's story 'The Man Travelling with the Brocade Portrait' (Oshie to tabi o suru otoko, 1929) undoes the dioramic beautification of the Sino-Japanese war, showing instead its gory and grotesque character. This paper also traces the entangled cultural histories of the magic lantern in Japan: from a Western import to a popular Edo-period spectacle and then later to a potent a tool for both positivist knowledge and militarist promotion. An episode from the autobiographical novel The First Lesson (Dai ikka, 1915) by the dramatist Osanai Kaoru (1881–1928) presents a magic lantern lecture held during the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) as a participatory performance mobilising nationalist affect. The same episode, however, gives us glimpses of how the energies of militarism were deflected and resisted.



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Taka OSHIKIRI (University of Bologna)

Bio Taka Oshikiri obtained her PhD from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Her publications include “Gathering for Tea in Modern Japan: Class, Culture and Consumption in the Meiji Period” (2018) and “Selling Tea as Japanese History: Culture, Consumption and International Expositions, 1873–1910” (2021). Her current research explores women’s subjectivity in Japan’s cultural modernisation in the late nineteenth and early twenties centuries.

Title “Translating Fûryû in Meiji Japan: Nation-building, Imperialist Ambitions and Cultural Modernisation”

Abstract Japan’s cultural modernisation entailed the canonisation of a range of premodern literary, artistic and cultural practices and the simultaneous marginalisation of the others. This paper focuses on the notion of fôryô (elegance or refinement) – an aesthetic concept describing specific dispositions in premodern Japan – in an attempt to understand how and why some aspects of Japan’s premodern culture survived the modernisation process while others did not. By analysing discourses on chanoyu, Japanese ceremonial tea practices, in relation to fôryô during the Meiji period (1868–1912), this paper discusses how premodern aesthetic concepts, such as fûryû, became marginal in modern Japan’s aesthetic sensibility while premodern cultural practices, such as chanoyu, were canonised as cultural tradition of modern Japanese nation. It argues that while the interpretation of fôryô in the modern period was associated with Japan’s disappearing and commodified past, chanoyu was successfully translated as a cultural tradition of modern Japanese nation and highlights that both transformations occurred in tandem with Japan’s nation-state building project and growing imperialist ambitions.



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Lucas MILASI (Sapienza University)

Bio Luca Milasi is an Associate Professor of Japanese and Korean language and linguistics at the Department of Oriental Studies, Sapienza University, Rome, where he is also currently serving as programme coordinator for the BA and MA courses in Middle and Eastern Asian languages. Additionally, he has held positions as a Project Professor at the University of Tokyo (FY2020) and as a Visiting Professor at Hanyang University, Seoul (2023). His research focuses on Sinitic literacy, the cultural history of Early modern Japan, and Edo-period palaeography and extraliterary records.

Title “Modernizing Passion: Male Nostalgia, Chinese Allusions, and Women’s Aspiration for Independence in Late Meiji Prose Fiction”

Abstract Chinese literature maintained a prominent position in Japan’s cultural landscape until the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese conflict (1894-5) and slightly beyond. Despite the initial biased treatment from the Meiji intelligentsia, who deemed the portrayal of sensual passion (jōyoku) unsuitable for addressing gender and sexuality issues within the context of enlightenment concerns, Meiji writers with direct access to pre-modern Chinese narratives refused to relinquish altogether their fondness for Ming and Qing ‘love’ stories. In their fictional works of the mid and late Meiji era, male characters often exhibited a nostalgic view of the ‘Chinese moods’ prevalent in literature until the discontinuation of magazines like *Kagetsu shinshi* (‘The New Journal of the Flowers and the Moon,’ 1877-1884). Concurrently, contemporary Japanese literary criticism explored the unique depiction of sensual passion found in Premodern Chinese novels.

In the novel *Gan* (‘The Wild Goose,’ 1911-14), Ōgai revisits the theme of concubinage from a dual perspective, through the lens of his female protagonist. The narrative features a striking divergence of viewpoints between genders. Male characters perceive the heroine through the prism of Chinese-style fiction deemed ‘sentimental and fatalistic,’ idealizing her as a character from a romantic narrative, and overlooking the constraints of her real-life situation. Meanwhile, the female protagonist, Otama, gradually acknowledges her own sensual desires and expectations, tragically unfulfilled until the conclusion of the story.

Examining fictional works created by Japanese writers in the early 20th century offers valuable insights into their concrete and nuanced understanding of China and its literature, recognized as distinctly unique within the broader array of literary influences on Japan’s cultural production. Furthermore, these works shed light on the true significance of Meiji writers’ concerns with the reformist agenda of the era of Enlightenment.

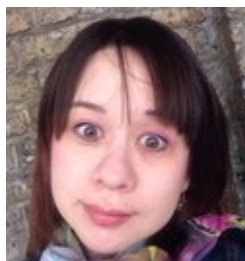


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Naomi FUKUZAWA (University of Bologna)

Bio Dr Naomi Charlotte Fukuzawa works as postdoctoral fellow in nineteenth century modern Japanese literature at the University of Bologna in “Modernizing Empires: Enlightenment, Nationalist Vanguards and Non-Western Literary Modernities” (Project, funded by the European Research Council in Italy. She completed her PhD in Comparative literature at UCL University College London in association to Japanese Studies SOAS in the United Kingdom. Her first book “Japon and Japonisme in Late Nineteenth Century” is forthcoming with Routledge.

Title “The ‘submerged ideals’- debate (Botsurisôrônsô) by Tsubouchi Shôyô and Mori Ôgai”

Abstract In 1891 and 1892, the debate called Botsurisôrônsô about ‘submerged ideals’, was carried out between the literary theorist, translator and academic Tsubouchi Ôgai (1859-1935) and the writer, translator and medical researcher Mori Ôgai (1862-1922). The discussion was carried out in successive publications in the literary journal Waseda bungaku by The ‘submerged ideals’- debate (Botsurisôrônsô) by Tsubouchi Shôyô and Mori Ôgai (founded by him as professor of Waseda University) and Ôgai in the journal Shigarami Zôshi that he also had founded. Starting from an advocacy of Shakespeare by Shôyô, Ôgai argued on the question whether modern Japanese literature should absorb ideals or not. Ôgai, who had just returned from Prussia, introduced the aesthetic philosophy of Eduard von Hartmann and claims it as compatible with Shôyô’s subdivision of the novel in three schools. The opposition of the two eminent literary figures also consists in Shôyô’s English-style philosophy and Ôgai’s German metaphysical idealism in a Romantic tradition. This means that Shôyô emphasized the poetics of literature that are equal to photographic portrayal as well as the insertion to the Buddhist aesthetics of mono no aware while Ôgai advocated an idealistic understanding of ideas in a Platonic tradition. This debate for the first time in Japanese history showed to the public the role of modern literature, bungaku, as the notion of literary fiction became independent in Meiji as a result of the reception of European intellectual history. This marked a change from the non-individualistic writing of the Edo period before the genre of the novel was imported to Japan. The debate ended with an argument by Ôgai about the naturalistic novel.



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Doreen MUELLER (Leiden University)

Bio Doreen Mueller is assistant professor of Japanese art and material culture at Leiden University. She earned a PhD in the History of Art at SOAS, University of London. Her research explores the intersections of visual culture, social and environmental history with a focus on how representations of famine and natural disasters were used for moral admonition and social criticism in early modern Japan. She has published on the production of knowledge about animals and plants in early modern East Asia, and the nature of political caricature in nineteenth-century Japan.

Title “Fabricating Authenticity around an Allusive Subject: Representations of the Buddhist Nun Otagaki Rengetsu in 1930s Japan”

Abstract While the poetry and artwork of the Buddhist nun Otagaki Rengetsu (1791-1875) have been analysed in detail, the ways in which posthumous visual and textual representations of Rengetsu have shaped her image as a cultural arbiter of modern Japan have received less scholarly attention. Past research has framed the discussion of her waka poetry and Sencha (literally, “steeped tea”) pottery within the context of her personal hardships, peripatetic lifestyle, and eclectic religious practice, coinciding with momentous political change in the second half of the nineteenth century. McCormick (2023) has questioned this relatively narrow framework by highlighting the transhistorical nature of Rengetsu’s cultural production, drawing attention to her allusiveness as a subject. This paper discusses how visual and textual representations fabricated Rengetsu’s image as an authentic cultural practitioner in 1930s Japan. Tapping into traditions of envisioning cultured reclusion in literati and Zen pictorial traditions, these representations shaped Rengetsu’s image as detached from the tumultuous changes taking place in the late Edo and early Meiji Periods, positing her serenity and moral strength of character as sources of her cultural authenticity. This paper argues that these representations *de-historicised* her image, thereby fabricating her as a modern icon of cultural authenticity. This shows the implications of painting in supporting the politicized discourse about culture in 1930s Japan.



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