

Report on the International Symposium/Workshop in Japanese Literary and Visual Studies
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I attended the International Symposium/Workshop in Japanese Literary and Visual Studies 2020 as a presenter and participant. To me, this symposium is a unique occasion to bridge the English and Japanese academia, and a valuable opportunity for aspiring scholars to present on-going works, learn from exemplary studies, and participate in scholarly arguments and discussions.

As a graduate student at an American institution working on Japanese studies, I have been benefited, and I am motivated to learn, from scholarship both in English and in Japanese. I have attended as many conferences, symposiums, and research gatherings as possible. However, oftentimes, I have questions about how certain theories or methodologies that are well-received in the United States would be approached in Japanese academia, and vice versa. The Columbia-Waseda symposium, with its focused theme and audience, creates an engaging environment for scholarly discussion in richness and deepness; and provides answers to many of my previous questions by putting the two academia into conversation.

Besides the informative and productive symposium, I want to particularly highlight the extra-symposium activities, such as dining with the participants and the after-symposium museum tour. Given this year's symposium theme in visual studies, there were many experts on visual studies in the symposium. During my museum tours with the distinguished Japanese scholars such as Kazuaki Komine, Akira Takagishi, and Satomi Yamamoto, I observed and learned a hands-on method of how to approach visual art, from proposing possible dates for visual objects to forming detailed analyses. This experience triggered my own consciousness for visual studies; it also revived the theories on material and visual cultures that I had read previously in a new, visceral sense of appreciation.

An international symposium such as the Columbia-Waseda Symposium/Workshop in Japanese Studies could be intensive, or even intimidating to some graduate students—simply due to the foreign language or environment. However, to me, this is a learning opportunity that should not be let pass, or merely reduced into another line in the resume. What I have noticed and experienced is a profound sense of engagement, with other scholars' studies, with researchers from very different backgrounds from you, or with the research methods that you might have never thought of or previously felt uncomfortable with. And I sincerely hope all the future Columbia-Waseda symposiums would similarly and continuously open such doors for newcomers.