

Title: Crossing the Borders of Modernity: Fictional Characters as Representations of Alternative Concepts of Life in Meiji Literature (1868-1912)

Location: University of Cologne, Neuer Senatssaal, Albertus-Magnus Platz 1, 50931 Cologne, Germany

Date: 10th - 11th January 2020

Motto: “The process of civilization is endless. One should not be content with the present state of the Western countries.”

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901): An Outline of a Theory of Civilization (1875)

Abstract: The Meiji era (1868–1912) was a time of great social change. After more than 650 years, the military rule of the Shogunate came to an end and governmental power finally returned to the Imperial Household. Japan was transformed into a constitutional monarchy, and fundamental reforms of the educational, legal and military systems were carried out in next to no time.

The conference *Crossing the Borders of Modernity* aims to relate different historical perspectives on the Japanese modernization process to each other. By focusing on fictional texts by Japanese authors, we will select one central aspect of the public discourse of the Meiji era. We shall analyze how authors positioned themselves in their writings in terms of social and political changes. What specific problems did they identify in view of the rapid development from an isolated, feudal and agricultural society to an imperialist, modern industrial nation? What solutions did they offer to their readers?

Particular attention shall be paid to the fictional construction of alternative concepts of life beyond the propagated social ideals. For this, authors use numerous strategies of characterization and character constellation. Accordingly, the conference will not only deal with the fictional portrayal of the crossing of borders, but also with the fictional description of those who cross borders, those who are caught between tradition and modernity, between East and West and between different social groups.

Conference Schedule

10th Jan 2020

10:00-10:15 Opening Address/Welcome Speech

10:15-11:30 Panel 1

Frank Jacob Generational Conflicts and the Crossing of Socio-Cultural Barriers: The Meiji Works of Shiga Naoya

Martin Thomas “Why Not Just Stay in Bed?”: Literary Characters Between Personal Fulfillment and Social Expectations
in the Early Writings of Nagai Kafū

11:30-11:45 Coffee Break

11:45-13:00 Panel 2

Martha-Christine Menzel The Sanctuary of Art in a Modern World of Despair: Nagata Mikihiro and his Autofictional Novel *Reiraku*
 (“Downfall”, 1912)

Takita Hiroshi The Isolation of Mushakoji Saneatsu’s Early Characters

13:00-14:00 Lunch Break

14:00-15:15 Panel 3

Stephan Köhn

New Images of Idealized Womanhood in the Early Work of Miyake Kaho

Yamamoto Kinji

Textual Subtlety in the Later Writing of Higuchi Ichiyō: Interpreting *Takekurabe*

15:15-15:30 Coffee Break

15:30-17:15 Panel 4

Gala Maria Follaco

“Who Ever Said that...?”: Higuchi Ichiyō’s Revolution as Seen Through Her Characters

Chantal Weber

Women in a World of Men: Female Characters in the Fictional Writing of Kanno Suga

Matthew Königsberg

Marital Relationships as Reflected in Ozaki Kōyōs “Three Wives” (*Sannin zuma*, 1892)

11th Jan 2020

09:30-10:45 Panel 5

Timothy J. Van Compernelle Writing the Visual in Meiji Literature: Paintings in the Fiction of Natsume Sōseki

Ingrid Fritsch

Love and Passion: Wagnerism Among Writers of the Meiji Period

10:45-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:15 Panel 6

Simone Müller

“Useful” and “Useless” Intellectuals in Literary Works of the Meiji Period: Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Tōsei shosei katagi* (“The Character of Contemporary Students”, 1885-1886) and Futabatei Shimei’s *Ukigumo* (“The Drifting Cloud”, 1887-1889)

Kobayashi Toshiaki

Ways of Self-Reflection: Educated Loafers in the Work of Natsume Sōseki

12:15-13:15 Lunch Break

13:15-14:30 Panel 7

Massimiliano Tomasi

Representations of Self-Awareness and Social Dissent: The Role of Christianity in Late Meiji Narrative

Hibi Yoshitaka

Rethinking Literary Imaginations of *Naichi-Zakkyo* (Domestic Mixed Residence)

14:30-14:45 Coffee Break

14:45-16:00 Panel 8

Indra Levy

Can the Meiji Man Laugh?

Beate Wonde

Gyūnabe (1910): Mori Ōgai and the Meat Pots of Modern Life

16:00-16:15 Closing Remarks/Farewell