Gauging the Distance: On the Challenges of Writing about Pre- and Post-Fukushima Japan from a Western Perspective

An Afternoon Workshop at Seikei University

November 23rd, 2019

2:30 – 5:30 p.m. Building 6, in the 6th-Floor Meeting Room

Free Admission, All Welcome!

Featuring:

Fabien Arribert-Narce (University of Edinburgh)
Michael Pronko (Meiji Gakuin University)
Andrew Houwen (Tokyo Woman’s Christian University)
Barnaby Ralph (Seikei University)

Chaired by Fuhito Endo (Seikei University)

Kindly Supported by the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, Seikei University

This workshop will focus on the long tradition of Western writings about Japan that gained momentum in the second half of the 19th century with the Japoniste trend, and have continued to the present day despite an apparent shift of interest towards the infra-ordinary and the un-exotic. In their attempt to depict and interpret this powerful object of fascination, authors and scholars writing about Japanese culture necessarily have to face the challenging question of stereotypes, be they Japoniste, Neo-/Post-Japoniste or otherwise – the risk being to create new forms of reductionisms while trying to situate oneself in relation to longstanding images of Japan, even if one’s primary goal is to de-orientalise and de-exoticize intercultural representations.

In their respective analyses covering a variety of themes, genres and time-periods, the four panellists will therefore address the key issues of distance – more specifically the fraught nature of critical distance in this context; exoticism, auto- and post-exoticism; creative misunderstandings, theoretical/cultural assumptions and potential subsumptions under typically Western preoccupations and concepts; literary and academic legitimacy, and the status of knowledge. Reflecting on their own position with respect to their object of study, they will also consider the concerns about future-proofing any discussion, and the various strategies used by writers and scholars struggling with the representation of Japan to counter stereotypical and reductionist depictions or interpretations.

**Speakers and Themes:**

- **Fabien Arribert-Narce** (University of Edinburgh/CAPS, Seikei University), ‘Defining Literary Post-Japonisme(s), Before and After Fukushima’
- **Mike Pronko** (Meiji Gakuin University), ‘Orientalist Imperatives and Fictional Freedoms’
- **Andy Houwen** (Tokyo Woman’s Christian University), 'Ezra Pound, Japonisme, and Orientalism'
- **Barnaby Ralph** (Seikei University), ‘Getting it Wrong with the Best of Intentions: Writing about Women and Contemporary Rock Music in Japan’
- **Chaired by Fuhito Endo** (Seikei University)

**Sessions will be 30 minutes each, followed by a short break and an open round-table discussion**
GETTING TO SEIKEI UNIVERSITY

Get off at Kichijoji Station on JR Chuo Line, Sobu Line (Tokyo Metro Tozai Line through service) or Keio Inokashira Line.
Take KANTO Bus from the North Exit bus depot (No.1 or No.2) at Kichijoji Station.
After approx. 5 mins., get off at Seikeigakuen-mae bus stop.
Approx. 15 mins. on foot from Kichijoji Station.
Get off at Seibu Yagisawa Station on Seibu Shinjuku Line.
Take KANTO Bus headed for Kichijoji Station from the North Exit.
After approx. 20 mins., get off at Seikei Gakuen-mae bus stop.

Building 6 is #6 on this map. Enter through the front gate and follow the path to the left. It is on the left-hand side, just past the Library.