



Centrality Reimagined: Geographical, Linguistic, and Temporal Space in East Asian Literary and Cultural Expression (A Conference in Honor of Richard Torrance)

Abstracts

(listed alphabetically in order of presenters' last names)

1. Catering to the "True Views" of the People: An Overview of *Osaka Puck* at OSU Libraries' Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum (BICLM), Ann Marie Davis, Ohio State University

Published from November 1906 to March 1950, the magazine *Osaka Puck* is one of the longest-running comics periodicals in Japan (surpassed only by Kodansha's *Nakayoshi*, a monthly *shōjo* magazine that was launched in 1954 and continues to this day). According to comic studies scholar Shimizu Isao, the *Osaka Puck* derived its popularity as a local magazine that "catered to the 'true' views of Osaka People." In contrast to its rival *Tokyo Puck* (published from 1905 to 1923), this regional version satirized modern society from (and for) the viewpoints of merchants, farmers, and other local commoners (1986). My presentation explores this interpretation vis-a-vis the vast holdings of *Osaka Puck* at OSU's Billy Ireland Cartoon Library (BICLM). With over sixty original print issues (spanning from 1907 to 1949), the BICLM holdings are the most wide-ranging and extensive in North America. A preliminary overview of the collection highlights the fascinating changes that came not only to modern Osaka society, but also to the magazine itself, including its adoption of new titles, changes in owners and editors, and its ever-evolving subjects and formats.

2. Slums of Taisho Osaka, Robert Del Greco, Oakland University

Drawing largely on the 1986 edited volume *Taishō Osaka Suramu: mō hitotsu no Nihon kindaiishi* this presentation discusses the living and working conditions of the mass of urban poor in Taishō era Osaka and considers the lasting impact of these communities on Osaka's cultural production and the city's image in the Japanese imagination. Osaka's thriving industry advanced Japan's economy in a moment of tense global competition, and it demanded a massive influx of low-wage laborers coming from both rural Japan and the empire's more recent overseas acquisitions. Among these, the character of Korean immigration in this period would be the defining factor in the make-up of Japan's largest Korean communities today. As diverse groups entered the city seeking personal success through factory work, harsh new realities of modernity came to the fore. I argue for a connection between this moment in the Taishō slums, as disillusionment with capitalism sets in and traditional worldviews fail to serve individuals in this new environment, and the uniquely Osaka style of irreverence observed in modern pop culture, or for example, in the works of Oda Sakunosuke.

3. **History, Horror, and Politics in the Fiction of Shindō Junjo**, Stephen Filler, Oakland University

Shindō Junjo (b. 1977) is a writer of epic-scale fiction that crosses the “popular” genres of horror, mystery, and historical fiction. Shindō’s work was initially characterized as “horror” due to its portrayal of gruesome and grotesque scenarios, but over time he has increasingly engaged with historical events of contemporary Japan and Asia, including the Cultural Revolution, the Vietnam War, and the U.S. occupation of Okinawa.

I look at three novels in chronological order. *Ando sankyodai no seishoku* (The sacred profession of the Ando brothers; 2008) builds a family drama around three brothers who have inherited their father’s business of creating mementos for the recently deceased using their bodies as material. *Bozu* (Gravehead; 2012) traces the life of a mysterious persona born with the remains of a parasitic twin on his head. Shunned and feared by all, “Bozu” is present at many major historical events, and tragedies, of postwar Asia. *Takarajima* (Island of Treasures; 2017) portrays four young outlaw-heroes who raid American military bases for food and supplies, resisting U.S. and mainland domination. In the latter two novels, Shindō considers Japanese identity in Asia and the world, as his characters struggle with the legacy of historical trauma.

4. **Tanabe Seiko’s Rewritings of Heian-Period Japanese Literature: The Intersection of Gender, Dialect, and Postwar Experience**, Naomi Fukumori, The Ohio State University

Tanabe Seiko (1928-2019) is a writer of postwar Japan whose works are marked uniquely by various factors: her female gender, her base in the city of Osaka (rather than Tokyo, the center of modern Japanese literary production), and her experience of World War II/the Pacific War. She broke new ground by indelibly capturing the lives of newly independent postwar women in the vivid cadence of the Osaka dialect. Another prominent pursuit of this prolific writer was the reinterpretation and reintroduction of Heian period (794-1185) court literature such as *The Tale of Genji* for a postwar audience. This presentation will illuminate how Tanabe fashioned female-centric, Osaka-inflected reinterpretations of the Heian classics in her modern Japanese translations.

5. **Adaptation as Arson: “Barn Burning” from William Faulkner to Murakami Haruki to Lee Chang-dong**, Pil Ho Kim, The Ohio State University

South Korean director Lee Chang-dong’s *Burning* (Pöning, 2018) is ostensibly a film adaptation of Murakami Haruki’s short story, “Barn Burning” (Naya o yaku, 1983), which was in turn ‘inspired’ – in a very loose sense of the word – by William Faulkner’s work with the same title, originally published in 1939. There is an interesting triangular relationship between the three works that defies the conventional meaning of adaptation. Lee’s film is intimately involved with both texts, but often dares to veer off and cast them aside to create its own jagged, incendiary narrative. *Burning* thus openly mocks the fidelity discourse in adaptation studies by juxtaposing Faulkner’s and Murakami’s stories from

different angles. Moreover, the intertextuality inscribed in this film is not limited to the two textual sources, as *Burning* liberally makes direct references to Faulkner and his contemporary American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and alludes to Murakami's other stories. As a novelist-turned-filmmaker, Lee Chang-dong opens a literary dialogue between himself and these acclaimed authors in the process of adaptation, burning through the textual constructs to reveal the deep anger and unease of contemporary Korean youth about their capitalist society.

6. The Profane and the Profound: Feces as Philosophical Device in Saito Mokichi's *Zuihitsu*, Stefanie Thomas, The Ohio State University

This presentation aims to introduce attendees to Saito Mokichi's *zuihitsu* corpus by showcasing its dichotomy of aesthetic considerations and insistence on being "true to life" according to the poetic *shasei* principle espoused by the *Araragi* poetry circle. It will do so by presenting a selection of four prose fragments originally published in the *Araragi* journal in which the author utilizes excrement and the act of defecation to explain his thoughts on poetic subject matter, to juxtapose ideal and reality, and to connect internal processes with the outer environment. As Mokichi was a trained physician as well as the senior editor of *Araragi*, this seemingly disparate pairing of concepts not only represents both professional realms in which he worked, but also espouses a holistic way of seeing the world that does not flinch away from the unpleasant, and harnesses the humorous to instruct his juniors.

7. Leo Tolstoy in Japan: The Case of Nakazato Kaizan, Artem Vorobiev, The Ohio State University

This presentation will aim to address the issue of Russian literary influence, more specifically, that of Leo Tolstoy's philosophy on the Japanese popular literature writer Nakazato Kaizan and his representations of the Edo-period past in the *jidai shōsetsu* (period novel) titled *Daibosatsu tōge* (Great Buddha's Pass).

Using Nakazato Kaizan's epic *Daibosatsu tōge* novel, his antiwar essays and poetry, this presentation will attempt to explore Nakazato's treatment and reimagining of the past, which in fact serves as a vehicle for coming to terms with the present. This presentation will aim to delve into Nakazato Kaizan's vision as informed by the anti-war philosophy of Leo Tolstoy, whose essays and publications Kaizan was exposed to during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and whose writings produced a great impression on him, remaining a life-long influence.