

The Single-Gender Worlds of Suzuki Izumi, Kurahashi Yumiko and Shōno Yoriko – A Short History of Ambivalence Towards All-Female Worlds in Japanese Speculative Fiction

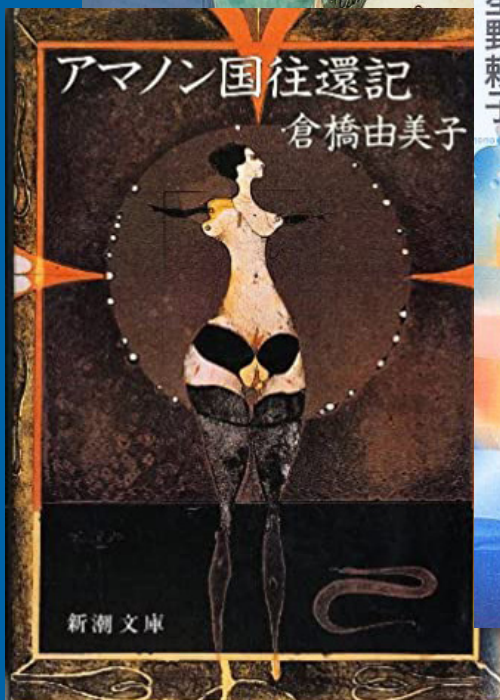
a virtual lunch lecture by Stefan Würrer

Thursday
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LUNCH LECTURE
12:30~14:00
online



In this talk I will take a closer look at three speculative novels by Japanese woman writers that negotiate the utopian potential of all-female worlds: Suzuki Izumi's 鈴木いづみ (1949-1986) "Onna to onna no yononaka" 女と女の世の中 (Women's World, 1977), Kurahashi Yumiko's 倉橋由美子 (1935-2005) *Amanon-koku ōkanki* アマノン国往還記 (Record of a Voyage to Amanon, 1986) and Shōno Yoriko's 笙野頼子 (1956-) *Suishōnaisendo* 水晶内制度 (World Within the Crystal, 2003). What these texts have in common is the fact that the all-female worlds they portray are not so much the locus of utopian hope – as, for instance, 'Whileaway' in Joanna Russ's epochal *The Female Man* (1975) – but rather the object of ambivalent dis-identification. What to make of this ambivalence?

Locating these texts within the broader context of utopian thought, feminist speculative fiction and feminism in Japan, I will demonstrate that, while these texts do constitute a critical negotiation of sexism and patriarchy in Japan, their ambivalence towards all-female worlds also bespeaks a systemic problem within the feminist discourses they reference. That is, by taking a closer look at the sexual politics of these texts (as opposed to their gender politics), I attempt to show that this ambivalence is not simply an expression of doubt about 1) the political potential of feminist separatism or 2) utopianism more generally, but 3) must also be understood as an effect of heteronormativity.



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Stefan Würrer is a graduate student (Ph.D.) at Tokyo University's Department for Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, Research Institute Assistant at International Christian University's Center for Gender Studies and Lecturer at Musashi University. In his Ph.D. project he explores the utopian potential of self-construction in Shōno Yoriko's work from a feminist/queer perspective. His research interests include modern and contemporary Japanese literature, feminist/queer theory, and the cultural history of gender & sexuality in Japan.