

A Few Thoughts Occasioned by Shigemi Nakagawa's Retirement from Ritsumeikan University

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I don't have an exact recollection of the time and occasion when I first met Shigemi Nakagawa. It must have been sometime in 1993, when I was Visiting Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. Or maybe it was a few years earlier. The occasion must have been a symposium, or a conference, or a party after some such academic event. While chatting about topics of common interest – Japanese and comparative literature, feminist and queer fiction and film, science fiction, postcolonial theory and literature, Japanese and East Asian cultural studies – Shigemi and I realized that we have many affinities, and that it would be nice to continue the conversation. This initial conversation sometime in the early 1990s was the starting point of a productive relationship of collaborative scholarly activities, projects, and exchange that continues to this day. It was also the beginning of an ongoing, stable friendship that has opened up for me worlds of wonderful, at times strange or unexpected discoveries (mainly but not only) about modern Japanese literature and culture, and thanks to which I am today (perhaps) a better, more compassionate human being.

The team research projects, conference panels, symposia and other events Shigemi Nakagawa and I have organized or collaborated on, and the publications that ensued from these collaborations are many and various. I will mention here only the most recent : Shigemi gave a fascinating keynote address at the *From Trinity to Fukushima and Beyond* international conference for junior scholars and researchers I organized with two of my graduate students at the University of Montreal on March 10-11, 2017 in commemoration of the March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Fukushima. The talk focused on the vision of a post-Fukushima world in the work of three well-known contemporary Japanese women writers, Tsushima Yûko, Tawada Yôko, and Kirino Natsuo. A week later I participated as discussant in a panel on queer readings of modern Japanese literature organized by Shigemi. The panel was part of the program of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, which took place in Toronto, on March 16-19, 2017. I was a speaker at the recent Edogawa Ranpo International Conference, *Edogawa Ranpo ou les labyrinthes de la modernité japonaise* (Edogawa Ranpo and the Labyrinths of Japanese Modernity), which took place on October 14-15, 2016, at the Université Paris Diderot and the Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris (パリ日本文化会館). This conference was part of a series of conferences and symposia focusing on Ranpo and his legacy in Japanese and world literature and visual culture, which was initiated by Shigemi Nakagawa at Ritsumeikan University in 2007. I was the organizer of a panel on film

adaptations of Sôseki's fiction at the *Sôseki's Diversity International Conference* which took place at the University of Michigan on April 18-20, 2014. Shigemi Nakagawa was once again speaker on this panel. The list of collaborative projects – which included graduate student exchanges between Ritsumeikan and the University of Montreal -- could go on.

As a scholar of Japanese and comparative literature, film, and media and cultural studies I would like to make special mention here of the impact of Shigemi Nakagawa's work, not only in Japan but also in Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, North America and Europe. Nakagawa-san's publications – monographs such as *Modaniti no sôzôryoku : Bungaku to shikakusei* (モダニティの想像力 : 文学と視覚性 *The Creativity of Modernity : Literature and Visuality*, 2009) and *Katarikakeru kioku : bungaku to jenda sutadizu* (語りかける記憶 : 文学とジェンダー・スタディーズ *Speaking Memories : Literature and Gender Studies*, 1999), co-edited essay collections such as *Rôdô no jendaka : Yuragu rôdô to aidentiti* (労働のジェンダー化 : ゆらぐ労働とアイデンティティ *The Gendering of Labor : Identity and the Changing Modern Conception of Labor*, 2005), as well as numerous scholarly articles and essays mostly in Japanese, but also in English and French -- cover a wide range of topics in several fields including modern and contemporary Japanese literature, comparative and world literature, Japanese, American, and European cinemas, visual culture and media studies, and gender studies. What is remarkable about several of these publications is at once the originality and brilliance of the readings they propose – readings of works by writers, critics, and thinkers as diverse as Natsume Sôseki, Yokomitsu Riichi, Tosaka Jun, Judith Butler, Tawada Yôko, Shôno Yoriko, Matsuura Rieko, Miyamoto Yuriko, and Hayashi Fumiko -- and the elegance and complexity of the theoretical and philosophical questions raised by these interpretations. While there are legions of scholars and critics who have written on feminism and modern women's writings and art, on queer theory and Hollywood stars, and on the relation between twentieth century modernisms and avantgarde movements and Marxist, socialist and communist ideologies, Nakagawa's readings stand out in their willingness to both question sanctioned canonical approaches and experiment with new interdisciplinary perspectives. Quite a few younger scholars in Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, the US, UK, France, Canada and elsewhere have benefited, and continue to learn from Shigemi Nakagawa's bold experiments in literary, visual culture and media criticism, and queer criticism and theory.

In conclusion a few personal remarks on Shigemi Nakagawa as a friend. Shigemi is not only an exquisite culinary, fashion, and fine arts connoisseur, but also a generous host, a zestful entertainer, and a loyal and supportive collaborator. He also has an excellent sense of humor and a fine-tuned understanding of human sentiments and foibles that immediately creates connections and sympathetic communication. I believe that that the intellectual and human legacy established by Professor Nakagawa will continue to flourish, and that he himself will continue to surprise and delight us with many more academic (and extra-academic) creative contributions.

Bio

Livia Monnet is Professor of Comparative Literature, Film, and East Asian Studies at the University of Montreal. Her main publications include *Ishimure Michiko, Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow* (Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 2003), the edited collection *Toxic Immanence : Nuclear Environmental Humanities for the Twenty-First Century* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2018), as well as numerous peer-reviewed scholarly essays and book chapters. Monnet is currently completing essays on contemporary Indian video artists, Edogawa Ranpo, and the production of subjectivity in the era of planetary environmental crisis.

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