

Conference Report –
1st Japanese Studies Conference “Text and Film in Interaction”
on 25–26 February, 2016, in Berlin

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On 25–26 February, 2016, the Institute of Japanese Studies at Freie Universität Berlin hosted the first international Japanese Studies conference “Text and Film in Interaction”. The conference was dedicated to questions related to forms of interdependence and correlation between text and film. Scholars and graduate students of Japanese studies and/or comparative media and literary studies had been encouraged to present research on media theory or media history, case studies on literary references to film as well as analyses of “filmic” writing styles or film adaptations.

The conference, which was held at the facilities of the *Holzlaube* building of Freie Universität Berlin in Berlin-Dahlem, was organized and hosted by Martha-Christine Menzel (FU Berlin) and Oliver P. Hartmann (FU Berlin) and sponsored by the Center for International Cooperation of Freie Universität Berlin and the Ernst-Reuter-Gesellschaft der Freunde, Förderer und Ehemaligen der Freien Universität Berlin e.V. The official conference language was English. Eleven speakers associated with universities in Japan (3), Germany (2), the United Kingdom (2), Ireland (1), Italy (1), Norway (1) and Switzerland (1) had been invited, though two were unable to attend on short notice. The remaining nine presentations were organized into six panels on “Cinematic Explorations of Literary Expressions” (Panels 1 & 2), “Tanizaki and Early Japanese Cinema” (Panel 3), “Literature versus Film” (Panel 4), “From Book to Screen” (Panel 5) and “Gender Perspectives on Literary Cinema” (Panel 6).

In the first panel, Irena Hayter (University of Leeds) explored tendencies of resistance by the modernist movement of the *Shinkankaku-ha*, the New Sensationalists, in the 1920s, whose ideas also resonated with the *Jun eigageki undō*, the Pure Film Movement. Against the background of the sensory politics of Japanese modernism informed by new technological forces such as photography, film, radio, phonograph and telephone, her paper “For the Eyes Only: The Sensory Politics of Japanese Modernism” offered close readings of fictional and critical texts by Yokomitsu Riichi (1898–1947), Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) and Kataoka Teppei (1894–1944). It argued that their writing and narrating styles were influenced by the new technologized sensory experience.

Till Weingärtner (University College Cork) opened the second panel concerned with cinematic experience influencing literary expressions. His presentation “Acting Writer?

Writing Actor? Takamine Hideko’s Autobiographical Essays” focused on actress/writer Takamine Hideko (1924–2010), who starred in adaptations of literary works during her acting career and later took on writing essays, the most widely read of which were autobiographical texts that described her acting experience. Kerstin Fooker’s (SOAS, University of London) presentation “Camille in Crisis – Adapting *La Dame aux Camélias* to the Japanese Silent Screen” discussed the circumstances of Murata Minoru (1894–1937) and Mori Iwao’s (1899–1979) adaptation project *Tsubakihime* of the French novel *La Dame aux Camélias*. Fooker argued that the variety of media involved in the promotional efforts for this specific production played on the imagery of existing adaptations and strove to “localize” the narrative, which drew heavily on the cultural capital of a wide variety of preceding theatrical adaptations.

The third panel was concerned with early Japanese cinema and filmmaker/writer Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886–1965). In her presentation “Hollywood Films in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s ‘Yokohama Period’ (1921–23) Novels”, Luisa Bienati (Università Ca’Foscari Venezia) elaborated on another phenomenon of internationalization and localization by focusing on Tanizaki’s novels of the early 1920s. Tanizaki, who had also participated in the Pure Film Movement’s debate, had been influenced by cinematographic visual techniques during his cooperation with the Taishō Katsuei film company and its connections to Hollywood. Bienati aimed at identifying elements concerning problems of modernization, ethnicity, and national identity in novels such as *Ave Maria* (1923) that laid the foundation for his later works. Tanizaki was also the point of interest in Daniele Resta’s (Daitō Bunka University, Tōkyō) contribution titled “Transnationalising Tanizaki: *Manji* in Liliana Cavani’s *The Berlin Affair*”. Resta discussed Liliana Cavani’s Italian adaptation *The Berlin Affair* of Tanizaki’s famous work *Manji* and the manner in which the four-way love affair of the original was translated into the context of Nazi-Germany. For Resta, the unusual adaptation choices reflect Cavani’s understanding of the story and Tanizaki’s poetics in general.

Iguchi Yūsuke (University of Tsukuba) explored the idea of literature versus film in the fourth panel. Under the title “The Characteristic of Movies. What Movies Can Show and Cannot Show the Audience”, he tried to explain the different storytelling techniques and strategies in movies and literature. For Iguchi, elements like picture, sound, and time create effects unique to film, whereas literary storytelling cannot entirely be reproduced in movie adaptations. He compared Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood* and Sebastian Schipper’s *Victoria*, which both create a certain illusion of time and reality that would be impossible to recreate in literature.

Movie adaptations were the main subject of the fifth panel. In her talk, Reiko Abe Auestad (University of Oslo) analysed “Ibuse Masuji’s *Kuroi Ame* (*Black Rain*, 1965) and Imamura Shōhei’s *Filmatisation* (1989)”, using the literary work and its cinematic adaptation to illustrate the concept of illusion of non-fiction in literature and film. Ibuse’s

work, which drew extensively on the “real-life” diary by a doctor who had witnessed the carnage of Hiroshima, has been criticized for claiming to be fictional, while allegedly plagiarizing non-fictional sources. On the other hand, Shōhei’s film adaptation has been criticized for feigning non-fictional content, while adding fictional elements. In the end, the question remained which of these stories “deserves” to be told, and how. A somewhat freer cinematic adaptation of literary origin was presented by Niels H. Bader (Freie Universität Berlin) in his paper “Fictional Biographies and Poetical History. Miyazaki Hayao’s *Kaze tachinu* (*The Wind Rises*) as an Homage to Hori Tatsuo”. Bader called the movie *Kaze tachinu* a twofold homage to the identically titled novel (1936–1937) by the author Hori Tatsuo (1904–1953) and the aeronautical engineer Horikoshi Jirō (1903–1982), who had been the role model for Miyazaki Hayao’s protagonist. By considering the fact that Hori Tatsuo’s *Kaze tachinu* was based on his own life experience, Bader identified the movie’s multi-layered narration of two biographies that touch on the ideas of history, creative work and war.

The sixth and last panel addressed Gender perspectives on literary cinema. Nakagawa Shigemi (Ritsumeikan University, Kyōto) raised the question of “Who can Define ‘Women’s Cinema’? – Where Literature and Film Meet”. By doing so, Nakagawa tried to sketch out the meaning of the symbolic cinematic expression “women’s literary cinema” between the 1930s and 1970s. The term itself seems to elude definition based on content, target audience or cast alone. Instead, Nakagawa stressed the role of literary sources as well as the influence of the rise of feminism, and the importance of “women’s cinema” as an experimental ground for female directors and feminist theory.

The immediate feedback at the conference during the final discussion was predominantly positive. Participants expressed their appreciation for a conference that connects and compares literature and film. Some remarked that the focus was naturally on text due to the academic background of the speakers, and wished to further explore the intermediality between text and film in the future. Others showed interest for engaging more thoroughly in the theoretical foundation of intermediality and other media theories. Accordingly, all participants expressed hopes for a follow-up conference or workshop in 2017. The conference was succeeded by the fourth meeting of the Initiative for Japanese Literary Studies, which was hosted in the same facilities.