

## Japanese Cinema: What Is It?

### Keynote Speakers:

Lindsay Nelson (Meiji University)

The Edge of Cinema: Japanese Horror in a Changing Media Landscape

In a time when the boundaries between YouTube, film, TV, and other media forms are becoming increasingly blurred, what can we learn from the trajectory of Japanese horror over the past twenty-five years? In this keynote address, Professor Lindsay Nelson examines recent developments in the world of Japanese horror, particularly the rise of horror YouTube channels and their international success. Such developments can offer insights into possible futures for Japanese horror and Japanese cinema as a whole.

Lindsay Nelson is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and Economics at Meiji University. Her research focuses on contemporary Japanese cinema, particularly Japanese horror films, and Japanese popular culture. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, the *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, and *Japanese Studies*. Her book, *Circulating Fear: Japanese Horror, Fractured Realities, and New Media*, examines the role that different forms of technology have played in Japanese horror films of the 2000s and 2010s.

D. A. Miller (University of California, Berkeley)

Wim Wenders' *Perfect Days*: Japanese Film as Genre

D. A. Miller taught for many years at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of several books on cinema, including *Hidden Hitchcock* and *Second Time Around: From Art House to DVD*. The Japanese version of *Hidden Hitchcock* is forthcoming.

### Speakers:

Ryo Takabe (University of Tokyo)

The "Broken Dreams" of Kiju Yoshida: On the Unfilmed scenarios *Lumière des roses* and *A Pale View of Hills*.

Japanese renowned filmmaker Kiju Yoshida (1933-2022) wrote two scenarios that could not be filmed in the 1990s: *Lumière des roses* (1991-92) and *A Pale View of Hills* (1996-98). The

former scenario features Gabriel Veyre, a cinematographer for the Lumière company who came to Japan in 1898. The latter scenario is an adaptation from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of the same name. I interviewed Philippe Jacquier, the producer of these two scenarios and of Yoshida's last film, *Femmes en miroir* (2002). Based on this research, my presentation will introduce and interpret these scenarios and attempt to pick up the fragments of Yoshida's "broken dreams".

Ryo Takabe is a Ph.D. student at The University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Culture & Representation Course. His research focuses on post-war Japanese films and Taiwanese new cinema, especially Kiju Yoshida and Ming-Liang Tsai. His main research achievement is *Shadows of Time: Cross-Cultural Reflection on Tokyo 1964 / 202X* (『東京時影 1964/202X』), Hatori Press, 2023 (co-author).

Kosuke Fujiki (Okayama University of Science)

A Postcolonial Romance with the Past: Taiwan and Japan's Mutual Nostalgia in *18×2 Beyond Youthful Days*

In Japanese media, Taiwan is often portrayed as a site of nostalgia for the Japanese. However, this nostalgia is reciprocal; many Taiwanese films depict the former colonial period as a romanticized chapter in national history, in stark contrast to the oppressive martial law period enforced by the Kuomintang after World War II. This paper examines *18×2 Beyond Youthful Days* (2024), a Taiwanese-Japanese coproduction directed by Japanese filmmaker Fujii Michihito and executive-produced by Taiwanese actor Chang Chen. Unlike such earlier Taiwanese films as *Cape No. 7* (Wei Te-sheng, 2008), which explicitly reference the Japanese colonial era, *18×2* mainly alludes to Japanese pop culture from the 1990s, a period immediately following Taiwan's democratization. In this context, Japan manifests itself as a symbol of democracy. Consequently, the Taiwanese male protagonist's journey to Japan remains superficial; it serves primarily to reaffirm his own identity rather than bringing about meaningful encounters with the Other.

Kosuke FUJIKI, Ph.D., is Lecturer in English linguistics at the Faculty of Education, Okayama University of Science. His research interests include the cinema of Okinawa and literary adaptation. He has recently published his monograph in Japanese on the film adaptations of Haruki Murakami's works.

Kohki Watabe (University of Tsukuba, Malaysia campus)

## *Kyaramnesia*: Rethinking Suture for the Ontology of Anime and Manga Characters

This paper explores the nature of characters in Japanese anime and manga through the concept of *kyaramnesia*, a term combining *kyara* (simple line-drawn images) and amnesia. In our current information-driven, capitalist society, audiences sadly no longer view "works" as autonomous or independent entities. People watch movies at double speed and consume snippets of classic films on social media. Rather than appreciating the inherent structure of a single work, they enjoy characters as the smallest unit of consumption. Viewers follow content across various media platforms and purchase character-branded products in convenience stores and supermarkets. This paper examines the ontology of these two-dimensional characters in Japanese visual culture by revisiting suture theory from film studies. The psychoanalytic concept of suture, combined with film theory's emphasis on three-dimensional space, reveals an undervaluation of two-dimensionality. Flat characters, easily reproduced in today's technological landscape and unbound by three-dimensionality, inherently embody a form of amnesia.

Kohki Watabe is an assistant professor of at the University of Tsukuba, Malaysia campus. He received Ph. D. in film and media studies from the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. His doctoral dissertation researched the cultural history of Japanese Americans' cultural practices prior to World War II, with a focus on film. His recent research focuses on culture and art in capitalist society, with particular attention to Japanese popular cultures.

Motonori Sato (Keio University)

Multiple Temporalities: A Comparative Reading of *A City of Sadness* and *Drive My Car*

It seems that Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989) and Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *Drive My Car* (2021) are different in multiple ways; Hou's masterpiece is a historical drama set in a crucial period in Taiwan modern history with a focus on the fate of a big traditional family while Hamaguchi's is a contemporary drama set in contemporary Japan featuring a modern couple. However, my paper claims that beneath such superficial differences lie some fundamental similarities that prove Hamaguchi's deep understanding of *and* commitment to Hou's cinematic style.

Motonori Sato is Professor of English at Keio University, Japan. His publications on literature and cinema include *The British New Wave* (in Japanese, Minerva, 2012) and *Graham Greene*,

a *Cinematic Life* (in Japanese, Keio University Press, 2018, Winner of the Association for the Studies of Culture and Representation Award). He is now writing a book on the Japanese modernist poet Junzaburo Nishiwaki.

Fareed Ben-Youssef (Texas Tech University)

When Savagery and Civilization Meet at a Ramen Shop: Sensing a Transnational Japan through Junzo Itami's Transnational Western *Tampopo*

Set in contemporary Japan, Junzo Itami's comedy *Tampopo* (1985) follows a truck driver-cowboy who trains a struggling ramen shop owner in the art of the dish. This simultaneously refined and bloody production is set on a frontier akin to that described by the historian of the American West, Frederick Jackson Turner: "the meeting point between savagery and civilization." At this frontier, Japan and the West clash and commingle, even as the Japanese center gazes upon its neighbors with a hungry, colonizing eye. This paper theorizes *Tampopo* as a transnational western, one that deploys the American genre's foundational savagery/civilization binary to sense a transnational Japan bristling with predatory appetites. *Tampopo's* under-theorized embrace of the western allows it to present food consumption and its preparation as dramatically as a duel. For instance, the cowboy swaggers toward the ramen shop with the solemnity of a gunslinger arriving at the showdown. To blaze her own trail, his pupil, the titular Tampopo, masters not the gun but her cooking utensils. Moreover, thanks to its underlying violence, the western genre creates a structuring logic for its delectable images undergirded by threat. Threat haunts Tampopo's dreams as when she imagines being assaulted by restaurant rivals, and it is even infused into the film's imagery, as in its allusion to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Therein, Tampopo sneakily looks through a peep hole to steal the recipe for a broth from a Chinese restaurant owner. At the point where the Japanese hero co-opts a Chinese culinary practice, Itami frames Tampopo like *Psycho's* Norman Bates stalking his next victim. Chinese culture is something to target. Mobilizing textual analysis along with theory on the western and transnational western, this paper reveals the tonally discordant film's value for both genre and Japanese film scholars. *Tampopo* shows how the Hollywood genre of the western provides an armature for Japanese filmmakers like Itami to frame implicating, cross-cultural connections—one wherein the colonial dimensions of Japanese (culinary) culture can be gleaned and where we might sense the savagery in its ostensible civilizing force.

Fareed Ben-Youssef is Assistant Professor in Film & Media Studies in the Department of

English at Texas Tech University. He has frequently published on Japanese cinema including in his book, *No Jurisdiction: Legal, Political, and Aesthetic Disorder in Post-9/11 Genre Cinema* (SUNY Press, 2022) and in *Japanese Language and Literature*. He is also the Film Review Editor of *Surveillance & Society*.

Mary A. Knighton (Aoyama Gakuin University)

Insect Women in Postwar Japanese Film

In the Abe Kōbō/Teshigahara Hiroshi collaboration, *Woman in the Dunes* (Suna no onna, 1964), and Imamura Shōhei's earlier *Insect Woman* (Nippon Konchūki, 1963), we see two very different postwar films that both narrate subjectivity and gender in terms of insects. Considering Laura Marks' concept of "the skin of the film," I ask what it might mean that the tactile and visual aesthetic of these films' embodied surfaces are not human, as critics usually contend, but animal. This talk explores how and why these two films generate a film language of insect women to describe a specific view of postwar Japan.

Mary A. KNIGHTON is Professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, where she teaches and researches modern American and Japanese literature and culture. Her essays have appeared in *Southern Cultures*, *Faulkner and Print Culture*, *Faulkner and Money*, *Mark Twain Journal*, and *Animal Comics: Multispecies Storyworlds in Graphic Narratives*, ed. David Herman (2017). Translations and articles on Kōno Taeko ([jll.pitt.edu/ojs/JLL/issue/view/12](http://jll.pitt.edu/ojs/JLL/issue/view/12)) and Kanai Mieko have appeared in *Japanese Language and Literature*, *Japan Forum*, and *U.S.–Japan Women's Journal*. Her current book project, supported by an ACLS/NEH/SSRC Fellowship and KAKEN Scientific Grant-in-Aid #17K02663, focuses on insects in Japanese literature and culture.

Ryohei Tomizuka (Kanagawa University)

The Japanese Melodrama of a Geisha Woman: Tamizo Ishida's *Old Songs* (1939)

Omio (Ranko Hanai), the protagonist of *Old Songs* (1939), is the daughter of a shipping agent in Senba, Osaka, and lives a comfortable life. However, when her family falls into poverty due to the Satsuma Rebellion, she is forced to become a geisha.

This presentation traces the process Omio goes through to make a heartbreaking choice after realizing the secret of her birth, focusing on the cinematography and mise-en-scène, and in particular, it analyzes the implications of the final scene, comparing it with the representative Hollywood melodrama of the same period, King Vidor's *Stella Dallas* (1937).

Ryohei Tomizuka is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Kanagawa University, Japan. His publications on literature and cinema include “From Grief to ‘Practical Power’: Moods and Affects in ‘Experience’” (*The Journal of the American Literature Society of Japan*, vol. 20, 2022), “Parlor and Study: Emerson’s Domestic Economy in Representations of Space” (in Japanese, *The American Review*, vol. 54, 2020, Winner of the Makoto Saito Award), and “The Method of *Asako I & II*” (in Japanese, *Eureka*, no. 50, vol. 12, 2018). His research interests include American literature, film studies, and literary theory. He co-edited *Drive My Car: Essays on a Cross-Media Vehicle* (in Japanese, Keio University Press, 2023).

Christophe Thouny (Ritsumeikan University)

Autistic Beings: Camering When Evil Does Not Exist

*Evil Does Not Exist* has confirmed Hamaguchi Ryūsuke’s place in contemporary Japanese and global cinema. This work that started out as a video clip for the music composer Eiko Ishibashi further expands on his exploration of images in a time of immediacy. Drawing on Fernand Deligny’s distinction between filming and camering, I propose here a reading that emphasizes another sense of the image, melancholic and surficial, an image that might disappoint but does not deceive, an image of endless gestures such as the young girl’s taking off her hat or erring in the forest, carried away. This is a loop story without beginning nor end, where binaries only set the stage for autistic beings without existence to live when there is no evil.

Christophe Thouny is associate professor of Japanese urban studies, media studies, modern literature, and critical theory at Ritsumeikan University. He is coeditor of *Planetary Atmospheres and Urban Society after Fukushima* and has published widely on Japanese popular culture and modern literature. His monograph entitled *Tokyo and the Urban Planetary: Dwelling in Passing* focusing on early 20th century Tokyo urban culture and the urban ethnographer Kon Wajirō was published in December 2023. He is currently working on postwar Japanese visual culture and the Japanese poet, actor and cineast Terayama Shūji.