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KYOTO LECTURES

Thursday, February 23th, 18:00h

Rebecca Suter

Diasporic Devils

The *Kirishitan* as
a Metaphor for Taishō
Cosmopolitanism
in the Works of
Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

SPEAKER

As Seiji Lippitt notes in *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, one of the defining characteristics of the intellectual panorama of the Taishō (1912-1926) period was its cosmopolitanism, a sense that Japan and the West were inhabiting the same world, that Japan had finally caught up with Western civilization and become “modern.” Much like for their Euro-American counterparts, however, for Japanese intellectuals such cosmopolitan fervor was accompanied by an increasing sense of displacement and cultural homelessness. A particularly intriguing, and not much studied, instance of such tension between celebration and fear of the transnational circulation of cultural forms can be found in Akutagawa’s *kirishitan mono*, a series of stories set during the so-called “Christian century” of Japan (1549-1638), the brief period of evangelisation before the ban on foreign religion in the Tokugawa period. This talk will look at the way this author portrays Japanese early Christians and Jesuit missionaries as symbols of the thrills and threats of negotiation and hybridity, and as a universal metaphor for the encounter with the Other.

Rebecca Suter is senior lecturer in Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney, and is currently a Visiting Researcher at Keio University in Tokyo. Her main research interests are in modern Japanese literature and popular culture, with a cross-cultural focus. Her first book, *The Japanization of Modernity*, examined Murakami Haruki’s role as a cultural mediator between Japan and the United States. Her current book project investigates the use of Christian imagery in modern Japanese fiction, including literature, film, *manga*, and *anime*. She has taught Japanese language and literature at the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO) in Rome, Harvard University, and Brown University.

This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room, 1st floor).

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