

Affect and Cognition in Modern Japanese Literature

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The second-generation cognitive scientists in recent years have emphasized the notion of mental processes as always embodied, embedded, and distributed in contrast with the more traditional view of the mind based on abstract propositional representations largely independent of the body and its surroundings.

Borrowing this insight, this book project will analyze a selection of modern and contemporary Japanese novels from a cognitive perspective—cognitive in the broad sense that includes thought, affects, emotions, bodily reactions, imagination and memory. With a particular focus on affect, I want to highlight in my reading continuity between mind and body, thought and feelings, and their embeddedness in the world at large. With its characteristic intensity, mobility and unpredictability, affect plays an unexpectedly decisive role in shaping not only interpersonal relationships but also the world opinions, and even politics, with consequences that cannot be taken lightly.

The book has twofold structures and objectives:

1. A thematic focus on the mind and body nexus, with key issues surrounding affects, mood, trauma, grief, and memories.
2. A formal focus on representation of the cognitive mix.
Literature is by its nature cognitively mixed. How does this mix manifests itself in the Japanese language and in genres such as *shaseibun*, *zuihitsu* and *shishōsetsu*?

Many of the works that I want to analyze are canonical novels that have played an important cultural role in the emergence of Japan as a modern nation state. And I believe a cognitive approach has a potential for debunking the kind of modernizationist readings that they have been most often subjected to.

The list of authors to be analysed (some of them, in the same chapter):

Natsume Sōseki, Shiga Naoya, Ibuse Masuji, Tsuhima Yūko, Ōe Kenzaburō, Kirino Natsuo, Tawada Yōko, Kawakami Mieko, Ito Hiromi, Ishimure Michiko.