Affect in Modern Japanese literature: Natsume Soseki, Oe Kenzaburo, Kirino Natsuo and Kawakami Mieko

This project will be looking at the complex mechanisms by which affect intervenes in human interactions and how it plays an unexpectedly decisive role in shaping interpersonal relationships.

About the project

In an attempt to overcome the impasse of social constructivism, cultural theorists have sought to look at "bodies" in ways that would acknowledge their active role in the process of social signification without denying their possibility for resistance. In a similarly non-dualistic approach to the mind and body, nature and nurture nexus, "affect" has received considerable attention in the last decade as the primary motivator in human interaction, providing us with an opportunity to draw a more comprehensive picture of the social world and human experiences in it.

Objectives

In this project I will analyze a selection of modern and contemporary Japanese novels, with a focus on affect, looking at the complex mechanisms by which affect intervenes in human interactions - sometimes as a reinforcement of, and other times as a deterrent of, or independently of, what is considered socially normative behaviors. With its characteristic intensity and unpredictability, it plays an unexpectedly decisive role in shaping interpersonal relationships. In efforts to include the reader in shaping of this "interpersonal relationship," I also wish to borrow some insight from recent findings in cognitive narratology.