

'I take on my reader's nationality':

French response to Japanese literature in a Global Age

Justyna Weronika Kasza



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"I firmly believed that the writers formed a lost tribe and spent their lives wandering the world and telling stories in all languages [...] I don't understand the attention paid to a writer's origins. Because for me, Mishima was my neighbour [...] when I became a writer and people asked me, "Are you a Haitian writer, a Caribbean writer or French language writer?" I answered

without hesitation: I take on my reader's nationality, which means that when a Japanese person reads me, I immediately become a Japanese writer". In his 2008 novel *Je suis un écrivain japonaise* (*I am a Japanese Writer*), Dany Laferrière re-examines the interdependence between 'language', 'literary canon', and the possibilities of becoming a Japanese writer based on his own experiences of reading the canonical texts of Japanese literature.

Focusing on selected French and Francophone writers (Amélie Nothomb, Éric Faye, Dany Laferrière, Philippe Forest), I discuss the 'European frameworks of Japanese literature', and I attempt to consider whether the writers in question, by crossing the language and cultural boundaries, could (possibly) become a case study in changing the paradigm for thinking about Japanese literature. How do they contribute to our practice of reading Japanese literature transculturally and translingually?

The objective of the presentation is to demonstrate that various forms of translations (intercultural, intracultural, self-translation) are immanent processes of identity construction in a Global Age, and how "foreignness" and "Otherness" have become the hallmark of contemporary Japanese literature.

Justyna Weronika Kasza is an Assistant Professor in Japanese Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, (Poland) where she teaches courses in Japanese literature, literary studies and translation. She received her PhD from the University of Leeds (UK) in 2013. In 2016, her PhD thesis was published as the monograph *Hermeneutics of Evil in the Works of Endō Shūsaku: Between Reading and Writing* (Peter Lang, Oxford). As part of her recent research activities, in 2016 she attended The Sixth Seminars in World Literature hosted by the Institute for World Literature at Harvard University. From October 2018, she is a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Comparative Culture at Sophia University in Tokyo. She received the Japan Foundation Fellowship for new book project *The "I" in the making: rethinking Japanese shishōsetsu in a Global Age*.

Lecture in English / No RSVP necessary / This talk is organized by Professor Angela Yiu (FLA).