
The visit to Japan by Ulysses S. Grant in 1879 represented the culmination of a period of turmoil and reform in which prefectural governors emerged as important symbols of the qualities and contradictions at the heart of Meiji governance. As bureaucratic officials appointed to the newly established regional prefectures, governors faced the problem of establishing their own authority and legitimacy to wary local populations, and drew upon eclectic ideological sources, including Confucian conceptions of benevolence, to gain public support for their leadership and reforms. These same Confucian ideologies could also be seen by governors as empowering and obliging them to critique the Meiji state’s privileging of its own aims over local interests. This paper will explore how governors’ activities during Grant’s visit illustrated these features of early gubernatorial authority, as well as the ways in which activist governors were increasingly at odds with a vision of politics increasingly centered on the emperor and state bureaucracy.

Kazue Harada, Literature, Miami University: “Queer Families: Nonhuman Companionships in Ueda Sayuri’s The Ocean Chronicles”

Ueda Sayuri (b. 1964) is a prolific writer of science fiction and fantasy stories. Her works inevitably challenge the limits of humanity and particularly push past gendered boundaries. Her series The Ocean Chronicle (2009-2013) questions normativity by including queer families—non-reproductive and non-heteronormative companionships between humans and nonhumans. The series offers a critique of contemporary pro-natal policies in Japan that were enacted as countermeasures for the nation’s low birthrate. In a sense, her post-apocalyptic world, which discourages human reproduction, anticipates the eventual extinction of the human race. This world also defies the notion of “reproductive futurism” by destabilizing the heteronormative
reproductive discourse that centers, as Lee Edelman observes, the futurity of the Child. Despite an impending environmental disaster Ueda’s series simultaneously leaves us with a sense of hope for the future through the presence of these queer families and the option of coexistence with nonhumans. By way of undoing heteronormativity and challenging anthropocentrism, this essay will explore the ways in which queer families—entanglements and companionships between humans and nonhumans—challenge reproductive futurism in Ueda’s series. I will primarily refer to Donna Haraway’s “companion species” and Karen Barad’s “intra-activity” to rethink human materiality and subjects in relation to nonhumans. I will also examine the ways in which the representation of queer families can function as a critique of pro-reproductive policies by engaging with Edelman’s “reproductive futurism.” Simultaneously, by referring to José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of “queer futurity,” I will show that the suggestive nonhuman survival not only contests anthropocentric views but leaves us with a sense of hope.

HOTEL: A block of rooms has been set aside at the TownePlace Suites East Lansing under the group name “MJS” and group code “MASO.” The cost is $104 per night, with taxes added at a rate of 13%, and includes a continental breakfast, parking, and internet access. The block will remain in effect until Oct. 15. To make a reservation, your best bet is to call the hotel directly at 517/203-1000. It is located at 2855 Hannah Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48823, about 1.5 miles from campus. Note that the hotel does not provide shuttle service to the airport or campus. For more information about the hotel, go to: http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/lants-towneplace-suites-east-lansing/

AIRPORT: LAN (Capital Regional International Airport) is located 15 minutes from campus, and a taxi ride for those 15 minutes will cost approximately $15 dollars. An alternative is DTW (Detroit Metropolitan Airport), which is a 75-minute drive or 2-hour shuttle at $30 one way.

CAMPUS MAP and PARKING: https://maps.msu.edu/

DINNER: The dinner will take place right after the seminar. The details will be forthcoming.

LOCAL CONTACT: Ethan Segal (segale@msu.edu)

NOTE: To receive PDF copies of the papers, please e-mail Betsy Lublin (aj8580@wayne.edu) by Oct. 16. When you do, please indicate if you intend to join for dinner Saturday evening.

SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2017

Feb. 11, 2017 University of Memphis
David Blaylock, History, Eastern Kentucky University
Anne Sokolsky, Comparative Literature, Ohio Wesleyan University

April 8, 2017 St. Xavier University
Beth Widmaier Capo, English, Illinois College
Tanya Maus, History, Peace Resource Center, Wilmington College
Would you like to present during the 2017-2018 year? If so, then please email Betsy Lublin (aj8580@wayne.edu).

MJS Website: https://wmich.edu/japancenter/seminar

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