Michael Bathgate, Saint Xavier University: “The Anecdotal Imagination: Narrating the ‘Secular’ in Medieval Japan”

With more than a thousand stories drawn from India, China and Japan, the Konjaku monogatarishū is the most ambitious (and, arguably, the most puzzling) example of medieval Japanese tale literature. Among its 28 extant fascicles, for example, are three scrolls that are entitled seizoku (“secular”) – rather than tales of filial piety or the salvific power of Buddhist ritual, these tales celebrate the cleverness of poets and doctors, the bravery of warriors and a decidedly bawdy (perhaps even impious) sense of humor. Stories such as these may well prove more engaging to modern audiences and have inclined some to view them as part of a transition in literary tastes from pre-modern didacticism to a more modern – even secular – literature. Rather than a departure from didacticism, however, this paper suggests that these tales are integral to the didactic enterprise of the collection as a whole, an enterprise with implications for how we theorize the secular itself.

Wei Yu Wayne Tan, Hope College: “Gendered Bodies: The Ordinary Lives of Blind Women”

What can disability studies tell us about the disability history of Japan? And how can we use disability as a lens to analyze the lived experiences of ordinary people in Japan? With a focus on the intersection of disability and gender, this paper begins by exploring historical sources to provide new perspectives on the lives of blind women in Tokugawa Japan. It looks at what constituted “normal” in the context of status-based rule and how blind women, especially goze (blind female musicians), earned their livelihoods. Tracing the personal accounts of some of
these goze, the discussion considers how modernity changed—and did not change—the expectations that these women had of society and of themselves. Approaching disability through case studies of blind women and at the level of microhistory, the paper seeks new ways of examining the early-modern and modern divide in the historiography of Japan and argues that the study of profiles of disabled people exposes gaps in our understandings of how disability was inscribed onto gender and lived through gendered bodies.

**HOTEL:** Hotel information for MCAA can be found at the following through the link for Conference Information: [https://morningside.edu/mcaa](https://morningside.edu/mcaa)

**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:** To register for MCAA, click on: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mcaa-2018-annual-meeting-tickets-46414271335](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mcaa-2018-annual-meeting-tickets-46414271335)

**TRANSPORTATION:** Information about transportation can be found through the link for Conference Information at: [https://morningside.edu/mcaa](https://morningside.edu/mcaa)

**CAMPUS MAP:** For a campus map and information about parking near the conference venue, go to: [https://www.metrostate.edu/about/locations/saint-paul](https://www.metrostate.edu/about/locations/saint-paul)

**DINNER ON THURSDAY NIGHT:** The MJS dinner during MCAA this year will be held on Thursday, Oct. 18, at Sakura Sushi, located at 350 St. Peter St. in St. Paul, either a quick drive or about a 20-minute walk from the Embassy Suites. The reservation is for 7 p.m., and you can get an advance peak at the menu by going to [http://sakurastpaul.com/site/dinner-menu/](http://sakurastpaul.com/site/dinner-menu/). The restaurant has asked for as firm a headcount as possible given that there is a Foo Fighters concert in town the same night. So, do please let me know in advance if you plan to join for dinner.

**LOCAL CONTACT:** Betsy Lublin ([elublin@wayne.edu](mailto:elublin@wayne.edu), cell 248-376-0368)

To receive electronic copies of the papers, please e-mail Betsy Lublin ([elublin@wayne.edu](mailto:elublin@wayne.edu)) by Sept. 28. Also and again, please indicate if you would like to join for dinner on Thursday night.

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**REMAINING SCHEDULE FOR 2018-2019**

**Nov. 10, 2018**  **Northwestern University, Evanston, IL**
David Holloway, Literature, University of Rochester  
Hiromi Mizuno, History, University of Minnesota  
Gian-Piero Persiani, Literature, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Feb. 9, 2019**  **North Central College, Naperville, IL**
Aragorn Quinn, Literature, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Kathryn Ibata-Arens, Political Science, DePaul University
Kendra Strand, Literature, University of Iowa

April 6, 2019    Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH
Anne Sokolsky, Literature, Ohio Wesleyan University
Yuki Miyamoto, Religion, DePaul University
David Humphrey, Literature, Michigan State University

MJS Website:  http://www.wmich.edu/japancenter/seminar

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