



27 Mar 2019 (Wed) 4:30-6:00pm

CRT-4.36, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU

Modern Japanese literature is said to have resulted from an encounter between Japanese writers and foreign letters during an era of translation coeval with the Meiji period (1868-1912), when European literary styles were actively assimilated. Yet by presuming that literary influence is a book-to-book affair, scholarship overlooks the older role of European visual media in the development of aesthetic sensibilities both before and after the Meiji Reformation. This lecture thus disputes the view that modern Japanese literature was primarily a function of translating works of the European canon. Appealing to historical record and Meiji literature's formal and thematic tendencies, the lecture will suggest that Japanese literature modernized through the imitation of Western visual media, in which premodern governmental authorities, alarmed by Western imperialism, had well perceived military applications, lending such media a new air of prestige.



Ron Martin Wilson is a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University's Department of Comparative Literature and focuses on modern Japanese literature, film, and visual culture. Part of an ongoing interest in the rapport between literature and technology, Wilson's book project, *Meiji, Media, and Modernity: The Politics of Optical Mimesis in Late-Nineteenth-Century Japan*, contests the almost universal explanation of how modern Japanese literature came into existence, namely, as the product of translating Western literature. Citing pre-modern Japan's military interest in Europe's optical media, Wilson argues instead that the formal, thematic, and historical character of modern Japanese literature was defined by this earlier visual orientation, a trace of Japan's technological defense against Western colonial encroachment. Wilson currently resides in Hong Kong.



SCHOOL OF
MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
FACULTY OF ARTS, THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

All are welcome. No registration is required.
For enquiries, please contact Dr. Emily Chow, at echowq@hku.hk.

SMLC Seminar Series