



UNIVERSITATEA  
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



Mutual  
Images

## Seasonal imagery in Japanese language, culture and literature

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November

Organised by Mutual Images Research Association

and

The Sembazuru Centre for Japanese Studies [SCJS]

8h30

### Welcome and opening speeches

Aurore Yamagata-Montoya, PhD, Chair of Mutual Images Research Association (France)

Hiroshi Ueda, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador (Japanese Embassy in Romania)

Rodica Frentiu, Prof. PhD habil., Chair of the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania)



**9h15 – 10h15**

**Guest speaker**

How the 'Coming of Spring' is Differently Encoded Linguistically across Languages: An Interim Report

Yoshihiko Ikegami, Professor Emeritus (Tokyo University, Japan)

**10h30-12h30**

**Panel 1- The seasons in visual and performance arts**

Moderator: Ciliana Tudorică

A Farewell to the Past: Employing the Idealization of the Seasons as a Means to Overcome the Fear of the Future in Takarazuka Revue's Musical Performance *Sekkishō* (flower troupe, 2016)

Maria Gradjan, Hiroshima University (Japan)

Dressed by Nature, Adorned by Design: Seeing, Feeling, Marking the Seasons with Kimono

Lucile Druet, Kansai Gaidai University (Japan)

Seasonal Elements in Toru Takemitsu's Film Music

Xie Mohan, Xiamen University (China)

Seasonal Imagery in (Global) Ikebana Practice Today: Opportunities and Challenges

Marlies Holvoet, Ghent University (Belgium)



**13h-14h30**

**Panel 2- The seasons in Japanese Literature**

Moderator : Ciliana Tudorica

The Seasons of War: The Traditional-Style War Haiku of Hasegawa Sosei

Lenin Emmmanuel Gutierrez, Nagoya University (Japan)

Love and Death Through the Prism of Seasons: The Word “Pampas Grass” in the Collected Poems of Lady Ise

Maria Elena Raffi, IFRAE (France)

Subversive Imagology: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Ibuse Masuji’s *Kakitsubata* (1951) and Taguchi Randy’s *Zōn ni te* (2013)

Veronica de Pieri, University of Bologna (Italy)

**15h15-16h45**

**Panel 3- Perception of the Japanese seasons in popular culture**

Moderator : Ioana Tosu

Sakura: Representations of the Cherry Tree in Fiction and its Relationship with Japanese Culture

Aline Silva Dejosy Nery, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

and Lucas Mascarenhas de Miranda, Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

Four Seasons in Japan: Marketing Seasonal Pre-Wedding Photography for Foreign Couples

Aurore Yamagata-Montoya, Mutual Images Research Association (France)

Cherry Blossoms and Sweet Sentimentalism: Analysis of the sakura Song Boom in the 2000s

Tepei Fukuda, University of Oregon (USA)



**16h45-17h15**

**Panel 4- Commemorating Kawabata Yasunari**

Moderator : Oana Bîrlea

A Living Space Under the Sign of the Rythms of Nature: Kyoto in *The Old Capital* by Kawabata Yasunari

Sabina Maria Sava, independent scholar (Romania)

Rereading Yasunari Kawabata: The Winter Imaginary in the Novel *Snow Country* (*Yuki guni*, 1935-1937/ 1948

Rodica Frentiu and Florina Ilis, Babes-Bolyai University (Romania)

**17h15-17h30**

Closing comments

## Abstracts

*A Farewell to the Past: Employing the Idealization of the Seasons as a Means to Overcome the Fear of the Future in Takarazuka Revue's Musical Performance Sekkashô (flower troupe, 2016)*

Maria Gradjian, Hiroshima University (Japan)

This presentation aims at critically observing the alternating concatenation of seasonally inspired numbers and Japanese legends from time immemorial in the show Sekkashô (「雪華抄」, “Snowflake Anthology”), staged by the Japanese all-female musical company Takarazuka Revue’s flower troupe in late 2016. The goal is to disclose some of the strategies employed by Takarazuka Revue’s administrators in pursuing a necessary agenda of breaking with the tradition while steadily moving forward towards a future of self-reinvention, without disappointing the deeply conservative fans’ vast community. The analysis occurs both historically and systematically: on the one hand, the year 2016 was a “bridge” year between 2015 with its two major reconfigurations of the decade-long image of Takarazuka Revue as a bastion of shôjo culture firmly anchored in a delusional past and its stubborn rejection of common sense as well as historical reality, and 2017 with its blatant reconfiguration of Soft Power priorities in terms of theatrical representation; on the other hand, Sekkashô itself is a symbolical gem of Takarazuka Revue’s most typical features, signifying an effective yet dignified statement of not so much criticizing the past, but releasing oneself from its almighty grasp so that one can change the direction of the present towards a different type of future





than the familiar flows of history so far. Fierce pragmatism in facing historical advancement on the global scale and radical responsibility in the proactive reinvention of the self are the two major ideological strategies inaugurated by Sekkashô: the display of “Japanese elegance” in the spirit of *nihonmono* (Japanese-style performance) unfolds gracefully on-stage, starting with the glorious scenery of spring, the glittering waves of summer, the autumn moon, the fascinating world of dancing snowflakes and culminating in the overwhelmingly blooming cherry blossoms, intertwined with famous legends and folk-tales, and sends a message of honoring the past while building up a future in the service of freedom as the fundamental meaning of life – life being itself the most valuable asset one possesses and could ever possess.

### Dressed by Nature, Adorned by Design: Seeing, Feeling, Marking the Seasons with Kimono

Lucile Druet, Kansai Gaidai University (Japan)

As analyzed in various studies of Japanese arts and crafts, objects that are designed in Japan materially, symbolically and aesthetically reflect the characteristics of Japan’s climate and cultural sense of nature. The kimono is an excellent example, with Japanese nature present from its conception to the way it is colored and patterned, notably through a clear, strong at times “poignant” connection with the seasons. Dressing in kimono thus leads to the idea of embracing a system of clothing that intricately displays the passage of time. The outfits convey a deep sensitivity that is concerned with how flowers, foliage, animals and plants grace the world and how elegantly human beings can inhabit this natural realm. By looking at specific pattern designs, such as snowflakes, autumn plants, plum blossoms, birds or animals paired with designated trees as well as the avoidance of inauspicious motifs like equinox flowers, this presentation maps the different ways the seasons are naturally (or paradoxically) expressed in kimono design. Complementing what is exposed in the books about kimono patterns this presentation also discusses the significance of dressing in clothes adorned with either realistic, exaggeratedly lush, subtly withered or more stylized seasonal motifs. It ultimately explores how the choice of a mode of dress inherently tied to the seasons can bring fresh perspectives to the fast fashion / slow fashion debate as well as imagine new directions for kimono design, formulating its future with renewed ideas for a classic yet contemporary “kimono saijiki”.

### Seasonal Elements in Toru Takemitsu's Film Music

Xie Mohan, Xiamen University (China)

Film music creation almost throughout Toru Takemitsu's life, as many as 100 film music works are an essential part of his creative career. Takemitsu’s film music creation has made remarkable achievements in composing ideas and techniques, the exploration and practice of new sounds, recognising and application of Japanese folk music and musical instruments, and the combination of sound and painting. The seasons are a very important element, not only in the scenes in the movies but also in the atmosphere shaped by the music. This article is based on the keyword of the season and starts from two perspectives, namely, the distinct seasonal scene of Takemitsu's score and Takemitsu's film music based on the seasonal genre. Through the analysis of music ontology and creative techniques, the thesis takes Takemitsu's 4 representative film music works, *Waiting for Spring* (春を待つ人), *Dear Summer Sister* (夏の妹), *Burning Autumn* (燃える秋) and *Sound of Four Season* (音の四季), as the main object of analysis. It tries to explain how seasons are reflected in Takemitsu's film music, and what kind of music corresponds to what kind of seasons. Finally, it further analyzes how the film music and season interact in the picture.



## Seasonal Imagery in (Global) Ikebana Practice Today: Opportunities and Challenges

Marlies Holvoet, Ghent University (Belgium)

Seasonal imagery abounds in the floral art of ikebana. The use of seasonal floral materials at set times throughout the year is part of the traditional curriculum of many ikebana schools. Sensibility to the changing of the seasons as moments of transition, and to the life cycle of plants as a reflection of the cycle of life, is one of the qualities ikebana practice is said to foster in its practitioners. Also, the use of floral materials with strong historical and literary associations, allows ikebana practitioners to add symbolical layers to their arrangements, and the ability to discern these deeper layers, functions as evidence of cultural knowledge and connoisseurship. With ikebana being practiced worldwide today, the seasonal imagery used in ikebana, is picked up across the globe and takes on an additional layer of meaning, representing “Japan” and a sense of “Japaneseness”. This provides many interesting opportunities for national image building by government agencies, who gratefully make use of ikebana masters as cultural ambassadors for Japan, and for ikebana schools to acquire (inter)national prestige at the same time. Yet it presents challenges as well. The use of some seasonal imagery is so cliché, the question is whether it is still useful to attract interest. As for ikebana schools, they struggle to balance upholding their respective traditional repertoires of arrangements, while simultaneously keeping their schools moving with the times to remain relevant to a contemporary audience and client base. Some traditional floral materials are becoming increasingly hard to come by – both in Japan but also abroad – , creating the need for experimentation with alternatives, which triggers mixed reactions amongst ‘purists’ and ‘pragmatists’ on the question of authenticity. In this presentation, I will build on a combination of elements of cultural nationalism studies (Surak, Yoshino, McVeigh, et al.) and imagology (Leerssen, Laurusaite) to illustrate the opportunities and challenges seasonal imagery presents in ikebana today, drawing on observational fieldwork I’ve conducted within the Ohara School of Ikebana over the past years, focusing in particular on a stage performance of the Ohara Head Master in Seattle in February 2020, and the European Ohara Teachers’ Association Workshop, organized in Belgium, May 2022.

## The Seasons of War: The Traditional-Style War Haiku of Hasegawa Sosei

Lenin Emmmanuel Gutierrez, Nagoya University (Japan)

As the Second-Sino Japanese War (1937-1939) broke, traditional haiku poets maintained the use of seasonal words when composing war haiku, at a time when some considered kigo a limiting factor to report the war. This presentation will focus on the case of Hasegawa Sosei (1907-1946) and it aims to show how he used kigo to maintain traditional haiku tenets while attempting to convey the reality of war. Hasegawa, a member of the traditional Hototogisu haiku circle, was sent to the war front and composed haiku about the conflict. In 1939, after returning to Japan, he published *Hōsha* (Gun Carriage), the first war haiku collection written by a single author. This collection comprises the haiku that he composed while on service in China. Hasegawa created his war haiku in a traditional way, using kigo to convey the passing of the seasons and his experiences on the front. His pieces were celebrated for their authenticity and the evocative power of their images. However, some of his poems from *Hōsha* were also criticized for being too detached from the war. By analyzing examples of Hasegawa’s war haiku and the critical reviews that he received, some light will be shed on how traditional war haiku was assessed during wartime. The relation between war haiku and propaganda will also be discussed, as published poetry during this time period upheld the state ideology through the use of traditional intertextual poetics such as seasonal words.



## Love and Death Through the Prism of Seasons: The Word “Pampas Grass” in the Collected Poems of Lady Ise

Maria Elena Raffi, IFRAE (France)

The analysis of the word “hanasusuki” (pampas grass) in *Kokinshū*, shows that, at the time of this anthology, this flower, whose plumes (“obana”) are mentioned in the *Man’yōshū* amongst the seven plants of autumn, is strictly associated to the expression of passion. The image of plumed pampas grass swaying in the autumn wind was a traditional metaphor for the act of waving sleeves as an invitation sign and its use conveyed a sentimental context. The review of all the poems of Ise shū (Collected Poems of Lady Ise) containing this word reveals that Ise, the most represented female poet of *Kokinshū*, does not use it merely in love poems but in death poems as well. The elegies by Ise where the seasonal word “hanasusuki” appears not only suggest an association with the feeling of impermanence of life and of love which is heightened by the coming of autumn, the season which announce nature’s decay and desolation. Her unusual choice of this word in the verses composed on the occasion of Emperor Uda or Empress Onshi’s death could also evoke the ritual gesture of waving the sleeves accomplished during the “chinkonsai” (soul appeasement), a rite meant to pacify the spirits of the dead and, at once, an annual court ritual performed at the winter solstice, the longest night of the year when nature vitality is at its lowest level and which signs the passage from autumn to winter. The aim of this presentation is to provide, through the analysis of Ise’s poems, a meaningful example of the deep interlacing of life, death and seasons by observing how an ancient agricultural rite linked to the cycle of seasons and aimed to reinvigorating the sun at the darkest time of the year could become an imperial rite.

## Subversive Imagology: An Eco-Critical Analysis of Ibuse Masuji’s *Kakitsubata* (1951) and Taguchi Randy’s *Zōn ni te* (2013)

Veronica de Pieri, University of Bologna (Italy)

The relationship between Japanese people and nature is one of a strong bond in several respects. On the one hand, the symbiotic relationship between the Japanese and Japan’s natural environment has shaped cultural aspects of the philosophical and religious matrix, such as the Shintō and Buddhist rituals. On the other hand, the unpredictable character of nature manifests in earthquakes, tsunamis, and floods that have characterized the country for centuries. Eventually, in the global imagination, Japan is associated with cherry blossoms or autumn foliage, expressing an aesthetically perfect fragility in its fleeting passage. This image metaphorically describes nature as both friendly and hostile. What happens when this image is subverted by anthropogenic interference that corrupts the ecosystem and its connection with human beings? Radioactive contamination has troubled Japan twice. First, the double atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki annihilated the topography of the two cities. More recently, the nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi turned a flourishing agricultural region into a graveyard of radioactive waste. Nevertheless, literature gives us evidence of nature fighting back. In *Kakitsubata* (1951), Ibuse Masuji portrays a crazy iris, blooming out of season. With *Zōn ni te* (2013), Taguchi Randy presents a revitalized nature, more thriving than ever, despite the soil contamination surrounding the nuclear power plant. This contribution adopts an eco-critical perspective to analyze an alternative view of the Japanese seasonal imagery depicted in literature. The aim is to investigate how the imagology that associates Japan with a sublime, untouched country (*jitsuzō*) is far from the truth of a contaminated environment (*jittai*) which struggles to restore its unspoiled sublimity.





## Sakura: Representations of the Cherry Tree in Fiction and its Relationship with Japanese Culture

Aline Silva Dejesi Nery, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

and Lucas Mascarenhas de Miranda, Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

Since the 1990s, Japanese animations have gained space in Brazil, alongside American animations, but this growth has not been equally accompanied by knowledge of Japanese culture. Therefore, it is very common for people not to understand Japanese stories in their entirety. In Brazil, the name Sakura gained prominence from the airing of Sakura Card Captors and Naruto anime on TV throughout the country in programs aimed at young people. Unlike what happens in other series, in which the heroes solve problems and save the world through violence, in Sakura Card Captors, conflicts are resolved through loving and supportive behaviors. Therefore, if our well-being and our mental health are affected by the way we interact and react to the environment we inhabit, the hanami tradition can have a positive impact on the health of the Japanese. In addition, Sakura Card Captors is suitable for children, as it does not resort to violent solutions to conflicts and reinforces the importance of the most varied affective bonds and small gestures between people. The contemplation of the flowering period of trees is a millenary Japanese tradition, having an important cultural meaning and economic value for Japan, both for tourism and for the products that derive from them. Cherry blossoms are referenced as scents for perfumes and moisturizers and as a brand for food products. Cherry trees were brought to Brazil by Japanese immigrants in the 20th century. Unfortunately, its trees are not common, since the tropical climate of the country does not contribute to its growth in all states, even in regions where the winter is colder. What makes few places accessible to observe its flowering. As temperature is an important factor in cherry blossoms, it is to be expected that climate change will also affect these species. Over the centuries, the warming of the planet has anticipated the flowering process, and studies have pointed out some ecological and social implications resulting from this warming. Thus, we understand that the name sakura, which is widely used, is not just any word, but an element with great cultural, social and scientific value.

## Four Seasons in Japan: Marketing Seasonal Pre-Wedding Photography for Foreign Couples

Aurore Yamagata-Montoya, Mutual Images Research Association (France)

Wedding photography practices have evolved and, in Asia, pre-wedding photography has become an important moment and part of the wedding budget for many couples. While destination weddings increase, pre-wedding photo sessions abroad have also become popular thanks to the development of low-cost airlines. Wedding websites give tips about how, where and when best to organize a pre-wedding photo shoot. Japan is usually the top 10 of countries listed on those websites. One photographer's website states: "The wonderful thing about Japan is that it is beautiful in all seasons. There is never a dull moment in Japan and every season exudes a charm of its own." This presentation will focus on one Kobe-based wedding photo company La-Vie Photography, created in 1995. It specializes in pre-wedding photographs for foreigners, especially Chinese couples. On their home page, it is stated: "Let us travel to where we want to go, in the season we want to be in, and capture in photographs the blissful smiles of our faces when we are together. That is the kind of romantic trip we want to embark on, no matter when and where." We can see that the idea of a trip and of the seasons is present. Their whole communication is arranged around the four seasons, with "seasonal stories" and recommended locations by season. Even more than the location, the season seems to be the prime choice element for the future wedded couple. Through a textual and visual analysis, this paper will first highlight how the seasons are depicted and how through them other themes such as love, marriage or beauty are represented. Then, the presentation will focus on the image of Japan as a natural, all year-round heaven rendered through the photographs.





## Cherry Blossoms and Sweet Sentimentalism: Analysis of the sakura Song Boom in the 2000s

Tepei Fukuda, University of Oregon (USA)

In the 2000s in Japan, there was a big trend in the J-pop scene. The trend is often called “sakura song boom” (sakura songu būmu). Beginning with Fukuyama Masaharu's smash hit, *Sakurazaka*, and Aiko's *Sakura no Toki* (Time of Cherry Blossoms), many musicians released songs about cherry blossoms in the 2000s. Even after 20 years have passed since the beginning of the boom, some of these sakura songs are still widely consumed. This paper explores four songs released during the sakura song boom and the boom itself as a cultural phenomenon. To consider the boom itself, this essay will analyze two sales-oriented commercial web articles. By investigating the song lyrics and how it was advertised and circulated, this paper will attempt to solve these questions: Is there a collective image of cherry blossoms shared in these sakura songs? Is there any social function in this shared image of cherry blossoms in J-pop music? Why do Japanese people widely consume this collective image? Associated with events that happen in spring in modern Japanese people's lives, such as the end and beginning of a fiscal year, changes of school terms, and graduation ceremonies, the image of cherry blossoms in the four song examples in this essay works as a symbol of changes and transitions. Moreover, these four songs all depict protagonists' sentimental emotions triggered by the ideas of changes and transitions represented by the image of cherry. Perhaps, this association between sentimental emotions and cherry blossoms can be seen as a part of what Haruo Shirane calls “highly encoded system of seasonal representation.” Applying Sara Ahmed's idea of shared “orientation” of an object and David Leheny's “collective ideologies,” this essay will unfold how these songs and the Sakura song boom itself shared common performance of emotions and how it creates collective identities.

## A Living Space Under the Sign of the Rhythms of Nature: Kyoto in *The Old Capital* by Kawabata Yasunari

Sabina Maria Sava, independent scholar (Romania)

The present study tries to emphasize the way in which, out of the desire to lament the loss of tradition, in his novel whose original title is *Koto*, Yasunari Kawabata creates an idealized image of the old imperial capital, giving it the value of a “keeper of the most authentic values of the Japanese ethos (Brown 1988: 376) as well as that of a symbol of aesthetic concepts such as *mono no aware*, the fleeting beauty, *wabi sabi*, the rustic, imperfect and desolate beauty, or *ma*, the beauty of the empty space, which were generated by a deep awareness of the transient beauty of nature. The vegetal element that perhaps best characterizes the Japanese soul, always tried hard by the forces of nature, the cherry blossoms, occupies a central place in Kawabata's novel, encompassing its traditional meanings as a symbol of renewal, but also that of the impermanence of beauty and of the of fragility life. Keepers of tradition, the novel's characters revere them and follow the *hanami* ritual in the famous gardens and parks of the old imperial capital. By discussing the literary text, the following analysis attempts to explore how the image of Kyoto is recomposed by describing nature and seasons, gardens, temples or festivals and identify how typical characters stand for a typical way of living in the world, under the sign of a permanent change of things and also embody the reciprocity of influence from man to the environment and from the environment to the human being.



## Rereading Yasunari Kawabata: The Winter Imaginary in the Novel *Snow Country* (*Yuki guni*, 1935-1937/ 1948)

Rodica Frentiu and Florina Ilis, Babes-Bolyai University (Romania)

Filtered by the literary-artistic imagination, nature and the cycle of seasons represent a central theme in the classical literary and visual Japanese culture, known as 雪月花 (Setsugekka), or as the theme of seasons changing, a metonymical wording for the beauty of each season. Since the uniqueness of a work of art implies its identification by anchoring it in the context of a tradition, beginning from the Setsugekka theme, the present study aims to circumscribe the imaginary of winter in the novel *Snow Country* (雪国・*Yuki guni*, 1935-1937/ 1948), by Yasunari Kawabata. As in a (musical) canon across time, in the postmodern context that suspends the borders between the “high” culture and the “low” culture, between the original and the copy, the novel *Snow Country* appears in manga form in 2010, with drawings by illustrator Sakuko Utsugi, thus offering a particular re-reading, an “inter-semiotic translation” of the original text. The present study goes on to analyse the specific vocabulary through which the “iconography” of winter is created in the komikku version of the novel, and to identify the means by which it aims to configure the psychological states and the emotions of the characters. Due to his acute sense of the seasons, through his novel, Yasunari Kawabata succeeds in completing the traditional list of famous places (*meisho*) associated with the motif of winter in Japan, with the snow country from Echigo.