Paper Title: (Re)assessing Sagawa Chika (1911-1936) as a modernist poet

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Abstract
My presentation (re)assesses the importance of Sagawa Chika (1911-1936) as a crucial figure of the modanizmu movement in the early Showa era. Sagawa created not only experimental but artistically successful poetry both in terms of thematic content and style at a time of dynamic poetic development, under the influence of modernism, surrealism and dadaism from the West, which inspired many Japanese poets in the 1920s and 30s. Sagawa was closely involved with a group of young modernist writers that included Kitazono Katsue (1902-1978) and Haruyama Yukio (1902-1994), who later came to be acknowledged as the fathers of Japanese poetic modernism. Sagawa made an important contribution to the developmental stage of this movement, as much as or even more so than these male contemporaries, but her contribution has been forgotten or ignored.

Despite the quality of her poetry, academic discourse has failed to take up her work, mainly because pre-war women poets have been almost completely ignored in Japanese literary studies. Nor was Sagawa taken up by feminist studies, because I would argue she hardly ever engaged with womanly themes like motherhood, child rearing or female empowerment. Moreover, she did not choose to write autobiographically using the ‘confessional watashi-gatari (first person narrative)’ style, which has been considered one of the strongest characteristics of pre-war women’s writings. I argue that Sagawa was writing like her ‘male’ peers and she was ‘too
advanced’ as a ‘woman poet’ of her time, and so was ignored not only by the male establishment but also, ironically, by feminists.

In this presentation, I will analyse the influence of modernism and surrealism in her poetry, focusing on the ‘non-feminine’ gloomy and grotesque imagery. I will also discuss the freshness and uniqueness of her metaphors and language-usage in relation to Western modernist writings, which she both read and translated, such as the poems and short stories of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Aldus Huxley.

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(Equipment requirements (if any) >

power point

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literature