

Plotting Illness in 21st-Century Japan:

The Cancer Fiction of Ogino Anna and Yamauchi Reinan

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Image: cancer cells

18:00-19:30, June 25th, 2019

Room L-821, 8th Floor, Library, Sophia University

In this presentation I will explore two works of fiction dealing with illness in the mid 2010s, a high-water mark for literature of this kind. Ogino Anna's short story "Nue" and Yamauchi Reinan's novella *Gan damashii* (Cancer Spirit) both were published in *Bungakukai* one in 2015 and one in 2011, and both focus on living with cancer. These works differ markedly in their style, content, and tone; Ogino's story (later included in her short story collection *Kashisugawa*) is multi-faceted, reflecting on her life and drawing upon themes and motifs from her earlier literary career, while Yamauchi's novella is her first work of fiction as well as one of her last, since she passed away from cancer within weeks of receiving her award. As we will see however, reading Ogino and Yamauchi's works together allows us to see the complex role of illness—and particularly cancer—as lived experience, imagined presence, and artistic vehicle in 21st century Japan.

Amanda C. Seaman teaches at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she is a professor of modern Japanese literature. A scholar of modern women's literature, genre fiction, and gender studies, she is the author of *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan* (2004) and *Writing Pregnancy in Low-Fertility Japan* (2016).

Her current research explores the representation of illness and the afflicted in postwar Japanese literature, film, and popular media. She is currently a Japan Foundation Fellow affiliated with Sophia University.

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This lecture is organized by Professor Bettina Gramlich-Oka (FLA)