

ICC Lecture Series

The Concept of the Future and Perspectives on Women's Lives in Meiji Japan

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5-7 p.m., June 10, Room 10-301

Female characters in Meiji literature often act out the agonies and hopes that (mostly male) intellectuals nurtured in the predicaments they found themselves in at the time. Many political novels depicted incarcerated women, to instill in the reader's mind a sense of the injustice of the new regime, and to justify the cause of Freedom and Popular Rights. Another genre of literature that used female characters allegorically at the beginning of the modern era was comprised of works on the future called mirai-ki. Japanese were fascinated by the idea of "the new woman" as well as the hope for "the new Japan." A work on the future woman that inspired the Japanese readership was *Le Vingtième Siècle* (1883), by French engraver Albert Robida. This work is filled with fantastic images of women and men in the future French society. The basic story was introduced by some writers, and partial and whole translations appeared in different editions, influencing the way Meiji Japanese intellectuals thought about Japan's future in terms of spatial elements as well as women's new lifestyles.

In my lecture I will introduce the original work by Robida, discuss the Japanese translations, and assess their collective impact on Japanese works on the future.

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