

Japanologie Frankfurt am Main

Dr. Stephen Dodd, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London: "Things of Beauty: Aesthetics and Politics in the work of Kajii Motojirô"

Vortrag im Rahmen der Reihe "Shiori-Literatursommer"



Der Schriftsteller Kajii Motojirô

Kajii Motojirô (1901-1932) wrote only about twenty short stories before he died of tuberculosis. His stories are characterized by their intriguing narratives and an exceptionally beautiful literary style. One reason why Kajii is an interesting writer is that, even as he began his literary career with his first story Lemon (Remon) in 1925, he was already aware that he was more than likely to die soon due to his illness. The question is: why would a young man decide to pour the remainder of his short life into a series of beautifully crafted literary works? However, Kajii's writing is also of interest in terms of a wider literary context. He began writing just as the Taishô period was coming to an end; a exciting moment in which a range of literary and cultural movements -- proletarian writing, modernism, and so on -- were in the air. By the time he finished his last work in the early 1930s, Japan was already entering another more subdued and introverted cultural phase, the so called "return to Japan" (Nihon kaiki). Kajii's stories might be read as a kind of bridge that links these two very different cultural moments in Japan's history. In my presentation, I will examine the way in which Kajii's literature might be read as embodying the process of shifting from one cultural moment to another. In particular, I will explore Kajii's articulation of an aesthetics that gave shape not only to matters of beauty, but also to the complex social and political environment in which he was writing.

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