

MERCREDI 9 OCTOBRE 2019

## REGARDS SUR LE THERMALISME EUROPÉEN DU MOYEN ÂGE AU XIX<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLE

### Spas in England and Japan: Historical Traditions and Literary Representations

---

Eri Ohashi, Nagasaki University (Japan)

[eriorika@gmail.com](mailto:eriorika@gmail.com)

#### Abstract:

[This presentation will be in French]

Since both English and Japanese spas have a long history, they are often described in literature. However, we find few studies comparing spas in both England and Japan. This paper analyzes the differences in perception and representation of spas between them, as evidenced in literary examples from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The use of spas for curing various illnesses has long been tied to myths and religions. In England, the goddess Minerva was first celebrated in Bath before a Christian abbey was built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In a *Shinto* legend, a lesser divinity recovered his health from bathing in a hot spring. So the Japanese built shrines or temples near hot springs. We can find also another common trait through the presence of animals: in Bath, pigs (according to Bladud's legend), while in many Japanese legends, people understood as well the benefits of spa waters by observing foxes, bears or monkeys healing their wounds in such waters.

However, there is a major difference in their history. In early Christianity, Europeans thought that spas, developed by Romans, were an immoral and pagan habit. Afterward, as they believed that plague epidemics were the wrath of God, there were calls for closing spas. During the same period, the religious custom of *Seyoku* spread in Japan. It is the holiday when temples provide their spas free to the public. Following the scripture of *Onsen-Kyo*, in which Buddha teaches the importance of cleansing both body and spirit through bathing, the people prayed in such spas.

So, what kind of influence do these differences have upon literature? In England, we find two types of writings: travelogues and novels. The travel records of Celia Fiennes who visited famous spas contain valuable information on the traditions and the customs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the novels of Jane Austen, Bath is the special town where various people meet. The truth of each person, less obvious in other places, is exposed there. As for Japan, the most famous *Haiku* poet, Matsuo Basho, went on a journey through Japan in the second part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and wrote about spas; his poems are combined with his travel accounts. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century a humorous short poem, *Senryu*, was in fashion among common people and many *Senryu* were about spas: for example, a man went secretly to a spa and prayed to Buddha to recover from syphilis.

Thus, spas, rejected for religious reasons for several centuries in England, lost their original mystique to evolve into a social and literary place for the wealthy. In Japan, spas remained linked to Buddhism, retaining their original and poetic traits for all people. Today, spas and their surrounding continue to fascinate, as evidenced by their presence in literature and in films, in England as well as in Japan.

## **Biography:**

### **Expériences Professionnelles**

Avril 2013 – Aujourd’hui : Professeure, Université Nagasaki, section de langue étrangère

Octobre 2008 – Mars 2013 : Maître de Conférences, Université Nagasaki, section de langue étrangère

Avril 1994 – Septembre 2008 : Maître de Conférences, Université d’Art et de Culture d’Oita, section de culture internationale

Avril 1991 – Mars 1994 : Maître Assistant, Université d’Art et de Culture d’Oita, section de culture internationale

Avril 1988 – Mars 1991 : Assistante, Université du Kyushu, section de langue et littérature françaises

### **Formation**

Doctorat : Janvier 2013, Université de Rennes 2, section de langue et littérature françaises

D.E.A : Septembre 1987, Université de Rouen, section littérature moderne (boursière de Rotary Club)

Maîtrise : Mars 1985, Université du Kyushu (Japon), section de langue et littérature françaises, Japon.

### **Publications**

#### ***Œuvres collectifs***

- « L’évolution des consciences grâce à la langue, vue au prisme du voyage, de la colonisation, et de l’émigration » in *Book of XXIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* : Vienne, 2018, à paraître.
- « Romans sans frontières : ampleur de la lecture dépassant les conflits » in *Expanding the Frontiers of Comparative Literature: Toward an Age of Tolerance. Vol. II*, Ed.Sung-Eon Cho, Seoul: Chung-Ang University Press, 2013, pp. 211-219.
- « La déconstruction de l’humain dans *La Légende de Saint Julien l’Hospitalier* : le conte de Flaubert et le vitrail de la Cathédrale de Rouen » in *Beyond Binarisms 2 : Corssings and Contaminations*, edited by Eduardo F. Coutinho and Pina Coco, Rio de Janero, Aeroplano Editora, 2009, p. 235-243.