

Murakami Haruki and Our Years of Pilgrimage

Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen, Senior lecturer in Japanese studies



Senior Lecturer in Japanese studies, Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen and Leverhulme Fellow, Dr Michael Tsang have just published the book, *Murakami Haruki and Out Years of Pilgrimage* (Routledge, 2021). The book builds on the AHRC funded project that Dr Hansen led in 2017-2018 and the events that she and Dr Tsang organized at Newcastle in March 2018.

Full details of the project and events can be seen on the project's website:

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/murakami/>

The book is a timely and expansive volume on Japan's most high-profile contemporary writer, Murakami Haruki.

With contributions from prominent Murakami scholars, this book approaches the works of Murakami Haruki through interdisciplinary perspectives, discussing their significance and value through the lenses of history; geography; politics; gender and sexuality; translation; and literary influence and circulation. Together the chapters provide a multifaceted assessment on Murakami's literary oeuvre in the last four decades, vouching for its continuous importance in understanding the world and Japan in contemporary times.

The book also features exclusive material that includes the cultural critic Katō Norihiro's final work on Murakami – his chapter here is one of the few works ever translated into

English – to interviews with Murakami and discussions from his translators and editors, shedding light not only on Murakami's works as literature but as products of cross-cultural exchanges.

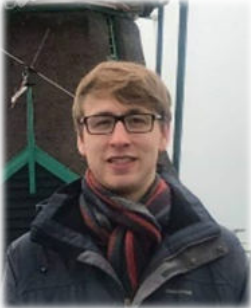
MURAKAMI HARUKI AND OUR YEARS OF PILGRIMAGE

EDITED BY GITTE MARIANNE HANSEN
AND MICHAEL TSANG



My Four Years of Japanese at Newcastle

Charlie Straw, BA in Modern Languages, German and Japanese



Four years ago, I started studying Japanese at Newcastle University - and I'm so pleased I did! My language skills progressed quickly, I had some amazing

experiences in Japan, and I have become more employable.

"That must be so difficult!" is a common response I get when I tell people I study Japanese, and I did find it more challenging than European languages. However, I progressed incredibly quickly.

Within one year I went from knowing almost no words to giving directions in Japanese, and after two I was ready to study in Japan. This progress was thanks to an intensive and carefully structured Japanese language course. Lots of seminar time and small classes meant I really got to know the lecturers, who were eternally patient!



I was particularly grateful for this progress when studying in Japan in my third year. I chose to study at Dokkyo University near Tokyo and enrolled in German and Japanese language classes. I had plenty of free time for activities arranged by the university such as a trip to a shrine. I also joined the calligraphy society. These activities made it easy to make friends with not just Japanese people but also students from all over the world. These friends and the countless cultural experiences mean I look back



extremely fondly on my time abroad. When I started my degree, I didn't know what I wanted to do after I had completed it. I am now, however, delighted I chose to study Japanese. I improved my communication skills, I developed my intercultural competencies, I learnt how to build relationships. My time abroad also proves I am adaptable and resilient. Even if I don't directly use my



language skills this will all be valuable in any future career.

Studying Japanese has been challenging and intensive but also rewarding and worthwhile. I have acquired a new language and many other skills but most importantly, I have made many new friends and had some fantastic experiences. I would like to thank Newcastle and Dokkyo staff as well as the other students for a brilliant four years.

Unusual Year Abroad experience from home

Klaudia Tujek,

BA in Modern Languages and Business Studies (French and Japanese)



This year has been unusual in many aspects. Students were taking classes from home, there was a change in working conditions and travel restrictions. It has influenced many spheres of my life too, however, to my surprise, I could still say I had an amazing Year Abroad experience.

Nanzan University has offered online classes for exchange and home students. I have been able to attend the courses as planned throughout the year. I have chosen to study business, translation and Japanese

culture, since those are my main subjects in Newcastle University. It was the first year when Newcastle University has offered to students a choice of Nanzan University as a host university. I can fully say I was positively surprised by the choice and possibilities that the university offered. In the afternoons it was possible to meet in an online portal called Japan Plaza, a place for students to do their homework together and meet new people. Everyone was assigned a language buddy, a Japanese person to talk to in their free time. We could reach out to them in case of any queries, or just to practice our language skills.

Moreover, Nanzan University offered a wide range of classes. First of all, everyone had to be assigned to a grammar class, which was set based on the result from a test at the beginning of the term. Therefore, my knowledge on Japanese language did not have to be extremely high, I was assigned to what I needed. Additionally, students were able to choose politics, religions, economy and many more. The classes which I enjoyed the most were the popular culture classes, where we were watching and comparing manga and anime to real life situations. It was even more interesting taking the fact that there were people from various countries into consideration. We were all comparing Japan to our home country traditions and beliefs, and it sometimes became really funny. I was even able to take odori (dance) classes online!

I have not had the opportunity to visit Japan yet, however, this experience has only strengthened my interest in Japan and Japanese culture. My next destination will definitely be Japan! I would like to highly recommend Nanzan University to everyone. Although this pandemic experience was not easy for anyone, this university has taken all the necessary measures for the exchange students to take the most out of it.



My Journey at Newcastle University



Kelsey Wong, BA in Japanese studies

My experience as a student in Japanese studies (TT14) had been fulfilling. Although it had been interfered with cover throughout my first year and second year. However I still very much enjoyed the course. I have always been facisnated by the Japanese language and Japan, because it posses a totally different language structure to English and I really love the Japanese culture because it is so different. At first, I thought it would be very difficult however all of our senseis make the seminars very enjoyable and fun. Sensei often make fun activities in seminars to teach us words or explain grammar structure to us. For example there was this time I remembered that we were told to get everything out of our bag and then we raise any item we have in our bag to sensei and sensei will teach us the Japanese word for it. (E.g tooth brush = 歯ブラシ, glasses = メガネ).

Through out my course studying in Japanese studies, I was able to learn Japanese so quickly and had the opportunity to use it in class and also while speaking to my senseis.

I was never afraid to make mistakes in class, as senseis have always been encouraging and they are always willing to correct my mistakes speaking in Japanese, which encourages me not to be afraid to speak Japanese to my Japanese friends as well. We also get a lot of practice with weekly tests and sakubun such as writing kanji, writing passages in Japanese, so that it was to build our confidence in Japanese.

Furthermore, the class size is approximately 15-20 people, and I was lucky enough to meet a bunch of friends that were willing to help me and support me throughout my year during Japanese studies. As a class we had created some events to invite our senseis to hangout with us together (e.g Christmas parties, picnic and going to Japanese restaurant). It is also a way for us students and teachers to get to know each other. We are like a big family.

Although it had been difficult throughout covid as we could not meet each other face to face but I must say I have spent the best 2 years in my life so far, and I believe there are many more yet to come. And I cannot wait to go abroad to Japan and come back to Newcastle speaking Japanese fluently.





Ameria Powell, BA in Modern Languages, German and Japanese



When I first decided to study Japanese at university, I never expected that my undergraduate year would be taught entirely online due to a global pandemic. Nevertheless, I have found studying Japanese

this year incredibly rewarding, despite having my lectures and seminars take place entirely in my room.

I decided to take beginner's Japanese module alongside the Introduction to Japanese History and Culture. As a result of all the opportunities to talk with other students in break out rooms and interact with our lecturers over Zoom, I still felt connected to the university and coursemates. I also felt motivated by the interesting content of my modules. I particularly enjoyed being able to deepen my enjoyment and understanding of the movies *Godzilla*, *Spirited Away* and *The Wind Rises* through studying the cultural and historical context behind them.

I was sure to make the most of online events recommended to Japanese students. One of these activities was a bi-monthly Japanese reading and conversation club organised over Zoom. I also attended an online Rakugo performance by Tatekawa Shinoharu. Due to the small size of the online audience, he was able to answer my questions about his stories afterwards.

I connected with others studying Japanese through the Anglo-Japanese Society over Discord. I really enjoyed getting to meet people of differing ages, yet similar interests during weekly socials. The online fancy dress quiz at Halloween was particularly fun.

I've also enjoyed my time with the university Karate Club, which I feel compliments my course well, as I can gain a deeper understanding of the

Japanese terminology used. Taking up a sport helped establish some more structure in the absence of in-person seminars and lectures, as well as allowing me to meet more people face to face. I was recently able to take my first grading and managed to earn my red belt. I was extremely proud of this achievement since the majority of my training had been through Zoom. This confirmed to me how I have still been able

to gain so much from online teaching.

When restrictions allowed it, I enjoyed meeting some of my coursemates in person for meals out or to explore



whatever else Newcastle had to offer, such as a haunted house at Halloween, a trip to a cat cafe or a day at the beach. After lessons had ended, our lecturers, Etsuko Suda and Fumika Cartlidge, organised a



picnic to enable everyone on the Japanese course to finally meet in person. My excitement for second year grew

further, as I started to look forward to the more conventional university experience, which hopefully lies ahead.

I will look back fondly on the time I have spent both online and offline these past months, and am grateful that my coursemates and I were able to gain so much from this challenging year.



Dr Shiro Yoshioka, Lecture in Japanese Studies

When I tell people that I am doing research on Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki Hayao, one question they almost always ask is: what is your favourite Ghibli/Miyazaki film? My answer is: as a fan of anime, I like Castle in the Sky the best because that is the last “true” Miyazaki film with a male

protagonist and jam-packed with lots of actions and adventure, but as a researcher, it’s Spirited Away. This is the film that led me to where I am. Exactly 20 years ago (I didn’t realise this until I was recently contacted by TIME magazine for an interview for an article on twentieth anniversary of the film, which you can read here: <https://time.com/6081937/spirited-away-changed-animation-studio-ghibli/>), I watched this film in a cinema in Hokkaido, where my late granny used to live. I was moderate to keen fan of anime at the time, but the only Ghibli/Miyazaki film I saw in cinema was Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, which was simply too difficult for a four-year old. Ever since, I didn’t find Miyazaki films particularly interesting. But this particular film was so popular that I decided to give it a try. The result was: I had no idea what it was all about. Still, I somehow felt that the film was trying to say something very important, although not sure what it was. A year later, I was sitting in an undergraduate Japanese history seminar taught by my PhD supervisor. The class was about modernization of Japan and superstition, and one of the readings was The Legends of Tono, a collection of Japanese old folk tales compiled in 1910, when Japan was fiercely modernizing itself. At the end of the seminar, my supervisor said that maybe Spirited Away was a modern version of the book that tried to preserve “old Japan.” Then I heard something



click in my brain and asked him whether I could do PhD on Miyazaki and Japanese history. Probably you know what he said because I am here now, writing this! So, this film got me into academia, pushing me off to a journey now continuing for 20 years, and will continue. Want to hear more about Miyazaki, Spirited Away and Japanese

history/culture? Then come and join our first-year introductory module on Japanese history and culture. Maybe you can start your own journey!

<https://time.com/6081937/spirited-away-changed-animation-studio-ghibli/>

End Of Year Round Up!

Tobias Smith,

BA in Modern Languages & Linguistics, Spanish & Japanese

This year was an unexpected year for everyone, at AJS we did our utmost to make the most out of everything regardless.

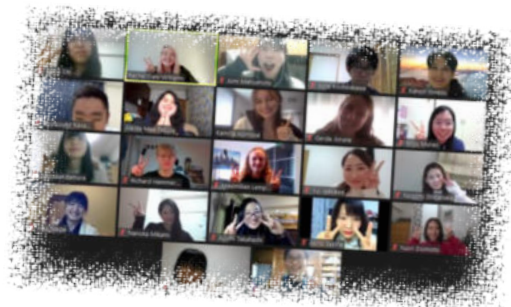
We continued the weekly tradition of Oshaberikai through online means such as zoom and discord. On the Oshaberikai everyone had the chance to make new friends through different exciting online games such as Skribbl.io, Jackbox and Among us.

Of course, AJS too carried on running interesting Japanese themed events for members. These ranged from more casual events such as the Hiragana/Katakana bingo to Japanese themed cooking events! This year at AJS, members connected on video calls to cook delicious Japanese treats such as Nama Choco and even Dango during our hinamatsuri event.

Some of the events also took place in the form of collaborations with other societies. AJS had the pleasure of watching "Howl's Moving Castle" with 'Filmsoc' in the early stages of the year. Later we helped to teach students about the role of women in Japan in a panel through a collaboration with 'Femsoc'. Finally, we had a chance to show off the fascinating and stylish Japanese fashion by collaborating with NUFS (fashion society), some of the committee even had a bit of fun here by dressing up and showing off the style themselves!

Amazingly, we managed to allow members the chance to meet and converse with Japanese students. Throughout the year we held multiple 'cultural exchange events'; events held on zoom which offered both Japanese and English language learners the opportunity to practice their target language, and to make some new friends. The first 'cultural exchange event' even boasted as many as 92 applications from Japanese students, varying from many different universities throughout Japan!

Despite the circumstances presented last year, we at AJS still believe we had a great time. Although, we are extremely excited to see where the society progresses from here and cannot wait to see the return of in-person events!





Alessandro Hicks, BA in Combined Honours course of History and Japanese

After just graduating from Newcastle University, I found myself wanting to return to the Japan I thought I knew so well after having spent a year there on my Year Abroad. So after getting an offer from the JET Programme, I hopped on a plane and never looked back. However, as Heraclitus once said “One never steps in the same river twice”. Indeed the fast-paced, social (and often drunken) typhoon of the year abroad could not have been more different than the current peaceful and mundane life that I’m experiencing now. The small town of Sakae (栄町) in Chiba, a conglomeration of multiple villages in the Inba-gun (印旛郡) area, was where I was to be placed. I knew then, from the first day at the city hall, after meeting the Mayor in his Showa era styled office, with austere and musky furniture boxed within walls of tinted yellow from years of cigarette smoking, that I was in for a totally new experience. Sakae is a mix of people who spend most of their time away from the town, school children and OAPs. And yes, you guessed it, nothing ever really happens. But despite, as they say in Japanese, the “bed-town” aspect of Sakae, I wouldn’t have wished to be placed anywhere else. I am the only foreign person working At my junior high school, and because no one speaks much English (including English teachers) I’ve had to get better at Japanese. I live in an area close to a river and rice paddies, and I often go out running or cycling to the tune of cicadas and 鶯(Japanese bush warblers). It was a bit of a challenge for the big city boy at the

beginning. Having come from a multi-cultural background, it took some getting used to to the monoculture that is Sakae. Furthermore, Japanese schools are probably the most Japanese of all places, where values and morals are literally taught to the next generation. I’ve never said “Good-morning” so much in my life! But the more I experience things here, the more I realise that my year abroad was just an illusion, a watered down experience of what Japan truly is. However, I can say in full confidence that small town Japan is an experience I’m so glad to have experienced.

There are frustrating things: the slowness of administrative issues, the amount of paper used at school to just tell me that I have my health check, the rigidity of the workplace, no one to speak my mother tongue to and many other thing, but...

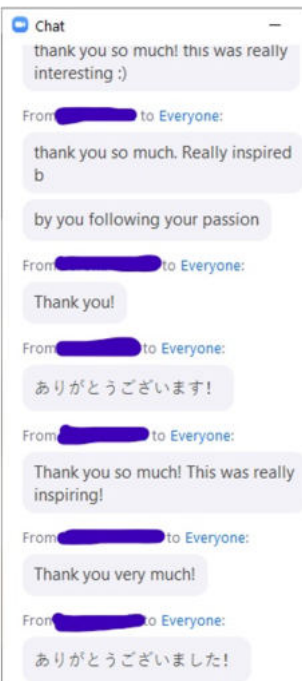
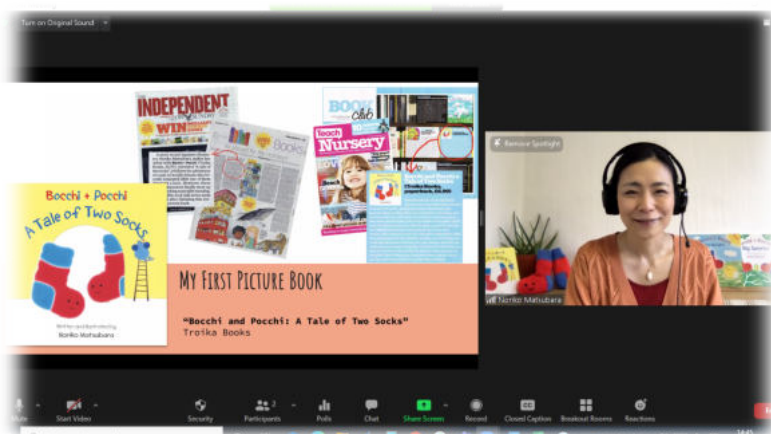
There are good things: teaching teenagers my culture, learning about theirs, knowing everyone in town, them knowing you even though you’ve never met them before. And even though that seems like it’s a bit intrusive, it may have actually saved my life. On a dark night after studying the JLPT at a fellow teacher’s house, I was run-over whilst crossing the road. I broke my sternum (chest-bone). And if a member of the tax office (whom I’d never seen before) from the town hall wasn’t parked in their car just in front of where the accident was, I don’t know what would have happened.

So it is with that overwhelming feeling of appreciation and thanks that I will always remember this town. I will be leaving here next month, but I’ll never forget it.

Public Seminar by Noriko Matsubara, Author of picture books for children

Kumi Casey, Japanese Language Coordinator

School of Modern Language hosted an online public seminar funded as part of the project to enhance Japanese language education in the North East (2020/21) by the Japan Foundation in March 2021, inviting Noriko Matsubara, author of “Bocchi + Pocchi” and other children’s picture books as a guest speaker. Noriko shared her journey of pursuing her dream to become an artist as well as an author. She studied fine art in Canada and in the UK and has experience in teaching Japanese. Noriko has recently worked with BBC Children's for their Storytime App and illustrated one of their new interactive stories. The audience enjoyed her adventurous life story and was inspired by her passion and resilience to pursue her dream, despite the challenges that she faced. After the talk, some participants in the workshop tried translating one of her picture books in a group and learnt tips from



Noriko about how to choose the right words and expressions depending on the scenes and the characters. Some participants also took on the challenge of translating another book for themselves after the workshop and received feedback from Noriko individually. As part of the project funded by the Japan Foundation, Noriko has also created a series of Japanese learning videos for children.

Public Seminar by **Noriko Matsubara**,
Author of **picture books for children**

Noriko Matsubara is an artist, children's book author & illustrator born in Japan and Bocchi and Pocchi: A Tale of Two Socks is her first picture book. The 'Bocchi and Pocchi' series has been published in the UK and translated into six languages including Spanish, Catalan, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese. In this seminar, Noriko will talk about her long journey to make her dream come true and the challenges that she has experienced in translating English into Japanese and vice versa.

Before becoming an artist and author, Noriko was a Japanese language teacher and taught in Lebanon, Canada and the UK. A consequence of her travels was her decision to follow her passion, and she went on to study visual arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada and completed a MA in Fine Art at Central St Martin's College of Art and Design in the UK. She currently lives in Consett, County Durham with her husband and two children.

Date & Time: 26th March 2021(Fri), 1.00 - 2.00pm online
The seminar is held in English. Everyone is Welcome!

You will have the opportunity to try some translating work (English-Japanese) after the Talk.

<http://norikart.com/>

The event is free to attend, but booking is essential. To reserve a place, please click [here](#) to sign up by 15th March. For any queries, please contact Ms Kumi Casey (kumi.casey@newcastle.ac.uk).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGsrFaePwFg&t=13s>

My Memories at Newcastle



Dr Michael Tsang, Leverhulme Postdoctoral Fellow



Four years ago, I arrived at Newcastle about to start my first job post-PhD. I was anxious, not least because I had been trained in a different academic discipline. While I had studied Japan and its language and culture at university, and had written on its literature in my masters, my main area of research was in literary studies. My job also required me to organise a week-long event series on the famous Japanese writer Murakami Haruki alongside teaching; as one could imagine, the stress was paramount.

Fortunately, the amazing colleagues in the Japanese section were immensely encouraging and understanding. Thanks to them, I was able to enjoy both of my roles as teacher and researcher of Japanese literature and culture. With their support – and the generous assistance of the inspiring colleagues in the School of Modern Languages – I was then able to get a three-year postdoctoral fellowship to conduct my own research in the influence of world literature on the publishing industry and reading public in twentieth-century Japan.

As I embark on a new journey to take up a lectureship in Japanese Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, I still cannot believe I am going to leave my dear colleagues and this place I have called home for four years. If I have to pinpoint the best thing that happened to me at Newcastle, it would definitely be the people, the friends I have

made here. There is something about the Novocastrians that make them unique: a relaxed and breezy attitude to life in general that at the same time respects individuality.

This gets reflected in our teaching as well. The Modern Languages degree here at Newcastle allows students to study up to three languages, and Newcastle University also boasts a flexible combined honours programme. My colleagues in the East Asian section, too, use various teaching methods to offer insight on East Asian contexts, from popular culture to society, from film and anime to literature and manga. I was very proud to be such a devoted team of teachers who did their best to give students the best learning experience.

Before Newcastle, I had lived in Coventry for almost six years; in Newcastle I have only lived for four, but I will miss Newcastle more than I missed Coventry (no offense, Cov). As I move down to the Big Smoke, I know I will miss the way I can cross the Newcastle city centre on foot in twenty minutes, the stunning panoramic view of the city when trains make that turn onto the Tyne bridge, the easy-going attitude of the people, the beautiful beaches of Whitley Bay, and maybe even the Geordie accent a little. Newcastle will always hold a dear place in me.



End of year Picnic





End of year Picnic



Contact Us

For Information about admissions
Please contact Lesley Sherrin
Tel: 0191 208 5082, email: sml@ncl.ac.uk
or visit

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/study-with-us/east-asian-studies/>

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