

# Monstrous Obsessions: The Undercurrents of Desire in the Aesthetics of Izumi Kyōka

Alejandro Morales Rama  
Assistant Professor, Department of Spanish, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 22 October 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

**Abstract:** Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939) was a writer of novels, novellas, and plays that developed a unique Romantic style opposed to the rise of naturalism in the literature of Meiji Japan. His oeuvre was largely popular among women, due in part to his depiction of suffering yet beautiful and brave women. On the other hand, he is known as one of the foremost representatives of the fantastic genre in the Meiji Japan. Kyōka’s awareness of injustice and discrimination is mostly encapsulated in the female characters that inhabit his stories, who, oftentimes, are linked to uncanny events and monstrous figures which the male protagonist encounter.



“Ghost of Otsuya” (1926) by Yama Rokurō. Published in *Kuraku* to illustrate Izumi’s *Mayukakushi no rei*. Used with permission from Club Cosmetics.

This talk discusses three of his later works: “Magic” (*Yōjutsu*, 1911), “The Story of Three Who Were Blind” (*Sannin no mekura no hanashi*, 1912), and “A Silent Obsession” (*Mayukakushi no rei*, 1924); and focuses on Kyōka’s concept of twilight, which he proposed on his 1908’s essay “The Taste of Twilight” (*Tasogare no aji*). This talk proposes that this concept is the key to understanding the inner workings of his novellas belonging to the fantastic genre, since it sets the basis for a different way of knowing which opposes the epistemology of Civilization and Enlightenment of the Meiji period by creating liminal spaces where fixed identities are threatened.

In this ongoing project, the analysis of different works by this author, this paper utilizes the theories of post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari, who experimented with new ways of understanding “being.” First, by using their concept of assemblage it will analyze Kyōka’s

concept of twilight as a combination of setting, characters, and ideologies that allow for movements of deterritorialization, meaning a multiplication and indetermination of identities. Secondly, through their concept of becoming monster, this talk analyzes the flows of desire within the stories: voyeuristic male desires left unfulfilled in “Magic,” lustful desires that give way to jealousy and tragedy within the love triangle of “A Tale of Three That Were Blind,” and finally the obsessive desire to become the perfect wife that transcends even death in “A Silent Obsession.” Like the *obake* that Kyōka so fervently loved, the characters we encounter through the eyes of the main protagonist seemingly shapeshift, and they bring about changes in the way the male protagonists think, a change that Kyōka probably wanted to extend to his readers.

## To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. **Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.**

Meeting ID: 952 9921 4976 Passcode: KUMMC

## To Attend in Person:

**Preregistration via the adjacent QR code at least a day in advance** for those coming in person from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated. If you are coming from off campus, **please also register as a Guest at the Information counter** near the entrance before coming up to the room.

ご来場の方：神奈川大学関係者は事前登録不要です。学外の方は前日までに QR コードにて事前登録をお願いします。当日は 1F の Information カウンターで Guest 登録を済ましてから、部屋までお越しください。Zoom でのご参加は事前登録不要です。

当日は上記の Zoom ミーティング ID とパスコードでログインしてください。



***Inquiries · お問い合わせ: James Welker [jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp](mailto:jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp)***