

**Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Center Fellowship Grant Application**

I. General Information

- a. Name: **Gergana Ivanova**
- b. M#: **05060475**
- c. Department: **German Studies**
- d. Position: **Assistant Professor**
- e. Project title: **"Unbinding *The Pillow Book*: Gender, Adaptation, and the Afterlife of Japanese Classics"**
- f. Potential external funding that might arise from this project:
The grant will allow me time to submit fellowship applications to the Japan Foundation, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).
- g. Intended results of a funded research, e.g., concrete plans for publication or conference presentations:
This project will be published as a monograph.

II. Taft Grant History

2013 **Taft Summer Research Fellowship** (\$8,000)

Project Title: **“Gendering the Classics: Adaptation, Women, and Japanese Modernity”**

Publication: **(Peer-reviewed) “Gendering the Classics: Early Modern Female Readers and Sei Shōnagon’s *Pillow Book*.” *Japanese Language and Literature*, forthcoming (Spring 2016).**

Conference Travel Grants

2015 Project title: **“Rewriting the Japanese Imperial Court for British Audiences”** (\$1,057)

Contributed to the completion of Chapter 6 of my book manuscript.

2015 Project title: **“Heian Writers as Tools for Gender Training”** (\$1,109.40)

Contributed to the completion of Chapter 5 of my book manuscript.

2014 Project title: **“From a Guide to Court Life to a Guide to the Pleasure Quarters: *Makura no sōshi* in Early Modern Japan”** (\$331.31)

Contributed to the completion of Chapter 3 of my book manuscript.

2013 Project title: **“‘The Pleasures of the Flesh and the Pleasures of Literature:’ *The Pillow Book* in International Contexts”** (\$ 368.69)

Contributed to the completion of Chapter 6 of my book manuscript.

III. Project Proposal

Unbinding *The Pillow Book*: Gender, Adaptation, and the Afterlife of Japanese Classics

Gergana Ivanova

Justification of the Project

I am in the advanced stage of a book manuscript that examines the intersections between gender ideology, political context, cultural appropriation, and literary production in the re-construction of the large corpus of women's writing that emerged in tenth and eleventh century Japan. Produced in the Heian (794-1185) period, these pioneering works by women have been frequently referred to as "classics" and played a crucial role in the creation of national literature in modern Japan. Adapted into fictional tales, dramas, erotic parodies, illustrated narratives, and didactic picture scrolls over the centuries, Heian women's literary texts have been transformed multiple times to address issues such as women's status, creativity, morality, and sexuality.

Likewise, the images of these female authors have shifted over the centuries, being shaped by dominant ideologies, rather than through references to historical documents and direct interactions with their literary works. For example, in medieval Japan, Buddhist views of women as the ultimate source of suffering led to the depiction of aristocratic women associated with the imperial court as destitute in their old age. Early modern books for women hailed Heian writers as paragons of femininity, transforming them into ideal women who were accomplished poets and artists, much like the idealized image of top-rank courtesans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the government focused all its efforts on the formation of a nation-state of civilized citizens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the images of these women writers continued to be readapted and reinvented as selective representations of them were employed as an efficient tool for gender training in modern Japan.

Why do some literary works from the distant past continue to play important roles in cultural production? What processes and agents have contributed to new readings of Japanese "classics"? Why have the images of women writers been manipulated and appropriated over the centuries? These are some of the questions I will address, focusing on one of the texts of Heian Japan entitled *The Pillow Book* (early 11th c.). Currently perceived as one of the most important literary works in the Japanese language and a masterpiece of world literature, *The Pillow Book* has elicited *severe criticism* and received intense *praise* over the centuries. The multiple appropriations of the text by various audiences over the course of a millennium are indicative of the significance *The Pillow Book* has had for generations of readers. Examining the ways *The Pillow Book* was constructed and the image of its writer Sei Shōnagon was shaped with the advent of commercial printing and the development of popular culture in early modern Japan (1600-1868), and then further transformed

during the formation of a modern nation-state at the beginning of the twentieth century, this project will advance our understanding of how women's writing has been used to influence political contexts, affect socio-cultural conditions, create readerships, and construct gender. Moreover, taking up the large number of novels and films inspired by Sei Shōnagon's work outside Japan, many of which have transformed *The Pillow Book* into an erotic and sensually saturated narrative, while portraying Japanese women writers as promiscuous and sexually overactive, this study will draw attention to misconceptions about countries and groups of people that arise from translation and adaptation of literary works outside their cultural contexts.

Chapter Outline

1. **Introduction** [Notes, Summer 2016]
2. **(Re-)Constructing the Text and Early Modern Scholarship** [Complete, Summer 2015]
3. **From a Guide to Court Life to a Guide to the Pleasure Quarters** [Substantial portions complete, Winter 2016]
4. **Rewriting *The Pillow Book* for a Female Readership** [Complete, Fall 2014]
5. **Constructing the Woman Writer** [Analysis of 18th c. primary sources complete, Summer 2016]
6. ***The Pillow Book* outside Japan** [Analysis of the majority of primary sources complete, Fall 2016]
7. **Conclusion:** [Notes, Fall 2016]

Relevance of the Project

This book project is the first attempt to offer an examination of the transformation of Sei Shōnagon's work from the seventeenth century through the present in terms of literary criticism, women's education, sexuality, the formation of national and cultural identities, and images of Japan as seen from abroad. Since there is limited information on how *The Pillow Book* has been canonized and reevaluated both within and outside Japan, my study will advance our understanding of the ways Heian literary works and the images of their female writers have shifted over the centuries. This project will contribute to the emerging field of reception history of classical literatures, thus joining studies by Joshua S. Mostow, Michael Emmerich, Jamie Newhard, Satoko Naito, James I. Porter, and Philip Hardie. By offering a new approach to understanding the role of women as agents in literary production and consumption, as well as the functions of classical texts in popular culture, my project will contribute to important debates in the humanities, specifically the fields of women's history, literary study, art history, reception theory, classical studies, and gender and sexuality studies.

This book project builds upon my dissertation, which is the only study of the reception history of *The Pillow Book* available in English. Within it, I examined scholarship on, adaptations, and parodies of this Heian text when it was made available for the first time to diverse readerships in terms of class, literacy, and gender in early modern Japan. My book will go beyond the early modern period and include an examination of the reception of Sei Shōnagon's work in the twentieth century within and outside Japan centered around literary and cinematic works inspired by it. In addition, through comparisons with other Heian literary works, including *The Ise Stories* (9th c.) and *The Tale of Genji*

(11th c.), my monograph will provide a broader overview of the literary landscape and offer stronger evidence for the roles *The Pillow Book* played over the centuries.

Benefits of Center Fellowship

My project brings together history, literary criticism, gender studies, and art history to explore the roles that women's writing has played in Japan's cultural production. I am excited at the prospect of receiving feedback from scholars from other disciplines through the Taft Center Fellowship. Working with peers outside the field of Japanese Studies will enable me to refine my methodology, broaden my perception of what constitutes "relevant knowledge," and produce a book manuscript that will appeal to larger multidisciplinary audiences. Likewise, I believe that my extensive background in Japanese cultural and literary studies would complement the strengths of the multidisciplinary team of TAFT Center fellows.

Schedule

In **August, 2016** I plan to complete the Introduction. In **September, 2016** I will prepare a book proposal and send it to the following university presses: Hawai'i, Cornell, Harvard, Stanford, and Michigan, as well as Brill. I will also submit fellowship proposals to the Japan Foundation and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). In **October, 2016** I will complete a draft of my chapter on the reception of *The Pillow Book* outside Japan (Chapter 6). In **November, 2016** I plan to visit Columbia University's East Asian Library (C.V. Starr) which will provide me with access to numerous reference work that is essential for preparing my manuscript for submission. I will also complete the Conclusion. I will spend **December, 2016 and January, 2017** addressing feedback from publishers, revising chapters, and implementing feedback from the TAFT Center fellows. In **February, 2017** I plan to submit my book manuscript to publishers. After presenting my preliminary findings at the Annual Conference of the Association for Asian Studies in **March, 2017**, I will be able to advance my next research project on erotic literature in medieval Japan, and implement the feedback I will have received from some of the leading scholars in the field of Japanese Studies. In **April, 2017** I will prepare and submit a grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and continue working on an article I will submit to *Monumenta Nipponica* later in 2017. In **May, 2017 and June, 2017** I will continue revising my book manuscript, addressing feedback from external reviewers.

Proposed Format

The results of this project will be disseminated as a scholarly monograph published by a university press, which is a tenure requirement in the Asian Studies Program in the Department of German Studies.

IV. Curriculum Vitae

GERGANA ENTCHEVA IVANOVA

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EDUCATION

- 2006-2012 **Ph.D. in Asian Studies**
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
Major Field: Premodern Japanese Literature
Subfields: Modern Japanese Literature; Theories of Reception and Transtextuality
Dissertation Title: “Knowing Women: Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi* in Early-Modern Japan”
- 2004-2006 **M.A. in East Asian Studies**
University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
Concentration: Premodern Japanese Literature
Thesis Title: “Textual Variations of Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi*: Perception of the Text and the Narratorial Voice”
- 2000-2002 **M.A. in International Cultural Studies**
Utsunomiya University, Utsunomiya, Japan
Concentration: Japanese Linguistics
Thesis Title: “A Study of Mimetic Words in Modern Japanese” (Gendai nihongo no gitaigo no kenkyū)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2012-present **Assistant Professor of Japanese Literature**
University of Cincinnati, Department of German Studies,
Asian Studies Program
- 2011-2012 **Visiting Lecturer in Japanese Language and Literature**
Washington University in St. Louis, Department of East Asian Languages and
Cultures

RESEARCH

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

(Peer-reviewed) “Gendering the Classics: Early Modern Female Readers and Sei Shōnagon’s *Pillow Book*.” *Japanese Language and Literature*, forthcoming (Spring 2016).

(Translation) Fujii Sadakazu, “Grammatically Dissecting the Japanese Language.” In *Theorizing Japanese Literature*, edited by Kimura Saeko. Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, forthcoming.

(Invited) “Eiyaku sareta *Makura no sōshi* ga tsukuridashita taishūbunka” (*The Pillow Book* in English Translation and Popular Culture). *Kaigai Heian Bungaku Jānaru* (Journal of Heian Literature Overseas) vol. 2 (March, 2015), 11-21. Tokyo: National Institute of Japanese Literature.

(Invited) “Kinsei no josei dokusha to koten no taishūka: Nishikawa Sukenobu no *Ehon Asahiyama* o daizai ni” (Early-modern Female Readers and the Popularization of the Classics: Nishikawa Sukenobu’s *Ehon Asahiyama*). *Nishikawa Sukenobu Kenkyūkai Ronshū* (A Collection of Essays on Nishikawa Sukenobu), edited by Ishigami Aki, 9-23. Kyoto: Ritsumeikan University Art Research Center, 2013.

(Invited) “Sound-symbolic Approach to Japanese Mimetic Words.” *Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics* 26 (2006): 103-14.

(Peer-reviewed) “On ni kakureta imi: nihongo no gitaigo no shūtoku e no atarashii apurōchi (Meanings Hidden in Sounds: New Approach to Mastering Japanese Mimetic Words).” *Journal of the Faculty of International Studies, Utsunomiya University* 14 (2002): 71-77.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

“Rewriting the Japanese Imperial Court for British Audiences.” Erotic Literature: Adaptation and Translation in Europe and Asia Conference (University of Cambridge, UK, June 30, 2015.)

“*The Pillow Book* in English Translation and Popular Culture,” Joint Workshop between the National Institute of Japanese Literature (Tachikawa, Japan) and the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada) on The Possibilities of Classical Japanese Literature and Cross-Cultural Harmonies (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, September 26, 2014).

“From a Guide to Court Life to a Guide to the Pleasure Quarters: *Makura no sōshi* in Early Modern Japan.” Panel Presentation in “Reading Heian Writers through the Pleasure Quarters,” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference (Philadelphia, March 30, 2014).

SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2014	Co-investigator: Faculty Development Council 2014 Spring Departmental and Interdisciplinary Award, University of Cincinnati (6,088)
2014	University Research Council (URC) Faculty Research Grant, University of Cincinnati (\$8,000)
2013	Taft Summer Research Fellowship, Taft Research Center, University of Cincinnati (\$8,000)
2010-2011	Japan Studies Fellowship, Japan Foundation (\$42,000)
2008-2010	SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (\$40,000)