Globalism and Nationalism in Transnational Japanese Literature

During the Meiji Era, when Japan finally opened its borders after centuries of isolation, Japanese writers began to look outwards towards countries like the United States. At the same time, the West gained greater awareness of Japan. Writing from the time period reflects Japan's curiosity, but also a certain wariness that they could end up colonized and divided like China. In the time leading up to WWII, Japan for a second time closed itself off to the West. However, after the war, Japan again focused on global connections, and many writers began moving out of Japan. Transnational Japanese literature from the Meiji Era to the present offers insight into Japan's view of the world – a view that has little study in the Western world. There are many articles on how the West views Japan, and how Japanese migrants struggle to live in the West. However, there is little research into nationalism and globalization within Japanese writers. This paper examines the themes of nationalism and globalization within transnational Japanese writers Lafcadio Hearn, Sugimoto Estu, Shimazaki Tōson, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Murakami Haruki. By examining how each author's definition of Japaneseess colludes with the international affairs of their time period, I examine how internationalism shaped Japanese nationalism throughout modern history.

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Nationalism is an 'us versus them,' situation; it can even be seen in the finals of soccer games, in the claiming of 'historic' rights to lands and seaways, and can motivate a group or population towards good or ill. There is a human need to 'belong,' and playing that string has been shown to be all to easy, from 1939 Germany to present day China and Islam. Corporate globalization, on the other hand, threatens nationalism because it is undemocratic and anti-sovereignty. Corporate globalization is an imperial force in the world today that erodes democratic institutions and often exceeds the sovereignty of proper nation states.