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## **Piracy or Pastiche? Comparative Literature to (un)think about Pirates in Japan**

Teaching comparative literature in the Japanese archipelago is not an easy task. For many university students, a foreign country is an ocean away. The need to learn about foreign cultures is not fully realised because most of the students can graduate from university, enjoy culture and entertainment without a good command of a foreign language. How can we comparatists do for such university students to realize the necessity and interest of comparative literature? Is it possible for them to acquire a critical perspective on the way in which their own culture has been revitalised by the influence and sometimes appropriation of foreign cultures? Here, I would like to present a case study of pirates. There are countless stories about pirates, but it is fair to say that the stories originated in Britain. So it is not difficult to take a story about pirates and point out that it is a pirate version of, say, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. However, the task tends to be a nationalistic affirmation of the status quo, which may only confirm the ingenuity of the present improved work. In first case, it would be useful to relativise the work from the perspective of historical research. The point of view that pirates were self – governing organisations, independent of their origins, allows us to see that the story of pirates still follows the model of the nation – state. Secondly, it is useful to look for the absence of what should be there. By comparing works from different periods and different countries, we can rather easily find the absence of a subject or a depiction which should have been in the work. By doing both of these things, the students may come to realise the importance of making comparisons, rather than just accepting or rejecting the works around them.