

Beckett & Japan: A Virtual Seminar Series

Saturday 13th May & Saturday 3rd June

Please join us for the fourth and fifth sessions in this seminar series examining aspects of the reception of Samuel Beckett's work in Japan. This series is presented by the Samuel Beckett Working Group at IFTR and the School of Arts, English and Languages at Queen's University Belfast.

Booking: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/samuel-beckett-japan-seminar-series-tickets-624296015187>

Seminar 4

Saturday 13th May 2023, 10.00-11.30am (Dublin/London time) / 6.00-7.30pm (Tokyo time)
(via MS Teams)

Euske Oiwa,

'Facing the Time: Beckett's Theatricality and Installation Art'

This presentation explores the structures of Beckett's work through my own artistic practice. As an artist and researcher, I have focused on and analysed the interplay between the specific design of installation artworks and the audience's theatrical experience. Art theorist Michael Fried developed the critical concept of 'theatricality' influenced by Stanley Cavell's essay on *Endgame*, which delves into the experience of existence in a theater. Some of my works evoke the respective themes through various theatrical media: subjectivity in the pandemic lockdown with a comedy (*Vacances*, 2020), the eerie temporality of vaccination with a science-fiction-style dialogue (*Chill*, 2021), our paranoiac interest in the external world with a play (*P in case*, 2022), and the convergence of possibility and fate with a game (*Card Game*, 2022). Fried characterizes the theatrical object as 'disquieting,' like a silent, masked human, but in our current situation, individuals are left to make the decision to wear a literal 'mask'. Beckett's abstractness provides valuable insights into our experience of 'otherness,' which includes others, distant futures, ghosts, language, and the world. Therefore, the subject of my artistic research is what sort of sensibility is essential to installation art as a form that emerged in the 1960s and continues into the present.

Kumiko Kiuchi (Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan),

'Thirty Years: Reception of Samuel Beckett's prose work in Japan from the 1990s'

This paper is part of the publication project of the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan to commemorate its thirtieth anniversary this year. The purpose is to illustrate the Japanese reception of Beckett's prose in the Japanese literary world during the past thirty years from the 1990s onwards.

Within this timeframe, the paper begins by focusing on the body of writing by the Japanese novelist Kazushi Hosaka (1956-). He has been one of the few contemporary novelists who openly and repeatedly declares Beckett's influence on his work, reflecting in depth on the concept of the novel in the loop of Beckett, Kafka, and the Japanese novelist Nobuo Kojima (1915-2006). Kojima, known for his essayistic writing style that blurs the boundary between reality and fiction in a subtle yet mesmerizing manner, also acknowledges Beckett's influence in his prose writing and interviews.

This presentation first studies how Hosaka discusses Beckett along with Kojima, and vice versa. Despite differences in methods and styles, Hosaka praises both Beckett and Kojima for offering

the reader an affective experience. The idea of ‘affective reading’ is posed as a challenge against the analytical method of reading that urges the reader to treat a literary text mainly as a body of data that can be divided into units of meaning for a plausible interpretation. Instead, he underlines the fact that reading a novel is first and foremost an experience of the indivisibility, between content and form, image, sound, and movement/rhythm. However, any critical writing is analytical in nature. Then, how does Hosaka write about Beckett, Kojima or others while maintaining the “integrity” of their work? By analysing Hosaka’s writing on Beckett’s *Molloy*, this paper analyzes how Hosaka inserts the reader’s physicality as an index of the present in his analytical writing.

This presentation also seeks to contextualise Hosaka’s writing strategy as a response to the dominant discourse in the Japanese academia and literary world when he began his career as a writer in the early 1990s. The presentation also hopes to introduce some young contemporary writers in whose writing Hosaka acknowledges ‘Beckett’, not the ‘Beckettian’.

Seminar 5

Saturday 3rd June, 2023

10.00-11.30am (Dublin/London time) / 6.00-7.30pm (Tokyo time)
(via MS Teams)

Sennojo Shigeyama

‘Revitalizing Beckett in the New Era of Japan’,

In conversation with Yoshiko Takebe

In this talk, Sennojo Shigeyama will discuss his experience of acting Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* at Kanagawa Arts Theatre (Yokohama city) in 2019. The strategy of featuring a young yet traditional Kyogen actor in a contemporary setting raised the question of what it means to ‘wait’ for the audiences, who were in fact experiencing the transition period from the former Heisei to the new Reiwa era back in 2019. Just as Beckett was writing and directing bilingually, this talk also focuses on the effect of being a bilingual performer and director through the innovative lens of Sennojo Shigeyama.

Speaker Biographies

Kiuchi, Kumiko is Associate Professor at the Institute for Liberal Arts, Tokyo Institute of Technology. She was a member of the *rita* (altruism) project of the Future Humanity Research Centre (2021-2023), writing a number of essays on the topic. She has published articles and book chapters on Samuel Beckett and the representation of urban space both in English and Japanese. Her recent publications include ‘Reading Prometheus’s fire after P in case’ (in Euske Oiwa, *P in case*, Towada Art Center, 2023), ‘Why is “Listener” Named “Souvenant”’ (in *Beckett’s Voices/Voicing Beckett*, Brill, 2021), ‘Tweaking Misogyny or Misogyny Twisted’ (in *Beckett and Politics*, Palgrave, 2020), ‘Tokyo Ecology’ (in *Botanical City*, Jovis, 2020). She is one of the translators of the new Japanese translation of Beckett’s complete dramatic works and publishes her creative writing and photographs in the literary journal *SNOW*. She is currently the chairperson of the Samuel Beckett Research Circle in

Japan (2023-2025) and is a leading editor of *Beckett's Words/Paroles de Beckett (Beckett no kotoba)*, the volume to be published in autumn/winter 2023 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Circle.

Oiwa, Euske was born in 1993 in Saitama Prefecture and is an artist who reinterprets installation art by considering the various phases of space beyond its physical shape. He sees space as an interweaving of multiple aspects: game-like possibilities, interpersonal intimacy, our collective movement through time, the relationship between engagements and desires, the efficacy of language and words, and the juxtaposition of history with fiction. Through his writings and creative practice, he explores the idea that we don't have to be 'contemporary' with other people and objects and that this may at times extend to the artist and the audience. He finds this motif reflected, for instance, in the way different spaces have transformed in recent years due to the pandemic.

Oiwa is currently enrolled in the doctoral program at the Graduate School of Film and New Media at the Tokyo University of the Arts and is a lecturer in the Art and Design Course in the Department of Information Design at Tama Art University. His recent installation works include a card game entitled *Executioners Accompanists* (2022), and *margin reception* (2021), which featured an orange-flavored drink whose juice content ratio was that of the artist-gallery profit margin, and *Vacances* (2020), where manzai stand-up comedians are tormented by noise.

Shigeyama, Sennojo (Doji Shigeyama) (born: 1983) is recognized today as one of the new emerging talents in the world of Okura School Kyogen. Influenced by his pioneering grandfather Sennojo (died: 2010), who broke the taboo of the world of Noh-Kyogen by engaging in a rich variety of activities outside his Kyogen profession, and by his father Akira, who followed that vision by attempting to achieve fusions of traditional Japanese performance arts and Western contemporary theater with his NOHO Gekidan theater company and other international activities such as directing opera and staging Kyogen performances in English, Doji Shigeyama is opening up new horizons as a performer. His activities as an artist have ranged from writing and directing stand-up comedy for his *Hyakumanben* performances, writing a new Kyogen work for his *Marikouji* performances with the aim of creating new classics that will still be performed a hundred years from now, directing opera and bilingual Kyogen.

Takebe, Yoshiko is Professor in the Translation and Interpreting Course at the Department of Practical English, Shujitsu University in Japan. Her research focuses on the correlation between nonverbal and verbal forms of expressions with respect to drama and theatre. She studied Drama and Theatre in Research at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has worked as a Japanese-English interpreter and translator in Tokyo. Her recent articles on Beckett are 'Translating Beckett's Voices in Different Cultures' in *Beckett's Voices / Voicing Beckett* (Eds. Laurens De Vos, Mariko Hori Tanaka, and Nicholas E. Johnson. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021) and 'Translating Silence: Correlations between Beckett, Chekhov, and Hirata' in *Influencing Beckett / Beckett Influencing* (Eds. Anita Rakoczy, Mariko Hori Tanaka, Nicholas E. Johnson. Budapest/Paris: L'Harmattan Publishing, 2020).

Series Organisers

Mariko Hori Tanaka (Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo), Michiko Tsushima (University of Tsukuba), Kumiko Kiuchi (Tokyo Institute of Technology), Yoshiko Takebe (Shujitsu University), and Trish McTighe (Queen's University Belfast). For queries relating to the event and booking please contact t.mctighe@qub.ac.uk.