

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

Gender and Sexuality in East Asia
(Joint Social Science and History & Humanities Study Group)



September 30 (Thu), 2021, 18:30h JST

Touching the Unreachable:

Love of the Object and of the Self through Kawabata

Fusako Innami, Durham University

Kawabata Yasunari's (1899–1972) literary works have often been discussed in relation to the objectification of the (female) body as well as his orphan background. Having witnessed a number of deaths in his early life, Kawabata's acute attention to the loved object seems inseparable from his fundamental awareness of its unreachability. Writing, as a specific kind of medium, enables Kawabata to approach the unreachable; it connects past and present, repression and liberation, words and the not yet verbalized, or the embodied and not fully verbalized. In the protagonist's yearning and in Kawabata's writing, the very act of trying to reach the loved object "marks" the emergence of the desired objects through the interaction with the loved one.

In this talk, I examine how writing as a medium functions as a mode of connection through special attention to Kawabata's writing of adolescents. Often attracted to the untouched, not yet touched, or unreachable, his writing creates and re-creates the loved object while extending the self (through language, smell, and the gaze, even when physical contact is not involved), with an extent of reciprocity. Writing is a continuous process between approaching the object while simultaneously distancing oneself.

Fusako Innami is an Associate Professor in Japanese and Performance Studies at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Durham University. Her first book, *Touching the Unreachable: Writing, Skinship, Modern Japan* (the University of Michigan Press, 2021), examines touch as the mediated experience of the memories of previous touching and the accumulation of sensations, all of which create an interstitial space between those in contact. Her research interests include life writing, performance and performativity, the senses and perception, phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and translation, including the translation of bodily experiences into language, inter-media translation, and the circulation of ideas. Her work has been recognized by the International Federation for Theatre Research (New Scholars' Prize, 2012), foundations, such as Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, and her commissioned works in performing arts for cultural organizations include those at Bunkamura in Tokyo and Glyndebourne Opera in Sussex, UK.

About

The *Gender and Sexuality in East Asia*-Lecture Series is part of the DIJ's Social Science and History & Humanities Study Groups. The events are open to all. Further information can be found [here](#).

Online Presentation

Registration for this online event is required via email to geilhorn@dijtokyo.org until **29 September 2021 (JST)**. Log in data will be provided after registration.