



September 28 (Thu), 2023, 18:30h JST

Spatial Dynamics in Japanese Poetry amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic, along with measures such as social distancing, travel restrictions, and national lockdowns, has had a profound impact on our understanding of space. However, the world of reading, an activity traditionally seen as a purely cognitive act that allows readers to leave their physical bodies behind, appeared to remain relatively unaffected by these spatial constraints. Surprisingly, Japanese poets Saihate Tahī, Fuzuki Yumi, and Mizusawa Nao responded to the pandemic's challenges by crafting works that drew readers' attention back to their physical presence and the space surrounding them. These creations took the form of poetic installations and exhibitions, transcending conventional publishing formats and manifesting in both physical and virtual spaces. This interdisciplinary presentation will closely examine poetic works like Saihate Tahī's site-specific installation *Shi no kasoku / shi no teishi* (2020), Fuzuki Yumi's sound installation *Koe no genba* (2021), and the online exhibition *Kakuri-shiki nōkōsesshoku-shitsu* (2020) by Mizusawa Nao and media artist Fuse Rintarō to explore space, proximity, and the act of reading within the context of poetry installations. As a theoretical framework, I will incorporate spatial theories such as Henri Lefebvre's 'triad of space' and Edward Soja's 'thirdspace', as well as Maeda Ai's idea of 'hare' or 'asobi', alongside Devin Proctor's adaptation of Lefebvre's concepts to the internet's space. This approach will be complemented by insights from cognitive literary studies, focusing on Gillian Silverman's article 'Touch' (2020) on the connection between touch and reading. My presentation will suggest that the works presented here create poetic spaces that serve as a poignant reminder of the readers' own physicality, rather than offering escapism. As a result, readers become more aware to the spaces that surround them and the far-reaching effects of COVID-19 on these settings.

Sarah Pützer is a PhD student at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford. Her research focuses on contemporary Japanese literature and poetry, with a particular interest in exploring the concept of 'poetic spaces' in the works of poets Saihate Tahī and Fuzuki Yumi among others. She has pursued her studies in Oxford, Berlin, and Japan, and graduated from the IUC 10-month programme of professional Japanese training in Yokohama, administered by Stanford University. Currently, she is a PhD student at the DIJ.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. This session is organized by Harald Kümmerle. All are welcome to attend.

Venue:

Online and DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>

Hybrid Event:

On-site participation: Registration is required via email to kuemmerle@dijtokyo.org until September 27.

Online participation: Please register via our [webpage](#). Log-in data will be provided after registration.