“Adaptation” of Sinitic Poetry in Kudai waka (Waka on Lines from Chinese Poems)  
by Jien and Teika  
Miaoling Xue, University of British Columbia

Kudai waka is the reinterpretation of a line or several lines of Sinitic poetry (kanshi) in waka poetry. Lines from Tang poet Bai Juyi’s (772-846) poems were frequently used in the practice of kudai waka. This presentation illustrates how Jien (1155-1225) and Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) took inspiration from Bai Juyi’s satirical poem (fengyu shi) “Inauspicious House (xiong zhai shi, 806)” and composed kudai waka.

Bai’s poems are also woven into the narratives in The Tale of Genji (early eleventh century) and The Rise and Decline of Tamatsukuri Komachi (ca. eleventh–twelfth century), often employed to make veiled criticism of the luxurious lives of noble families. Although the use of Bai’s poems in The Tale of Genji has been examined by previous studies, the satirical poems in kudai waka received little attention. I argue that the kudai waka of Jien and Teika use the topic provided by a line from “Inauspicious House” to create a waka world in which an individual’s impression of nature is predominant, thus diverging from the satirical theme. I also compare adaptations of “Inauspicious House” in different genres and show a way to rethink the definition of the term “adaptation” in discussing Sino-Japanese intertextual transculturation.

The Tale of Genji in Colonial Taiwan (1895-1945)  
Yu-ning Chen, Washington University in St. Louis

This presentation focuses on the role of The Tale of Genji (early eleventh century) in colonial Taiwan (1895-1945). The national literature (kokubungaku) movement in modern Japan attempted to establish a connection between The Tale of Genji and the Japanese national spirit. In the case of colonial Taiwan, national literature scholars used The Tale of Genji to support Japanization (kominkan undo, 1937-1945) in three aspects: the assimilation of Taiwanese people, the promotion of the Japanese language and the elimination of Taiwanese customs. However, although these Genji discourses were aimed at Taiwanese people, they were actually read mainly by Japanese people living in Taiwan. In the 1940s, when the publication and sale of The Tale of Genji was banned in mainland Japan, in Taiwan it remained free from censorship, continuing to aid the cause of Japanization and serving as a symbol of the Japanese national spirit.
Translation Without Words: What Kyogen Can Tell Us About Samuel Beckett’s Tolerance for Adaptation
Jane Traynor, Columbia University

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is known for his strict expectations for performers to heed to the specifications of his playtexts. However, he is also known for his work as a translator, a job which many would agree requires a nuanced understanding of the necessity of adaptation. Considering this, is it possible for one to discover at what point, for Beckett, necessary alterations become superfluous personal liberties? Particularly in cases of theatre, it is important to consider not only the linguistic translation of the written text, but also the adaptations of the performed text. In an attempt to address this question, this presentation examines Noho Theater’s adaptation of Samuel Beckett’s Act Without Words I (1982), as well as related performance reviews and thespian commentaries. Through this case study, I investigate the boundary between translation and adaptation, and challenge the understanding of the text-stage relationship in the performing arts.

The Myth of Translating Myth: Shōno Yoriko’s Mythomorphic Kompira
R. Alan Reiser, Indiana University

Popular modern author, Shōno Yoriko, is known in Japan for many things, among them being that she is the only author to win the “Triple Crown” of Japanese literary awards. Nevertheless, most of her large oeuvre has remained untranslated (into English) and thus remains largely unknown outside Japan. Her subject matter explores contemporary gender and other identity issues in a characteristically post-modern first-person narrative style. Yet for all her literary success and the global relevance of her subjects, why has she been seemingly overlooked outside of Japanese language audience?

This presentation examines one possible reason Shōno remains untranslated is that she writes with deep and complex relationship to Japanese traditions, including its syncretic mythology, which may be deemed untranslatable by Western publishers. The recent series of myth translations published by Canongate includes Rebecca Copeland’s translation of Natsuo Kirino’s Goddess Chronicle, an adaptation of the Izanami creation myth, argues for the necessity of adaptation. I claim that while a work may change through translation, the very mythic and transgressive nature of Kompira begs to be carried to a modern audience beyond Japan.