

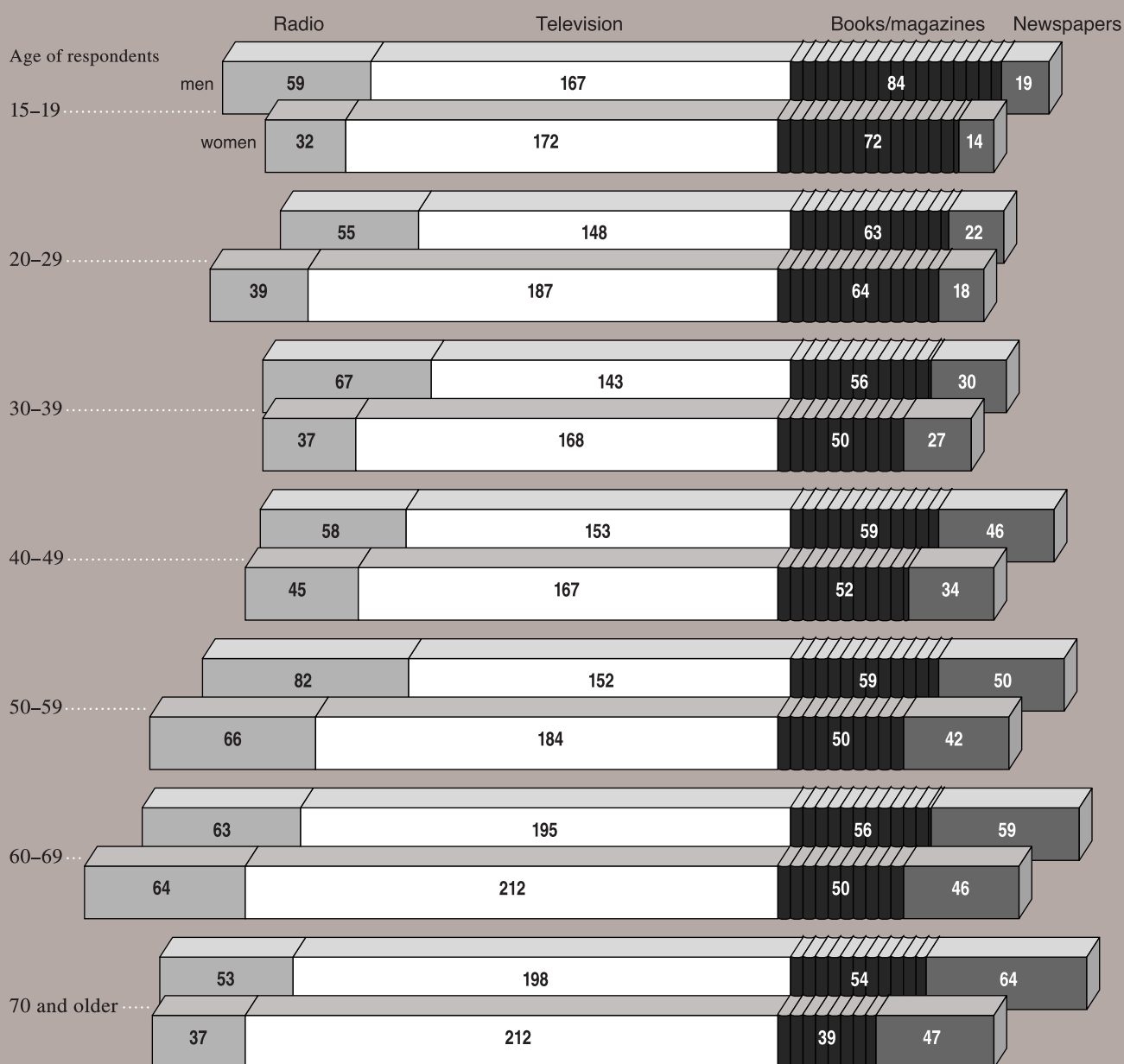
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Japanese Book News

Ambivalence and Identity in Okinawan Literature
Rōjinryoku: Embracing the Patinas of Age
Japanese Books in Korea Today

Reading and the Mass Media: Average Daily Consumption in Japan (unit: minutes per day)



Source: 1998 Survey from 1999-nemban dokusho yoron chōsa [Public Opinion Surveys on Reading, 1999], Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1999, p. 19.



The Japan Foundation

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From the Editor

This issue's lead essay introduces recent trends in the literature of Okinawa. Located at the southernmost part of the Japanese archipelago, Okinawa is a tropical chain of small islands surrounded by beautiful coral reefs extending nearly to Taiwan on latitudes roughly the same as Miami and New Delhi. Its distinctive heritage and geography as well as staunchly preserved traditions are the source of energy and inspiration for its people, and recently Okinawa has become the locus of new and exciting cultural developments in music, literature, cinema, and other arts.

In Japan's rapidly graying society, the issues of the elderly and aging are serious ones indeed. Yet the author of a recently published best-selling volume of essays reflects with humor and fun on the progress of aging under the rubric of *rōjinryoku* (old-age "strengths"). Not an established word, but one coined very recently by writer Akasegawa Gempei, *rōjinryoku* has already entered the popular vernacular to express a fresh and positive perspective on aging. Literary critic Yoshino Jin offers insights on the gradual change taking place in Japanese views on life that is behind the popularity of this curious new turn of phrase.

The Japanese Books Abroad page in this issue brings us up-to-date on recent developments in publishing of Japanese books in Korea.

From this issue, we welcome a new contributor to the From the Publishing Scene column. Ikari Haruo, acquisitions agent at a Tokyo bookstore, is an essayist and author of *Besutoserā no hōteishiki* [Equation for a Best-seller] and other books. He claims to have at least a passing acquaintance with most of the new titles put on sale in bookshops, roughly 20,000 a year. We have asked Ikari, perhaps the person most broadly knowledgeable about books in Japan today, to write a series of articles about recent topics relating to book sales and distribution. Koyama Tetsurō continues his series with an article on the fascination with the classical lexicon among young and upcoming writers.

In Their Own Words this time is by novelist Ikezawa Natsuki, who now resides in Okinawa. Ikezawa is currently very active, as the author of a novel serialized in a national newspaper as well as numerous essays and critiques.

Japanese Book News address:

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Ambivalence and Identity in Okinawan Literature

Yonahara Kei

Any understanding of the literature of Okinawa must be based on an appreciation of its distinct history and geography. Only in the late nineteenth century did this chain of islands become an administrative unit under the Japanese government. The subtropical climate of its fifty-odd large and small islands surrounded by azure seas makes it quite different from the main islands of Japan. While the latter is associated with temperate-zone vegetation and mountains wreathed in soft mists, Okinawa is covered with lush jungles bathed in strong subtropical sunlight, more like some parts of Southeast Asia than mainland Japan. The landscape of countries like Thailand or Vietnam would be more familiar to Okinawans than that of the old capitals of Kyoto and Nara. As the crow flies, moreover, Okinawa is closer to Taiwan and China than it is to today's capital in Tokyo (see map).

Formerly called Ryūkyū, Okinawa was once an independent kingdom, although perhaps not an autonomous state in the modern sense. Until the nineteenth century, it was among the many states in East Asia, like Korea and Vietnam, that were tributary states of China. They were politically and culturally subservient to the Chinese court, but in practice they maintained considerable autonomy.

In the early seventeenth century, the Satsuma clan, rulers of a domain in the southern part of Japan, invaded Ryūkyū and placed the kingdom under its control. Instead of abolishing the kingdom, however, Satsuma allowed it to maintain its tributary ties with China, thereby benefiting from the lucrative foreign trade that accompanied that relationship. This commerce was particularly valuable at a time when Japan remained committed to its diplomatic and commercial isolation from the rest of the world.

Over a period of two centuries, therefore, Ryūkyū was subordinate to both China and Japan. Satsuma, prospering from the wealth extracted from the Ryūkyū trade, played a major role in the ending of the nearly three centuries of rule by the Tokugawa clan and the restoration of imperial

rule. With the emergence of the new Meiji government in 1868, Ryūkyū was incorporated into the modern Japanese state.

Needless to say, this historical experience had complex effects on the Ryūkyūan psyche that cannot be ignored in any discussion of Okinawan literature today. Looking back through the ages, we can see that the cultures of Japan and Okinawa do converge to a certain extent, and it can be argued that Okinawa's culture falls within the sphere of Japan's in the broad sense. As one historian has shown, Okinawan culture attained its identity within the mainstream of Japanese culture. The sisterhood of the two has been clearly corroborated in the language as well. However, while the speech of the local people did change considerably over the centuries, it retains today distinctive expressions not found in standard Japanese. Another factor that distinguishes Okinawa is the strong impact of China and other countries of East Asia. During the centuries when Japan was cut off from the outside under its seclusion policy, Okinawan culture developed through active interchange in the region.

Between Absorption and Resistance

Incorporated into the Japanese state, Okinawa in the modern age was chronically torn between accommodation and resistance to its control. During World War II, furthermore, Okinawa became the sole domestic battlefield of the war, and at immense cost: some 20 percent of the population perished when American troops landed there in the final stages of the war. In addition, Japan's defeat marked the beginning of what was to become twenty-seven years of American rule of Okinawa. The U.S. military was quick to recognize the strategic value of the islands' location. One might add that as early as three years before the end of the war, the United States had conducted a survey that demonstrated that Okinawans were "ethnically different" from Japanese. Its findings were based on study of the historical and cultural background, and in a sense they were correct.

As a result of the rule by the U.S. military, however, Okinawa was made the site of a number of U.S. military bases, which today occupy nearly 20 percent of the area of Okinawa's main island. In the process of building these bases, the old villages that had dotted the island from ancient times were lost. During this period, Okinawa suffered many painful incidents which, over time, fueled a deep-rooted movement demanding early reversion to Japanese sovereignty.

This reversion movement was not without ambivalence. Okinawa's relationship with Japan through history had certainly not always been a happy one, and its sense of belonging to Japan was by no means strong. The fact that it had to raise the banner of "reversion to Japanese sovereignty" despite such ambivalence reflects its complex history. Indeed, voices calling for Okinawan



independence were raised many times in modern times, and even at the height of the movement for reversion, that was certainly one hope Okinawans entertained.

Given this historical and geographical setting, it may be helpful in understanding Okinawan literature to think of that of Ireland. In fact, quite a few of Okinawa's writers have been intrigued by Ireland, starting back in the 1910s with journalist Iha Getsujō's interest in William Butler Yeats and continuing today in the comparative studies of specialist in English literature Komesu Okifumi. Okinawa and Ireland share the consciousness of threatened cultural identity and loss of their ancient language resulting from domination by another people. For both as well, the activities of writers have been necessarily political in nature. Going back in time, one discovers that both Okinawa and Ireland had rich premodern traditions of oral literature, transmitted in the form of fables and poetry. Like Ireland, Okinawa has ancient songs praising the gods and the beauties of nature that were sung at religious rituals and continue to be passed down today. These songs preserve the ancient language of the Ryūkyū islands. Even the songs that were influenced by Japan and China conform to a distinctive indigenous style.

During the modern era, attempts were made to prohibit use of the Okinawan language by the Japanese government and local advocates of modernization. Since the late nineteenth century, writers have struggled over how to express in Japanese sentiments and ideas that are essentially Okinawan. Some of the rich literature of Okinawa, as seen in its ancient songs, is passed down in the indigenous language and does not easily translate into Japanese. Any attempt to give literary expression to the Okinawan identity today, nevertheless, must of necessity be done in Japanese. The dilemma is the same as that faced by Yeats, who sought to confirm the Irish identity on the spiritual level even while expressing it in the English language.

A poet who gave voice to Okinawans' dilemmas was Yamanoguchi Baku (1903–64). His poem "Kaiwa" [The Conversation] describes the complex feelings of native Okinawans who, under the discriminatory gaze of Japan, cannot talk about their true homeland.

Okinawan literature grew vigorous, adopting Japanese as its vehicle of expression, from 1945 under U.S. military rule. Even in the tumultuous days immediately after the war's end, local newspapers and magazines long repressed by the controls of the militarist regime began to publish freely again, and authors experimented with all manner of literary forms of expression. Particularly during the years up to the reversion in 1972, much writing was political in motif, and given the peculiar conditions of U.S. military rule, it was a perfectly natural trend.

Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, the first Okinawan to win the Akutagawa Prize (in 1967 for his novel *Kakuteru pāti* [Cocktail Party]; Rironsha, 1982), was a writer symbolic of this era. This novel portrays an Okinawan who has close friendships among Americans and his inner struggle of identity between Japan and Okinawa. Ōshiro says that his reason for writing the book was to portray his "absolute intolerance for those who dominate and victimize," but the work's impact resulted mainly from the fact that he

does not depict Okinawans simply as victims. Okinawan authors all assume the burdens of their birthplace, but Ōshiro does more than condemn the problems; by conscientiously portraying the struggle of the individual, he succeeds in giving voice to the dilemma of Okinawa as a whole. He declares that the "Okinawa issue" is not a political problem but a cultural one. Ironically, it is these cultural dilemmas that today lend strength to literary expression in Okinawa.

Distinctiveness Embraced

In 1971, Higashi Mineo became the second Okinawan after Ōshiro to receive the Akutagawa Prize, for *Okinawa no shōnen* [A Young Man of Okinawa] (Bungei Shunjū, 1980). This novel depicts Okinawa through the eyes of a young man who lives in Koza, the entertainment district that catered to the military personnel stationed on the American bases. One of the features of this book is its skillful use of vernacular speech. He unhesitatingly incorporates the Okinawan words liberally sprinkled through daily conversation into his writing. Where previous writers found it difficult to handle a mixture of standard Japanese and Okinawan speech, Higashi broke new ground by making daily speech a part of writing. This style perfectly expresses the distinctive character and atmosphere of the streets of Koza. By demonstrating that Okinawa was to be found in the vernacular of everyday speech, Higashi spearheaded a whole new vector in its literature.

Ordinarily, people native to the islands take for granted that which is "Okinawan"; it is not something of which they are consciously aware. But in the course of conflict or confrontation with the Other, awareness of their identity gradually grows clearer. It is in a way ironical that the era of U.S. military rule ended up providing the historical moment in which Okinawan writers established "Okinawan literature" as an independent genre.

The writing of Ōshiro and Higashi may have been the inevitable product of the occupation era, but the literature of subsequent decades has been gradually changing with the times. Political themes tend to be prevalent even now, but motifs have considerably diversified as the generation that did not experience the war comes onto the literary stage. *Buta no mukui* [The Pig's Retribution] (Bungei Shunjū, 1996) by Matayoshi Eiki (b. 1947; see *Japanese Book News* No. 15, p. 20) portrays the local scene in an optimistic, relaxed tone. Postwar-born Matayoshi does not deal directly with the themes of war and the American bases, but instead focuses affectionately on particularities of the islands themselves and the local people.

An author of yet a younger generation than Matayoshi, Medoruma Shun (b. 1960) gives expression to the shadow of the war that continues to hang over the land and its people in "Suiteki" [Waterdrops] (*Bungakukai*, April 1997 issue). An even younger author, Ikegami Eiichi (b. 1970) has published a novel skillfully introducing in today's context the world of old Okinawan magic and ancient songs in his *Bagājima nupanasu* [Tales of Our Islands] (Shinchōsha, 1994).

What is notable about these younger writers is their weaker identification with Japan. Indeed, their works wholeheartedly embrace the separateness and particularity

of the land of Okinawa. When we think of the generation that struggled with the frustrations of having everything native to their culture compared derogatorily to that of the mainstream society of Japan, we cannot but be impressed with the changes taking place in recent years.

Today the rich diversity that once flourished in Japanese culture as a whole has been steadily eroding, giving way in almost every part of the country to the spread of a homogenized—"Tokyo-ized"—culture." The literature of the younger generations tends to be set against the anonymous, artificial, inorganic landscape of the city, and there are fewer works that give readers a sense of the flavor of specific local areas. In Okinawa, as elsewhere, the local language is changing with the times. Many younger people are no longer familiar with the old

Okinawan tongue, and some have expressed the fear that the identity of Okinawans may gradually fade out of memory. Looking at the work of the younger writers recently coming to the fore, however, it is evident that the generation does indeed treasure its Okinawan identity, in its own way.

Whenever I come in contact with the richly distinctive expressions of Okinawa's literature, I think of the blessings enjoyed by those islands far removed from Tokyo. Culturally, Okinawa is still very much Okinawa; it is not just another local area of Japan. There, the continuous flow of time constantly speaks to Okinawans, reminding them of the value of their heritage. It is a call that we hope will be heard in many other parts of Japan as well. (*Yonahara Kei is a freelance writer.*)

Further information about the books in the New Titles section starting on page 8 may be obtained by contacting the following publishers and agencies.

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Rōjinryoku: Embracing the Patinas of Age

Yoshino Jin

The book *Rōjinryoku* [Old-Age “Strengths”] (Chikuma Shobō), published in September 1998, was an instant best-seller. Akasegawa Gempei (b. 1937), avant garde artist and novelist who won the Akutagawa Prize under the penname Otsuji Katsuhiko, coined the word *rōjinryoku*, meaning “old-age strengths” presented in this collection of essays.

When people enter advanced age, they become forgetful, begin telling the same stories and repeating the same jokes, and seem always to be sighing and staring into space. These developments stemming from decline in mental agility, loss of control over physical functions, and senility, are generally bewailed. Akasegawa’s *rōjinryoku* looks for their positive, hidden merits and the humor to be found in these symptoms.

The young have plenty of vitality, their heads are clear and minds are sharp, but precisely because of that they often act too quickly or impulsively, making mistakes or tripping themselves up. They may fail to channel their energies in the right direction or at the right time, become confused and frustrated by an overabundance of information, distracted or misled by an excess of undigested knowledge, attempt goals beyond their realistic abilities or status, and rush to keep up with the Joneses whenever something new comes along.

Those who have acquired the *rōjinryoku* patina of age, however, can avoid such overkill, says Akasegawa. Less obsessed by worldly desires and attachments, they become adaptable and free. They achieve a certain strength by yielding, letting go, and not trying too hard. There is something distinctively Japanese in such strength, he suggests, perhaps related to the aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*.

Everyone eventually arrives at the age when they discover themselves stumbling over what they wanted to say and unable to summon up the stamina to spurt for the train as the bell sounds. It is often difficult even to get out of one’s chair. We know age is coming on when we start talking to ourselves, involuntarily uttering words of self-encouragement. Japanese has a number of these words, like “dokkoi-sho,” used typically by older people when attempting to move something heavy or get up from a sitting position. The older you get the more you find such exclamations the necessary prelude to any kind of action. When people begin to show such symptoms, it is usual to mourn the onset of dotage. But Akasegawa takes something that has always been described negatively and gives it a new twist: “they’re improving in the capacities of old age,” he says: *rōjinryoku ga tsuita*.

It is important to distinguish *rōjinryoku*, literally the *strengths* of old age, from *rōjin pawā* or “senior citizen power,” which denotes older people who seem to be just as energetic and active as young people. The author of the book himself has expressed his dismay at a tendency in the media to mis-define *rōjinryoku* as the “powerfulness of senior citizens.” (Akasegawa Gempei, “Rōjin-

ryoku ni haru ga kita” [Youth Comes to ‘Rōjinryoku’] (*Bungei shunjū*, April 1999 issue). Although people in general seem to understand and use the word as Akasegawa meant it, often its meaning has been distorted.

Akasegawa’s book discusses *rōjinryoku* with a rich sense of humor. By taking a positive stance toward advancing age, he is convinced, we can begin to see that growing old can afford a certain kind of energy. Since the word *rōjinryoku* was originally coined as an in-joke used in conversation with the author’s friends as they teased one another about getting old, the logic behind the usage of this new term may seem a little forced. Nevertheless, what he says does reflect recent trends in Japan. Hobbies that were once disparaged as pursued only by old folks, like going to hot-spring resorts and collecting antiques, have been enjoying a cross-generational boom, especially among young women. A trend in favor of the tastes of older people does seem to be taking a natural hold on society. Japanese as a whole are “improving in the capacities of age.”

Indeed, Japan is already an aging society. The population 65 years old and over has risen above 20 million, making one in six people a senior citizen. Forecasts are that Japan will be a “super-aging” society by 2015, when a quarter of the population will be 65 and over.

Meanwhile, worries abound about how to manage the society that will have to support the livelihood of this large aging population. Rapid economic growth and the overheated “bubble” economy that represented its pinnacle are now things of the past, and the recession that followed has been prolonged. War and hunger have been ended in Japan, and a peaceful and affluent society has been built. Yet outrageous incidents occur, like the release of poison sarin gas in crowded subway trains by members of the Aum Shinrikyō cult in 1995. The number of suicides throughout Japan is now far greater than deaths from automobile accidents (about 10,000).

The advent of a whimsical expression like *rōjinryoku* is not unrelated to the backdrop of these pathos-tinged times. Since the end of World War II, Japanese have steadily pursued affluence and novelty. Uninterested in elegance and unaccustomed to leisure, the dutiful masses labored determinedly and tirelessly, serving as unassuming cogs in engines of their country’s immense corporate machine. Now, it seems, the strain and unnaturalness of that effort are beginning to take their toll.

People conscientiously pursued the postwar ideal of living “with energy, wisdom, cheerfulness, and confidence and striving for harmony with others,” but it can be difficult to uphold such noble ideals and still be true to oneself and one’s true nature. Finally people are beginning to realize the tremendous price they have paid for refusing to accept weakness and the dark sides of their society, pushing anything that was embarrassing or distasteful out of sight in their headlong plunge toward

wealth and “success.” Recent recognition of what they have lost, it seems to me, has something to do with the appeal of an idea like *rōjinryoku*.

We can detect a similar perspective in the popularity of another current best-seller, *Tariki* [Reliance on the Other] (Kōdansha), a collection of essays by writer Itsuki Hiroyuki. In a chapter entitled “Genuine Positivism Begins with Utter Negativism,” Itsuki writes: “What has up to now been considered ‘positivism’ is, in fact, nothing more than a naive optimism—a vague feeling of hopefulness—certainly not a conviction that might give you real strength in life.”

Akasegawa argues that *rōjinryoku* is important precisely because it is off the productivity track. He says we ought to cultivate the strengths older people display as a regular part of our lives. Today, retirees whose lives revolved totally around their work are beginning to have private free time of their own. Those who can continue to pursue hobbies begun in their youth find they can enjoy a satisfying and full “old age.” The most important thing about *rōjinryoku* is that it stands for keeping a sense of humor and fun even with regard to the aging process.

Since a few years back, there have been quite a number of best-selling novels and works of non-fiction on the themes of aging and death. A few years ago there was Shimizu Tatsuo’s *Ima hitotabi no* [One More Time] (Shinchōsha, 1994), a collection of short stories on the themes of love and life. It drew the attention of critics, was lauded by fiction fans, and was nominated for the Naoki Prize. Regarding his reasons for writing this anthology, Shimizu commented: “When I turned fifty, you see, I began to feel the greater proximity and familiarity of death. I also realized that in Japan up to now, we have been concerned solely with how we ought to *live*; I don’t think we thought at all about how we ought to *die*.” (*Nami*, August 1994 issue, published by Shinchōsha).

It was not long after these stories were first serialized in a magazine that we began to see books appearing on the market on the theme of death. A number of them became best-sellers: Yamazaki Akio’s *Byōin de shinu to iu koto* [Death in the Hospital] (Shufu no Tomo Sha, 1990; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 1, p. 16), Chibetto “*Shisha no sho*” [Tibet’s *Book of the Dead*] (NHK Shuppan, 1993), and Ei Rokusuke’s *Dai-ōjō* [The Great Crossing] (Iwanami Shoten, 1994; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 8, p. 12). These were the topics on everyone’s lips.

Another serious concern today is old age and caregiving. The book *Kōraku* [Withering Leaves] (Shinchōsha, 1995; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 14, p. 17) by Sae Shūichi, which won the Prix des Deux Magots Bunkamura Prize, described the difficulties of a middle-aged couple in caring for the husband’s elderly father and mother. As the story unfolds over twelve years, we see the realities of old people caring for even older people. This story was later made into both a film and a stage play and sparked a good deal of public debate. Based on the author’s actual experience, the story is a vivid portrayal of accidents (a broken limb) and symptoms of senility as well as trying to look after an incompatible couple who were always quarreling with each other.

Even before Akasegawa offered his humorous twist on aging, there were a number of works that dealt with

facets of an aging society. While discussions of old age and death inevitably become dark and dreary, *Rōjinryoku* offers a smile and raises the spirits. It puts aside the lugubrious and heavy and brings out the positive. Akasegawa’s book brought people’s attention to a dimension of the discussion on age that had previously been overlooked, and it is full of wit and whimsy.

Another recent book on the issue of aging is *Boku ni “rōgo” ga kuru mae ni* [Before I Enter “Old Age”] (Asuka Shinsha, 1999), by Nagai Akira, a former internist who is now a journalist specializing in medical issues. The fifty-one-year old author disguised himself as an old woman and wrote this book as a documentary of his experiences. Spending two hours on his face make-up, wearing weights and padding both arms and legs with weights and athletic supporters, removing his glasses to impair his vision, and stuffing sponge in his ears to make himself hard of hearing, he was able to approximate the physical state of an eighty-year old. In this guise he took to the streets, riding buses and trains and testing the disabilities of the elderly.

This story illustrates vividly how an older person might be fine as long as he or she is at home, but how the attempt to go any distance for shopping or to take care of errands can be fraught with difficulties: the traffic light that changes before you can get across the street, the steep incline of subway stairways, the hard-to-read fare chart at the railway station, confusion at an automatic ticket-taking machine, the clucks of impatience from younger folk when you stop in your tracks in bewilderment. There is a great deal to learn from this account.

Filled with minute details about how the body physically responds and how one feels, and supplemented as well with a medical doctor’s knowledge of what it means clinically to age, this book is not only easy to understand but highly informative. Dr. Nagai’s decision to disguise himself as an old woman introduces a comical touch that makes the book a delight to read. The willingness to approach the topic of age with a sense of humor is something really fresh in books in this category.

Indeed, the authors enjoying the greatest success in writing about age and death in Japan right now are those who consider the issues seriously and concretely but don’t feel obliged to remain formal and serious at all times. They accept weaknesses as such, but are open and positive about dealing with their own problems from their own perspective. (*Yoshino Jin is a literary critic.*)

Back Numbers of *Japanese Book News*

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Japanese Book News back numbers from No. 15 onward may be downloaded at the Japan Foundation website:

http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/media/publish/4_04right.html

Japanese Books in Korea Today

Kim Tae-Ik

South Korea's major daily newspaper *Chosunilbo* has recently carried two substantial articles on Japanese fiction writers. The first was about Murakami Haruki's travelogue *Henkyō, kinkyō* [Out of the Way Places, Nearby Places] (Shinchōsha, 1998) and the other on Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchin* [Kitchen] (Fukutake Shoten, 1988). While Korean translations of Japanese literature have been introduced in the newspapers before, it is unusual for such articles to occupy the top spot on the culture page. Publishing a large-spread article based on an interview of the author (Yoshimoto in this case) by a reporter sent to Japan expressly for that purpose was simply unheard of. Newspapers can no longer ignore the steadily rising interest among their readers in learning more about Japanese culture.

The adoption in October 1998 by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) of a measure gradually lifting its ban on Japanese popular culture has brought Japan unmistakably closer to the Korean people. Not everything is permitted free circulation; a number of restrictions remain, but it is now much easier for ordinary people to come in contact with the culture of one of their closest neighbors. The large bookstores in Seoul now have sections devoted entirely to introducing books on Japanese pop culture. The number of titles that go beyond discussions of whether Japan is good or bad in the attempt to accurately appraise and understand its culture is certainly increasing, and some have even gotten onto the best-seller list. These titles are mainly written by movie directors, critics, and others who have lived in Japan and are known as particular aficionados of Japanese culture.

Experts on Korea's publishing industry, however, say that on the whole they doubt that the measure aimed at softening the cultural boycott has had any significant impact on the publishing market. "On the contrary," says a representative of one publishing company, "adoption of the measure happened to coincide with the period when the Korean economy was placed under IMF supervision, resulting in higher exchange rates and a considerable decrease in the number of contracts for translation rights." Aside from such a quantitative change, it is undeniable that the new government policy has paved the way for something of a Japanese culture boom in Korea.

The recent changes are reflected, for example, in the field of literary publishing. With the exception of Christian novelist Miura Ayako's *Hyōten* (2 vols., Asahi Shimbunsha, 1970–71; translated into English as *Freezing Point*, Dawn Press, 1986), the readership of Japanese literature was never very large. Now, however, the situation is quite different. Almost all of Murakami Haruki's works have been translated, and at Kyobo Bookstore in Seoul, the ROK's largest bookstore, twenty-three titles by Murakami Ryū are on display.

Sales of Murakami Haruki's *Noruei no mori* [Norwegian Wood] have risen above 500,000 copies and the re-

cently released Korean translation of *Kitchen* has already sold 10,000. Other authors who have established a firm following among Korean readers are Maruyama Kenji and Shimada Masahiko. The works of Japanese resident Korean authors like Yi Hoesong, Kim Seokbeon, Yan Sogiru, and Yu Miri continue to be the object of close attention. On the other hand, the publication of a complete collection of the works of Ōe Kenzaburō put out a few years ago by Koreaone Press failed to rouse much popular interest. Its weakness may have been its lack of appeal among the young.

The genre of publishing introduced from Japan in greatest quantity is unquestionably manga. Even before the introduction of step-by-step cultural market opening, Korean publishers had contracts with Japanese publishers and most of the best-known manga were already available in Korea. *Dragonball* and *Slam Dunk* are big best-sellers of more than a million copies. So in the field of manga as well, the experts see no particular impact since the liberalization. There does seem to be some difference, nevertheless, as reflected in the import of the animation magazine *New Type*, and the launching in May of the Korean edition of this monthly magazine.

Despite the much-improved conditions for the import of Japanese popular culture into Korea resulting from the easing of restrictions, no dramatic change has yet come about. There was talk of the possibility that leading Japanese publishers would make large-scale investments in the ROK in the wake of the eased restrictions, but perhaps because of the recession that continues to weigh the industry down, few significant moves in that direction are yet to be seen. (Kim Tae-Ik is a reporter for the Korean daily *Chosunilbo*, Cultural Affairs Division.)

Applications Invited

Translation/Publication Assistance Program

As part of its endeavor to promote understanding of Japan in other countries, the Japan Foundation provides subsidies for the publication and translation of superior Japanese books and/or the publication of quality books on Japan in other languages.

Applicants should be publishers (corporate bodies). A portion of translation costs is provided under the Translation Assistance Program and a portion of printing and binding costs under the Publication Assistance Program.

Application forms will become available in September 1999 at Japanese embassies and Japan Foundation offices overseas. For details of the programs, including qualifications for application, please see the application form. Applications for the fiscal year ending March 2001 should be submitted to the nearest Japanese embassy or Japan Foundation office no later than December 1, 1999.

The Revivalist Style of Young Fiction Writers

Koyama Tetsurō

The winner of the 120th Akutagawa Prize, the new writer's gateway to success in Japan, awarded in February, was Hirano Keiichirō, a student at the University of Kyoto, for his *Nisshoku* [Solar Eclipse]. Hirano joins Ishihara Shintarō, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Maruyama Kenji in receiving this prestigious prize at the young age of 23. Fueled by the expectations of promising young talent, printings of *Nisshoku* have already topped 400,000 copies.

What has made *Nisshoku* much talked-about, however, is not just the youth of its author. Perhaps more provocative is the "difficult" style in which it is written. Set in medieval Europe, the work describes the encounters of a Christian monk with an alchemist, the Inquisition, and the execution of a person for being androgynous. In order to tell this story, the author chose a style of writing expressed in obscure *kanji* difficult even for members of the screening committee to read. Hirano is a special fan of Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), the Meiji-era novelist known for the rich and erudite use of Chinese characters in his writing. The influence of Ōgai's style takes us back about one hundred years in the history of Japanese literature.

Hirano is not the only young writer to revive old styles of writing today. Wakai Sū (b. 1958), won the *Bungakukai* New Writer's Prize last year for a work entitled "Nō byōin ni mairimasu" [Going to the Brain Hospital] written using classical forms of characters and syllabic characters (*hiragana*) in a prewar style modeled after the work of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), in particular. That story was also a candidate for the 119th Akutagawa Prize.

These classical usages of *kanji* and *hiragana* were familiar to prewar Japanese, but with the postwar reforms of the writing system, newly simplified characters were adopted and changes were made to bring the way the language was spoken and written into closer conformity. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 25, pp. 3–5.) There are a number of authors whose writing employs the classical writing system, including novelists Maruya Saiichi and Takai Yūichi. These authors maintain that contemporary rules of writing have lost the "historical logic" that existed under the classical rules of writing.

For younger readers, however, the rarely used *kanji* adopted by Hirano and the classical *kanji* and *hiragana* usage employed by Wakai are no longer familiar. So why would young writers opt to use such archaic forms?

Perhaps, although this may be a hazardous guess, this trend may be attributed to the influence of the rapid spread of Japanese-language word processing. The word processor is a convenient device for organizing ideas. Since the advent of the personal computer, Japanese writing has grown more direct and more fast-paced. This may be fine when you want your message to be direct and clear, but for fiction, in which one wants to savor the twists and turns of writing more slowly and richly, the word-processed sentence may have its drawbacks.

By their use of difficult *kanji* and classical *kanji* and *hiragana* forms, the young-generation writers appear to be attempting to shape the world of fiction by putting the brakes on the pace at which people read. (Koyama Tetsurō is editor, *Cultural News Section*, *Kyodo News*.)

The Healing Message of "Freddie the Leaf"

Ikari Haruo

It is quite a phenomenon. Japanese businessmen are buying and reading a picture book. Found piled high in the large bookstores frequented by working people, it was ranked among the top titles in the fiction division for a time and has consistently been among the ten best-selling titles since it was published (October 1998). It is *Happa no Freddie: Inochi no tabi* (Dōwaya, 1998; a translation of *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*, Charles B. Slack, Inc, 1982), a book about "life" by well-known American life scientist Leo Buscaglia, and the only picture book he has produced for children.

In addition to the photographs in the original book, watercolor drawings were included for the Japanese edition. The story describes the life of a leaf as it passes through the cycle of the four seasons, changing in turn from lush green to bright red and yellow and finally to withered brown.

There is a reason a picture book found such an unusual readership. Even before it came out, a weekly business magazine introduced it as the kind of book that appears only once in a decade. Calculating that such a favorable review in a mass-market weekly was sure to stimulate sales, the large-scale bookstores displayed the book in their business sections.

At first bookstore sales staff thought the people who

purchased *Freddie* were buying it for their children, but it didn't take long for them to notice that the adults were enjoying it themselves. Why? The reason most cited on the reader response cards (included in the book when sold) sent back to the publisher was that they found the story healing. In these days of recession and corporate restructuring many company employees in their fifties and sixties look back over their lives devoted intensely and completely to their jobs and wonder if it was worth the sacrifices they made. This book comforts them, helping them see that their lives meant something and reassuring them that what they accomplished has contributed to society.

Another message in the book that offers serenity for the spirit is the reminder that death is part of the perfectly natural course of life and also that life goes on eternally. Perhaps this was the message that struck businessmen readers most forcefully. Japan today is in a period of transition. Often buffeted and battered in the upheavals that have resulted, many white-collar workers found this book soothing in their effort to keep spiritually and psychologically afloat.

There may be yet another reason the book is selling well: people seem to have an especially soft spot for stories about leaves, as attested by the timeless appeal of O. Henry's *The Last Leaf*. (Ikari Haruo is an essayist.)

New Titles

MEDIA

Nijusseiki zasshi no ōgon jidai [Magazines of the Twentieth Century]. Aramata Hiroshi. Heibonsha, 1998. 216×152 mm. 462 pp. ¥4,700. ISBN 4-582-25303-2.

Well-established secondhand-book stores in Japan publish catalogs of their books in stock and going through such lists is one of book lovers' greatest pleasures. One often wondered what it would be like if they compiled catalogs of their back issues of periodicals and now we have something of the kind.

The present book is a catalog of cover illustrations of entertainment, fashion, and other magazines in the author's collection interspersed with ample text; many of the illustrations are in color, making it visually very rich.

The author, a collector of antique magazines from Europe and the United States, writes about the history of the American pulp-fiction periodicals that were the origin of contemporary mysteries and science fiction, as well as about such fantasy writers as Howard Phillips Lovecraft and Robert Ervin Howard. His discourse on the rise and fall of the pulp magazines and their publishers is filled with fascinating anecdotes.



Cover design: Mine Yūko

Shimbun shōsetsu no tanjō [The Birth of the Newspaper Novel].

Honda Yasuo. Heibonsha, 1998.

194×130 mm. 306 pp. ¥2,500.

ISBN 4-582-84183-X.

This book asserts that, in both form and content, Japan's newspapers established during the Meiji period (1868–1912) were influenced less by the West than by the mass culture that was emerging from the urban culture of the Edo period (1600–1868). The key figures of the Meiji-era press had been either *gesaku* (popular-fiction) writers since the Edo period or were members of samurai families formerly loyal to the Tokugawa shogunate, now stripped of their positions of political authority by the new Meiji government. Japan never experienced a popular revolution such as occurred in France; the shift of political authority that occurred was comparable, rather, to England's Glorious Revolution.



Cover design: Nakagaki Nobuo, Yoshino Ai, and Shimada Takushi

The establishment of the *shimbun shōsetsu* (novels serialized in newspapers) was exemplary of peaceful revolutionary changes that accompanied the change of regimes. The serial newspaper novel was at once a mirror reflecting the conflicts among all social categories and a forum for searching for new world views. The author of this book suggests that the establishment of the serial novel as a leading literary form in Japan was an expression of the sense that such a quest is necessarily an endless one, and represented an effort to unite the past with the present through that intuition.

RELIGION

Hōnen tai Myōe: Kamakura Bukkyō no shūkyō taiketsu [Hōnen versus Myōe: Religious Confrontation in Kamakura Buddhism]. Machida Sōhō. Kōdansha, 1998. 188×127 mm. 232 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-258141-8.

Probing the fundamental question of how human beings find salvation, this book contrasts Hōnen (1133–1212), one of the priests who helped establish Japanese Buddhism, with Myōe (1173–1232), another well-known member of the Buddhist clergy who was severely critical of Hōnen. Machida vividly depicts the backdrop of the Kamakura period during which the two men lived and their individual circumstances. He draws a skillful contrast between the realist Hōnen, who pursued the Japanese path to salvation focused on death, and idealist Myōe, who followed the Indian principle oriented toward life. He does not attempt to judge one as superior to the other, however.



Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

Hōnen chose the *nembutsu* (chanting the name of the Buddha) and Myōe Zen meditation, and both devoted their lives to their chosen paths. In Japanese society today, where dramatic change and prolonged recession have forced many people to ask themselves what they seriously aspire to in their lives, the author recommends the philosophy sought by these priests of medieval Japan.

Born in 1950, author Machida took the tonsure at age fourteen and

received training as a Zen monk. He then went to the United States and received his doctoral degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently assistant professor in the Japanese Studies department at Singapore University.

HISTORY

Meiji nashonarizumu no kenkyū: Seikyōsha no seiritsu to sono shūhen [A Study of Meiji Nationalism: Seikyōsha and Its Context]. Satō Yoshimaru. Fuyō Shobō Shuppan, 1998. 207 × 151 mm. 350 pp. ¥6,800. ISBN 4-8295-0219-3. Japanese had virtually no concept of the nature of the nation-state before the Meiji era (1868–1912). To them “state” (*kuni*) meant the domain, district or village where they were born and raised. Other parts of the country they called *takoku*, “other countries.” Because of this mentality, the job of forging the “rich nation and strong military” needed for a nation-state in the modern sense was very difficult. The Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (*gunjin chokuyu*) and the Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo*) were part of the Meiji government’s effort to instill in people the idea that they were all the subjects of the emperor.

In the 1887–90 period, with the foundations of the Meiji state more or less established, two influential associations of thinkers were born. One was Tokutomi Sohō’s Min’yūsha and the other the Seikyōsha, led by Miyake Setsurei, Shiga Shigetaka,

and others. While the Min’yūsha advocated populism, the Seikyōsha championed nationalism, but it attacked the narrow-minded, emperor-worshiping nationalism espoused by officialdom, emphasizing instead the Japanese nation in the context of the world. Much research has been done on the Min’yūsha, so this close examination of the Seikyōsha helps to redress the imbalance of study on the two associations.

Nihon no kindai 1: Kaikoku, ishin 1853–1871 [A History of Modern Japan 1: The Opening of the Country and the Meiji Restoration 1853–1871]. Matsumoto Ken’ichi. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 197 × 134 mm. 378 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 4-12-490101-1.

This is the first of a sixteen-volume *Nihon no kindai* [Modern Japan] series written by sixteen scholars. The first half of the series provides a general history of Japan from 1853 through 1990. The latter half is to deal with specific themes such as military history, theories of the city, entrepreneurship, and education.



Cover design: Chūō Kōron Sha

The modern history of Japan began in 1853 when a U.S. fleet of armed steamships (the “black ships”) led by Commodore Matthew Perry forced its way into Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay) carrying a letter from the U.S. president demanding that Japan open its doors to trade.

Avoiding as much as possible politically or schematically biased views of history such as those oriented to the emperor system or to the principle of class struggle, the book

instead seeks to capture the dynamics of history—why the times changed as they did—drawing on primary historical sources and records of individuals’ actual deeds and pronouncements. Includes many color illustrations.

TRAVEL

Kirameku kawa-tachi: Ikkyū suikei tōha no tabi [Glittering Rivers: Traveling the Nation’s First-Class River Systems]. Okamura Naoki. Shinkōsha, 1998. 194 × 130 mm. 293 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-88302-365-6. Born in 1948 in the vicinity of the Tamagawa river running through the western part of Tokyo, author Okamura has been fascinated by rivers and their surrounding natural environments since his childhood. He has explored the courses of all the 109 major rivers in Japan designated “first-class river systems” (*ikkyū suikei*), which come under the supervision of the national government. The present book is a travelogue, based on accounts of sixteen of these explorations.

In 1894, the year the Sino-Japanese War broke out, geographer Shiga Shigetaka (1863–1927) published *Nihon fūkeiron* [The Landscape of Japan] aimed at forging a nationalistic unity in the geographical images of the various regions of Japan. The book became a best-seller. It was that time that features such as “Japan Alps” and “Nihon



Cover design: Unno Yukihiro and Miyamoto Kaori



hakkei" (the eight scenic "wonders" of Japan) were named, making Shiga's book a model for domestic tourism of that time. Okamura's travelogue alludes to associations similar to those in Shiga's book, but with less nationalistic hype, reflecting the peaceful mood shared by people today.

Nihon "ikai" hakken [Discovering the Extraordinary in Japan]. Naitō Masatoshi. JTB Shuppan, 1998. 216 × 154 mm. 143 pp. ¥2,600. ISBN 4-533-03095-5.

The author is a photographer and folklorist who travels throughout Japan with the purpose of throwing light upon the real world from the angle of "the extraordinary" (*ikai*), the non-daily world that is the product of human imagination. Alongside the real world Japanese believed in the existence of a mystical other realm, the extraordinary. If you travel the country with this perspective in mind, the author argues, you can see deeper layers of history than have been portrayed in standard accounts.



Cover design: Toda Tsutomu and Oka Kōji

In the chapter on Kyoto, for example, he examines the topography, design of the city, and other features of the ancient capital to show that the imperial court and such military leaders as Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu devoted themselves to protecting the city and the state not only through political and military means but also by giving full play to mystical beliefs.

The book contains many beautifully composed photographs capturing the world of the mystical and

extraordinary. These images are vivid testimony to the powerful popular imagination of the extraordinary that once flourished in Japanese culture at its deepest layers, a power that has been largely forgotten by Japanese of today.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Hito ka saru ka to towaretemo: "Aruku bunka-jinruigakusha" hanseiki [Man or Monkey? An Autobiography of an "Anthropologist Afoot"]. Nishie Masayuki. Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1998. 195 × 133 mm. 230 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-643-98115-6.

Japanese society is well known for its affinity for group behavior and tendency to suppress individuals who stand out from the crowd. At the same time, however, Japan has a long tradition of eccentricity (*fukyo*)—of "madness in reason"—that has its roots in medieval figures such as the Zen monk Ikkyū (1394–1481) and the poet-monk Saigyō (1118–90) and reached aesthetic heights in the works of early-modern *haiku* master Matsuo Bashō (1644–94). Even today's highly ordered Japanese society leaves ample room for thoroughly unconventional ways of life.

The author of this autobiography is one such non-conformist. Joining no academic factions, schools or societies, Nishie studied linguistics and anthropology while traveling the world. He cultivated open-minded exchange and communicated with all he met on an equal footing.



Cover design: Shigehara Takashi



Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

"Ikiru" to iu zeitaku [The Luxury of Living]. Yodogawa Nagaharu. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193 × 131 mm. 204 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-532-16256-4.

This is the autobiography of the popular film critic Yodogawa Nagaharu, who died late last year at age 89. It was favorably received when originally published serially in the major daily newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* in 1997.

Born in 1909 in Kobe, a port city that embraced the cultures of other countries, he went to see a Western film for the first time with his film-loving family at the age of four. His career ultimately covered a variety of cinema-related work, including ad man for United Artists (U.S.) and Japanese film productions, editor in chief of the *Eiga-no-tomo* film magazine, and organizer of an association to encourage film appreciation among young people.

For most Japanese, Yodogawa's name brings to mind his role as commentator for the popular TV film program "Nichiyō Eiga Gekijō" (Sunday Cinema Theater), which he always ended by waving his hand with a broad smile, saying "Sayonara, sayonara, sayonara." He hosted this program for more than thirty years right up until just before his death. His consistent policy of finding and praising the good points of films, never speaking ill of any, was a major factor behind his popularity with TV viewers.

All the essays that make up the present book reflect Yodogawa's unrivaled affection for cinema.

***Ōmu to watakushi* [Aum and I]. Hayashi Ikuo.** Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 191 × 130 mm. 494 pp. ¥1,857. ISBN 4-16-354370-8.

The release of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system by the Aum Shinrikyō cult in 1995 left twelve people dead and many more sick and injured. As one of the perpetrators of this world-shocking crime, the author of this book has been sentenced to life imprisonment.



Cover design: Sakata Masanori

Hayashi Ikuo was born in Tokyo in 1947, the fifth of the six children of his father, a medical practitioner, and pharmacist mother. After graduating from a prestigious medical school, he pursued a career as a heart surgeon and was a highly trusted and esteemed member of the medical profession. At the same time, troubled by myriad personal problems that he could not resolve by himself no matter how he anguished over them, he began to search for a system of thought that would explain and resolve all these problems in a comprehensive and holistic way. He developed an intense desire for the spiritual emancipation promised in the teachings of Sakyamuni (Buddha), and this led him to the Aum Shinrikyō cult. Believing cult founder Asahara Shōkō to be the guru who would guide him to enlightenment, Hayashi eventually followed Asahara's "teachings" even to the point of committing murder.

In this work, Hayashi offers a stirring testimony of how he came to release a deadly gas among innocent people, and of his deep disillusionment, wrenching reform and continuing repentance upon realizing that

the "teachings" he had staked his life on were false.

***Yakan chūgakusei Takano Masao* [Night Junior High School Student Takano Masao]. Takano Masao.** Kaihō Shuppansha, 1993. 194 × 132 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-7592-2111-5.

At the end of World War II, the author was six years old and orphaned in Manchuria as Japanese civilians and troops fled when Russia entered the war in Northeast Asia. Homeless in the northern Kyushu city of Hakata, he hung around the black market as a youngster. Later he went to Tokyo and lived in the day-laborer slums of Ueno and San'ya. It was not until he was seventeen that he learned how to write, and then from an old Korean ragpicker who taught him using a set of Japanese syllabary flash cards. At age 20 his name was officially registered in a *koseki*, giving him legal proof of his status as a Japanese citizen.

When he was twenty-one, he entered a night junior high school and received formal schooling for the first time, completing requirements equivalent to nine years of formal schooling at the age of 24. Ever since then, Takano has been actively involved in efforts to establish more night schools at the junior high level for those who have not completed the three-year compulsory junior high school education. The stories of night junior high school students introduced in this book reveal a side of Japan, where poverty and discrimination are very real, that many Japanese themselves do not know much about.



Cover design: Unno Yukihiro

SOCIETY

***Shin gōmanizumu sengen supe-sharu: Sensōron* [New Declaration in Favor of Straight Talk: On War]. Kobayashi Yoshinori.** Gentōsha, 1998. 210 × 147 mm. 382 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-87728-243-2.

Given the unusual conditions under which Japan adopted its constitution renouncing war as a sovereign right of the state during the occupation period following the war, a concept of state-level responsibility for war has not developed in Japan. For this reason, as well as because of the distrust widespread in society with regard to the effect of law, the recent discussions on war responsibility have served only to highlight the contradictions in postwar Japanese society.



Cover design: Suzuki Sei'ichi Design Shitsu

The present book, written in the form of a story manga, is one of the latest works by a manga artist known for his straightforward criticism of the discrimination-prone character of Japanese society. *Sensōron* deals directly with the issue of war responsibility as an extension of the artist's personal involvement in the "war" against the Aum Shinrikyō cult and the negligence in the Japanese health and welfare ministry that led to infection with HIV by many hemophiliacs who received tainted blood products. In this book Kobayashi attacks the Tokyo tribunal (in which wartime Japanese military and civilian leaders were put on trial by the victorious Allies) and the so-called progressive ideas of Japanese intellectuals. (See also *Japanese Book News*, No. 15, p. 14.)

Subarashiki rajio taisō [The Wonderful World of NHK Radio Calisthenics]. Takahashi Hidemine. Shōgakukan, 1998. 187×130 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-09-387223-6.

At 6:30 a.m. every morning, 30 million Japanese perform a short physical exercise routine to simple piano accompaniment and the voice of an instructor broadcast on public NHK radio. On rainy days, too? Even on snowy mornings? Yes, of course. "Don't you get wet?" you ask, and they will reply "Yes, we do." "You could catch cold!," you exclaim. But they say, "No, we don't." "Why not?" "Because we do radio calisthenics every day."

In Tokyo alone, there are 266 permanent locations, open throughout the year, where people can perform the NHK radio calisthenics routine every day.



Cover design: Morisaki Tadashi

Author Takahashi, wondering why Japanese seem so attached to the NHK exercise routine, began to think it represents a kind of constant, shared, and familiar routine to people of the postwar Shōwa era, and that writing about the phenomenon could help to clarify what these times have meant to them.

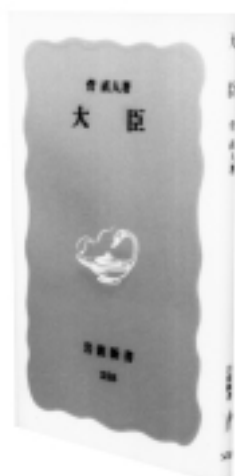
Through extensive research and interviews he discovered that the calisthenics routine, which was originally developed by an American insurance company as a sales promotion gimmick, was introduced to Japan by some Ministry of Communications officials and thereafter adapted, developing its distinctively Japanese character over the years.

POLITICS/ECONOMY

Daijin [State Ministers]. Kan Naoto. Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 173×105 mm. 232 pp. ¥640. ISBN 4-00-430558-6.

The duration of office of Japan's ministers of state is an average of only one year. Why is it so short? Author Kan Naoto, currently the head of the largest opposition party, Minshutō, served as the minister of health and welfare from January through November 1996 under the Hashimoto Ryūtarō Cabinet. He came into the limelight for his role in the revelations of past negligence in the Ministry of Health and Welfare that led to HIV-infection of hemophiliacs via blood products.

The Japanese cabinet is a "parliamentary cabinet"; in other words, the voters elect the members of the Diet, who in turn choose the prime minister. Ministers of state are then appointed by the prime minister. In reality, says Kan, it is more like a "bureaucrat Cabinet system" because the cabinet is actually controlled by bureaucrats. The posts of state minister have been virtually honorary posts to which lawmakers are appointed by turns, and in which their predominant role has been merely to endorse documents prepared by the bureaucrats. The fact that the Cabinet (the administration), although it is supposed to consist of representatives of the people, has been reduced to mere form, is partly responsible for the decreasing popular interest in politics and the low voter turnout at election time that results.



Based on his experience as minister of health and welfare and drawing on his own expertise in constitutional law, Kan discusses the desirable roles of the Diet, Cabinet, and state ministers and in what direction Japanese politics should move. The book offers valuable insight on the condition of politics in Japan today.

Keiki to keizai seisaku [Economic Performance and Economic Policy]. Ono Yoshiyasu. Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 173×106 mm. 202 pp. ¥640. ISBN 4-00-430576-4.

Since the burst of the bubble economy at the beginning of the 1990s Japan has suffered a prolonged recession that seems only to be getting worse. Despite lively debate among specialists on how to pull the country out of its slump, the prospects are still dim.



The factor most responsible for the slump, according to the author, is the wavering of government economic policy confronted by opposing views of the two major schools of economic history, one stressing the supply side and the other the demand side. The former seeks to improve the productivity of the entire economy through more efficient corporations and smaller government, while the latter hopes to raise economic performance through active government intervention whereby the government itself generates demand and increases fiscal spending. Government policy has tended to adopt the ideas of one school on one occasion and the other on the next, with the result that the effects of the two theories cancel each other out.

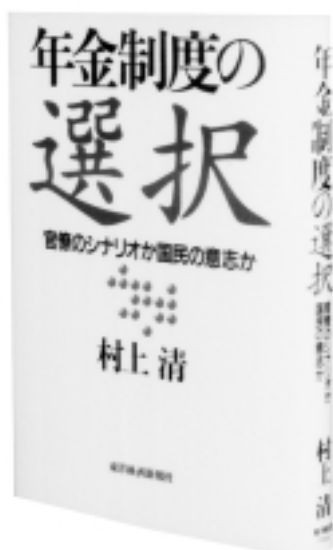
Author Ono, economist at Osaka University, positively evaluates both

theories and urges that the adoption of the two should depend on the current phase of the economy.

***Nenkin seido no sentaku* [Options for Japan's Pension System].**

Murakami Kiyoshi. Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, 1998. 194 × 134 mm. 242 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-492-70046-3.

The latest of regular revisions of the National Pension Law made every five years will be made in 1999. To that end, the government is currently busy recalculating the pension budget, and calls are being heard from various quarters for drastic reform of the entire pension system.



Cover design: Suzuki Takashi and Sasaki Yumi

Given Japan's aging population and low birth rate, it is predicted that, if left in its current state, the pension system would collapse sooner or later as the financial burden it places on the next-generation working population grows too great. Based on this prediction, many proposals now being made are aimed at keeping pension benefits down. Consequently, public faith in the pension system's ability to provide future security is waning, and many Japanese remain unable to plan properly for their livelihoods in old age. This sense of uncertainty is prompting them to save rather than spend their money, a trend that serves only to worsen Japan's current economic slump.

In this work, the author, affirming the importance of pensions as the basis of income security for senior citizens, insists that Japan now needs

a pension system based on unchanging principles and not linked to the vicissitudes of the economy.

***Nihon kaikaku ron no kyojitsu* [The False Premises of Reform-of-Japan Theories].** Uchihashi Katsuto.

Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 193 × 131 mm. 330 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-00-026201-7.

This is the first volume of *Dō-jidai e no hatsugen* [Speaking Out In Our Time], the eight-volume collected works of a respected economic critic (b. 1932) who has repeatedly warned of the dangers of national economic policies from the viewpoint of the real welfare of the people. This volume consists of eighteen highly informative essays arguing that deregulation and other reform programs currently being pursued are based on mistaken premises.



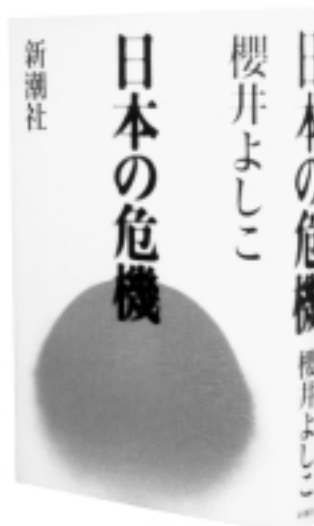
The reform programs, originally aimed at liberalizing society, have actually worked to increase people's burdens. The policy of transferring power from government to the private sector has ended up giving a free hand to big business. He severely criticizes those who advocate reform and market deregulation as a kind of cure-all, when in fact such reforms do nothing but negate the basic conditions of a decent human existence and promote the superiority of corporations' "conditions for production." He argues persuasively that the structure of constant "transfer of income" from the worker sector to the producer's sector is responsible both for the economic growth of the past and for the prolonged recession of today.

The author's urgent proposal that Japan seek not the "false" economy of speculative capitalism but an economy that integrates living, working, and quality-of-life conditions has been so convincing that his opponents have not been able to ignore this book. (See also *Japanese Book News*, No. 22, p. 12.)

***Nihon no kiki* [Japan in Crisis].**

Sakurai Yoshiko. Shinchōsha, 1998. 196 × 137 mm. 282 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-10-425301-4.

A well-known veteran commentator for TV news programs presents her views on various aspects of Japanese society today. Based on extensively gathered material, she reports on excessive medical care spending, the defects of the taxation system, the decay of the education system, and other problems that symbolize Japan's contemporary crisis. She urges that people reflect on the situation and do something to relieve the crisis.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

Intuitively, the author senses that the romanticism of anti-establishment forces is powerless in coping with real social problems, but the "realistic" approach of the establishment, too, has achieved virtually no effect, as can be easily demonstrated. This book offers not cure-all remedies, but information with which individual readers can contemplate the issues. One can readily see that the author has developed through her long career as a TV commentator the sensitivity to recognize easy romanticism and easy realism as two sides of the same coin.



Cover design: Chūō Kōron Sha

Shiba Ryōtarō ga kataru zasshi genron hyakunen [Shiba Ryōtarō on 100 Years of the Opinion Press]. Shiba Ryōtarō et al. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 197 × 134 mm. 492 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-12-002859-3. Known for his disappointment in the quality of writing in the opinion journals of the postwar era, historical novelist Shiba Ryōtarō (1923–96) hoped to compile an anthology of the highpoints of social commentary in the early days of these publications. This book, edited by critic Kasuya Kazuki, former editor-in-chief of the monthly *Chūō kōron*, brings to fruition this plan.

The book is made up of a lengthy discussion between Shiba and Kasuya and a number of well-known essays submitted to leading magazines and journals established since the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912) known as a genre as *sōgō zasshi*, or journals for a general readership. Among the essays are Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Gakumon no susume" [An Encouragement of Learning], Hiratsuka Raichō's "Genshi, josei wa taiyō de atta" [In the Beginning Woman Was the Sun] and Kobayashi Hideo's "Sensō ni tsuite" [On War]. Generally speaking, it is difficult to imagine any magazine or journal articles that appear today moving readers and influencing the course of their lives as these pieces did. Kasuya laments the passing of the era in which general-interest journals served as a crucial forum for public debate.

POPULAR CULTURE

Shōwa renren: Ano koro konna kurashi ga atta [Shōwa Nostalgia: This Is How We Lived]. Yamamoto Natsuhiko and Kuze Teruhiko. Seiryū Shuppan, 1998. 210 × 147 mm. 202 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-916028-51-1.

This book consists of short essays by essayist-biographer Yamamoto Natsuhiko (b. 1915) and art scholar-TV director Kuze Teruhiko (b. 1935), looking back on Japanese society during the 1930s and 1940s, amply illustrated with black-and-white photographs, and a dialogue between the two men.

Yamamoto and Kuze are brought together by their shared sense of skeptical unease about the radical social changes that took place in Japan during those prewar years. Their evocations of cultural symbols of the era—*apāto* (apartment buildings), *orugan* (organs), *chikuonki* (gramophones), bromide photographs, *furoshiki* (traditional Japanese wrapping cloths) and many others—come alive in a vividness and immediacy reminiscent of Proust's "unconscious remembering." While drastic social change is known to divide the emotions of those who live through them between sentimental nostalgia for the past on the one hand and tacky anticipation of the future on the other, this book is clearly concerned with sentimental attachment to the tangible memorabilia of the past. The book can be a useful resource on the history of modern Japanese lifestyles.



Cover design: Nakajima Kaboru

ARTS

Muraki Yoshirō no eiga bijutsu: "Kiki gaki" Kurosawa eiga no dezain [The Movie Art of Muraki Yoshirō: Notes on Designs for Kurosawa Movies]. Muraki Yoshirō and Tanno Tatsuya. Film Art Sha, 1998. 210 × 148 mm. 290 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-8459-9885-8.

Muraki Yoshirō is one of the foremost art directors of the Japanese film industry. During his fifty-year career, he has worked on the art direction of seventy-two films, and is the creator of the impressive and memorable designs for most of the films by the late Kurosawa Akira (1910–98). (See article in *Japanese Book News*, No. 25, pp. 1–2.)



Cover design: Iizumi Etsuko

In this book, compiled from interviews by Tanno Tatsuya, editor of the volume, Muraki gives scene-by-scene accounts of the off-camera trials and tribulations in production of nineteen Kurosawa films, from the early work *Yoidore tenshi* (Drunken Angel; 1948), to the last, *Māda da yo* (Madadayo: Not Yet; 1993). The discussion reveals some fascinating aspects of filmmaking. For example, the key to an authentic-looking design often lies in "soiling" the set to make it look real. Muraki describes, for example, his complicated treatment of wooden boards used in sets for buildings in period films. He notes Kurosawa's refusal to walk with shoes across any set no matter how dirtied it already was, and acknowledges that, though such demands put pressure on everyone

involved, the meticulousness paid off. This book, in this and many other ways, is Muraki's eulogy to the great director.

Otoko to onna no ie [Homes for Men and Women]. Miyawaki Mayumi. Shinchōsha, 1998. 191 × 130 mm. 218 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 4-10-600553-0.

This is a collection of critiques on the subject of housing design based on transcripts of a series of lectures given by a leading Japanese house designer not long after learning he had cancer. He died in 1998.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

Miyawaki offers candid insights about the lifestyle and values of the Japanese people, the changing nature of the Japanese family, and in particular on how the composition of homes reflects and influences relations between the sexes.

He notes that, despite being an integral part of home design, the question of male-female relations has never been squarely addressed in the housing and architectural field. This book draws on the author's experience with home-design clients to probe how sexuality manifests itself in home design. He deplores the fact that areas comfortable for men are disappearing from many Japanese homes today and that men and women tend to interact in the home not as men and women but only as fathers and mothers. A good home, Miyawaki insists, is one which, though thoroughly ordinary, allows men and women to coexist as equals and share their lives over a long period. For this among other reasons,

he urges Japanese men to spend more time at home.

Sōzō wa shū nari [Creation Is Ugly]. Nakamura Masayoshi. Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1998. 202 × 151 mm. 263 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 4-568-20156-X.

The more creative the art, says the author, the more likely it is to shock or repulse the onlooker. This is a collection of dialogues and essays by painter Nakamura Masayoshi (1924–77). Nakamura was born in Toyohashi, Aichi Prefecture, also the home town of Watanabe Kazan (1793–1841), a progressive-minded scholar, painter and politician active toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate. Nakamura's decision to become a painter was influenced by his early acquaintance with Kazan's works.



Cover design: Yoshida Katsuyo and Nakata Nobuko

Nakamura developed an eccentric style that incorporated elements of Nihonga (traditional Japanese-style), yōga (Western-style), and *sumi-e* (ink) painting and that was distinguished by his preference for the primary colors: red, blue and yellow. Nakamura was always somewhat abashed by his artistic profession, aspiring to the kind of versatile, well-rounded competence exemplified by Kazan and Tomioka Tessai (1837–1924), who, though deeply devoted to art, did not relinquish their interest in scholarship and politics. Nakamura's motto was that "a painting is good when the artist's noble sentiments are aimed in the right direction." He died of lung cancer at the age of 53.

LANGUAGE

Zusetsu Nihon no kanji [Illustrated Study of Japanese Ideographs]. Kobayashi Yoshinori. Taishūkan Shoten, 1998. 326 × 241 mm. 214 pp. ¥17,000. ISBN 4-469-23201-7.

Among Asian peoples who use Chinese characters, Japanese are the only ones who give indigenous readings to Chinese characters. When and how did this *kun* reading evolve and how did it develop?

Japan's *kana* syllabaries were developed on the basis of Chinese characters. When, how, and by whom were they created? Of them, the *hiragana*, known as the "female hand," is believed to have been developed by women and used only among women. Was that really true?

The present book challenges established theories and solves mysteries of the language with solid empirical methods. Professor emeritus of Hiroshima University, Kobayashi closely examines ancient wooden tablets (*mokkan*), random jottings (*rakugaki*), and extant old documents to support his arguments. His extensive studies include Yayoi-period (B.C. 300–A.D. 300) pottery sherds with what seem to be *kanji* characters written on them, and a dictionary compiled by Buddhist priest Kūkai (774–835), the original of which is rarely accessible even to specialists. Unable to adequately express themselves satisfactorily using only *kanji*, Japanese of ancient times began combining *kanji* with the uniquely



Cover design: Kondō Keizō

developed *kana*, and the literature of the Heian court, including the *Genji monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*), which was written predominantly by women, flourished in this combination.

NONFICTION

Nani ga nandemo! Kinoko ga suki [No Matter What, I Love Mushrooms!]. Kobayashi Michiko. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193 × 130 mm. 230 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-532-16273-4.

Although a city dweller, artist Kobayashi Michiko has a long-standing fascination with the natural environment in and around the cities. By chance she discovered the charms of mushrooms and became completely devoted to the subject. This book is her account of mushrooms in all their variety, including how to pick, prepare, and cultivate them.

Once you develop a fascination for mushrooms, she tells us, your whole outlook on the world changes. To begin with, it is difficult to say clearly whether mushrooms are plant or non-plant. Difficult to clearly classify as flora or fauna, and in other ways, mushrooms have both scientists and backyard botanists baffled. Their very beauty and dreadfulness evokes the duality of existence itself.

In displaying the multifaceted nature of the humble mushroom as both food and artistic motif, Kobayashi also reveals something of her own versatile and active lifestyle.



Cover design: Endō Tsuyoshi

Rōjinryoku [Old-Age “Strengths”]. Akasegawa Gempei. Chikuma Shobō, 1998. 194 × 135 mm. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-480-81606-2.

The behest of today’s information society may be to know as much as you can and be as up-to-date and involved as possible, but we ought also, declares the author, to attempt to acquire *rōjinryoku*, or the relief afforded by *discarding* information and *shedding* the unnecessary and extraneous from our lives.

Some advocates of the positive-thinking school stress how the elderly get healthier and more energetic the older they become, but avant-garde writer Akasegawa turns this approach about-face by calling attention to the strengths to be found in heretofore disparaged traits of old age like forgetfulness, repetitiveness, sighing, loss of physical control, and other symptoms of debilitation.

In the midst of his writing career, Akasegawa found himself growing forgetful after he turned sixty, and it was in the friendly repartee with his friends about the various symptoms of old age they began to show that the word *rōjinryoku* was born. The book has become a best-seller and its byword a household word. At a time when the prospects of Japan’s “super-aging society” seem gloomy indeed, this new and humorous perspective on aging has caught on especially among people in their late forties and older.



Cover design: Minami Shimbō



Cover design: Sakagawa Eiji

Yuri: Nikkei nisei NY Hāremu ni ikiru [Yuri: A Second-Generation Japanese in Harlem, New York]. Nakazawa Mayumi. Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 193 × 132 mm. 278 pp. ¥1,762. ISBN 4-16-354490-9.

This is a journalistic biography, given the English title, “The Life and Times of Yuri Kochiyama,” of the life of a second-generation Japanese-American (born in 1921) who has devoted her life to the cause of ending discrimination.

Born in San Pedro near Los Angeles, Kochiyama was placed in an internment camp for Japanese-Americans during World War II. After the war she married in New York and has lived in Harlem since 1960. Together with her husband and their children, she has dedicated herself to humanitarian causes, including the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the struggle for desegregation of blacks, movements to abolish discrimination against Japanese-Americans and other Asian-Americans, support for political prisoners, and numerous activities for the protection of human rights. In recognition of her devoted work, in 1996 Kochiyama was awarded the best citizen award by the JACL, the largest organization of Japanese-American citizens in the United States.

The author met Kochiyama twenty years ago and has kept in touch with her over the years. The book is based on three years of interviews with Kochiyama as well as documentary research, and is presented first person in autobiographical style.

Gōrudo rasshu [Gold Rush]. Yū Miri. Shinchōsha, 1998. 196 × 137 mm. 324 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-10-401703-5.

In 1997, Japan was shocked by the news that an elementary school boy had been murdered in a suburb of Kobe and that the head of his mutilated corpse had been left by the gate of a junior high school. The impact of the incident on the Japanese public then went beyond the bizarre when a 14-year-old junior high school boy was arrested as the killer.



Cover design: Hara Ken'ya

Inspired by this case, this novel by Akutagawa Prize-winning Yū concerns a 14-year-old boy who murders his father. The story is set in the present day in a crime- and poverty-stricken port town in Yokohama and in the exclusive residential area on the hill overlooking the town. Having risen out of the poverty of the town, the boy's father now flaunts his wealth. Though the boy has been raised as the successor to his father's business, he becomes a delinquent both cold and indifferent toward his own feelings and with an uncontrollable, hair-trigger temper. Untroubled by guilt even after killing his father, the boy keeps the body hidden as he attempts to take over his father's business. His only consolation in life is money—hence the book's title.

Despite the current economic slump, Japan is still a nation of great wealth. This novel is a moving, passionately written sketch of the despair and ruin of the stepchildren of

the affluent society characterized by three traits: *mukatsuku*, *iratsuku*, *kireru*—antagonism, irritability, and rage.

Itsuka umi no soko ni [Someday at the Bottom of the Sea]. Maruyama Kenji. Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 194 × 132 mm. 476 pp. ¥1,857. ISBN 4-16-317970-4.

Since winning the Akutagawa Prize in 1966 at the age of 23, Maruyama has continued to work at the leading edge of creative literary work while keeping his distance from established literary circles. In recent years he has focused on experimental works that explore the potential of prose to the very limits of the form and his well-tempered, dense, and polished style has earned these works the designation "poetic novels."



Cover design: Nakajima Kahoru

A full-length novel set in a desolate port town in Japan's far north, this story concerns the growth to independence of a seventeen-year-old native of the town named Amano Seiji who attends a part-time high school. His older brother, on whom his parents had pinned high hopes, is serving a prison sentence for robbing a bank. Since his brother's conviction, Seiji's family has fallen apart, his father taking to drinking and womanizing, his mother to overeating and indifference. Seiji himself remains free from the surrounding gloom. When a crane he had kept as a pet dies at the end of summer, he buries it at sea, recalling his fisherman grandfather's conviction that "the true fisherman some day sinks to bottom of the sea." Then, as if

somehow taking the place of the bird, a suspicious-looking man appears in town accompanied by a foreign woman, and a series of unusual events ensues.

Jiorama [Diorama]. Kirino Natsuo. Shinchōsha, 1998. 197 × 136 mm. 268 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-10-602642-2.

This is a collection of short stories by an author who specialized in romances and junior fiction before embarking on writing mysteries. Her earlier work *Auto [Out]* (1997; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 21, p. 16) was acclaimed as ushering in a new phase in the genre of crime fiction in Japan.

The main characters appearing in this book include a young woman who by day works as a quite-normal-looking office worker, but at night sells her body to strangers for money; a boy who, through a telephone club, becomes acquainted with a homosexual man who is married to conceal his sexual preferences; a middle-aged stalker; a young man who feels no affinity for either the Japanese or German sides of his parentage; a bank clerk who falls in love with a woman living immediately below him in a condominium who dyes her hair bright red. Such characters are not uncommon in large cities in contemporary Japan; they are men and women who are subtly alienated in terms of community solidarity and norms, but definitely deviant.

Drawing on incidents that actually occurred as well as real conditions in



Cover design: Shinchōsha

society today, the book skillfully depicts the dark side of the hearts of contemporary Japanese.

Tsukiyo no niji [Moonbow]. Ushijima Hidehiko. Kōdansha, 1998. 194×131 mm. 342 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-06-206880-X.

This novel is based on the author's own exhaustive study of Hawai'i's modern and contemporary history. Protagonist Hiroi Akira is a member of the Imperial Japanese Navy. During the Pearl Harbor attack he is assigned to a two-man special submarine and sets out on his mission not expecting to return alive, but luckily survives. Later he joins a secret association devoted to winning independence for Hawai'i. He changes his name to Tanaka and makes a living helping the owner of a locally published Japanese newspaper.

Many young Americans of Japanese descent enlist in the U.S. military and their achievements on the European front are widely recognized. Japanese-Americans in Hawai'i, however, are ambivalent, hoping for a U.S. victory in Europe and a Japanese victory in the Pacific. Watching these developments as an outsider, Hiroi comes to believe that war is nothing but murder that nations force their people to commit. His antiwar sentiments grow stronger. In 1959 Hawai'i becomes the fiftieth state of the United States. The dominance of whites on the once-beautiful, peaceful islands escalates, imposing private ownership of land and making Hawai'i a military fortress.

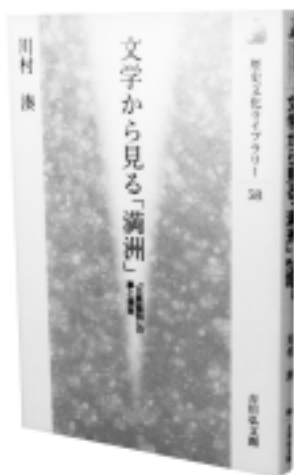


Cover design: Yamaguchi Shigō Design Shitsu

LITERARY CRITICISM

Bungaku kara miru "Manshū" ["Manchuria" in Literature]. Kawamura Minato. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998. 188×128 mm. 190 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-642-05458-8.

Manchukuo was a state founded by Japan in northeastern China in 1932 that collapsed in 1945. It was recognized only by Japan and a few other states such as the Vatican City. Today, China calls it *wei-Manzhouguo* ("pseudo-Manchukuo") and the period of Japan's rule of Manchuria *lunxianqi* (enemy occupation period).



Cover design: Yamazaki Noboru

The two major slogans under which Manchukuo was established were "harmony of the five peoples" and creation of a "sphere of peace and prosperity," which aspired to an affluent land where Japanese, Manchurians, Chinese, Mongolians, and Russian *émigrés* could live in harmony. The reality, however, was full of contradictions, sometimes accompanied by tragic consequences. Under such circumstances, various works of literature were produced by writers of the five peoples living in Manchukuo, the most notable of whom are introduced in this book.

Soviet troops advanced across the national border a few days prior to Japan's surrender in World War II. Only then did the Japanese living there directly and painfully experience the fact that the other peoples living there had not trusted them from the outset. The "literature of Manchukuo" reflects the hardships of each of the five peoples, showing how difficult it would have been to

attain anything close to "harmony of the five peoples."

Dokusho no shuto Pari [Paris, the Reading Metropolis]. Miyashita Shirō. Misuzu Shobō, 1998. 194×130 mm. 330 pp. ¥3,200. ISBN 4-622-04660-1.

This is a study of nineteenth-century French literature with focus on the publication and distribution of books. The literacy rate rose steadily and more people were reading fiction, but the price of books was high and the number of copies printed was by order at only one or two thousand. Most books were bought by "reading clubs," or lending libraries, that loaned out books for a small price.

A good novel was read by many people, but that did not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of copies printed, while the lending libraries made good profits. The popularity of a work, therefore, was not reflected in the income of its author. It was Balzac (1799–1850) who was opposed to the system and founded a reading club for not loaning but selling books in the attempt to lower the price of books and increase the size of printings. He was not, however, successful.



The solution came with the emergence of newspaper fiction. The growth of railways also helped increase the number of printed copies of novels. Some authors became rich by writing novels.

Nowadays in Japan, works of good quality may sell badly while best-sellers can include some works of surprisingly poor quality. It is intriguing that a study of conditions in

France a long time ago should offer valuable perspectives on the situation in Japan today.

Shakuya to mochiie no bungaku-shi: "Watashi" no utsuwa no monogatari [A Literary History of Rented and Owned Houses: A Story of the Containers of "I"]. Nishikawa Yūko. Sanseidō, 1998. 193 × 133 mm. 380 pp. ¥2,700. ISBN 4-385-35881-8. Throughout the modern period, Japanese fiction portrayed only the insides of houses. This was only natural because modern fiction was centered around the first-person protagonist. When talking about the family who take care of "I," there had to be a house as the container of "I" and the family. In that sense, the book, which discusses many prominent literary works produced in Japan over the last one hundred and thirty years, is an ingenious attempt to be read as if it were one long novel created jointly by many writers, among them Higuchi Ichiyō, Natsume Sōseki, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Nosaka Akiyuki, Ōe Kenzaburō, Murakami Haruki, and Yoshimoto Banana.

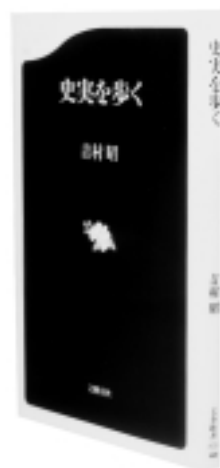
The types of dwelling depicted in contemporary and modern fiction and manga, the author notes, change from houses with *irori* sunken hearths around which family members sit to houses centering around the *chanoma* (Japanese-style tatami-matted family room), to houses with Western-style living rooms, and then to one-room apartments. In accordance with this shift, moreover, changes also occur in the themes that are dealt with, the number of characters appearing in the novel, the usage of first, second or third person in narration, the writing style, and so forth.



Cover design: Mamura Toshikazu

The philosophy of life of the author—a specialist in Japanese and French contemporary and modern literature as well as in the study of gender—which forms the backdrop for the book, adds much to the appeal of the narrative.

Shijitsu o aruku [Pathways of Historical Fact]. Yoshimura Akira. Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 173 × 108 mm. 214 pp. ¥680. ISBN 4-16-660003-6. Taking his material primarily from Japanese history, and employing a straightforward style far removed from sentimental, melodramatic depictions of history, writer Yoshimura Akira (b. 1927) has carved out a unique place in Japanese literature.



Cover design: Sakata Masanori

In the present work, drawing on his research and writing experience and referring to a number of his own works, Yoshimura explains his self-styled approach to empirical inquiry. Discussing the relationship between historical scholarship and historical fiction, he considers, for example, the problem of how to write dialogue for historical figures. The task of historical scholarship must focus instead on the scrupulous description of what is known. But the effort to imaginatively recreate the unknown elements and uncorroborated aspects of history so as to draw from the past new perspectives on the present inevitably leads beyond the realm of historical science. As a form of defiance to the excessive restrictions scholarship places upon this imaginative effort, historical fiction offers a potential alternative form of history.

Written in a style to match such aims, this book also serves as a

useful practical guide for effective writing of historical fiction.

Shirarezaru bannen no Shimazaki Tōson [The Unknown Later Years of Shimazaki Tōson]. Vol. 2. Aoki Masami. Kokusho Kankōkai, 1998. 215 × 151 mm. 318 pp. ¥5,200. ISBN 4-336-04092-3.

"If the ten best novels in the world, including Japan, are selected, one of them should be Shimazaki Tōson's (1872–1943) *Yoakemae* (*Before the Dawn*)," wrote playwright and novelist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–77) in *Nijusseiki no sekai shōsetsu* [World Fiction of the Twentieth Century] published by Chūō Kōron Sha in 1954. Hotta Yoshie, one of the novelists most capable of seeing Japanese literature in world perspective, when asked in an *Asahi shimbun* questionnaire in 1989 to name five favorite works of Shōwa-era Japanese literature, named only one novel: *Yoakemae*. But most Japanese do not seem to really appreciate the greatness of this prewar poet and novelist.



Aoki, author of the present book, is a secondhand book dealer and Shimazaki admirer. He has collected many documents about the prominent novelist and amassed a vast amount of data on him. The book gives a detailed chronological account from the time Shimazaki was fifty-seven onward. Carefully considered references to people around him evoke a vivid portrait of the novelist's personality. The volume contains many previously unpublished proofed galleys, handwritten manuscripts, letters, and other documents.

Events and Trends

Thriving Sales of Grimm's Tales

Grimm's Fairy Tales and related books are currently selling briskly in Japan, and the bulk of readers are adults. The edition that is capturing renewed interest in the famed story-book is not the one familiar to children all over the world but the uncensored original.

Since the original edition, published by the Grimm Brothers from 1812 to 1815, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* has been rewritten numerous times. The version most widely read today is the seventh edition (brought out in 1857), which is the product of a process of revision that gradually removed descriptions of brutality, sexuality, and other controversial elements. Only the original version contains episodes depicting children stabbing other children to death, and while in the popular edition it is a stepmother who tries to kill Snow White and a stepmother who drives Hansel and Gretel into the woods, in the original it is their true mothers.

The current Grimm boom started with the publication of a textbook for the study of German. Put out by Hakusuisha in 1993, the German-Japanese bilingual text *Gurimu shohan o yomu* [Reading the Original Grimm's Tales] recorded phenomenal sales for a language-study text, prompting the publisher to decide that the original edition ought to be entirely translated, and resulting in the publication in 1998 of the four-volume *Shohan Gurimu dōwashū* [The Original-edition Grimm's Fairy Tales], including all the 156 stories. This series sold well, too, making Hakusuisha follow up with an edition of "best" thirty-six tales, published in November 1998.

Meanwhile, a related title that has remained high on the best-seller lists since last year is Kiryū Misao's *Hontō wa osoroshii Gurimu dōwa* [Grimm's Fairy Tales in Their Terrifying True Form], published in June 1998 by KK Bestsellers. Complete with graphic depictions of bloody murders and incest, this adaptation of

the original tales has become a million-seller. Its sequel, *Hontō wa osoroshii Gurimu dōwa 2* [Grimm's Fairy Tales in Their Terrifying True Form 2], published in February this year, is also selling well.

Sales of *Dōwatte honto wa zankoku* [Fairy Tales Are Actually Quite Brutal] (Futami Shobō), which includes stories from the Grimms, Hans Christian Anderson, and Aesop, as well as from the Japanese folktale tradition, quickly broke the 500,000-copies mark. Mikasa Shobō, meanwhile, has published *Otona mo zotto suru shohan Gurimu dōwa* [Original Grimm's Fairy Tales That Make Even Adults Shudder].

This niche of explicit, adults-only fairytale books was pioneered by writer Kurahashi Yumiko's *Otona no tame no zankoku dōwa* [Grisly Fairy Tales for Adults] (Shinchōsha), in which Grimm's and other stories from around the world are recast as tales of hopeless evil and ugliness. Much talked about when it was first published in 1984, this work was reprinted in paperback in August 1998 and is again selling rapidly.

Tie-up with French Publisher

The first ever full-fledged business tie-up between an established Japanese publishing company and a major foreign counterpart has been announced. Leading French publishing house Hachette Filipacchi Media, which markets 173 magazines, including the women's magazine *Elle* and the cinema magazine *Premiere*, in thirty-one countries, has formed a partnership with Japan's Fujin Gahō Sha, known for fashion and women's magazines such as *Fujin Gahō* and *Men's Club*. Through a Japanese affiliate, Hachette Filipacchi issues the Japan editions of *Elle* and *Premiere*, sold by Kadokawa Shoten.

Chinese History Boom

The most popular Chinese historical novel among Japanese is the "Tale of Three Kingdoms" (the Wei, Wu, and Shu dynasties of third-century China). Even computer games based on this story are a hit. The best-known Japanese version of the Three Kingdoms tale in Japan is Yoshikawa

Eiji's eight-volume *Sangokushi* [Tale of the Three Kingdoms] (Kōdansha), which has sold more than five million copies since it was first published in 1975.

More recently, however, interpretations of the story that differ from Yoshikawa's have appeared in quick succession. One is the thirteen-volume *Sangokushi* (Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho) by Kitakata Kenzō, an author known for his hard-boiled writing style. Completed in October 1998, Kitakata's "Three Kingdoms" marks a distinct break from the didactic tone of the Yoshikawa version. Another new version is *Sangoku engi* [Romance of the Three Kingdoms] (Kōdansha), a six-volume work written by Anō Tsutomu, publication of which started in November 1998. Whereas Yoshikawa worked from the original fourteenth-century Chinese popular novel *Sanguozhi yanyi* [Romance of the Three Kingdoms], which was based on a Confucian historical view, Anō's work looks at the same history from a Taoist perspective.

Another work in this vein is the two-volume *Sōsō* [Cao Cao, 155–220, founder of the Wei dynasty] by Chin Shunshin, a novelist well-known for his *Ahen sensō* [The Opium War] and other historical novels about China. Though cast as a villain in the original Three Kingdoms tale, in Chin's *Sōsō*, published by Chuō Kōron Sha in November 1998, Cao Cao is portrayed as a politically adroit, highly literate hero. Chin had previously published a number of other Three Kingdoms-related novels as well, including *Shokatsu Kōmei* [Zhu-ge Liang, 181–234, the famed strategist of the Shu dynasty] (Chuō Kōron Sha).

The Three Kingdoms is not the only Chinese historical novel currently popular among Japanese readers. *Fengshen yanyi* (the story of Da Gong Wang of the Zhou dynasty [c. 1122–256 B.C.], who destroys the tyrant Zhou, last emperor of the Yin dynasty [c. 1766–1123 B.C.]) has also gained a strong following recently, particularly among young Japanese. Various versions of the tale have been published in Japan, including Anō Tsutomu's three-volume *Hōshin engi* (*Fengshen yanyi*) (Kōdansha). Among other novels dealing with

Chinese history, a number of works by Miyagitani Masamitsu, including *Taikōbō* [Da Gong Wang, who helped found the Zhou dynasty in the twelfth-century B.C.] and *Kika okubeshi* [Seize the Chance] are also attracting many readers.

Kadokawa Shoten in Taiwan

In April this year, Kadokawa Shoten, one of Japan's largest publishing houses, established a subsidiary in Taiwan. A joint enterprise with a Taiwanese printing company and other partners, Kadokawa Shoten Taiwan represents the first move into the Taiwanese market by a major Japanese publisher since World War II. Kadokawa Shoten's main objective in setting up the subsidiary is to publish a local information magazine to be titled *Taipei Walker*. Beginning with its *Tokyo Walker* targeting the Tokyo metropolitan area, Kadokawa Shoten has found a favorable market in Japan for its *Walker* series of regional information magazines, publishing further local editions in various other parts of the country.

While Japan's publishing industry is in agonies from low sales figures, causing many publishing companies to go under, Kadokawa Shoten has kept its head up and shown healthy business performance. In November 1998, it offered stocks to the public, a rare step for a Japanese publishing company. In addition to the strong sales of its *Walker* series and other magazines, a key factor in the company's success is its multimedia marketing strategy, by which it coordinates the publication of horror novels—currently a popular genre, particularly among young Japanese—with accompanying films, TV programs and computer games. A good example is the modern horror-novel series by Suzuki Kōji, including *Ringu* [Ring], *Rasen* [Spiral] and *Rūpu* [Loop], all three of which stayed for extended periods at the top of the best-seller list. Notable in the marketing of these works was the extra exposure gained through adaptation to both cinema and television, with book sales resurging with the release of each film. The novel *Bāsudei* [Birthday], a Ring-series spin-off labeled “the completion of Ring World,” is also

selling well, as are such sideline products as a collection of the movie scripts, a commentary, and a manga adaptation of the series.

Writer Becomes Governor

In the gubernatorial election of April 11, Akutagawa Prize-winning novelist Ishihara Shintarō became Tokyo's new governor.

Born in 1932, Ishihara was still a student at Hitotsubashi University when he appeared in the literary spotlight by taking the 34th Akutagawa Prize in 1955 for his novel *Taiyō no kisetsu* (Season of the Sun; trans. *Season of Violence*, 1966). Another work that drew considerable attention a few years ago is *Otōto* [My Younger Brother] (Gentōsha; see *Japanese Book News* No. 18, p. 19), about his brother Yūjirō, a popular actor who died in 1987. Ishihara's *Hokekyō o ikiru* [Living by the Lotus Sutra], about Buddhist self-edification, has also been selling well since its publication in December 1998.

While continuing his writing activities, Ishihara has also pursued a successful career in politics. He was elected to the House of Councillors in 1968 as the top-polling elected candidate in the nation-wide electorate. He later became a member of the House of Representatives and has served as director-general of the Environment Agency and as transport minister. His recent candidacy was his second attempt at winning the governorship of Tokyo.

Ishihara has a reputation as a nationalist and his right-leaning views have often drawn public criticism. “No” to *ieru Nihon* (English ed., *The Japan That Can Say No*, Simon and Schuster, 1991), which he co-authored with Sony chairman Morita Akio and published at the height of U.S.-Japan trade frictions in the late 1980s, caused a sensation both within Japan and abroad for its anti-American content. In September 1998, Ishihara published *Sensen fukoku* “No” to *ieru Nihon keizai* [“Declaration of War”: The Japanese Economy That Can Say No] (Kōbunsha).

Ishihara's predecessor as Tokyo governor, Aoshima Yukio, is also a writer whose novel *Ningen banji*

saiō ga hinoe-uma [Blessings in Disguise] won the prestigious Naoki Prize.

Phone Ringer Melody Books

In January 1999, mobile-telephone numbers were expanded from 10 to 11 digits to keep pace with the astonishing spread of use of the new devices. Feeding off the mobile-telephone craze, a hungry publishing market has developed guidebooks on how to program your mobile phone to ring with the melody of your choice. The books, which explain how to set a phone's ringer to play snippets of the latest song-chart hits or TV commercial jingles instead of the usual electronic chirr, have climbed to the top of the best-seller lists. The boom was set off by the series *Keitai chaku-mero do re mi bukku* [Mobile Telephone Ringer Do Re Mi Book] (Futabasha), first published in July 1998 and now in its seventh edition. Inspired by Futabasha's success, other publishers have entered the ringer-melody book market, and almost all are ringing up healthy sales figures.

Shirasu Masako Passes

On December 26, 1998 essayist Shirasu Masako succumbed to pneumonia at the age of 88. The second daughter of a family belonging to the Meiji period peerage, Shirasu studied the art of *noh* from the age of four and was well known as an essayist on topics relating to the classical performing arts, antiques and traditional crafts, as well as travel.

Her first book was *O-Nō* [The Noh], published in 1943 and she received the Yomiuri Prize for Literature twice, once for her 1963 book *Nōmen* [Noh Masks] and again in 1971 for *Kakurezato* [The Hidden Village]. She was on close terms with many of the great literati of her time including Shiga Naoya, Kobayashi Hideo, and Ōoka Shōhei. In recent years she had drawn attention again, mainly among young women in the wake of the antique boom.

Translation and What I Write

Ikezawa Natsuki

The aim of translation is to render the content of a work originally written in one language as faithfully as possible in another language. If you think about it, however, this undertaking proceeds on a quite dubious footing; strictly speaking, in fact, it is impossible. The Japanese word for dog, *inu*, may not really be the same as the English “dog.” What the Japanese speaker refers to by *inu* and what the English speaker means by “dog” differ to the extent that attitudes toward this animal in Japanese society differ from those in English-speaking societies. This is even more apparent with words such as *sakura* (“cherry blossom [tree]”) and “apple pie.” In practice, however, people—that is, writers, translators, and readers of translations—take a tolerant and in a sense loose attitude to translation that is aimed at covering for these differences.

Will my writings stand up to translation? Are my ideas and feelings universal enough to transcend the language barrier? Although I have felt such apprehensions to a certain extent upon learning that something I have written is to be translated, fortunately I have not been the one who had to weigh such questions. I have had only to wait for some skilled and diligent person to do the actual translation. So far my works have been translated into English and French. My grasp of French, however, is virtually nil—not even enough to get the gist of a passage—and the same is true of my knowledge of other languages into which my work is, I believe, currently being translated.

I am nevertheless glad to see what I have written in Japanese published in other languages. This is because my own writing has been much influenced by the numerous translations I have read, and because I myself have translated into Japanese a number of literary works written in either English or modern Greek. I am well aware of all the difficulties the translator faces. The problems notwithstanding, I have faith in the enterprise of translation. In today’s ever-shrinking world, readers on distant continents and of completely different backgrounds may understand me better than people living right next door in Japan.

I used to think that what I wrote was not very “Japanese.” My works were wrought from a position far removed from the Japanese literary tradition—far, that is, from the traditions of Heian court literature, Edo-period *gesaku* (popular literature), the works of Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, and so on. I have never had the slightest intention of trying to emulate such works of the Japanese literary canon. I was therefore momentarily taken aback when someone who had

read my *Still Lives* in English translation pointed out that it carried on the traditional Japanese literary convention of aesthetic sensitivity to the natural environment (*kachō-fugetsu*). After the initial shock, however, I had to agree. This kind of sensibility had been such a natural part of my outlook that I had not even noticed it was there. I am Japanese insofar as I am, in this sense, a product of Japan—or perhaps, rather, a product of the Japanese language (*Nihongojin*). This fact, which in the Japanese linguistic milieu had remained hidden deep beneath the surface, was drawn out through the process of translation and revealed to me in the light of a broader standard. The reality of my having been born and raised in Japan with Japanese as my native language had been etched in me all along through my experience both of the natural environment and of the traditions for literary representation of that environment.

I have a complicated love-hate relationship with Japan. This kind of attitude toward one’s own country is itself quite uncommon in Japan, and if I am not careful it can make me the object of criticism by other Japanese. Translations of my works further complicate this love-hate dynamic by introducing a third-party perspective, that of the reader in a non-Japanese language environment. The result is confusion, which I actually find thoroughly enjoyable.

In other words, while writing in the Japanese language of characteristically Japanese things, at the same time I place myself on the boundary of the Japanese linguistic world. For such a person, literature serves, among other things, as a measure of oneself.

(Even as I write these lines, which I know will be translated into English, I am eager to see how a contrivance like *Nihongojin*, which exploits the linguistic potential of Chinese characters and literally says, “Japanese-language person,” will be rendered.)



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Ikezawa Natsuki is a novelist, poet, translator, and film critic, born in Hokkaido in 1945. He went to Greece in 1975 and resided there for three years. His Japanese translations of contemporary Greek poets’ works have appeared mainly in the magazine *Yuriika* (Eureka). He is winner of many prizes. In 1963 he won the Akutagawa Prize and the Chūō Kōron Newcomer’s Award for his novel *Sutiru raifu* (translated into English as *Still Lives* by Dennis Keene, Kodansha International, 1998; translated into French as *La vie immobile* by Véronique Brindeau and Dominique Palmé, Philippe Picquier, 1995). In 1984 he received an Art Festival Award prize for his lyrics *Oidipusu henreki* [Oedipus’s Wanderings], in 1992 the Shōgakukan Literature Prize for *Minami no shima no Tio* [Teo of the Southern Island], in 1993 the Yomiuri Literature Prize for his travel account *Haha naru shizen no oppai* [The Breast of Mother Nature], the Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Prize for *Mashiasu Giri no shikkyaku* [The Downfall of Macias Guili], in 1994 the Itō Sei Literature Prize for *Tanoshii shūmatsu* [A Happy End] and the JTB Travel Literature Grand Prize for *Hawai’i kikō* [Travel in Hawai’i]. His work *Hone wa sango, me wa shinju* [Bones Are Coral, Eyes Are Pearl] was translated into French as *Des os de corail, des yeux de perle* by Véronique Brindeau and Corrine Quentin, Philippe Picquier, 1997. In 1995 he became a member of the Akutagawa Prize screening committee.