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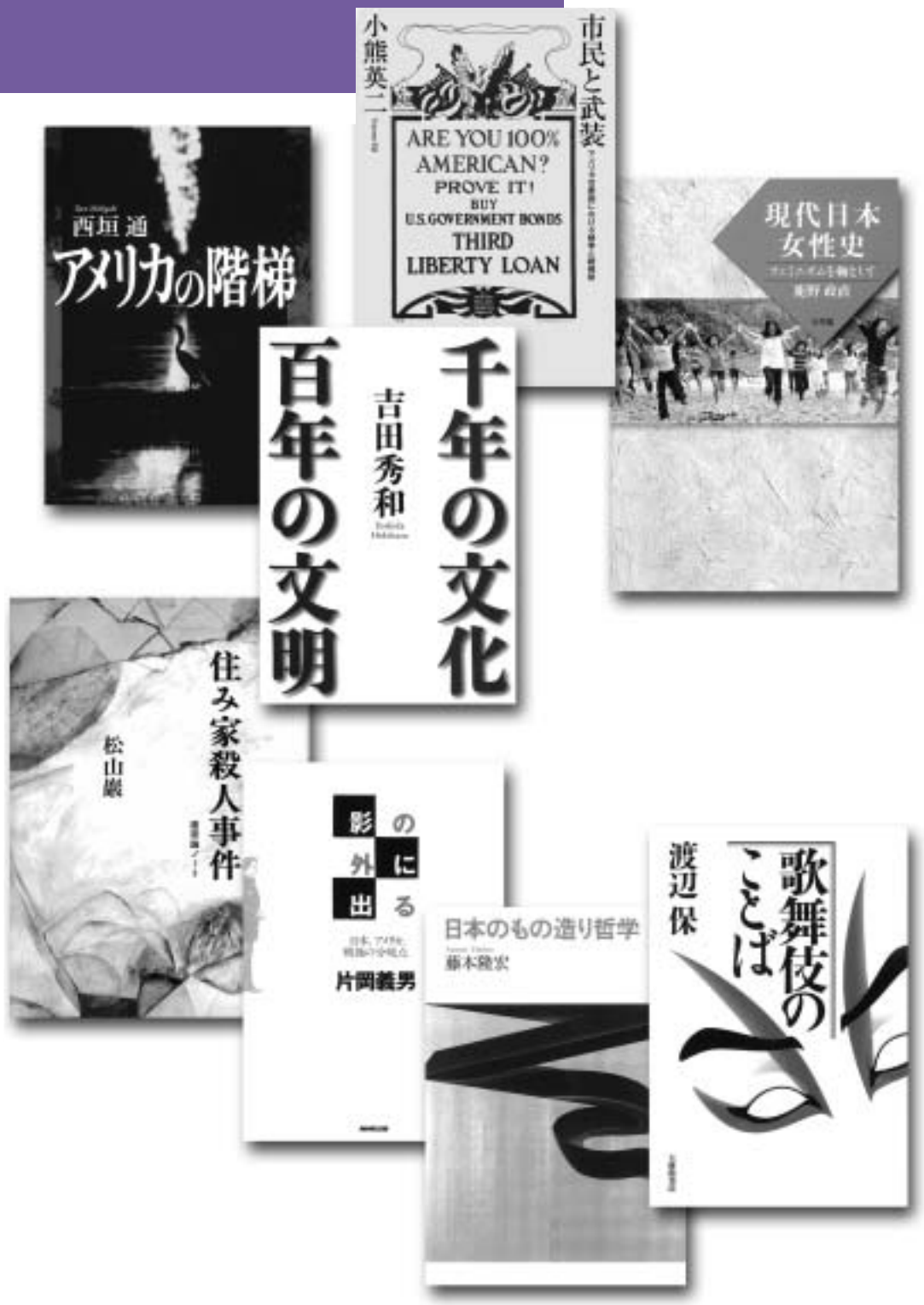

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The Two Clocks

by Roger Pulvers

An innocent detail in a book sometimes offers profound, if unintentional, insight into the art of translation.

In the summer of 1851 the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne found himself looking after his five-year-old son, Joshua. His wife had taken their two daughters on a trip to Boston. For three weeks Hawthorne fed and amused the little boy, keeping a diary of the days' mundane events. I recently read this remarkable little diary. It is a poignant account of a father-son relationship written more than 150 years ago.

I was particularly struck by the entry for Thursday, August 7, 1851, which begins: "We got up rather later than usual this morning, not till seven o'clock by our timepiece, which, however, is twenty minutes faster than the village clock. A still, warm morning . . ."

These opening lines of that day's entry, I must say, had a powerful effect on me. But why? The passage states simply that Hawthorne's clock was twenty minutes faster than the clock in the village. Despite this discrepancy, Hawthorne does not, as an author of today would be likely to do, make a comment on which clock was correct. In fact, in 1851 there would not only have been no way of knowing which was correct; the entire notion of correctness itself would not have been a concern, let alone an obsession, for him.

The year 1851 is on the eve of the scientific revolution in the United States. The railroad, the telegraph, photography, and later the telephone and radio would come to redefine people's concept of the correctness, or exactness, of time. Before then virtually no one knew, and few cared, about the exactness of time.

This inadvertent metaphor of time, taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne's diary, applies perfectly to translation. We writers and translators seem to be obsessed with correctness and exactness when, in fact, there is no such thing. In Hawthorne's village there is no actual time; there is only a creative approximation of it. And that is what a work of literature and a translation are: a creative approximation of one's own or another's imagination.

Yes, there is such a thing as mistranslation. The Russian translator who rendered "The spirit is willing, but the flesh isn't ready for it" as "I'd love a vodka, but I'll wait until the pot roast is cooked" certainly missed the mark. One might say that his watch was twelve hours slow, making the two translations as different as night and day.

There is also such a thing as misinterpretation. The translator of literature must be extremely well informed as to the personal background of the author, the historical and social context and, perhaps more than anything, the psychological color of the language used in the original. All of this goes without saying. Creative freedom was never enhanced by a callow half-literacy.

But the success of a translation is in its beauty and power, a beauty and power that evoke the same deep sentiments in the person who reads the book in translation that they do in the person who reads it in the original. The same anger, the same laughter, the same tears and comfort—the mastery of a translation is tested solely in the heart and mind of the reader, not on the page.

Now, it is easier to recreate these emotions when your language is linguistically related to the language you are translating. Related languages generally share related cultures, if not long-lasting historical ties. A Pole reading Knut Hamsun's *Sult* (*Hunger*) will find no difficulty in visualizing its scenes, set, as they are, in nineteenth-century Norway. Norwegians are, by and large, Protestants; Poles, Catholics. But they worship the same God. They travel in similar vehicles, wear similar clothing and eat similar foods. But how does a Pole relate immediately to the environment in a Japanese novel written more than a century ago, say, by Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939)? The characters may travel by ricksha, be dressed in *montsuki haori* (traditional crested coat) and eat mugwort-flavored gelidium (*yomogi tokoroten*). In an instant a huge bamboo curtain descends before the readers' eyes and they may find it difficult to enter the heart of the character.

Related languages share a primary linguistic feature: the logic of word usage. Japanese and English share little in every linguistic respect, right down to the very definition of the role of a word in a sentence. I strongly believe that in translating Japanese into English, a reconstruction of the original must be undertaken. This is less necessary, curiously, when going the other way, from English into Japanese. Readers of Japanese are open to and familiar with so-called non-Japanese modes of expression in Japanese. They often do not expect foreign works to "sound" Japanese.

But this is not true for writing in English. While the exotic turn of phrase in English may certainly add color to a passage, English style, of whatever variety, has its native norms. Sticking to Japanese word order, for instance, in an English translation or mistaking Japanese stylistic voluptuousness for a pseudo-Oriental atmosphere makes only for shoddy mistranslation.

In translating prose, drama, poetry and nonfiction from Russian, Polish, Swedish and Japanese over the past thirty-eight years I have asked myself one question before I set out each time: What is the author trying to do here? Take the famous haiku by Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) as an example. It is not only famous, but highly controver-

sial. There are still experts who consider it unworthy of being included in his legacy:

Keitō no jūshigohon mo arinubeshi

The first word, *keitō,* denotes the cockscomb flower. Shiki is looking upon a little grouping of them, fourteen or fifteen plants. That's all he says about them, that there are fourteen or, perhaps, fifteen of them. This haiku is like a black and white photograph. It appears to be just a plain statement of fact, devoid of the emotional input of the poet. So where's the poetry? You can see why some people have relegated these cockscombs to the compost heap of those items that are better left, at best, recycled or, at worst, buried for all time.

Masaoka Shiki brushing picture of cockscomb from his sickbed. Drawing by Nakamura Fusetsu. Courtesy: Taito Ward Municipal Museum of Calligraphy, Tokyo. Reprinted from "Masaoka Shiki no e" [Pictures of Masaoka Shiki], catalog of the special exhibition held in Matsuyama on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the poet's death.

In order to ask ourselves what Shiki is really trying to say in this very straightforward description, we need to know something of the nature of the flower itself. The scientific name for cockscomb is Celosia, from the Greek *keleos,* which means "burning." This name refers not only to the fiery red color of the flower, but also to its flamelike shape, or, rather, *shapelessness.* Cockscombs grow in a mass of plumes and combs; and that, I suppose, is where the English name comes from.

Shiki has not referred to the color of the cockscombs in the haiku. He has drained the color out of the flower. That is why its picture appears as a black and white photograph. But he is making a fascinating comment on its shapelessness. He is defining the cockscomb as a plant whose growing pattern and shape make it difficult to pick one flower from another. Many of his haiku are, in fact, just such unadulterated depictions of reality. He used the term *shasei,* or "reality sketches," to describe his method of describing what he saw.

Perhaps one translation of this controversial haiku would be:

Cockscombs
14, 15
It's hard to tell*

In other words, the cockscomb is such a plant that it's hard to tell their number. Or, is Shiki hinting that he is so sick and weak (as he was for many years) that his vision is not up to the task of seeing this flower clearly? Whatever the ambiguity, it is contained in a strictly realistic and clear-cut form.

Sometimes the actual focus has to be changed in order to make the poem in Japanese into a poem in English. The poet may be emphasizing one feature; but in translation the emphasis may shift in the interests of a poetic result. If the poem doesn't read like a poem, however simple, in translation, the entire exercise becomes meaningless. Translators are not bookkeepers or proofreaders; they are adaptive creators and interpreters of dreams.

The great haiku poet Kobayashi Issa (1763–1827) wrote:

Tenohira no shirami to narabu kōri kana

This is a description of what he has in his palm. It seems to me that the last noun, the ice, is the main item here of the three. Yet in English, when the translation comes out, the poet's palm may take pride of last place:

Side by side
Ice and lice
In my palm

Issa was a master at juxtaposing objects on two ends of the spatial scale. He made people seem small and yet, through observation, central to this world.

Utsukushiya shōji no ana no amanogawa

How beautiful!
The Milky Way from a hole
In my sliding rice-paper door

Once again, due to the differing nature of the two languages and the poetic effect sought in English, I have altered the order of the words, taking the emphasis off the galaxy and putting it on his paper door.

Whether the three modest translations given here are successful or not, I certainly am the last person to know. They may be as much interpretations of the poetic intent of the two poets as they are translations as such. But as to whether they are accurate or not, I would have to say that, like the two clocks in Hawthorne's old village, they are as right in their own way and for their own purposes as the originals. I suppose that I might have preferred to imagine myself in an era where the space of a few minutes made little or no difference, and any number of ideals could exist at once.

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* The translations of this and the other poems in this article are by Roger Pulvers.

Roger Pulvers

Roger Pulvers, author, playwright, theater director and translator, was born in New York City in 1944. After finishing studies at UCLA and Harvard Graduate School (in Russian Area Studies), he lived in Warsaw and Paris, before arriving in Japan in 1967, where, for five years in Kyoto, he taught Russian and Polish. He went to Australia in 1972 to teach Japanese language and literature at the Australian National University in Canberra and, in 1976, became an Australian citizen. He is the author of nearly thirty books including novels, collections of short stories, collected essays, translations, and his autobiography, Amerikajin o yameta watashi *[The Unmaking of an American](Simul Shuppankai, 1988). He has directed many plays in Australia and Japan, has made regular appearances on Japanese television and radio, and was assistant director on the film* Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence. *He has just completed writing twelve stories from the Bible.*

Note: Prices do not include tax.

FICTION

Nishigaki Tōru

Born in Tokyo in 1948. A graduate of the University of Tokyo Faculty of Engineering, Nishigaki is professor at the university's Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies and widely regarded as a leader in the field of information studies. His major publications include IT kakumei *[The IT Revolution],* Dejitaru narushisu *[Digital Narcissus],* 1492-nen no Maria *[Maria of 1492], and* Kiso jōhōgaku *[Fundamentals of Information Studies].*

Amerika no kaitei
[America on the Ladder of Progress]

By Nishigaki Tōru

Kōdansha, 2004. 188×127 mm. 315 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-06-212517-X.

This novel, about an American Japanese raised in Japan who travels to the United States to unravel the secrets of his birth, takes up the theme of the advancement of humankind.

In 1932, a time when Japan–U.S. relations are under strain from the Great Depression, the Manchurian Incident, and other troubles, twenty-six-year-old protagonist Makabe Samu sets out from Japan bound for California, having learned that his biological father, whom he has never met, is critically ill. While freely exercising the devices of effective storytelling, including a dramatic, spy-novel-like chase in which Samu becomes involved from the outset, this is also a speculative novel, dealing in fictional form with two themes central to the author's intellectual concerns: "America" and evolution. Revisiting the fundamentals of Darwinian theory, the novel explores the hypothesis that evolution must be a process of moral progress, and that, for human beings on this planet, the United States stands at the most advanced phase in that process. Does Japan have fundamental principles of its own to match the universalistic American principles that are sweeping the world? In posing this question, the novel raises issues of immediate relevance in today's world.

Hantō
[The Peninsula]

By Matsuura Hisaki

Bungei Shunjū, 2004. 188×127 mm. 303 pp. ¥2,190. ISBN 4-16-323110-2.

Set in a provincial town in present-day Japan, this part-realistic, part-fantasy novel is written in an elegant, richly expressive style.

The fictional town, referred to as "S," is at the end of a small peninsula jutting into the Inland Sea. While in many ways thoroughly typical of real provincial towns in Japan today, as in Matsuura's previous novels the setting is gradually revealed to be part netherworld, where the line between dream and reality is blurred. The main character is Sakomura, a man in his forties. Sakomura left his previous career as a trading company employee to become a university teacher, and now, having suddenly decided that his teaching is going nowhere, has quit the university and lives in S, a place he had visited once long before. Taking up lodgings at the very tip of the peninsula, he settles into a quiet routine free of worldly concerns, his only work the unhurried translation of a biography of an eighteenth-century British politician. He has various unexpected encounters, and the story follows his pursuit of a certain mystery, with the peninsula becoming something like the maze or haunted house where the mystery is played out. The flavor of homegrown Japanese fantasy is skillfully blended with the author's extensive knowledge of Western literature to create a supremely fictive world.

This novel won the 2004 Yomiuri Prize for Literature.

Matsuura Hisaki

Born in Tokyo in 1954. Graduate of and currently professor at the University of Tokyo (representational culture theory and French literature), poet, and novelist. In 2000, Matsuura won the Minister of Education Award for Art in the field of literature for Chi no teien: Jūkyū seiki Pari no kūkan sōchi *[Garden of the Intellect: Spatial Devices in Nineteenth-Century Paris] and the Akutagawa Prize for a novella* Hana kutashi *[A Spoiling Rain].*

Shitatariochiru tokei-tachi no hamon [The Ripples of Dripping Clocks]

By Hirano Keiichirō

Bungei Shunjū, 2004. 188×127 mm. 295 pp. ¥1,524. ISBN 4-16-323050-5.

Hirano Keiichirō

Born in Aichi prefecture in 1975 and a graduate of the Kyoto University Faculty of Law, in 1999 Hirano received the Akutagawa Prize, the youngest winner as of that time, for Nisshoku *[The Eclipse], which he wrote while a student at Kyoto University. In 2002 he published the massive, 2,500-page-long* Sōsō *[The Funeral]. His official website is at http://www.k-hirano.com.*

This is a collection of new stories by the "wonder boy" of contemporary Japanese literature Hirano, who burst onto the scene in his early twenties with the award-winning novel *Nisshoku* [Eclipse].

"Shonanoka" [The Seventh-Day Service] describes the days immediately following the funeral of an old man, mainly from the point of view of his eldest son. The style is quite conventional and the portrayal realistic. "Tojikomerareta shōnen" [The Boy Shut In] is a short but vivid account of how a boy tired of being bullied attacks the ringleader of the bullies with a knife. The entire story is a kind of palindrome, unfolding the same when read forward as in reverse. "Saigo no henshin" [The Final Metamorphosis], the longest story in the book, is about a young, unmarried office worker living with his parents who one day suddenly withdraws from society, shutting himself up in his room. The story is a sustained comparison between the young man and Gregor Samsa, the character in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." Also included is "Baberu no konpyūtā" [The Computer of Babel], a computer-age, science-fiction reworking of the Jorge Luis Borges story "The Library of Babel."

The nine works collected in this volume vary widely in length and topic, but are all ambitiously experimental in nature. The book strikingly demonstrates the new directions in which this young author is taking his craft.

Sunahama [Sandy Beach]

By Satō Masahiko

Kinokuniya Shoten, 2004. 188×127 mm. 152 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-314-00963-2.

This is a sequence of ten episodes depicting the people, life, nature, and history of Heda, a port village on the western side of the Izu Peninsula. The book's narrative world is viewed through the eyes of Yōji, an elementary school boy who lives by the village beach (Mihama) and the author's alter-ego.

In "Suihei no haka" [The Graves of Sailors], Yōji's maternal grandmother tells him about the Russian sailors who stayed in the village long ago. While on a mission to open Japan's ports to trade in the final years of the Edo period (1603–1868), the Russian naval frigate *Diana,* under the command of Rear-Admiral Efimi Vasilievich Putiatin, was sunk near Heda by a tsunami, and its crew members were given shelter at temples in the village. Yōji's grandmother tells him how she, at the time still a young girl, befriended one of the sailors. Some time later, after his grandmother has died, Yōji goes off to university, where he studies Russian. While researching history, he comes to realize that his grandmother had not even been born at the time of the Russian sailors' stay. By the time he returns to the village to visit his family's graves during the annual Bon festival honoring ancestral spirits, Yōji is able to read the Russian inscriptions on the graves of two of the Russian sailors buried there.

While the author thus relives his own cherished memories, the reader, too, feels as if reentering his or her treasured past through the narrative. In this way, the book has a universality that transcends the constraints of any specific time or place.

Satō Masahiko

Born in Shizuoka prefecture in 1954, Satō graduated from the University of Tokyo Faculty of Education, and is currently professor of environmental information at Keiō University. His major published works include Satō Masahiko zenshigoto *[Complete Works of Satō Masahiko] and* Mainichi shimbun *[The Mainichi Newspaper].*

Onda Riku

Born in Miyagi prefecture in 1964 and a graduate of Waseda University, Onda has won a large following for her unconventional works not bound by the established genres of horror, science fiction, and mystery, including Kyūkei no kisetsu *[The Spherical Season] and* Kinjirareta rakuen *[Forbidden Paradise].*

Yoru no pikunikku [Nighttime Picnic]

By Onda Riku

Shinchōsha, 2004. 188×127 mm. 342 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-10-397105-3.

This novel is about a series of events that occur during an all-day, eighty-kilometer walk undertaken by the students of a high school. For the senior students the walk is the final school event before graduation.

Two of the senior students, a boy named Nishiwaki Tōru and a girl named Kōda Takako, are half-siblings born of different mothers. Burdened with the shame of his father's infidelity, Tōru avoids Takako and cannot confide in any of his classmates. Takako makes a bet with herself that if she can talk to Tōru during the walk she will ask him to do something she has long had in mind. But things keep coming between them, including Ryōko, a girl who has feelings for Tōru, a message left by Anna, a girl who has gone to study in the United States, and a mysterious boy wearing a white hat. When Tōru suffers a sprain while favoring a previous injury, his chances of finishing the walk look grim. Takako, too, has yet to achieve what she set out to do.

Although no serious incidents occur, the story is nonetheless told in an exciting style that uses the techniques of romance and mystery fiction to hold the reader's attention from beginning to end. The depiction of characters almost entirely through the dialogue brings out realistic and recognizable personality in each of them. When the main characters resolve to walk through the night to complete the event, their trial becomes a metaphor for youth as an unavoidable and irreversible rite of passage. The story leaves the reader feeling positive and somehow refreshed.

LITERATURE

Shinpen: Mori no gerira, Miyazawa Kenji [Guerrilla of the Forest, Miyazawa Kenji, Enlarged Edition]

By Nishi Masahiko

Heibonsha, 2004. 160 mm×112 mm. 272pp. ¥1,000. ISBN 4-582-76500-9.

Through an analysis of the works of Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933, poet and author of children's books) in terms of composite-culture environment in colonized areas, this book is a groundbreaking study for understanding cultural diversity and plurality in the post-colonial age.

In his children's stories, Miyazawa took up the issues of composite culture and the political ramifications of the arrival of central Japanese culture in the peripheral northeastern region of the country. The way his fictive worlds are constructed, depicting innocent, uncomplicated animals on the one hand and civilized humans on the other, reveals his critical views of colonialism. His narrative approach seems to derive from a determined strategy to remain on the move in order to avoid being subsumed into a dominant system. One of Japan's leading scholars of comparative literature, particularly that relating to Creole, Yiddish, and other marginal cultures, Nishi thus identifies some of the distinguishing features of Miyazawa's literature and skillfully analyzes its aspects that have not lost their appeal even today.

The book is also an ambitious attempt to place Miyazawa within the broad schema of world literature. As such, it provides an entirely new context for reading Japan's modern and contemporary literature.

Nishi Masahiko

Born in Okayama prefecture in 1955, Nishi started doctoral study at the University of Tokyo, but left before completing it. He is currently professor at Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto), specializing in comparative literature. His principle works include Rafukadio Hān no mimi *[Lafcadio Hearn's Ear] and* Idisshu: Idō bungaku ron I *[Yiddish: Studies in Migrating Literature I].*

BIOGRAPHY

Bera Chasurafusuka: Mottomo utsukushiku [Vera Caslavska: Most Beautiful]

By Gotō Masaharu

Bungei Shunjū, 2004. 188×127 mm. 381 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-16-366020-8.

Gotō Masaharu

Born in Kyoto in 1946. After graduating from the Kyoto University Faculty of Agriculture, Gotō became a nonfiction writer. He is recipient of the Kōdansha Prize for Nonfiction for Tōi ringu *[Distant Ring] and the Ōya Sōichi Prize for Nonfiction for* Ritān matchi *[Return Match].*

Czech gymnast Vera Caslavska won gold medals in the individual all-round event for artistic gymnastics at both the 1964 Tokyo and the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. Although she is remembered by many Japanese mainly for her beauty and grace, her personal story reveals a woman of much deeper qualities.

In 1968, Caslavska, sympathetic to the popular movement for liberalization and democratization in what was then the communist republic of Czechoslovakia, added her signature to some 70,000 others on the Two Thousand Words manifesto, a petition calling for an end to Soviet intervention in the country. Later, under the conservative communist government that came to power after the Prague Spring, Caslavska, refusing to retract her signature from the document, was prevented from finding satisfactory employment and had to struggle to survive. Czechoslovakia threw off its Soviet yoke with the Velvet Revolution of 1989, but hardship returned to Caslavska's life several years later when her son killed his father, Caslavska's former husband. The trauma she experienced over the incident eventually made it necessary to get hospital care, where she remains today.

Through detailed interviews and patient research, the author uncovers valuable testimony about an era and a personality of broad potential interest to readers around the world.

ARTS

Kabuki no kotoba [A Glossary of Kabuki Terms]

By Watanabe Tamotsu

Taishūkan Shoten, 2004. 188×127 mm. 261 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-469-22164-3.

Watanabe Tamotsu

Born in Tokyo in 1936. A graduate of the Keio University Faculty of Economics, Watanabe previously worked in the planning division of the film production and distribution company Tōhō, and is currently professor of the University of the Air and a drama critic. His major publications include Haiyū no unmei *[An Actor's Destiny] and* Kabuki nabi *[A Guide to Kabuki]. Watanabe posts monthly kabuki critiques on his website at http://homepage1.nifty.com/tamotu/.*

Since its inception in the Edo period (1603–1868), kabuki theater has developed a range of special terminology. Through explanations of the meanings of various terms grouped by category—terms related to the actors themselves, the kabuki stage, the dramaturgy, kabuki ideas and concepts, and so on—the author describes the aesthetic sensibility and worldview of kabuki as a whole in clear language.

An example is the very first term, *tachiyaku,* in the first chapter on the actors themselves, defined in three senses: (1) a male role in general; (2) (the role of) an earnest, honest, middle-aged man; and (3) genuineness, as in sincerity and unpretentiousness. As the embodiment of the *tachiyaku* role, the author points to the character Ōboshi Yuranosuke in the famous play *Chūshingura* [The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, based on the Forty-seven Rōnin Incident]. The two main features of the Yuranosuke role, he explains, are the *to no ko* and *hara. To no ko,* a kind of whetstone powder, is used for Yuranosuke's makeup to create a naturalistic, lustrous effect. *Hara,* lit., belly, refers to the basic elements of how the character thinks and moves. The *tachiyaku*'s fundamental nature as symbolized by *to no ko* and *hara* is the essence of the role around which a kabuki play revolves.

The focus on these terms, going beyond their mere dictionary definitions, makes for an in-depth study of kabuki that probes for the essence of this distinctively Japanese art.

Kaisō Kurosawa Akira
[Kurosawa Akira as I Remember Him]

By Kurosawa Kazuko

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2004. 173×110 mm. 217 pp. ¥740. ISBN 4-12-101761-7.

In this memoir of renowned film director Kurosawa Akira, his daughter recounts his daily life and on-set "mutterings" in twenty-four sections subheaded with verbs—"Choose," "Resist," "Eat," "Dress," "Collapse," and so on.

Many of the Kurosawa quotations collected here provide revealing insights into the man's philosophy of life. Some examples: "If you find something you like doing then throw yourself into learning all you can about it; otherwise you'll never get any good at it." "Work hard at what you do until you start to enjoy it, and then there'll be no limit to the effort you'll be able to put into it." "Everyone was always telling us to study, so we hated it. Tell children instead, 'Go ahead. Do whatever you want,' and they'll have no problem doing their best."

In addition to being close to the great director as his daughter, the author also worked in the costume department for a number of his films, thereby gaining a firsthand experience of their production. As someone who thus supported and stood by him, both as a father and as a film director, literally until the day he died, she uses her special insight to portray him with warmth yet also at times with a keenly critical eye. The result is a valuable record of aspects of Kurosawa Akira that interviews and other public appearances can never capture—the private thoughts and words that he reserved for those closest to him. As such, this book is a potential feast for information-hungry readers and Kurosawa fans overseas.

Kurosawa Kazuko

Born in Tokyo in 1954 as the daughter of film director Kurosawa Akira. After working in the fashion industry, she entered the movie industry and has supervised costume design for a number of well-known films, including Hachi-gatsu no kyōshikyoku *[Rhapsody in August],* Tasogare Seibei *[The Twilight Samurai], and* Zatōichi. *Her previous publications include* Papa, Kurosawa Akira *and* Kurosawa Akira no shokutaku *[Kurosawa Akira's Dinner Table] (see JBN No. 37, pp. 14–15).*

CULTURE

Bunka no ofusaido/nōsaido
[The Offsides and No Sides of Culture]

By Chō Kyō

Iwanami Shoten, 2004. 194×134 mm. 246 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-00-024621-6.

Written by a Chinese scholar who now teaches at a university in Japan, this study considers from various angles how cultural otherness has been understood and received in the last decade or so, with particular reference to China and Japan.

The environment surrounding culture changed dramatically in the 1990s. Before that time, cultures were easily distinguished, and in cross-cultural relations it was thought to be sufficient to recognize and understand otherness and heterogeneity. Since the mid-1990s, however, rapid advances in globalization of the economy and communication technology have ushered in an age in which different cultures mingle and merge in unprecedented ways (the theme to which the sports-evoking title refers). This book examines how the cultures of East Asia have changed in this important transition period.

The first of the book's three parts is an intriguing analysis of Japan's cultural influence on China—particularly shifts in the reception of various subcultures—in the days when perceptions based on the notion of distinct national cultures still prevailed. This is followed by a discussion, focusing mostly on Japan, of the confusion over culture that arose once the boundaries between national cultures began to grow fuzzy. Finally, the author interprets works by contemporary writers, and considers the relationships between literature and the media and between fiction and "history."

This is both an ambitious study of culture and notable critique of East Asia's evolving society today.

Chō Kyō (Zhang Jing)

Born in Shanghai in 1953. Chō received a doctoral degree in comparative culture at the University of Tokyo. He is currently professor at Meiji University. His previous publications include Koi no Chūgoku bunmei shi *[A Cultural History of Love in China] (Chikuma Shobō), for which he won the 1993 Yomiuri Prize for Literature, and* Kindai Chūgoku to "ren'ai" no hakken *[Modern China and the Discovery of "Love"] (Iwanami Shoten), for which he won the 1995 Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities.*

Miyata Tamaki

Born in 1964. A graduate in engineering of Osaka University, Miyata is an essayist. He is a connoisseur not only of out-of-place-looking giant buddhas, but of the incongruous and unusual in general. A companion to the present book is his Tōnan Ajia yojigen nikki *[A Fourth-dimension Diary of Southeast Asia], a travelogue of odd and extraordinary sights in Southeast Asia. Among numerous other offbeat publications, mostly on travel and leisure themes, is his collection of humorous essays* Tabi no rifujin *[Absurdities on the Road].*

Hareta hi wa kyodaibutsu o mi ni [On Fine Days I'm Off to See Giant Buddhas]

By Miyata Tamaki

Hakusuisha, 2004. 188×127 mm. 293 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-560-04992-0.

This is a collection of seriocomic travel essays recounting the author's walking tours through Japan in search of what he calls "kyodaibutsu"—giant buddhas—and the odd landscapes resulting from their presence.

In addition to the well-known great buddhas (*daibutsu*) of Nara and Kamakura, Japan has a surprising number of even larger buddha statues. Whereas conventional *daibutsu* are oversized icons of genuine followers of Buddhism, many of the great buddhas have been erected on the whim of local bigwigs in places with no particular religious significance, and in many cases therefore go unmentioned in travel guides. From among the more mammoth of these statues, the author selected fifteen, each standing at least forty meters (the Great Buddha in Nara is about fifteen meters tall), to visit and see with his own eyes. Sometimes coming into sight rather startlingly with no apparent connection to the surrounding landscape, these enormous *daibutsu* are imposing but convey little more than a sense of their own incongruity and unnaturalness. One seems like a character out of the world of cartoons, another sports an immense emergency staircase down its back, and the insides of yet another are covered with odd decorations reminiscent of a Disneyland attraction.

Engagingly written, the book skillfully utilizes the bizarre topic of giant buddhas to offer insights on the curious and mysterious in contemporary Japanese culture.

Sennen no bunka hyakunen no bunmei [Millennial Culture, Centennial Civilization]

By Yoshida Hidekazu

Kairyūsha, 2004. 188×127 mm. 347 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-7593-0832-6.

This book is a collection of essays written by the author on Japanese culture, traditions, and art. A feature of Japanese culture, he believes, is that, at a deep level, it was influenced by quite different external civilizations, and through that process has constantly renewed itself.

The first of the book's five chapters deals with the distinguishing features of Japanese culture. Europe, where the author has traveled extensively, presents its history wherever one looks, he observes, vigorously reminding us that it is the land of a very old civilization. This is because Europe has always devised ways to harmonize the past with the present. For Japan, in contrast, the European world was novel, and when Japan opened its doors to the West, it sought to absorb what it learned by discarding the old and adopting the new. In so doing, Japan destroyed many of the fundamental elements of its own traditional culture. From the second chapter on, the author applies this basic perspective in an easy-to-understand comparison of Japan and the West, considering such questions as whether or not Japan has truly learned from the West about harmony between the individual and the state, and weighing key differences between Japanese and Western culture.

Yoshida Hidekazu

Born in Tokyo in 1913. Graduating with a major in French literature from the Faculty of Literature at what was then Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), Yoshida has been active as a music critic since just after World War II. His other major publications include Mōtsuaruto *[Mozart] and* Mōtsuaruto no tegami *[The Letters of Mozart].*

Kashiwagi Hiroshi

Born in Kobe in 1946. A graduate of Musashino University of Art, where he is now professor of history of modern design, Kashiwagi is the author of Fasshon no nijusseiki *[Fashion in the Twentieth Century] and* Modan dezain hihan *[Critique of Modern Design].*

"Shikiri" no bunka ron [A Culture of Partitioning]

By Kashiwagi Hiroshi

Kōdansha, 2004. 173 mm×106 mm. 280 pp. ¥740. ISBN 4-06-149719-7.

Modern ideas about the separation of public and private, the author believes, were key to the consciousness of "society" as it took shape in the West. In the modern era, these ideas were introduced to Japan, where the long-standing fluidity of space between *uchi* (inside/"us") and *soto* (outside/"the other") divided by temporary partitions (*shikiri*) had shaped what is known as *seken* (the judgmental gaze of the "world" or the "community").

In the first two chapters, the author asserts that to classify something is to partition it, and considers, from the perspective of the study of culture, what people do and do not partition. To illustrate the idea, he offers the example of people who close their eyes on crowded trains, thereby shutting themselves away from—partitioning off—the external world.

In the third and fourth chapters, the discussion turns to physical partitions in architectural structures, historically and in the present day. As the author sees it, with the rapid spread of condominiums and private homes in Japan after World War II, the individual has become cut off and alienated from society. He offers his ideas on how this situation could be improved by making use of the flexible, adaptable partitions typical of traditional Japanese architecture, such as *byōbu* (folding and standing screens), *fusuma* (removable sliding screen-doors), and *engawa* (open verandas). His insights are sure to speak to the interests of people outside Japan who have made futon, tatami mats, and other elements of Japanese culture part of their lifestyle.

GENDER ISSUES

Gendai Nihon josei shi [A History of Women in Contemporary Japan]

By Kano Masanao

Yūhikaku, 2004. 212×149 mm. 284 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-641-07680-4.

This work traces the history of women's issues in postwar Japan with reference to feminism, one of the most important intellectual movements of the latter half of the twentieth century and one of the key challenges to establishment culture.

Japanese feminism arose in 1970 out of the movement then known as "women's lib," but Japanese histories of women have for the most part failed to address either women's liberation or feminism because of the image of the scandalous that surrounded the women's lib movement then and even today. A specialist in the modern and contemporary Japanese history who has been critical of this tendency for a long time, Kano in this work considers feminism a pivotal force in the contemporary history of Japanese women.

The first of the book's four chapters, on "Creation of the Company Employee/Housewife (*Shain/Shufu*) System," looks at the circumstances of Japanese women during the period of rapid economic growth. Chapter 2, titled "The Banner of Women's Lib," recounts the birth of the women's liberation movement and the new directions in thinking it pioneered. Chapter 3, "The Restoration of the Independent Self," concerns the re-evaluation of sexuality instigated by women's liberation; and the final chapter, "Feminism and the Present Day," takes up key issues and challenges raised by feminist ideas.

By thus focusing on the hitherto neglected role of feminism, this book has filled in many of the gaps in contemporary history on women in Japan.

Kano Masanao

Born in Osaka in 1931. A graduate of the Waseda University School of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, Kano is currently professor emeritus of Waseda University. Specializing in modern and contemporary Japanese intellectual history, he is author of Kindai Nihon shisō annai *[Guide to Modern Japanese Thought] and* Kenkōkan ni miru kindai *[Modernity as Seen in Attitudes to Health].*

Kataoka Yoshio

Born in 1940. A graduate of the Waseda University School of Law, Kataoka made his debut as a writer in 1975, entering the spotlight with Surō na bugi ni shite kure *[Play the Boogie Slow Please], which won him the* Yasei Jidai *magazine Newcomer's Award. Since then he has been active in a broad range of literary genres, from fiction-writing to criticism and translation. Among his major works are* Tōkyō seinen *[Tokyo Youth],* Bunbōgu o kai ni *[Off to the Stationery Shop], and* Hōmutaun Tōkyō *[Hometown Tokyo].*

Kage no soto ni deru: Nihon, Amerika, sengo no bunkiten
[Out of the Shadows: Japan, the United States, and a Postwar Crossroads]

By Kataoka Yoshio

Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2004. 188×127 mm. 238pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-14-080835-7.

Taking actual current events as its point of departure, this essay-style critique examines postwar Japan through the prism of its relationship with the United States.

Since the summer of 2003, a number of expressions are constantly being heard in Japan, mainly via the news media—"independent decision of Japan," "the national interest," "cooperation with the United States," "contribution to the international community," "humanitarian support for reconstruction in Iraq," "the war on terror," and so on. Feeling what he calls "a strange, hard-to-explain discomfort" with such expressions, the author developed an interest in finding out exactly what they refer to and how those issues are being discussed. This book is the fruit of his efforts to rethink the same issues in his own way and put ideas about them into his own words.

Can present-day Japan, dazzled by the power of the United States into a kind of suspension of thought, reconstitute itself as an independent, self-determining nation? This is the central theme of the book and the question to which its title alludes. Written in a plain, straightforward style, the author's ideas about Japan and the United States in the postwar era are incisive and thought-provoking. The book's insights on Japan's situation today, particularly its relationship with the United States, offer a valuable new perspective.

Shimin to busō: Amerika Gasshūkoku ni okeru sensō to jū kisei
[Citizens and Arms: War and Gun Control in the United States of America]

By Oguma Eiji

Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004. 188×127 mm. 180 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-7664-1100-5.

The United States is both a land of freedom and a great military power. In examining why America goes to war and why the idea of gun control is not accepted, this book goes back to the nation's founding and gives a clear analysis of the superpower's essential makeup.

The two main parts of the book are essays respectively titled "Citizens and Arms" and "Nationalism That Goes by the Name of Universality." The first essay reviews the surge in debate over gun control that followed the fatal shooting of a Japanese exchange student in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1992. The man who shot the boy who had knocked on the door of the wrong house looking for a Halloween party was acquitted of manslaughter at the ensuing criminal trial. Explaining the philosophical underpinnings of the second amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects "the right of the people to keep and bear arms," the author explores in historical terms how the precept of an armed citizenry took shape in the United States and the problems inherent in it. In the second essay, the author notes that in pluralistic American society nationality-based nationalism and ethnic nationalism are directly antithetical, and follows that line of thinking to examine the relationship between cultural pluralism and national solidarity in the United States.

Oguma Eiji

Born in 1962. A graduate of the University of Tokyo Faculty of Agriculture in 1987, Oguma is currently associate professor of the Faculty of Policy Management, Keiō University. His major works include Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen *[Origins of the Myth of Racial Homogeneity; translated into English as* A Geneology of "Japanese" Self-Images; *Trans Pacific Press, 2002] and* Nihonjin no kyōkai *[The Boundaries of Being Japanese].*

Sumika satsujin jiken: Kenchiku ron nōto [Murder of the Home: An Architectural Study]

By Matsuyama Iwao

Misuzu Shobō, 2004. 216×157 mm. 200 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-622-07089-8.

Despite its murder-mystery title, this is a study of architecture in which the author declares that the rapid pace of construction and destruction of housing in contemporary society is "murdering" the essential nature of the physical home. From this provocative viewpoint, the author critiques contemporary attitudes about architecture and house-building.

Dwellings are a form of building essential to human life and the point of origin of architecture itself. The author shows how they correspond in many ways to the human body, reflecting people's ways of life, social relations, and the rules and constraints of their society. Other types of buildings, too, as well as entire towns and cities where buildings are concentrated, project the way of life of their inhabitants and the nature of the society. Buildings not only house and contain people, they also mold relationships among people. In that sense, the author argues, our age of repeated building, demolishing, and rebuilding is one of the "serial killing" of culture, lifestyles, and interpersonal relations.

To think about architecture is to think about the inner realities of culture as a living entity evolving from the past, through the present, and into the future. In today's world, as the impact of architectural structures on their surroundings steadily grows, this is an issue that warrants serious attention.

Matsuyama Iwao

Born in Tokyo in 1945. A graduate of the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Matsuyama is active as a critic in various fields, including urban studies, cultural studies, and literature. His major publications include Uwasa no enkinhō *[The Perspective of Rumor], which won the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities;* Ranpo to Tōkyō *[Edogawa Ranpo and Tokyo], which won the Mystery Writers of Japan Prize; and* Gunshū *[The Crowd], which won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature.*

ECONOMICS

Nihon no monozukuri tetsugaku [The Japanese Philosophy of Manufacturing]

By Fujimoto Takahiro

Nihon Keizai Shimbun Sha, 2004. 194×134 mm. 349 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-31139-X.

This work presents management strategy as it is rooted in actual manufacturing practice and based on a structural analysis of the organizational capabilities of Japanese enterprises.

Japan's economy has prospered on the strength of its manufacturing. In the 1990s, however, business went into decline, and confidence remains at a low ebb today. To explain the reasons, the author introduces the concept of manufacturing "architecture," meaning approaches taken to product design. There are two types of such architecture: the integral and the modular. For the former type, used in manufacturing automobiles, for example, the product is designed and produced in its entirety, with its various components adjusted to one another. In products of the latter type, such as personal computers, the final form of the product is determined by combining ready-made components in ingenious ways. According to the author, the integral approach best suits the organizational capabilities of Japanese companies and they should therefore devise management strategies to fit that approach. The problem, he says, lies in the "strong factory, weak company" configuration caused by the lack of such strategies.

While the book mainly elaborates a thought-provoking theory of "factory-floor-driven management strategy," its treatment of the differences in product architecture from one country to another makes it an interesting study in comparative culture as well.

Fujimoto Takahiro

Born in Tokyo in 1955. A graduate of the Faculty of Economics, University of Tokyo, where he is now professor of the university's Graduate School of Economics, Fujimoto is also executive director of its Manufacturing Management Research Center and a Harvard Business School senior research fellow. Specialist in technical management and production management. Major publications include Product Development Performance *(Harvard Business School Press) and* The Evolution of a Manufacturing System at Toyota *(Oxford University Press).*

HISTORY

Handō Kazutoshi

Born in Tokyo in 1930. After graduating from the University of Tokyo, Handō was employed at the publishing company Bungei Shunjū, Ltd., serving as chief editor of the monthly magazine Bungei shunjū *and as company director before becoming a full-time writer. Major works include* Nihon no ichiban nagai hi *[Japan's Longest Day] and* Nomonhan no natsu *[Summer of the Nomonhan Incident].*

Shōwa shi 1926–1945
[History of the Shōwa Period from 1926 to 1945]

By Handō Kazutoshi

Heibonsha, 2004. 194×132 mm. 512 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-582-45430-5.

This lecture-style history presents a highly accessible account of the early Shōwa era (1926–89) for people with little personal experience of or knowledge of this important part of Japan's recent past. The period extends from the beginning of the reign of the Shōwa emperor, through the tumultuous years of World War II to the defeat. The author carefully examines those prewar and wartime years in light of the circumstances Japan faced at the time, the factors that paved the way to war, and the tragic consequences brought by that conflict. The book's strength lies in its manner of narrating history—or rather its skill at storytelling. Its engaging style, presenting the "vast, varied, and intriguing tale" of history in plain language understandable to anyone, draws the reader on. The historical perspective emerges clearly in the author's reader-friendly style, although this may leave him open to objections and counterarguments by professional historians or people with different ideological points of view.

Such criticisms aside, the book unquestionably offers a fresh viewpoint on the course of Japanese history and the momentous transition experienced during the period in question.

THOUGHT

Hisenron
[The Doctrine of No War]

By Tomioka Kōichirō

NTT Shuppan, 2004. 188×127 mm. 285 pp. ¥2,100. ISBN 4-7571-4083-5.

After World War II, an experience like no other in Japanese history, all manner of anti-war and pacifist arguments were debated in Japan. The author dismisses most of these as ephemeral discussions shaped by prevailing political conditions. Instead, seeking contemporary relevance in the Christian eschatology-based "no-war doctrine" of modern Christian leader Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930), he advocates a no-war stance that goes beyond the pacifism of postwar Japan.

The discussion begins with an account of the pronounced political exploitation of pacifist thought and the peace movement in postwar Japan in the geopolitical context of the Cold War. The author criticizes the idealism of war renunciation encapsulated in Article 9 of Japan's postwar Constitution for erasing from Japanese people's minds the recognition that they were indeed a nation defeated in war. The devastation of the nation, he asserts, should not have been so generously remedied by the light-handed democratization policies of the Occupation and the war-renouncing Constitution. Starting from this fundamentally critical view of Japanese pacifist discourse and drawing from such thinkers as Uchimura and Karl Barth, the author engages in a profound discussion of an antiwar stance that seeks to move beyond both Western modernism and religious fundamentalism.

Tomioka Kōichirō

Born in Tokyo in 1957. A graduate of the Department of French Literature, Chūō University, Tomioka is a literary critic and professor in the Department of Comparative Culture, College of Humanities, Kantō Gakuin University. Among his major publications are Sengo bungaku no arukeorojī *[The Archeology of Postwar Literature],* Kotoba kotoba kotoba *[Words, Words, Words], and* Kamen no shingaku: Mishima Yukio ron *[Masked Theology: A Study of Mishima Yukio].*

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

The 130th Akutagawa Prize caused a stir in January 2004 when it was presented to two young women, setting the record for the youngest recipients ever. The honored works were "Hebi ni piasu" [Snake with Pierced Tongue] (first printed in the November 2003 issue of *Subaru*) by twenty-year-old Kanehara Hitomi and "Keritai senaka" [A Back You Want to Kick] (*Bungei,* fall 2003) by nineteen-year-old Wataya Risa. "Hebi ni piasu" gives a riveting portrayal of a nineteen-year-old woman's coming to terms with her own existence through body piercing, tattoos, and other forms of body modification. "Keritai senaka" follows a female high school student, a self-acknowledged class "outsider," who deals in her own way with her solitude while maintaining a complex mixture of closeness and distance in a relationship with a male classmate.

The winners of the Naoki Prize were Ekuni Kaori's *Gōkyū suru junbi wa dekite ita* [Ready to Cry at Any Moment] (Shinchōsha) and Kyōgoku Natsuhiko's *Nochi no kōsetsu hyaku monogatari* [A Second Sequel to the Rumored One Hundred Ghost Stories] (Kadokawa Shoten). *Gōkyū suru junbi wa dekite ita* is a collection of short stories relating the loves of various women through an unusual literary style midway between poetry and prose. *Nochi no kōsetsu hyaku monogatari* is the third in a series about Mataichi, an *ongyō* (distributor of charms meant to ward off bad spirits) who together with his comrades roots out evil by staging supernatural events.

The 131st Akutagawa Prize awarded in July 2004 went to "Kaigo nyūmon" [Introduction to Nursing Care] (*Bungakukai,* June 2004) by Mobu Norio, and the Naoki Prize to *Kūchū buranko* [Flying Trapeze] (Bungei Shunjū) by Okuda Hideo and *Kaikō no mori* [Forest of Encounters] (Bungei Shunjū) by Kumagai Tatsuya. In "Kaigo nyūmon," an unemployed "bleached-haired good-for-nothing" describes his days smoking pot and caring for his bedridden grandmother in what has been termed a "garrulous rap style." *Kūchū buranko* is a collection of humorous short stories tracing a group of diverse characters, including a circus artist unable to trust other people, as they find themselves cured of various psychological woes by an outrageous psychiatrist who involves them in all sorts of comic shenanigans. *Kaikō no mori,* set in a small mountain village in northeast Japan during the early twentieth century, portrays the dramatic life of a young man struggling to preserve his native *matagi* hunter culture amid the tides of modernization. This novel previously received the seventeenth Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize, making it the first work ever to win both awards.

Bookstores Spark Best Sellers

The Hon'ya [Bookseller] Prize represents an effort to stimulate sluggish book sales initiated by bookstore employees—those at the closest interface between books (the merchandise) and their readers (the customer). By helping to produce best-sellers, they hope to enliven the publishing industry from the ground up. The prize is chosen entirely by bookstore employees through a poll asking them to pick works they like and would recommend to customers from among all the books published over the last year. The winner of the first poll conducted in 2004 was Ogawa Yōko's *Hakase no aishita sūshiki* [The Equation the Professor Loved] (Shinchōsha). First place in the "Rediscoveries Division" honoring past books that have continued to capture readers over the years and remain worth reading even today was Matsumoto Seichō's *Suna no utsuwa* [Vessel of Sand] (1971; movie released in the United States under title *The Castle of Sand*).

Japanese Literature in Manga

Many manga take their source material from literature. Foremost among these are works drawn from classical or historical literature, for example *Asaki yume mishi* [A Fleeting Dream] (*manga* by Yamato Waki) based on *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, *Bagabondo* [Vagabond] (Inoue Takehiko) based on *Miyamoto Musashi* by Yoshikawa Eiji, and *Onmyōji* [The Yin-Yang Master] (Okano Reiko) based on the fiction series by Yumemakura Baku, each of which have sold millions of copies. There has also been a recent growth in the number of contemporary fiction works turned into manga, including Akutagawa Prize winner Wataya Risa's first novel *Insutōru* [Install] (artist: Mizuki Mio), Ichikawa Takuji's *Ima, ai ni yukimasu* [I'm Coming to See You Now] (Takada Yasuhiko), and Katayama Kyōichi's *Sekai no chūshin de, ai o sakebu* [Crying for Love in the Middle of the World] (Kazui Kazumi), which in its original form surpassed the three-million-copies mark never before achieved by any other Japanese writer of fiction, sparking a boom in so-called pure-love fiction.

The Voices of the Over-Thirty

Makeinu no tōboe

"No matter how beautiful or capable, any woman over thirty who has never married and has no children is a 'loser' (*make-inu*)," argues Sakai Junko. Such statements helped propel her book *Makeinu no tōboe* [Howlings of a Loser] (Kōdansha, 2003) to notoriety, causing a sensation on television and other mass media. According to the 2000 census conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the proportion of women in their thirties who are unmarried now exceeds 50 percent in six of Tokyo's wards (including Shibuya and Suginami), and many books targeting the growing population of such women are being published. Aside from essays by thirty-something single women discussing their views on work and marriage or self-help manuals giving advice on how to live a positive life, there are even books like *Aisarete okanemochi ni naru mahō no kotoba* [Magic Formulas to Make You Rich and Loved] (by Satō Tomio; Zennichi Shuppan, 2004) that roll tips on love and business into one. "Make-inu" became a 2004 buzzword.

Kirino Nominated for Mysteries Award

Out by Kirino Natsuo (originally published by Kōdansha in 1997; English translation published by Kodansha International in 2003) was nominated for the Edgar Allan Poe Award presented by the Mystery Writers of America. Although she unfortunately did not end up wining the prize, her bid marked the first time a Japanese had been nominated for this award considered the world's top prize in the genre of mystery fiction.

Cultural Contents Industry

Japan's contents industry encompassing such fields as music, movies, anime, books, and computer games is highly regarded overseas, thanks to their winning several internationally renowned prizes as well as to the worldwide popularity of their characters. This year the Diet passed legislation called the "Law Concerning Promotion of Creation, Protection, and Exploitation of Content" establishing the basis on which relevant ministries and private businesses should work together in promoting content creation and use, in the hopes that such content will not only enrich people's lives and encourage better understanding of Japan and Japanese culture overseas but also give businesses better impetus for growth.

Higuchi Ichiyō Boom

With her portrait appearing on the new 5000-yen bill issued November 1, 2004, Meiji writer Higuchi Ichiyō (1872–96) has recaptured popular attention. The publishing industry has responded with many books, for example *Higuchi Ichiyō "Iyada!" to iu* [Higuchi Ichiyō Says "No!"] (Shūeisha) by Tanaka Yūko and *Ichiyō goroku* [In the Words of Ichiyō] (Iwanami Shoten) by Saeki Junko, both written for the newly awakened market, as well as various spin-offs like *Ichiyō kara hajimeru Tōkyō machi aruki* [Higuchi Ichiyō-Inspired Walks in Tokyo Neighborhoods] (Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha) by Sakazaki Shigemori.

Courtesy: Ichiyō Memorial Hall

Obituaries

Sagisawa Megumu (real name: Matsuo Megumi), 35, author, April 11, 2004.

In 1987, Sagisawa won the Bungakukai New Writer's Award for "Kawaberi no michi" [Road by the River], written while in her last year of high school. At the time the youngest winner of the prize ever, she attracted much attention as a young woman student-author just then entering the Sophia University Department of Russian Language and Studies. In 1992 she won the Izumi Kyōka Literary Prize for *Kakeru shōnen* [Running Boy]. While writing this work she learned that her grandmother had been from the Korean peninsula, which prompted her to go to South Korea to study in 1993. Her essay about this experience, entitled *Kenari mo hana, sakura mo hana* [Forsythias Are Flowers, So Are Cherries], reflects on her origins as well as her commentary on Japanese-Korean relations.

Morimura Katsura (real name: Miyake Katsura), 64, author, September 27, 2004.

Morimura joined publishing house Kurashi-no-techō Co. following graduation from the Gakushuin University Department of Japanese Language and Literature. After leaving the company, she wrote *Tengoku ni ichiban chikai shima* [The Island Closest to Heaven], a novel based on her solo adventures traveling in New Caledonia in 1964. Her spirited style captured a wide audience of mostly young women and quickly made her a best-selling author. In 1984 the story was made into a movie directed by Ōbayashi Nobuhiko and was later even turned into a stage play.

From the Editor

We are pleased to announce the resumption of publication of *Japanese Book News* with this forty-third issue. Now under a new cover and with somewhat streamlined content, we hope you will continue to enjoy reading this window on Japanese books and publishing culture.

In order to make available to editors and translators overseas up-to-date information on new books published in Japan, the founding purpose of JBN, the content has been made somewhat more compact. In addition to the summaries introducing each title, we have added brief notes about the authors. As we endeavor to provide prompt news about publications of international interest in Japan, we hope our readers will feel free to offer suggestions about how we might improve our information and presentation.

Also enclosed is a postcard requesting confirmation of your address and desire to receive JBN in printed form. This information will help us update our mailing list for subsequent issues.

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Scenes from a Bicultural Marriage

Dārin wa gaikokujin [My Darling Is a Foreigner] (Media Factory, 2002–4), its title notwithstanding, is not a romantic story about an international couple. It is a humorously illustrated autobiographical account by Japanese *manga* artist Oguri Saori of life with her husband Tony Laszlo, an American writer and language buff who is proficient in five languages.

Oguri depicts the minutiae of daily life with a keen, no-nonsense eye for human traits and foibles. The book consists of twenty-one episodes and a number of short comics and single-page features that amusingly evoke various situations. The insights are honest, introspective, and often poignant.

"Those who fantasize about marriage with a Westerner will be disappointed," said Oguri in an interview. In fact, the author declares she never calls her husband "Darling." "I didn't want to use this title, but the publisher insisted on it, so all I could do was do my best to eradicate any romantic notions people might conjure up from the title."

In one episode called "Hooray for Thrift," Oguri depicts Laszlo's frugality. He keeps everything from a dying cell phone to a broken chair. At the bakery, Laszlo urges Oguri to buy a ¥100 bag (with two buns), dismissing her wish for a ¥200 bag with one, more delicious-looking bun. Laszlo insists they should save for the future, while Oguri, with a dark scowl, growls, "What if I die tomorrow?" In the next frame, we see Oguri on her deathbed, pleading faintly, ". . . that 200 yen bun . . . if I could just have had it . . ."

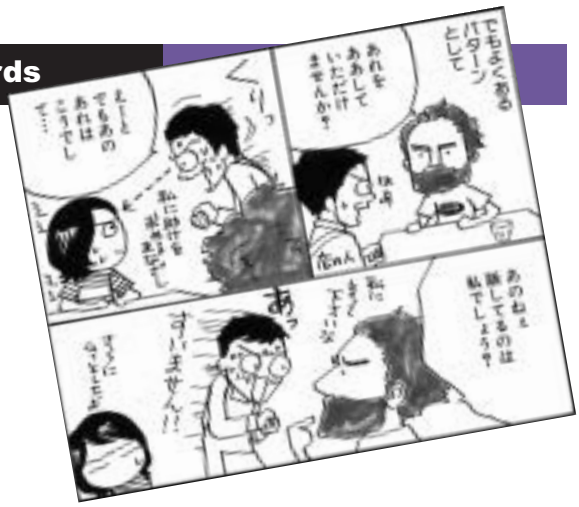
Laszlo is a forty-four-year-old American of Italian and Hungarian parents with a bushy beard and sloping shoulders that are accentuated in Oguri's drawings. He is portrayed as a careful and cautious man but also a sensitive and thoughtful husband. Oguri, thirty-eight, draws herself as the officious wife struggling to maintain her own set of values while striving to respect and adjust to her husband's.

At the dinner table at home, seeing that Laszlo is alternating between his broiled fish and the grated radish (*oroshi-daikon*) condiment, Oguri explains that they should be eaten together. Laszlo takes her advice right away, but he then goes back to eating them separately. Oguri, wondering whether Laszlo has forgotten her advice or is deliberately ignoring it, points it out again and again, eventually provoking Laszlo to gently ask her to let him alone. Her advice to the reader: It's a good idea not to interfere too much.

"I had never imagined that writing about our personal experiences would entertain readers so much," Oguri said. "I think the success owes greatly to his character."

Laszlo's sensitive comments and facial expressions are endearing, leaving readers touched by his open-hearted sincerity and making them realize how difficult it must be even for a man like Laszlo, who is fluent in Japanese and has lived in the country for nearly twenty years, to fully comprehend Japanese habits and culture.

Popular even among those who do not normally read *manga,* the comic series, now in two volumes, has sold nearly 1.1 million copies. Believing that the book would also sell well outside of Japan, an American publisher has obtained the copyright for the first volume and plans to market an as-yet untitled English-Japanese bilingual edition later this year.



In this episode, titled "Claimant," Laszlo complains to a waiter about the flavorless wine served with a cheap lunch set. The waiter, unaccustomed to customer complaints and dealing with foreigners in general, seeks help from Oguri, but Laszlo demands the waiter to speak to him directly, sending the waiter into a panic. (During the interview, Oguri said most of her non-Japanese readers sympathize with Laszlo, as Westerners are more accustomed to voicing their grievances, while Japanese tend to hold back, wanting to avoid trouble.)

Laszlo, who writes several columns where he sometimes tells his side of the stories, is in charge of rendering the ideas, subtle nuances, and jokes expressed in Japanese into an equally meaningful form in English. To fill the linguistic and cultural gaps, Oguri said, he is adding explanatory notes to make sure English readers get all the jokes. "I don't want a word-for-word translation," she said. She thinks the bilingual edition may be helpful to non-Japanese readers who want to learn Japanese and are curious about Japan's contemporary culture.

The book can also be a handy reference for those who plan to visit Japan, as it illustrates situations that may catch foreign visitors by surprise, such as encounters with Japanese who instinctively reply to questions from foreigners in English even when they are asked for directions in Japanese, or real estate brokers who refuse to rent rooms to foreigners out of the belief that all foreign tenants host boisterous parties.

Is a third volume in the works? "I've received many requests," Oguri notes, "but Tony and I have grown too accustomed to each other, so I have trouble finding new episodes." Indeed, the kind of behavior that seemed so peculiar to them at first no longer offers so many amusing surprises. In her first volume, Oguri's drawings show Laszlo grimacing every time she slurps her soba, but now she often sees him noisily sucking in his noodles himself.

(Written by Kawakatsu Miki, Japan Echo Inc.)

Oguri Saori was born in Gifu in 1966. She graduated from Tama Art University and made her debut as a manga *artist in 1995. Her major works include* Onegai kamisama *[Oh, My God, Please] (Shūeisha, 1998),* Kono ai no hate ni *[Beyond This Love] (Shūeisha, 2000), and many others.*