

# JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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# In Support of Literary Translation: The Shizuoka International Translation Competition

By Janine Beichman

The idea of Japan as an insular society, holding tightly to its island isolation, is often considered a key to its special character. There is no denying that this insular strain exists. But at the same time, Japanese culture has an intrinsically international streak that has made translation a vital and important activity from earliest times. This has, however, usually meant translation of foreign works into Japanese. The Shizuoka International Translation Competition was unusual from the beginning because it reversed the direction; instead of translating foreign literature into Japanese, it is dedicated to encouraging the translation of Japanese literature into foreign languages.

The competition was begun in 1995 by the Shizuoka prefectural government and is held every other year. Competition materials consist of three short stories and three pieces of criticism, with entrants choosing one piece from each category to translate. Only people who have never had a literary translation published may enter. The first five times the competition was held there were two arms to the competition, one for translating these works into English and the other for translating them into another language, a role that was filled in succession by French, Chinese, German, Korean, and Russian. From the sixth time, however, entries will be accepted in three languages; for the next competition, the two languages besides English will be French and Chinese. Since the competition has begun, the total number of entrants for all languages combined is 1,188 and 522 for English alone.

When Shizuoka Prefecture first decided to set up a translation competition, it approached one of its most famous native sons, Ōoka Makoto, who is an internationally respected poet and critic, as well as pioneer of several major translation initiatives himself. Ōoka has written that his first reaction was amazement and admiration that a government body would propose such a competition, and his second reaction was a resolve to see it realized in the best way possible. As head of the Planning Committee, he at once asked Donald Keene, world-renowned as a scholar and translator of Japanese literature, to chair the Judging Committee. Keene, who has inspired many literary translators through his own example, has long emphasized the importance of literary translation and lamented the lack of recognition for aspiring translators, particularly in universities. It is no wonder that he responded to Ōoka's invitation with great enthusiasm.

As members of the Planning Committee, Ōoka selected five prominent critics and writers: Awazu Norio, critic and scholar of French literature; Mukai Satoshi, critic (replaced from the fourth competition by Ogino Anna, novelist); Kawamura Jirō and Takahashi Hideo, critics and scholars of German literature; and Yamazaki Masakazu, dramatist and critic. These are the people with the difficult task of selecting the texts for the competition. That the texts must be of literary value goes without saying, but at the same time they must be neither too long nor too short, and neither too hard nor too easy. There is an effort made to choose texts of varying levels of difficulty and on different themes, but the process of translation is never a simple one and it appears that the average prizewinner spends several months preparing her or his entry.

The pattern that began with the first competition still holds. In December, the entries submitted by the deadline are collected, copied, and distributed to the preliminary judging committees, which select the 10 best entries from each language. In May, these are mailed to the judging committees. (For English, the chair is Donald Keene, with the two other members now being Ōoka and myself, although the fiction writer Ivan Gold was originally the third member. For other languages, the members change each year, depending on the language.) Then, on an afternoon in early June, the judging committees gather in Shizuoka. As representatives from the Shizuoka Prefecture Culture Department look on, committee members discuss their impressions of each translation in detail for several hours, and then make their decisions. Only then is the personal data of the contestants revealed.

During the press conference afterwards, the Grand Prize winner of each section is telephoned, and the calls are broadcast live. In September, the committee members and prizewinners gather for the formal presentation of prizes and a reception. All prizewinners receive substantial cash awards, and each of the Grand Prize winners is also awarded a scholarship for a full year of study at a university in Shizuoka. In addition, the winning translators are given a chance to revise their translations in line with the judges' comments and the revised translations are published in book form.

The goal of the competition is to increase the level of excellence of literary translation and to encourage begin-





Courtesy: Shizuoka Prefectural Gov.

## The 6th Shizuoka International Translation Competition (2005-2006)

The Shizuoka International Translation Competition was established by Shizuoka Prefecture in 1995, with the goals of introducing outstanding works of Japanese literature to foreign audiences and of promoting international understanding.

### Qualifications

Applications from persons of all nationalities and ages are welcome. However, people who have had their translations of literary or related materials published are not eligible. Joint translations (works translated by more than one person) are not eligible for this competition.

### Target Languages

English, French, or Chinese.

### Deadline

All translations must be received by the secretariat at the address below by December 10, 2006.

### Contact Information

The Secretariat for the Executive Committee of the Izu Literature Festival

Culture Department, Shizuoka Prefectural Board of Education  
E-mail: shizuoka@po.sphere.ne.jp

Web: <http://www1.sphere.ne.jp/shizuoka>

ning translators, and at the same time to spread knowledge of Japanese literature and culture. One of the results of the competition is that the prefecture has become aware of a pool of talented people. Thus was born the idea of the Shizuoka International Translators Network (SITN), which was established in 2003 to serve as liaison between publishers and translators. At the inauguration ceremony, held in conjunction with the awarding of the competition prizes for that year, Donald Keene gave a speech on the history of translated Japanese literature in the West before World War II and then presented past prizewinners with plaques denoting their status as SITN Executive Translators certified by him in his capacity as president of the

Donald Keene Foundation for Japanese Culture. There was also opportunity for the translators to meet informally with Keene and the other judges and to discuss the meaning of the competition and their expectations for the SITN itself.

So far SITN members have been chosen by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as translators for the Japanese Literature Publishing Project and by Columbia University Press for the Japanese Literature Anthology Project. Thus, the Shizuoka International Translation Competition continues to nurture a new generation of translators to bring Japan's literature and culture to the world.



Janine Beichman

*Janine Beichman earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University under Donald Keene and is professor in the Department of Japanese Literature, Daitō Bunka University. Among her many translations are Poems for All Seasons, which is a translation of Ōoka Makoto's Oriori no Uta; Beneath the Sleepless Tossing of the Planets: Selected Poems by Ōoka Makoto; and The End of Summer, a translation of Setouchi Jakuchō's Natsu no Owari. She has also published two literary biographies of modern Japanese poets: Masaoka Shiki and Embracing the Firebird: Yosano Akiko and the Birth of the Female Voice in Modern Japanese Poetry. She is a member of the Shizuoka International Translation Competition Judging Committee.*

## FICTION



Tsujihara Noboru

Born in 1945. Won the 103rd Akutagawa Prize for his 1990 *Mura no namae* [*The Name of a Village*], the Yomiuri Literature Prize for his 1999 *Tobe kirin* [*Fly, Qilin!*], and the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for his 2000 work *Yūdōtei Enboku*.

## *Kareha no naka no aoi honoo* [Blue Flames Among the Dead Leaves]

By Tsujihara Noboru

Shinchōsha, 2005. 197x140 mm. 205 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-10-456302-1.

With an imagination honed through wide reading in the literatures of both the East and West, the author shows a talent for freely going beyond the constraints of time and space in his writing, creating scenes of eerie, inexplicable worlds. This book is a collection of six stories that give the reader a full taste of the pleasures of that literary space. Two of the stories—“Chotto yuganda watashi no burōchi” [My Slightly Deformed Brooch], describing the unexpected consequences of an extramarital affair, and “Mizuirazu” [Just the Two of Us], with a peculiarly sensual woman who appears after the death of a close friend of the narrator—are steeped in a mysterious sense of eroticism.

All of the tales contain marvelously effective fictional devices, but it is the title piece of the book that comes last, “Kareha

no naka no aoi honoo” [Blue Flames Among the Dead Leaves], that unmistakably crowns this collection. The author begins with a story of the fate of Victor Starukhin, a Russian defector who played as a pitcher in Japan’s pro baseball leagues, and blends it with the tale of the “black magic” used by fellow pitcher Susumu Aizawa, who would later become the chief of Truk Island. This piece, a riveting baseball story in which it is difficult to separate fact from illusion, won the thirty-first Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature, awarded to the finest short fiction work, in 2005.

## *Kokuhaku* [Confession]

By Machida Kō

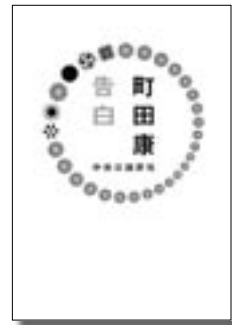
Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2005. 197x140 mm. 676 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-12-003621-9.

Machida Kō is an author with a unique résumé, having taken up writing after a period as a punk-rock singer. With his ability to open up new areas of potential for modern Japanese fiction, today he is seen as one of the country’s most vital young writers. *Kokuhaku* is a noteworthy work putting his full talent as a novelist on display.

The protagonist of the novel is a real figure from history, Kumatarō, a notorious killer who carried out the “ten Kawachi murders” in 1893 in what is today part of Osaka Prefecture. The book follows the course of his life from its early years to its tragic conclusion. It draws on historical fact to describe the time in which the story is set, but this is no ordinary work of historical fiction. The entire novel is infused with the theme of the gaps be-

tween what people think and what they express in words. Kumatarō is a deeply contemplative character, despite being born into the poverty of a farming household, and throughout his life he is tormented by the inability to find the words he needs to express the ideas in his mind.

The novelist makes talented use of Kawachi-accented Japanese as he depicts the words and psychology of the protagonist. Machida makes use of unusual rhythms in his writing, which features a delicate balance between the Kawachi dialect and standard Japanese, dialogue that can be as amusing as a comedy sketch, and piercingly accurate observations of human beings. All these factors make his text one that keeps a firm grip on the readers’ attention until the book’s very end.



Machida Kō

Born in 1962; grew up in Osaka. Began playing music in a band under the name *Machida Machizō*. In 1995 he took the name *Machida Kō* and began his writing career. His 1996 debut novel *Kussun Daikoku* [*Weeping Daikoku*] was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize and won him the Noma Literary Prize for New Talent. His 2000 novel *Kire-gire* [*In Shreds*] won the Akutagawa Prize. He has also tried his hand at acting, appearing in Morita Yoshimitsu’s 1999 *Kuroi ie* [*The Black House*].



Tawada Yōko

Born in 1960. Educated at Waseda University and the University of Hamburg. Has written novels in both German and Japanese and has won awards for both. Won the Akutagawa Prize for *Inu mukoiri* [trans. *The Bridegroom was a Dog*] in 1993, and the Goethe Medal in 2005. Has received a number of fellowships in both Germany and the United States, including the Max Kade Distinguished Visitor in German Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1999.

## ***Tabi o suru hadaka no me*** **[The Traveling Naked Eye]** By Tawada Yōko

Kōdansha, 2004. 195x135 mm. 267 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-06-212533-1.

A girl travels on her own from communist Vietnam to East Germany, and from there she wanders around Europe. The theme of this novel is the girl's search for identity. Having nowhere to go, the Vietnamese girl enters a movie theater in Paris without understanding the language. Taken with the beautiful starlet in the movie, Catherine Deneuve, the girl starts to refer to her as "you." In one movie, the actress is a vampire, another time a married prostitute, and on another occasion the owner of a rubber-tree plantation in colonial Indochina. The last of these movies, *Indochine*, is particularly important in that the character played by Deneuve takes back to Paris with her the child born to her Vietnamese stepdaughter.

It is believed that Tawada may have identified with the Vietnamese girl in the

movie. During the protagonist's time in Europe, the Soviet Union collapsed and East Germany ceased to exist; the emergence of the European Union now allows people to travel across borders without a passport.

In 2004 the German version of this book, *Das nackte Auge*, was issued by publisher Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke. It will be released this fall in France by publisher Edition Verdier under the title *L'Oeil nu*, and there are plans for publication of an English translation.

## ***Tonari machi sensō*** **[War in the Next Town Over]**

By Misaki Aki

Shūeisha, 2005. 195x135 mm. 196 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-08-774740-9.

This is an unconventional tale of a war that has broken out between two neighboring towns. Through his depictions of the strange, incomprehensible nature of war in the modern age, the writer presents a well-honed sense of criticism.

In the book the narrator learns that his town has gone to war with the neighboring one by reading notices in the municipal information magazine. He is, however, unable to discern any change in the way things are going in his own town. The only signs that war is underway are the numbers of the dead listed in the magazine. One day the narrator receives orders from the town hall: He is to carry out a reconnaissance mission, entering a fake marriage with a woman named Kōsai from the municipal war department and moving to the enemy town. In this

way he is drawn into the war. In the course of his observations of the neighboring town he comes to see its people as "the enemy," but he remains unable to see any meaning or purpose in the conflict between the two sides. At last the war comes to a sudden end. What had it all been about?

It is at this point, when the narrator's "mission" of cohabitation with Kōsai comes to an end, that he comes face to face with the graphic impact of war on individuals. As the two are forced to part, he confronts the reality of war for his first and last time. Not only is this an entirely fresh approach to the war novel, it is a cunningly crafted love story as well.



Misaki Aki

Born in 1970. Graduated from Kumamoto University's Department of History. Now works as a civil servant. This debut novel won him the Subaru Prize for Literature, awarded to talented new writers.

## BIOGRAPHY



Noda Masaaki

Born in 1944. After serving as head of the psychiatric ward of Nagahama Red Cross Hospital and professor at the Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, took up his present post as professor at Kwansei Gakuin University, where he specializes in the comparative cultural study of psychiatric medicine. His works include *Konpyūta shinjinrui no kenkyū* [Research on the New Computer People], which won the Ōya Sōichi Prize for Nonfiction, and *Mo no tojō nite* [In the Process of Mourning], winner of the Kōdansha Prize for Nonfiction.

## ***Chin Shin: Sensō to heiwa no tabiji*** **[Chen Zhen: A Journey of War and Peace]**

By Noda Masaaki

Iwanami Shoten, 2004. 195x135 mm. 233 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-00-023828-0.

This nonfiction work details the life of Chen Zhen, a Japan-born Chinese woman who lived bravely through the tumult of war and revolution, working tirelessly to increase mutual understanding between the Chinese and Japanese peoples. The author visited her in the hospital where she eventually passed away, gathering stories from her for this book.

The heroine worked for many years as a Chinese-language instructor for China Radio International, or “Radio Beijing,” and later NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation). Countless Japanese listeners were charmed by her beautiful voice as it painted pictures of China’s culture and the way its people lived. Chen was born in Tokyo in 1932 to a Taiwan-born linguist who supported the Communist cause in China. During her childhood she suffered

from violence and discrimination as Japan sank into militarism, and after moving to Taiwan once the war ended she faced persecution at the hands of the Kuomintang in charge there. In 1949 she risked her life to flee via Hong Kong to Mainland China, arriving in Beijing just before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and getting a job with a radio station there.

Her time in China was also marked by hardship, as she battled illness and unexpected famine. During the Cultural Revolution, she was unfairly punished for her family’s class. Behind Chen’s uncommon kindness and spiritual strength were tales of harsh suffering. This quality book teaches valuable lessons about the conditions that the forces of history brought about in both Japan and China.

## **“Ichō seishi hakken” no kenshō—Hirase Sakugorō no shōgai**

### **[Exploring the Discovery of Ginkgo Sperm: The life of Hirase Sakugorō]**

By Honma Takehiko

Shinsensha, 2004. 195x135 mm. 292 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 4-7877-0415-X.

In 1896 Hirase Sakugorō discovered flagellated sperm in a ginkgo biloba seed. This work of nonfiction details his life.

Hirase’s discovery of ginkgo sperm was noted around the world and ranks alongside Ikeno Seiichirō’s discovery of the same type of phenomenon in *Cycas revoluta*. Based on this work, in 1921 Hirase—despite being a mere upper primary school teacher—won the second Imperial Prize together with Ikeno, who was a professor at Tokyo Imperial University. Hirase’s name, however, rarely appears in science and biology textbooks in Japan. This is believed to be due to the fact that Hirase was also working as an adjunct instructor at the Imperial Univer-

sity’s Department of Botany, where he drew organisms for use in teaching, and was not on the tenured career track. Ikeno, by contrast, had followed the path more typical of an academic, graduating from the Imperial University and becoming an associate professor at the Imperial University of Agriculture the following year.

A lack of an academic pedigree did not hamper the creative and world-renowned genius of botanist Makino Tomisaburō, who never even completed elementary school. But Makino dismissed Hirase’s discovery as an “accidental find.” The author believes this was the determining factor in the low appraisal of Hirase.



Honma Takehiko

Born in Manchuria in 1940. Nonfiction writer. Served as editor for the magazine *Hanashi no tokushū* and as editor-in-chief of the magazine *Shinjuku playmap*. Major works include *Gaitō kakumei* [Street-Corner Revolution], *Machi o tsukuru yume shōnintachi* [The Dream Merchants Who Make the City], and *Sensō no otoshigo rarabai* [Lullaby for the Illegitimate Child of War].



**Unagami Masaomi**  
*Born in 1931. Art critic. Founded UNAC Tokyo in 1974. (UNAC stands for "Unir les arts contemporaines a la vie quotidienne," or "Connecting daily life with modern art.") Manages a group of art lovers, publishes art-related books, creates art documentaries, and holds exhibitions of other artists.*

## **Inoue Yūichi**

**By Unagami Masaomi**

Minerva Shobō, 2005. 195x135 mm. 317 pp. ¥2,700. ISBN 4-623-04328-2.

While Inoue Yūichi (1916–85) was one of the greatest Japanese calligraphers of the twentieth century, he was also a rare example of someone who stood apart from this tradition. The author of this book studied Inoue for a long time, and as he was someone who supported the artist during his creative period, this book can be called the first authoritative biography of the master.

Inoue lived a modest life as an elementary and middle school teacher. In his free time, however, he took a radical, experimental approach to drawing characters, and in this world, he stood apart from others.

At one point Inoue arrived at the idea of drawing a single character on a sheet of paper and seeing how much artistic sense he could imbue it with. He later used characters as a point of departure, taking his calligraphy to such an extreme that the

original characters were no longer discernible. After he stepped back from this avant-garde approach, the foundations of his work were increasingly based on his experience of an air raid on Tokyo in 1945, when this elementary school teacher saw children burned alive before his eyes. He kept silent about this event for many years before finally completing a calligraphic lament as his masterpiece some 33 years later. In his later years, Inoue was driven by a sense of mission to use art to give voice to victims. In this sense, his creations went beyond a sense of "Japaneseness" to touch the world on a universal level.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

### ***Nani ga atte mo daijōbu* [Whatever Happens, It'll Be All Right]**

**By Sakurai Yoshiko**

Shinchōsha, 2005. 200x140 mm. 317 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-10-425307-3.

This book is a semiautobiographical account by the noted journalist Sakurai Yoshiko, who was a pioneer as a female TV newscaster. Sakurai was born in a field hospital in Vietnam in 1945, and she soon moved to the southern island of Kyushu and then later to Ojiya, Niigata Prefecture. She attended the University of Hawaii after graduating from Nagaoka High School. After earning her degree, she began her career in journalism in Tokyo and became a TV newscaster by a twist of fate. After 17 years in that profession, she returned to her work as a freelance journalist.

She led a dramatic life, but every time she suffered a setback, she recalled her mother's words of encouragement: "Yoshiko, whatever happens, it'll be all right." In this sense, this book also tells

the story of Sakurai's mother, Ishi, who supported her over the years. The book shows how those words of encouragement gradually transformed from something Sakurai was told to an attitude that came from within her.

There was another memorable line that her mother told Sakurai when she entered high school: "Stand up straight as an arrow." Sakurai took this to heart and lived her life this way.



**Sakurai Yoshiko**

*Born in 1945. Writer and freelance journalist. Worked as the Tokyo correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor. Spent 16 years as a newscaster with Nippon Television Network. Author of numerous award-winning books, including Eizu hanzai: ketsuyūbyō kanja no higeki [AIDS Crime: The Tragedy of the Hemophiliacs] and Nihon no kiki [Japan's Crisis].*

## LITERARY CRITICISM



Baba Kimihiko

*Born in 1958. Received master's degree in Eastern philosophy from Hokkaido University. Edits magazines and books at Iwanami Shoten, Publishers. Has published numerous essays on such topics as Japan-China relations and Asian culture.*

## “Biruma no tategoto” o meguru sengoshi [Harp of Burma and Postwar History]

By Baba Kimihiko

Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 2004. 195x135 mm. 228 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-588-13016-1.

Takeyama Michio (1903–84) is a forgotten thinker. This man, who had translated the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, was disappointed that so many figures from the German literary world had willingly toed the Nazi line during World War II, and he flew the banner of nihilistic criticism in opposition. Following the end of the war, Takeyama was opposed to the Tokyo Trial, arguing that a trial of revenge that had the victors stand in judgment of the vanquished offered no possibility of examining the nature of the modern society formed by fascist war criminals. Today Takeyama is mainly remembered for his sole novel, *Harp of Burma*, which was published in 1948.

In World War II, Burma (now Myanmar) was the scene of fierce fighting between Japanese and British forces, and

in Takeyama's book, the strains of an English folk song being sung by both sides serves as an opportunity to deepen reciprocal feelings. A Japanese soldier who had been a prisoner becomes a monk after the war and stays behind alone in Burma. He carries a harp with him and consoles the spirits of his fallen comrades, giving up his chance to return home. Though Takeyama had never been to Burma, and his story was created using his imagination alone, it became a best-seller in Japan and was twice made into a movie. In this book, Baba points out mistaken details in *Harp*, elucidates Takeyama's view of modern civilization, and takes a critical approach to examining the changes that have taken place in Japanese people's morals and feelings regarding remembrance of the war dead.

## FINE ARTS

## Edo no dōbutsu ga [Animal Pictures of Edo]

By Imahashi Riko

Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004. 217x155 mm. 344 pp. ¥6,000. ISBN 4-13-080204-6.

During the nearly three centuries of peace and relative isolation of the Edo period (1603–1868), drawings and paintings of animals developed in Japan independently of the animal arts of the West, taking on a completely different form. With vivid illustrations and analysis, this book shows the close relationship between the Edo people's representation of animals and the naturalistic imaginative powers of the Japanese.

Up to a certain point, representations of nature were viewed as part of the formal pursuit of art. This changed in eighteenth-century Edo, however, as there came to be a proliferation of animal pictures that were used to make puns or symbolic or anthropomorphic points.

Imahashi takes the artist Katsu Gyoku (1735–80) as a representative

example, providing a scrupulous analysis of his representations of crows and rabbits in snowscapes. Imahashi notes that these two animals represent the sun and the moon, respectively, in the mythic consciousness of the Japanese, and she demonstrates that this particular screen painting contains the Buddhist cosmological structure. She also examines a set of three pictures on the theme of skulls drawn by the artist Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–99), who was viewed as a heretic at the time.

This significant book is an epochal attempt to address the history of Japanese art through the relationships between Buddhist history, the history of performing arts, and folklore.



Imahashi Riko

*Born in 1964. Art historian. Received a doctoral degree in philosophy from Gakushuin University. Now an associate professor at Gakushuin Women's College. Author of various art-related books, including Edo no kachō ga [Flower and Bird Pictures of Edo], which won the Suntory Prize.*



## PERFORMING ARTS



Hyōdō Hiromi

Born in 1950. Received master's degree in humanities from the University of Tokyo. Professor at Gakushuin University. Specializes in medieval Japanese literature and performing arts. Author of numerous books. Won the Suntory Prize for Taiheiki "yomi" no kanōsei—rekishi to iu monogatari [Reading the Taiheiki: The Story of History].

### **Enjirareta kindai** **[The Modern Age in Performance]**

By Hyōdō Hiromi

Iwanami Shoten, 2005. 195x135 mm. 325 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 4-00-022270-8.

During the mid-nineteenth century, when Japanese society embarked on the path of modernization, there were three new developments with regard to the theater. The first development was a move to transform Kabuki, in line with proposals that the drama should take precedence over the actors and that the lines should be given more importance than the actors' bodies. The second development was the appearance of a melodramatic genre known as *shinpa* (new school) during the period of intense nationalism around the time of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. The new school created a stereotype of the people that the audience identified with emotionally and thus bound the audience together as a nation. The third development was the introduction of Western theater as *shingeki* (new drama). New

drama rejected things that were essentially Japanese as seen in Kabuki and new school and attempted to enlighten what it saw as the ignorant audience by presenting performers' thoughts through new forms of body expression. Japanese drama underwent its modern transformation through the modernization of the actors' body performances.

This book addresses the history of Japanese theater with a focus on this transformation of body expression and the formation of the accompanying roles. The latter half of the book analyzes the backlash against the modernism within the Japanese theatrical world from the 1970s on. This excellent book is a challenge to the many existing books on Japanese theater, which tend to predominantly promote traditional theatrical forms.

## FILM

### **Jikō nashi** **[No Statute of Limitations]**

By Wakamatsu Kōji

Wides Shuppan, 2004. 210x150 mm. 203 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-89830-181-9.

Wakamatsu Kōji (1936–) is the most important radical director and creator in the world of Japanese film today. In the 1960s he produced one film after another, making movies that combined eroticism with political tension under the harsh conditions posed by low budgets and severe time constraints. His 1965 film *Kabe no naka no himegoto* [Secrets Behind Walls] was selected to debut at the Berlin International Film Festival that year despite the fact that it was not one of the films Japan provided as its official entries. This was a major scandal in Japan, and the country's authoritarian journalists referred to the film as a "national disgrace." Wakamatsu took this in stride, and though his work was largely ignored in the public square, his films were held in deep reverence within the underground culture.

He made a documentary on the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1970s and produced director Ōshima Nagisa's critically acclaimed but controversial 1975 film *Ai no korida* [In the Realm of the Senses]. Wakamatsu has also played a part in raising the next generation of radical Japanese filmmakers, providing advice to director Kitano Takeshi, and has worked for the release of anti-Japanese movies made in other countries that Japanese distributors hesitate to touch.

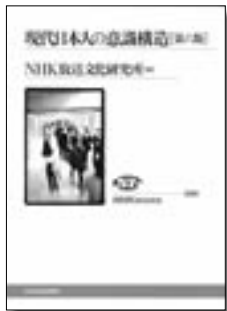
This book is mainly a biographical interview of Wakamatsu. His works are winning over new fans as they are re-released around the world in the twenty-first century. When a person who has been at the dark heart of Japanese film speaks, there is much worth listening to.



Wakamatsu Kōji

Born in 1936. Movie director and producer. Made his debut as a director with the 1963 "pink" film *Amai wana* [Sweet Trap]. Leading figure in avant-garde Japanese film. Has directed over 100 movies, including the well-known *Tenshi no kōkotsu* [Ecstasy of the Angels] and *Yuke yuke nidome no shojo* [Go, Go Second Time Virgin].

## SOCIETY



The NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute

*The institute was founded in 1946 as a comprehensive research establishment, then an unprecedented entity to be operated by a broadcaster. It works to bring about a more profound broadcasting culture by conducting research in the various societal fields of the day.*

### **Gendai Nihonjin no ishiki kōzō** [Attitude Structure of Contemporary Japanese People]

By the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute

Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2004. 182x130 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,020. ISBN 4-14-091019-4.

This book, a collection of data from a large-scale survey of people's attitudes and detailed analysis of the data, paints a clear picture of how the Japanese see themselves.

Beginning in 1973, the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute has carried out a survey every five years. Titled "Surveys on Value Orientations of the Japanese," these involve around 5,000 respondents, and aim to gauge the nature of Japanese ways of thinking and values, as well as the way these change over time and how they are likely to shift in the future. Areas covered in the survey include everything from "men, women, and the shape of the home" to "work and leisure" and "ways of living and goals for life." This book is the report on the most recent survey in the series, the seventh,

carried out in 2003.

Some of the fascinating results of this survey include the fact that 95% of the respondents "feel glad that they were born Japanese," that the majority of the Japanese see the present age as the one to keep in mind as they craft their goals for life, and that political consciousness is on the decline, with fully 57% of respondents noting that they support no political party. Especially interesting, though, is the recent shift in attitudes toward marriage. An amazing 60% of respondents feel that "marriage is not necessarily a requirement," with an astounding 89% of women aged 20 to 39 stating that they "don't feel the need to get married." However one wishes to interpret this data, it presents a detailed and realistic image of the Japanese as they are today.

### **Daibutsu hakai** [Destruction of the Great Buddhas]

By Takagi Tōru

Bungei Shunjū, 2004. 195x135 mm. 341 pp. ¥1,571. ISBN 4-16-366600-1.

The destruction of the giant Buddhas in Afghanistan by the Taliban was a prelude to the terrorist attacks of September 11. The writer of this book is a director at NHK. He says that though the Taliban government of Mullah Mohammed Omar had once said that it would not destroy the giant Buddhas, the change in his attitude leading him to actually order their destruction points to the deep involvement of Osama bin Laden, the leader of al Qaeda. Takagi concludes that the Taliban were co-opted by the terrorist bin Laden and explains that this became possible by bin Laden planting within Omar the seed of revulsion to "American filth."

Takagi arrives at this conclusion by examining countless statements and videotapes. He posits that if the international community had paid more attention to the

changing statements and actions of the Taliban, the destruction of the Buddhas and the ensuing 9/11 terrorist attacks might have been prevented. Takagi makes the case that 9/11 was caused by the failure to understand the significance of the destruction of the Buddhas on the part of the United States and Pakistan, which secretly supported the Taliban, and the Arab countries that encouraged fundamentalists to go to Afghanistan. This book won the Ōya Sōichi Prize for Non-fiction.

Takagi Tōru

*Born in 1965. TV director and writer. Graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1990 and joined NHK as a director. Has produced numerous TV shows. Won the Kōdansha Nonfiction Prize and the Shinchō Documentary Prize for his 2002 book Sensō kōkoku dairiten—jōhō sōsa to Bosunia funsō [War Advertising Agency: Manipulation of Information and the Conflict in Bosnia].*

## ***Mō ushi o tabete mo anshin ka*** **[Is It Safe to Eat Beef Now?]**

**By Fukuoka Shin'ichi**

Bungei Shunjū, 2004. 173x110 mm. 242 pp. ¥720. ISBN 4-16-660416-3.

Fukuoka Shin'ichi

*Born in 1959; graduated from Kyoto University. After doing doctoral research at Rockefeller University and Harvard Medical School, he taught at Kyoto University as an associate professor. Now a professor in the newly established Department of Chemistry and Biological Science at Aoyama Gakuin University, where he specializes in molecular biology.*

The author, a molecular biologist, brings his specialized knowledge to bear on issues related to our everyday lives—the food we eat and the threats it can pose to us, in this case bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or “mad cow disease.” This excellent scientific text gives a lucid explanation of the true nature of this issue.

Moves are now afoot on the political and diplomatic levels to restart imports of beef from the United States. In this book the author goes a step deeper, examining the root causes of the BSE problem from the perspective of the biological sciences. He draws on the concept of “dynamic equilibrium,” noting that the biological world is in a constantly shifting state, with living beings and their environment sharing and being composed of the same molecules. There is ceaseless flux in the

natural world, and living organisms are the entities where these flows converge and knit together loosely. The act of eating, gaining energy from other organisms, makes us a part of this flux.

Actions that upset the balance in this system cause other forces to react, pushing back toward that state of equilibrium. When humans perform actions that alter the system, the natural environment seeks a new state of balance, wreaking revenge on us in the process. Fukuoka states that BSE—a disease that has leapt from species to species and appeared in many places around the world—is a manifestation of this very principle. He goes on to apply this “dynamic equilibrium” argument to other human actions, focusing on organ transplants and genetically modified organisms as well as BSE.

## **CULTURE**

### ***Kyōkai bunka no raifu sutōri*** **[Life Stories from a Peripheral Culture]**

**By Sakurai Atsushi**

Serica Shobō, 2005. 195x135 mm. 404 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-7967-0261-X.

One thing that the Japanese view as shameful, and do not want to be known by foreigners, is the existence of people who were until modern times viewed as outcasts and are even today the victims of discrimination. Many of these people have historically been involved in music, dance, arts, and crafts—the core of Japanese culture. Nevertheless, it was almost forbidden to speak of them.

This book, which examines the discriminated-against *burakumin* around the eastern shore of Lake Biwa, is comprised of a series of long-term interviews conducted by a sociologist, and it offers proposals with regard to fieldwork methodology. In addition to providing a method for approaching the deepest layers of Japanese culture today, this book poses the fundamental question of whether oral

interviews can be used as a medium for history.

Sakurai unconsciously began the interviews with the presupposition of the official history of discrimination. He assumed that *burakumin* suffered from poverty and persecution. Under such circumstances, the subjects were at first reticent, but they finally opened up and told their own life stories. The result is something that departs from political correctness and traditionally held community beliefs, revealing that the pasts of these individuals are too idiosyncratic to be woven seamlessly into existing concepts of history. How can these marginal voices be transmitted by arguments that at the same time deny their marginality? This book probes such methodology.



Sakurai Atsushi

*Born in 1947. Professor at Chiba University. Specialist in life histories. Active in promoting the work of oral history as acting secretary of the Japan Oral History Association. Author of numerous books, including Intabyū no shakaigaku [The Sociology of Interviews] and Raifu sutōri to jendā [Life Stories and Gender].*



Okuno Takuji

*Born in 1950. Professor in Kwansai Gakuin University's social research graduate program, where he concentrates on info-anthropological and media studies. Has been active as a writer of broadcast scripts since his time as a student at the Kyoto Institute of Technology. He also serves as a board member for a startup firm and an advisor for the World Conference of Religions and Peace exhibit at the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan. Has written and translated numerous books.*

## ***Nihon-hatsu itto kakumei*** **[The Japanese "It" Revolution]**

**By Okuno Takuji**

Iwanami Shoten, 2004. 195x135 mm. 245 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-00-024233-4.

A unique and persuasive exploration of modern societal themes, this book—based on the results of field research carried out in cities across East Asia—focuses on the significance, value, and potential that Japan's pop culture has in today's information society.

Japanese animated TV shows and movies, comic books, video games, pop music, and toy figures have gained "cool" cachet among East Asia's urban populations. This has helped to boost the image of Japan, the nation creating all these products. The author focuses on this "Japan cool" phenomenon, arguing that in an age when societies are more connected to and dependent on information than ever, the business battlefield is shifting from manufacturing industries to the digital content arena. Okuno states that it is important—

indeed, necessary—for Japan to craft a strategy that pushes this "new Japanese culture" to the forefront. The nation's "cool" pop culture is also a body of extremely effective pop digital content.

The "It" in the book's title does not refer to information technology, but to the English slang "it," meaning "that which is cool"—meaning all those Japanese products now popular across Asia. The vast increases in production, distribution, and consumption of these products in today's information-savvy societies is nothing other than a Japanese "it revolution." Okuno's book is a fascinating thesis on modern Japanese culture.

## ***Tōkyō sutadīzu*** **[Tokyo Studies]**

**By Yoshimi Shun'ya and Wakabayashi Mikio (ed.)**

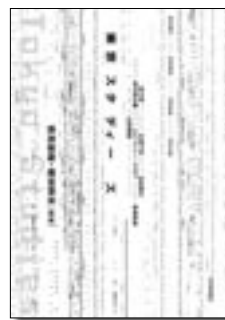
Kinokuniya Shoten, 2005. 210x150 mm. 285 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-314-00979-9.

This book is the most up-to-date Tokyo guidebook written by young researchers of cultural studies. It neither introduces the buildings created by famous architects nor indulges in the nostalgia of the generation that knew prewar Tokyo. The book presents the city of Tokyo using a multidimensional approach that goes beyond old dichotomies, such as physical space versus image space, foreign versus Japanese, center versus periphery, and anecdotal experience versus official documents.

The arbitrariness of Tokyo's urban planning can be seen in the area of land that has been reclaimed from Tokyo Bay. These areas without history or tradition emphasize their break from the *genius loci* of the surrounding districts and have a closed structure. Roppongi Hills, with its closed off appearance of self-comple-

tion, is an extension of this trend. In Ikebukuro the large numbers of laborers who have come from Asian countries are no longer newcomers but are participating in cultural production as members of the community, with some of them even taking part in providing welfare for the homeless.

This book vividly introduces the reader to the newest realities of Tokyo and its environs. The authors note, for instance, that the prominence of the bourgeois boom in the Shōnan district in the post-war years was due to the culture of the US military base at nearby Yokosuka. This book is extremely interesting as a work that examines the deepest layers of Tokyo, a city that changes by the day.



Yoshimi Shun'ya

*Born in 1957. Professor at the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies of the University of Tokyo. Specializes in urban theory and cultural sociology.*

Wakabayashi Mikio

*Born in 1962. Professor at Waseda University. Specializes in sociology, urban theory, and media theory.*

## ANTHRO-ARCHEOLOGY



Sahara Makoto

1932–2002. An archeologist who furthered knowledge of the Yayoi Period. After completing his doctoral studies at Kyoto University, he joined the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties in 1964. Director of the National Museum of Japanese History from 1997 to 2001. Active in bringing overseas research techniques like dendro-chronology to Japan and in preserving Japanese archeological ruins.

### **Sensō no kōkogaku** **[The Archeology of War]**

By Sahara Makoto

Iwanami Shoten, 2005. 195x135 mm. 319 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 4-00-027114-8.

The author, who served as director of the National Museum of Japanese History, worked tirelessly to make archeological knowledge more accessible. He passed away in 2002. This book is a collection of his writings and speeches on the origins of warfare between humans.

The book begins with an essay titled “When Did People Begin Fighting?” and goes on to explore theories of weaponry, the origins of war, and connections between war and society. The opening essay is a lucid explanation of Sahara’s beliefs concerning warfare. Through his research he found that up through the Jōmon Period (ca. 3000–200 B.C.), when food gatherers (people hunting, fishing, and otherwise living off of the bounty of nature) were the norm, cases of people killing people were rare. Beginning in the

Yayoi Period (200 B.C.–A.D. 250), though, with the rise of food producers who farmed and raised animals, warfare became a part of human existence. Once people took up agriculture, their lives became more stable, their populations grew, and they began to accumulate wealth. This led them to compete with other groups to gain more people and things for their own.

Building on these historical facts, Sahara goes on to state that since war is a relatively recent human creation, and not some innate factor that has always existed within us, we should set the goal of giving up on warfare as a human activity. The chapters of this book contain a detailed exploration of this question, pressing readers to change the way they think about war.

## JAPANESE HISTORY

### **Tojōkoku Nippon no ayumi** **[The Path Traveled by Japan as a Developing Country]**

By Ōno Ken’ichi

Yūhikaku, 2005. 212x147 mm. 258 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 4-641-16231-X.

This book seeks to answer the question of how Japan was able to successfully modernize over such a short period of time. By viewing the economic history of Japan from the nineteenth century to the present day as the story of a developing nation, this text presents a highly understandable rundown of the key topics from each era in that history.

Ōno specializes in practical applications of developmental economic theory, and has deep ties with developing nations, as well as with programs run by the Japanese government and international organizations that aim to help those nations. Many of his students are young government officials from developing countries. After coming to Japan on short-term programs to study developmental economics,

these students return to their countries and put their newfound knowledge to work. It is Japan’s past as a developing nation—its transformation into a cutting-edge industrial power—that these foreign elites are most interested in as they try to help their own nations along the development path.

This book has been compiled as a text containing much of the information these students need. At the end of the book Ōno offers a selection of questions asked by his students and answers to them. Readers should find it interesting to learn what areas of Japan’s economic history spark the most curiosity among foreign students. This is a helpful book for anyone hoping to gain a fuller understanding of what Japan is.



Ōno Ken’ichi

Born in 1957. After earning his BA and MA in economics from Hitotsubashi University, went on to get a PhD in economics from Stanford University. Was an economist at the International Monetary Fund and an associate professor at Tsukuba University; since 1997 has been a professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

## Aichi Book Boom

Nagoya, the capital of Aichi Prefecture, has never been one of Japan's best-known cities internationally. This is changing rapidly, though. Aichi is hosting the 2005 World Exposition, and it boasts a new international airport to bring guests to the festival. Toyota Motor Corp. leads the companies headquartered in Aichi that are helping to make Nagoya the most economically vibrant urban area in Japan.

Books focusing on Aichi are also benefiting from this boom. The official guidebook to the 2005 Expo sold 330,000 copies up through the beginning of summer vacation, becoming a runaway bestseller. Nagoya-related titles sell well, and publishers have put out some 15 in all, including *Nagoya to kin shachi* [Nagoya and the Golden Shachi] by Inoue Shōichi, *Koko made yaru ka Nagoyajin* [How Far Will You Go, Nagoyans?] by the Society for Learning from Nagoya, and Iwanaka Yoshifumi's *Nagoyajin to Nihonjin* [The Nagoyans and the Japanese]. Inoue's book clears up a mystery, noting that after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the Owari family, one of the three branch families of the Tokugawa clan that had ruled Japan for centuries, presented the golden *shachi*, the statues of mythical fish that decorated the roof of Nagoya Castle, to the new government. By using these objects to represent Aichi's fealty to the nation, the Owari clan turned the gold figures into symbols of the people of Nagoya, helping in turn to deepen their love for their homeland. The book is a unique take on Aichi culture that explains why these fish decorate the tanks driven by local units of the Self-Defense Forces



Aichi-related books are hot titles this year.

and the badges of office worn by Nagoya city council members.

Interest in the characteristic approach to business seen in Nagoya is also high, and titles like *Saikyō no Nagoya shōhō* [Powerful Nagoya Business Practices] and *Nihon no genki no minamoto: Nagoya no pawā* [The Source of Japan's Vigor: Nagoya Power] are strong sellers. Chūkyō University Professor Mizutani Kenji's book, *Sekai saikyō: Nagoya keizai no shōgeki* [Strongest in the World: The Impact of the Nagoya Economy], argues that Aichi businesses, notably Toyota, excel at developing ideas firmly rooted in reality. Mizutani states that today's economic vitality is thanks to long years of steady effort.

## Publishers Target Baby Boomers

Japan's publishers are releasing a steady stream of new magazines aimed at capturing readers among the baby boomer generation, the 6.8 million people born from 1947 to 1949. This demographic group will be reaching retirement age and enjoying an increase in leisure time beginning in 2007. More than half of the individually held financial assets in Japan are in the hands of people over 50, making the boomers a particularly attractive potential readership.

Shōgakukan released the first issue of *Rakuda* [Camel] in May this year, targeting older readers with information on overseas travel, asset management, and health issues. The journal is published every two months, with a print run of 100,000. Shōgakukan was one of the first publishers in Japan to cater to the middle-aged and older magazine audience, releasing the first issue of *Sarai* [Serai] in 1989. This was followed in 2002 by *Purachina sarai* [Platinum Serai], a journal targeting wealthy, mature readers. The publisher has replaced this irregular publication with the bimonthly *Rakuda*.

The success of *Sarai* eventually sparked a boom in baby boomer magazines, with six new journals focusing on travel, food, and leisure activities appearing in 2001 alone. These included Nikkei Hōmu Shuppansha's *Nikkei otona no OFF* [Nikkei's OFF for Adults]. The trend has continued, with 2004 seeing the launch of *Ren-*

*tier*, a magazine for middle-aged men, by Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho. Today there are some 20 magazines in all aimed at this generation.

Kimura Masao, an independent entertainment producer and former director of Yoshimoto Kōgyō Co., Japan's largest comedy production company, has announced a new free monthly, to be distributed in the Tokyo and Osaka regions from September. Targeting boomer readers, the magazine—with a projected print run of 300,000—will feature celebrity interviews, business stories from entrepreneurs, and news on reunions and other events organized by retired employees of various firms.

The baby boomers have a discerning eye when it comes to the information they consume. They have already found some of these new offerings insufficient, and Kōdansha's *Obra* and Mainichi Shimbun's *Hemingway*, both launched in 2001, are no longer in print today. Publishers have already started looking for new ways to boost advertising revenue and increase these magazines' profitability.

## Two Authors Win Dazai Osamu Prize

The Dazai Osamu Prize, presented by Chikuma Shobō, is viewed as a gateway to success for new writers. This year's award, the twenty-first, went for the first time to two writers. The women authors who won the prize are freelance writer Kawamoto Akiko, for her *Shishū* [Embroidery], and company employee Tsumura Kikuo, for *Man'ita* [Maneater]. The former, a story of a woman living together with her aging parents and young lover, depicts the concerns women have about love, work, and caring for their parents. The latter work presents the deep uncertainty stemming from abuse and sexual assault that afflicts a young female student in the course of her daily life.

The eighteenth Mishima Yukio Prize, meanwhile, went to *6000 do no ai* [Love at 6,000 Degrees], the work of 28-year-old Kashimada Maki, a rising star in the world of women writers. This novel deals with a married couple's illicit affairs, taking its title from the temperature of the

ground's surface when the atomic bomb went off in Nagasaki.

The Ōya Soichi Prize for Nonfiction went to two writers for the first time in four years. Winning the thirty-sixth award were Takagi Tōru, for his *Daibutsu hakai* [Destruction of the Great Buddhas], and Inaizumi Ren, for *Boku mo ikusa ni yuku no da keredo: Takeuchi Kōzō no shi to shi* [I, Too, Am Going to War: The Poetry and Death of Takeuchi Kōzō]. See the New Titles section of this issue for more information on Takagi's book. Inaizumi, at 26 the youngest writer ever to win this prize, has created an evocative work presenting a realistic portrait of the poet Takeuchi, who died in World War II at age 23, and his delicate sensibility.

The eighteenth Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize also went to two writers this year: Ogiwara Hiroshi for *Ashita no kioku* [Memories of Tomorrow], which deals with the issue of young people afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, and Kakine Ryōsuke for *Kimitachi ni asu wa nai* [No Tomorrows for You], a novel on people losing their jobs in corporate restructuring.

## Obituary

Niwa Fumio, 100, author, April 20, 2005.

Niwa Fumio was one of the representative writers of the Shōwa era (1926–89). He left behind some 500 books in all, with bestsellers in a broad range of literary areas, as well as around 50 serialized novels in newspapers. He launched his writing career in 1932 with *Ayu* [Sweetfish], an autobiographical "I-novel" about his mother, who abandoned her family when he was in primary school. During the prewar years he wrote works dealing with the hostesses at Ginza bars and other aspects of Japanese nightlife. He gained popularity with his 1936 *Wakai kisetsu* [The Young Season], but his choice of subject matter often got his books banned.

During the war he served as an information officer in the Imperial Navy. His 1942 book *Kaisen* [Naval Battle], which he based on his own experience of being injured in combat, is a masterpiece of Japanese war literature. In the chaotic aftermath of the

war he set about writing Japan's first novel dealing with issues of the elderly, the 1947 *Iyagarase no nenrei* [The Hateful Years]. This book's title entered the language as a commonly used phrase.

After turning 60 Niwa shifted his focus to works on religious themes, completing two massive biographies of Japanese Buddhist figures: the 1980 *Shinran* and his 1997 work *Renryo*, which won the Noma Prize for Literature. For nearly 30 years he spent his own money to publish the literary journal *Bungakusha* [Person of Letters], which helped build the careers of writers including Kōno Taeko and Setouchi Jakuchō. For his many achievements in the field of literature he received the Kikuchi Kan Award in 1974 and the Imperial Order of Culture in 1977.

## Murakami Book Chosen for Köln Event

From November 6 to 18 this year Köln, Germany, will host the Ein Buch Fuer die Stadt (A Book for the City) literary festival. At this event, held for the third time this year, one work by a world-famous novelist is selected and made the focus of presentations, public readings, and study sessions in and around Köln. This year's selection is Murakami Haruki's 1995 novel *Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* [trans. *South of the Border, West of the Sun*]. (The previous year's book was Italo Calvino's 1979 *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* [trans. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*].) The festival is promoted by the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* and other regional newspapers, which also carry reports on the events.

## War-Related Works Win Manga Awards

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Two manga works taking the end of the war and the atomic bombings as their themes have won a string of manga awards. Kōno Fumiyo's *Yūnagi no machi, sakura no kuni* [Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Trees], depicting the story of a family affected by the Hiroshima bombing,

took two awards: the grand prize in the manga division of the Japan Media Arts Festival sponsored by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Shinsei Prize, one of the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Awards. *Watashi no Hachigatsu jūgonichi* [My August 15], compiled by the Watashi no Hachigatsu Jūgonichi Committee, also took a pair of awards, winning the Japan Cartoonists Association Award and a Japan Media Arts Festival Jury Recommendation. This work is a collection of illustrations and writings from 111 manga artists, mainly in their sixties or older, describing what they did and thought on the last day of the war.

## Inoue Hisashi to Chair Japan P.E.N. Club Again

The writer Inoue Hisashi has been tapped to serve another two-year term as president of the Japan P.E.N. Club. The organization, which celebrates its seventieth birthday this year, is active in Japan and overseas, supporting the causes of peace and freedom of expression through its statements calling for the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Iraq and for journalists to be able to freely report on events there.

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## The Novel and the Movie

Recently I had the pleasure of seeing one of my books, *Kūchū teien* [A Mid-Air Garden], transferred to the big screen. Since then I have been asked any number of times about the connection between books and films: “How do you feel, seeing one of your novels turned into a movie?” I can only reply: “I was surprised by what I saw.”

This does not seem to satisfy the interviewers. “Did you notice any differences between your book and the movie?” they might ask. “Didn’t you ever feel like telling them that wasn’t what you meant? Did you sit in on the filming sessions?” To boil all their questions down, what they are asking me is: “How did you feel when the movie didn’t present things exactly as they were in your book?”

Last year I went to see a preview showing of the movie. Less than a minute into it, I was already amazed by what I was seeing on the screen. What did I find so surprising? The enveloping totality of the images there.

The protagonist of the tale is a woman who dedicates vast energy to her garden on her apartment balcony. In my book, her hobby takes only a single word, *gardening*, to describe. But no matter how much energy I might describe this in detail—explaining how this woman displayed the flowers, the time she spent watering them, the way she plucked the withered blossoms—I would not be able to fill more than a page or so.

The film version of *Kūchū teien* begins with a lengthy shot of the main character’s veranda garden. I was completely bowled over by the images of this balcony. All those things that could be summed up in the single word *gardening* had been translated onto the movie screen as a magnificent mid-air garden. I nearly felt faint to think of how many people must have worked to create this scene. I was similarly amazed by the labor that had obviously gone into the presentation of all the characters and settings in the story. Of course, when I wrote the book I had ideas and images in mind about these things. But to see these same things actually appearing before me was an astounding experience. These images didn’t make me think, “Oh, this is just as I wrote it,” or “This is different from what I meant.” They were *there*, a part of reality completely separate from my book.

When I write the word *flower* on a piece of paper, it exists only as a word. Many people may read that word and come away with their own ideas about different species, colors, or smells, but this doesn’t change the fact that the word is nothing more than an inert symbol. But when someone places a blossom in front of you, that goes far beyond the symbol on the page. This is the surprise I felt when I saw the film version of my book.

I see movies and books as fundamentally different things. They’re as different as a piece of pork and a light bulb. Both of them are a part of our lives, but that’s about the extent of their similarities. If you were to ask me about the differences between pork and light bulbs, I wouldn’t know how to respond, other than to say, “Well, they’re really different.” When I am asked about my book and the movie made from it, therefore, my honest response is that

I find the two things deeply different, and I am surprised by what I see on the screen. To the people who asked whether I had offered advice to the director, I wanted to reply with a question of my own: What could a butcher—who deals in pork, not light bulbs—tell an electrician about his job?

The differences here are, of course, mainly in the means of presentation, rather than the content being presented. There were few gaps to be found between the content of the book and the film—so few, indeed, that I was somewhat bewildered by all the interviewers’ questions on this topic. I took a very earnest approach to writing *Kūchū teien*, and after seeing his work, I believe that Toyoda Toshiaki, who directed the film version, took an equally earnest approach to the material. I believe that our earnestness in creating the novel and the film—our pork and light bulb—comes across in the same way.

Last winter my mother passed away. I had to go to the hospital alone, day after day, to take care of her, although I knew that she would not pull through. When I was lost in my thoughts in the taxi on the way to or from the hospital, again and again I found myself imagining scenes from the preview of *Kūchū teien* that I had seen. Those scenes were not the words that I had written. They were images of a mid-air garden that actually existed in the world, and the lines were really being spoken. At those times, when I was in the depths of my sorrow, those people—who really existed, moved about, and exchanged words with one another—were a great comfort. It was not the earnestness I had poured into writing my book that helped; it was the sincerity Mr. Toyoda had shown in directing the film.

After my mother died, I thought about what a truly wonderful movie this was. This is not the same as me thinking about how great the book was, though. I make this point not out of some overblown sense of modesty, but because I really do see our two creations as existing in separate categories. I truly believe that the filmmaker was able to look at my simple word *flower* on the page and make that flower bloom in reality in a way that went far beyond what I had imagined.

It is in these ways that books differ from films. It is precisely because of these differences that we need both. Learning this lesson through one of my own books has been a truly fortunate experience for me.



**Kakuta Mitsuyo**

Born in 1967. Debuted as a writer in 1990 with *Kōfuku na yūgi* [A Blissful Pastime], which won the Kaien Prize for New Writers. Her 1996 *Madoromu yoru no UFO* [A Sleepy Night’s UFO] earned her the Noma Literary Prize. She took the Naoki Prize with *Taigan no kanojo* [Woman on the Other Shore] in 2005. Her latest work, *Shiawase no nedan* [The Price of Happiness], is available from Shōbunsha.