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Mishima Again

Yomota Inuhiko

Interest in Mishima Yukio is booming. A new initiative to publish his entire works began two years ago, the second time this has been undertaken. A succession of previously unknown diaries, letters, and unpublished manuscripts have recently been discovered. When *Haru no yuki* [trans. *Spring Snow*], one of his greatest full-length novels, was turned into a movie and a manga, it caused a buzz of excitement. And when the Kanagawa Museum of Modern Literature held an exhibition about Mishima, it saw unprecedented numbers of visitors day after day and full crowds for all its public lectures on the writer. A collection of essays on the day of Mishima's astonishing suicide and its aftermath by a dozen or so intellectuals and artists has been published to great acclaim. And a documentary film in which artists from a generation with no direct knowledge of Mishima actively comment on the author has been released.

This boom looks set to continue for some time—certainly into 2006, when the publication of the complete set of Mishima's works will be wrapped up. It will probably reach its zenith when his film *Yūkoku* [trans. *Patriotism*] sees the light of day again after being kept under lock and key for many years by the author's family.

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Mishima Yukio was born in Tokyo in 1925, the eldest son of a civil servant. In the heavily autobiographical novel *Kamen no kokuhaku* [trans. *Confessions of a Mask*], he says that he vividly remembers the moment of his own birth. He was keen on literature from an early age, and his father, despite being a commoner, got him into a school that was generally only open to the sons of aristocrats. This background would later provide the seeds for Mishima's penchant for elegant, decadent nobility in the literary universe he created. Mishima once came close to joining the army during World War II, but he failed the medical due to his physical frailty. The guilt of being the only young man among his peers not to join the army was one of the factors that later prompted him to organize his own private army.

Mishima made his debut as a full-fledged novelist at about the same time that Japan was defeated in the war. Having written an innocent tale of boy-meets-girl love that drew on material from ancient Greece, he then depicted the ambition and frustration of young men in the confused postwar world. At a time when homosexual love was still socially taboo in Japan, he unashamedly released a novel with this as its main theme. His works plumbed diverse depths: everything from eroticism and forbidden beauty to the temptations of death and terrorism. Uncovering extreme divinity in a godless age was a constant theme of his writings. In other artistic activities, he pub-

lished and staged a series of plays in which he adapted the traditional Japanese theatrical forms of Noh and Kabuki to the modern age. He also sang French-style *chanson* music and appeared in *yakuza* movies. Mishima's greatest idols were Jean Cocteau and Gabrielle D'Annunzio, whose dazzling genius cut across every genre of art in the first half of the twentieth century.

The author eventually took up boxing and kendo to build up his strength, devoting himself to these pursuits until there was nothing at all in his physique to remind people of the fragile boy who had failed his army medical. Then, toward the end of his life, he entered a field completely unknown to him, in which he had never previously shown an interest: politics. His reactionary political ideals would prove to be his undoing.

Late in his life, Mishima undertook repeated periods of trial service in the Self-Defense Forces and used his personal assets to form a private military group. He urged that the Constitution be revised as soon as possible to give the SDF official sanction as a military entity and to enable this military force to defend the emperor. On November 25, 1970, in the final act of his dramatic life, he broke into the Ground Self-Defense Force Eastern Army Headquarters in central Tokyo and committed ritual suicide. He was 45 years old.

To avoid misunderstanding, I should stress that the current Mishima boom is a purely cultural phenomenon; there is no trace of political conspiracy, propaganda, or anything like that. The current Liberal Democratic Party administration led by Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō is engaged in an effort to revise the Constitution and raise the SDF's status to that of an army, but we must not link this with Mishima's political thinking or express disapproval of the Mishima boom as a clear sign of Japan turning to militarism. Nor should a connection be drawn be-



In a scene from *Haru no yuki*, Kiyooki and his lover, Satoko, have a tryst after learning that her hand has been promised to a nobleman. Courtesy: 2005 Toho Co., Ltd./Fuji Television Network, Inc./Hori Production/SDP/Hakuhodo DY Media Partners Inc.

tween the boom and the “mini-nationalism” spreading today among young Japanese who display not the slightest interest in history. The political situation, the social mood, and the feelings of Japanese people toward the imperial system are completely different now from what they were in the late 1960s—nearly 40 years ago—when Mishima was advocating these changes.

Mishima lived in an age marked by the rise of the global student-protest movement and by loud cries for revolution. The emperor he idealized was not the real emperor, who survived by renouncing his divinity, but a ghost of the handsome princes who appear and die young in ancient legends. The following anecdote gives an indication of just how radical and romantic Mishima’s political ideals were. While the University of Tokyo was being semi-occupied by students of the New Left movement, Mishima went alone to one of their rallies—even though his comrades warned him that it was too dangerous. Some of the students jeered this leading light of right-wing nationalism. Mishima ignored them and said in a loud voice, “If there is even one among you who would give his life shouting ‘Long live the Emperor!’ then I will gladly fight alongside you!”

As this episode shows, Mishima’s utopian political ideas were far removed from real politics. In fact, neither the right wing nor the left wing could understand him. Even if the leaders of a movement wanted to use him for their own ends, his energy, rhetoric, and romanticism were so passionate that any ill-considered attempt to encapsulate his thoughts would inevitably blow up in the face of whoever was involved. In the twentieth century, several artists managed to make major contributions to avant-garde artistic ideas while obstinately clinging to reactionary political beliefs. Alongside names like Wang Kuo-wei, Ezra Pound, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, Mishima can be classed as one of these “sacred monsters.”

How is Mishima being depicted by a new generation of Japanese with no direct knowledge of the shocking events of 1970? Japan’s current Mishima boom is completely unrelated to the reactionary political beliefs he once espoused. The concept of literature as high culture, which has in the past been used as an aid to understanding Mishima, also has virtually nothing to do with his surging popularity. If young people today are curious about Mishima, it is likely because he was a very rare figure who scurried around the subculture of his time, effortlessly crisscrossing every genre from theater to novels, cinema, music, bodybuilding, and explorations of homosexuality. The ill-fated lovers in *Haru no yuki* had a major influence on the kitsch romanticism embodied by today’s *shōjo* manga (comics for girls). The homosexual love between boys that Mishima liked to portray is another enchanting theme that to this day arouses the curiosity of adolescent Japanese girls. It is likely that people overseas will now gain a more complete picture of Mishima as a literary figure—not as a samurai, as he has been regarded in the past, but as a model of Japanese cool. In today’s mass-consumption society, Mishima will continue to be mythologized as a pioneering figure who was able to cross freely between high culture and subculture.

(Yomota Inuhiko, Professor, Meiji Gakuin University)



Haru no yuki protagonist Kiyooki seeks an audience with Satoko at the Buddhist temple where she has taken the tonsure.
Courtesy: 2005 Toho Co., Ltd./Fuji Television Network, Inc./Hori Production/SDP/Hakuhodo DY Media Partners Inc.

English Translation of Mishima Yukio’s Work

- Acts of Worship.* Trans. John Bester. Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1989.
- After the Banquet.* Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.
- Confessions of a Mask.* Trans. Meredith Weatherby. New York: New Directions, 1958.
- Death in Midsummer.* Trans. Edward G. Seidensticker, et al. New York: New Directions, 1966.
- The Decay of the Angel.* Trans. Edward G. Seidensticker. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974.
- Five Modern Nō Plays.* Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.
- Forbidden Colors.* Trans. Alfred H. Marks. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968.
- Madame de Sade.* Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- My Friend Hitler.* Trans. Sato Hiroaki. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002
- Patriotism.* Trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent. New York: New Direction Books, 1995
- Runaway Horses.* Trans. Michael Gallagher. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.
- The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea.* Trans. John Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.
- The Sound of Waves.* Trans. Meredith Weatherby. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956.
- Spring Snow.* Trans. Michael Gallagher. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.
- Sun and Steel.* Trans. John Bester. Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1970.
- The Temple of Dawn.* Trans. E. Dale Saunders and Cecilia S. Seigle. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.
- The Temple of the Golden Pavilion.* Trans. Ivan Morris. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959.
- Thirst for Love.* Trans. Alfred H. Marks. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.
- Twilight Sunflower.* Trans. Shigeo Shinozaki and Virgil A. Warren. Tokyo: Hokuseidō, 1953.
- The Way of the Samurai: Yukio Mishima on Hagakure in Modern Life.* Trans. Kathryn Sparling. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

FICTION



Takarabe Toriko

Born in 1933. Poet. Grew up in Manchuria until 1946. Her works include the poetry collections *Watashi ga kodomo datta koro* [When I was a Child], *Saiyūki* [Journey to the West] (for which she was awarded the ninth *Chikyū Prize* by the poetry magazine *Chikyū*), *Uyū no hito* [Nonexistent Person] (for which she was awarded the sixth *Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize*), and the essay collection *Shi no okurimono Jūni-ka-getsu* [Twelve Months of Poetry Gifts].

Tenpu meifu [Heaven and Hell]

By Takarabe Toriko

Kōdansha, 2005. 195x135 mm. 189 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-212955-8.

The author is an acclaimed poet, and this book is the result of her decision, 60 years after the events, to produce a written account of her harrowing experiences as a 13-year-old girl during the Japanese withdrawal from Manchuria. Though nominally described as a novel, most of what is written here is fact. The book describes such horrors as the death and disfigured corpse of the protagonist's father, acts of torture by Russian soldiers, and the rape suffered by the young girl. The writing recounts events in a calm manner without recourse to sentimentality.

Debate regarding Manchukuo, the state that Japan established in northeast China in 1931, has tended to focus on its fallacious nature as a state. Among the Japanese who actually colonized Manchuria were not a few people who made the voy-

age in the idealistic spirit of seeking a terrestrial utopia.

This adventure led, however, to utter disaster. Just before Japan lost the war in 1945, the Soviet army broke through the border between the Soviet Union and Manchukuo; many Japanese were sent to gulags in the Soviet Union. In a sense, what the author has undertaken in this book resembles Marguerite Duras's fictionalization of her experiences in Vietnam.

Sayonara, watashi no hon yo! [Farewell, My Books!]

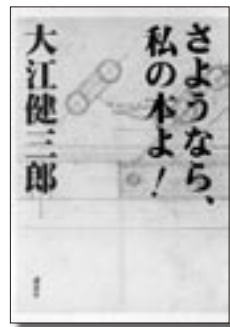
By Ōe Kenzaburō

Kōdansha, 2005. 195x137 mm. 467 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-06-213112-9.

Ōe Kenzaburō's novel is the final installment in a trilogy that features protagonist Chōkō Kogito, who serves as an alter ego for the author. The first part of the trilogy, *Torikaeko* [Changeling], published in 2000, was based on the suicide of renowned film director Itami Jūzō, the author's brother-in-law. At the end of the second part, *Ureigao no dōji* [The Child with the Melancholy Face], which was released in 2002, the protagonist is seriously injured while taking part in a drama re-creating a demonstration.

In *Sayonara, watashi no hon yo!* he spends his time recovering from his injuries at a villa in Kita-Karuizawa called Gerontion—"little old man"—where he finds himself embroiled in a terrorist plot. The terrorists are part of an organization that aims to resist at the individual level

the violence of nations in the post-9/11 world. The novel unfolds on three levels—autobiographical elements, fiction, and past literature, including T. S. Eliot—while heading toward an anticlimactic denouement. While serving as a shining example of Ōe's work, this book also evokes the feeling of a new beginning.



Ōe Kenzaburō

Born in 1935. Graduated from the University of Tokyo with a degree in French literature. Attracted attention while still in school for his short story "Kimyō na shigoto" [A Strange Job] and won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for *Shiiku* [trans. Prize Stock]. Has since then been at the forefront of modern literature and released numerous works. Won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. (See "The Creation of the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize" in the Events & Trends column on page 14 of Japanese Book News No. 46.)



Hirata Toshiko

Born in 1955. A poet, novelist, and playwright. Her dry literary style, liberally laced with black humor, completely changed the previous style of women's literature, opening up a new way forward for contemporary poetry. Her Shi nanoka [Seven Days of Poetry] won the Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize.

Futari-nori **[Two on a Bicycle]**

By Hirata Toshiko

Kōdansha, 2005. 195x135 mm. 253 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-06-212913-2.

This work, a collection of three short stories in one volume, is a depiction of middle-aged couples at the mercy of love and infidelity. The title refers to the way completely normal couples stray from their completely normal daily lives after some years together, wobbling ever more precariously as they pedal clumsily along on the bicycle of life. Strangely enough, this perilous ride comes like a breath of fresh air, leaving the reader feeling reinvigorated.

Arashiko, the protagonist of the first story, used to be an ordinary, happy housewife. Now in her forties, she falls for a man with a free and easy air and a family of his own and divorces her husband. She sets up a new, independent life, but the man she loves drops her the moment his grandchild is born.

The protagonist of the second story, Arashiko's younger sister Fujiko, spends her days in anguish after being deserted by her cheating husband. By chance Fujiko meets a young actress, and through their time together she is able to look inward at herself and heal her suffering.

In the third story, we see Fujiko's husband after he abandoned his family. He lives together with his lover, a bar hostess, and her father, but before long he leaves this life behind him as well and sets out alone. His journey takes him to a lighthouse, where he has a surprise meeting. The end of the journey is left up to the reader's imagination, but the last scene is bathed in hope as warm and bright as the beam of the lighthouse.

Fūmi zekka **[Incomparable Flavor]**

By Yamada Amy

Bungei Shunjū, 2005. 195x137 mm. 237 pp. ¥1,229. ISBN 4-16-323930-8.

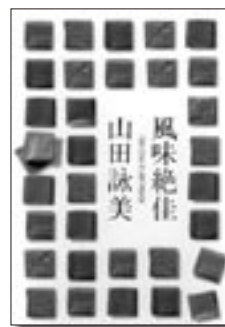
The protagonists in this collection of short stories by Yamada Amy are all manual laborers, such as a gas station attendant, a mover, a plumber, a garbage collector, and a person who works at a crematorium. They all live their lives unaffected by such affairs of the world as the state, society, and war; rather, they exist in the environs of human relations, such as those between man and woman, parent and child, and family members. Their days are given over to eating, sleeping, and sex.

Her subjects' everyday lives leave Yamada with an indescribable impression (hence the title), and the author's desire to depict them comes across just as strongly as another person's appetites for food, sex, or knowledge.

In the title piece, a man who works at a

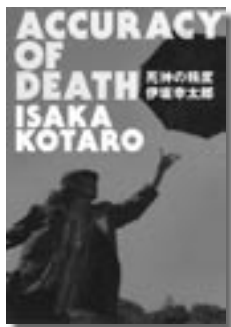
gas station tells the life story of his grandmother, a 70-year-old woman who insists on being called "Grandma" in English, constantly eats milk-caramel candies, and drives around in a red Camaro with her young boyfriend. His grandmother has spent her whole life operating a small bar next to a U.S. military base, an establishment where time seems to have stood still, as evidenced by the sounds of blues singer Millie Jackson that can be heard from inside. The woman only lets the people and the things that please her into this "America-obsessed" bar, which serves as a kind of Neverland for her.

This book—with its own "chewy" reading experience that leaves a sweet after-taste—won the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize.



Yamada Amy

Born in 1952. Made her debut as a writer in 1985 with the boldly told story of the intimate relationship between a Japanese woman and a black man in Beddotaimu aizu [trans. Bedtime Eyes]. Won the Naoki Prize for her 1987 work Souru myūjikkū rabāzu onri [Soul Music Lovers Only]. Two of her books have been made into movies. Prior to her debut as an author, worked as a manga artist under her real name of Yamada Futaba. Currently serves on the Akutagawa Prize Selection Committee.



Isaka Kōtarō

For his complete history, please refer to his interview in "In Their Own Words" on page 16.

Shinigami no seido **[Accuracy of Death]**

By Isaka Kōtarō

Bungei Shunjū, 2005. 195x137 mm. 275 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-323980-4.

Isaka Kōtarō, a young mystery writer whose presence in the literary world has been rapidly growing recently, amply displays his talent in this new series of short stories. This young author goes well beyond the narrow confines of the traditional mystery genre and reveals himself to be a writer with deep potential.

The lead character in this book is the Grim Reaper himself. Taking human form, Death walks the earth, methodically examining the circumstances of people who are to die a week later and issuing a report to the "responsible department." If his report says "yes," the subject of his investigation is to die on the eighth day.

This book consists of six of Death's "survey records." His subjects include a woman who works in the complaints department of a major corporation, always

troubled by the unreasonable demands of customers; a member of the *yakuza* trying to live his life in accordance with the old ways; a young person who stabs his mother and then murders a passerby when he flees the house; and complete strangers trapped in a mountain lodge by an avalanche.

All of these vignettes are woven with mystery, and while it is interesting to see them unravel, this book also contains a touch of the "hard boiled" in that it sketches a portrait of modern urban life as seen from the perspective of Death. In 2005 *Shinigami no seido* became Isaka's fourth work to be nominated for the Naoki Prize.

Tsuchi no naka no kodomo **[Child in the Ground]**

By Nakamura Fuminori

Shinchōsha, 2005. 197x137 mm. 140 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-10-458804-0.

Nakamura Fuminori is a promising young author, and his *Tsuchi no naka no kodomo*, which won the Akutagawa Prize, is an important work that breaks new ground. Since his literary debut, Nakamura has focused intensely on the paranoid impulses toward violence and destruction that lurk deep within human hearts, and in this book he goes further than ever before.

The protagonist of the story is a 27-year-old taxi driver. Abandoned by his parents when he was young, he lived with relatives who mercilessly abused him, in the end attempting to bury him alive in the mountains. While he was able to summon all his power and claw his way out to rescue, as an adult, he is unable to control the fear that remains deep within, and he exhibits depraved behavior that has him

actually seeking out fear. He resolves to live with and take care of a woman who has ruined her health through alcoholism, and he tries to overcome his dread. Given the ghastly crimes that appear in the newspaper nearly every day, the things written in this novel do not seem that far-fetched. Nakamura's novels straightforwardly examine the terror that lies within this reality.



Nakamura Fuminori

Born in 1977. Graduated from Fukushima University and has pursued a career as a writer since then. Won the Shinchō New Author Prize in 2002 for *Jū* [The Gun], which was also nominated for the Akutagawa Prize. Was again nominated for the Akutagawa Prize in 2003 for *Shakō* [Shade], which won the 2004 Noma Literary Award. Received a Mishima Yukio Prize nomination in 2005 for *Akui no shuki* [Memoirs of Malevolence]. (See the Events & Trends column on page 14 of Japanese Book News No. 46.)

BIOLOGY



Yoshimura Jin

Born in 1954. Was a researcher at the University of British Columbia, a researcher at London's Imperial College Centre for Population Biology, and a visiting professor at Chiba University. Is presently a professor at the Shizuoka University Faculty of Engineering and a professor at the State University of New York. Specializes in mathematical ecology and researches evolutionary theory.

Sosū zemi no nazo **[Mystery of the Prime Cicadas]**

By Yoshimura Jin

Bungei Shunjū, 2005. 197x140 mm. 126 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-367230-3.

The United States is home to strange types of cicada that emerge en masse once every 13 or 17 years. In Japan, as well, cicadas are mysterious insects that spend most of their lifespan (around six or seven years) in the ground as larvae. After all those years, though, they emerge and survive for just two weeks.

While cicadas are in general curious sorts of insects, some are particularly odd, like the insects in America that live in the ground for most of a cycle based on prime numbers. In the summer of 2004, cicadas were very much in the news, as Washington DC experienced a massive emergence for the first time in 17 years, while Cincinnati, Ohio, was overrun by an estimated 5 billion of them. Interestingly, these emergences were concentrated in very limited areas.

This book succeeds in unraveling the mystery of these bugs. Their secret lies back in the Ice Age, when North America was extremely cold. Low temperatures slow down the cicadas' growth. By emerging all at once in the same place, they are able to reproduce, meaning that they have developed a habit that allows them to perpetuate the species. Moreover, their cycle does not coincide with any others in nature, which results in less hybridization. This book explains, in other words, that because their extinction was a remote possibility, the only cicadas that survived were those that operated on a cycle based on a prime number.

NONFICTION

Teisei minshu shugi kokka Roshia—Pūchin no jidai **[The Putin Era: Czarist Democratic Russia]**

By Nakamura Itsurō

Iwanami Shoten, 2005. 195x135 mm. 247 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 4-00-024013-7.

The author of this book is an astute researcher who specializes in modern Russia. He spent four years in Russia doing fieldwork and aggressively gathering material from the imposingly named Presidential Palace Visitors' Meeting Area. The result is a work that is at once an insightful analysis of modern Russia's political system and a thrilling book that is more gripping than a mystery novel. President Vladimir Putin is trying to keep order in a unified Russian state while practicing authoritarianism. At the same time, he is taking an approach used by the czars who were beloved by the common people, pursuing a policy of actively listening to the public's complaints at the Visitors' Meeting Area.

Nakamura focuses on this dual character of Putin and refers to this political sys-

tem as "czarist democracy." In other words, while Putin has concentrated power like a czar, he is at the same time dependent on the direct support of the people. The most appealing aspect of this book is the way Nakamura scrupulously tells the stories of the people who personally petition the president, citizens who have problems and have lost hope. This volume is the result of daring fieldwork by a Japanese political scientist.



Nakamura Itsurō

Born in 1956. Professor of humanities and social sciences at the University of Tsukuba. Specializes in modern Russian politics. Studied at Moscow State University in 1985 and the Institute of State and Law at the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1990. Other works include Tōkyō hatsu Mosukuwa himitsu bunsho [Secret Moscow Documents from Tokyo] and Roshia shimin—taisei tenkan o ikiru [The Russian People: Living Through Systemic Transformation].



Kobayashi Hirotada

Born in 1937. Graduated from Waseda University in 1960 and then joined the Mainichi Newspapers. After retiring in 1992, worked as an instructor at Rikkyo University and Musashino Women's University until 2002. Is currently a nonfiction writer whose works focus on the history of the Edo period (1603–1868).

Watashi no sengo wa owaranai **[My Postwar Era Will Never End]**

By Kobayashi Hirotada

Kinokuniya Shoten, 2005. 195x135 mm. 276 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-314-00987-X.

The protagonist of this book is Tane, the wife of Honda Hajime, a military official who was hanged as a Class B-C war criminal in the aftermath of World War II. Tane met Honda when she was a nurse in a hospital's surgery ward. After suffering an untreatable wound while fighting in central China that left his right shoulder destroyed, Honda was brought to a clinic in the town of Kengun that was attached to a military hospital in Kumamoto on March 29, 1941. Tane, meanwhile, found herself forced to quit her job at the hospital, and she married Honda in the winter of 1942. Honda later went on to work at the Fukuoka POW Camp (Kumamoto No. 1 Branch Camp); his job was to keep watch on the prisoners, which led to his status as a war criminal after the conflict had ended.

Honda argued: "While I disciplined [the prisoners] harshly, I did not abuse them. Hitting and punching are things that troops do in wartime. Everyone did it." Addressing the reason for his death sentence, Honda said, "I don't remember causing any prisoners to die." One year after being sent to Sugamo Prison, though, Honda was indicted and sentenced to be hanged, even though the facts presented in the indictment (abuse of prisoners) contained a number of errors. Moreover, the trial was concluded in a single day—the very day before Tane was to appear as a witness. It was that day that Tane's "never-ending" postwar era began.

Kagaku taikoku Amerika wa genbaku tōka ni yotte umareta

[Dropping the Atomic Bomb Made America a Science Power]

By Utada Akihiro

Bungei Shunjū, 2005. 195x137 mm. 275 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-323980-4.

This book sheds light on a little-known aspect of modern history. With documents unearthed in the United States, it demonstrates that the development of the atomic bomb during World War II was what made the United States a science power and examines the thoughts and actions of the people who were at the center of the project.

It is commonly believed that General Leslie Groves, the military chief of the project, and Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the nuclear laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, were at the center of the effort to develop the atomic bomb, commonly known as the Manhattan Project. This book, however, focuses on the scientist Vannevar Bush. It was actually

Bush who led the project at the side of the president, playing a major role in the development of the atomic bomb. Bush set the direction that the U.S. government would take regarding the bomb, and he changed the workings of American society, going so far as to bind the scientific community, industry, and the military together. After the war, he simultaneously created the system for handling atomic weapons while promoting scientific advancements. Born in New England, the birthplace of America, Bush was the quintessential all-American, and this book takes a deep look at the importance of the role he played.



Utada Akihiro

Born in 1958. Graduated from the University of Tokyo Faculty of Letters. Worked at Sōdōsha, where he edited Gendai Shisō [Modern Thought], and later was editor-in-chief of Yuriika [Eureka]. Has worked freelance since 1993. While editing materials in the US Library of Congress, also writes on the subjects of media and science and technology.



Aoki Fukiko

Born in 1948. Moved to the United States in 1984 and served as the chief of the New York bureau of the Japanese version of Newsweek for three years. Married writer Pete Hamill in 1987. Major works include FBI wa naze terorisuto ni haiboku shita no ka [Why Was the FBI Defeated by Terrorists?].

731

By Aoki Fukiko

Shinchōsha, 2005. 197x140 mm. 386 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-10-373205-9.

The Kwantung Army's Unit 731 conducted experiments on Chinese prisoners in Manchuria during World War II, working to research, develop, and mass-produce biological weapons. Unit 731, as it is commonly known, was led by Ishii Shirō. This book clarifies what the unit did and what role Ishii played by confirming the correspondence between Ishii's personal notes and materials stored in the United States, thus shedding light on a dark part of postwar history.

Ishii hailed from a small rice-farming town in Chiba Prefecture called Kamo, a place that was home to a number of old burial grounds. The freelance journalist who authored this book learned that Ishii's handwritten notes were in the possession of a woman who used to work for the Ishii family. The two volumes of this diary cover the period just after the end of

the war. The author attempted to decipher the contents of the memos to discern what Ishii did in Unit 731, but as it was mostly codes and abbreviations, it was incomprehensible to an outsider. To understand the contents of the memos and the background behind them, it was necessary to compare them with the facts as stated in secret documents on Ishii and other subjects stored in the US National Archives. Through this painstaking work, the author re-creates in detail Ishii's actions and valiantly endeavors to unravel some of the mysteries of the war and the postwar era, revealing why Ishii was not executed as a war criminal.

HISTORY OF MUSIC

Modanizumu hensōkyoku [Variations on Modernism]

By Ishida Kazushi

Sakuhokusha, 2005. 197x140 mm. 551 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 4-86085-023-8.

This is a study that compares and considers how modern Western music was transmitted to Japan, China, and Korea and the processes by which, after a period of conflict and competition between Western and traditional local music, these countries produced their own composers. The three countries have in common the fact that they initially received Western music through the three main channels of Christianity, the military, and school education. In terms of the basis for accepting this music, however, they were all different. The colonization of Korea and China's turn to socialism also hampered the development of music in these countries in the twentieth century.

It is well known that the prototype for "Kimigayo," the Japanese national anthem, was composed by a foreigner hired

by the Japanese military band, but "Aegukka," the South Korean anthem, was a genuine composition by a Korean musician who was active internationally during colonization. The Chinese national anthem, meanwhile, was originally composed as a film score by a young man who died in Japan.

It is hoped that this book will serve as the catalyst for further studies of music history in Asia. The work will lead readers to the understanding that, far from being a cheap imitation of Western arts, East Asian arts in modern times were an experiment demanding that the idea of modernity be reconsidered.



Ishida Kazushi

Born in 1946. Music critic. Graduated from the Musashino Academy of Music graduate school. Teaches music history as a professor at Kurashiki Sakuyo University. Has introduced modern and traditional Japanese music to overseas audiences at the invitation of the Japan Foundation and other organizations. Chairman of the Japan-Russia Society for Musicians.

POLITICS



Watanabe Akio

Born in 1932. Is president of the Research Institute for Peace and Security and professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo and Aoyama Gakuin University. Specializes in international politics and Japanese diplomacy.

Aja-Taiheiyō rentai kōsō [The Concept of Asia-Pacific Cooperation]

Edited by Watanabe Akio

NTT Shuppan, 2005. 217x155 mm. 367 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 4-7571-2152-0.

It has been 25 years since the death of Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi. Though he is known for his work as foreign minister, when he teamed up with Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei to restore diplomatic relations with China, Ōhira was a visionary politician who went further and put forward the concept of “Pacific Rim cooperation.”

The idea behind this proposal was that all of the countries that ring the Pacific Ocean—those in North and South America, East Asian nations, the countries that now belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the states of Oceania—would gather once a year to discuss regional cooperation on such issues as security, political matters, and economics. Ōhira’s vision was realized with the 1989 creation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Published to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ōhira’s death and the twentieth anniversary of the Masayoshi Ōhira Memorial Foundation, this collection of essays examines the concept of his initiative and how it has been carried forward.

The “Pacific Rim cooperation” vision originally encompassed the maritime countries of Asia, excluding China, as that country had not yet begun its economic development. In 1978, though, almost at the same time Ōhira took office as prime minister, China embarked on the Four Modernizations, setting off what would become a spectacular economic boom that now dictates that “Asia-Pacific cooperation” include China’s sphere of influence in continental Asia.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Teikoku Nihon to jinrui gakusha [Anthropologists and Imperial Japan]

By Sakano Tōru

Keisō Shobō, 2005. 217x160 mm. 511 pp. ¥5,700. ISBN 4-326-10156-3.

How has Japanese anthropology developed amid the modernization that Japan has undergone since the Meiji era (1868–1912)? The first challenge for Japanese anthropologists was to battle against the racial prejudice of their Western counterparts. They had to take on the role of observers and define subjects for their research while aware that they themselves were also subjects for observation. It was impossible to keep any investigation into the origins of the Japanese people separate from the imperialistic nationalism that was being whipped up at that time. Japanese studies of native peoples in Hokkaido and in Taiwan, Korea, and Micronesia, which had been colonized by Japan, were very different from those conducted in Western colonies, simply by virtue of the fact that both subjects and

researchers were Asians. The assertion that Koreans and Japanese shared the same origins was exploited relentlessly to justify Japan’s colonial rule of Korea. And research in Taiwan was persistently designed to stress that the indigenous people of Taiwan were far removed from the Chinese cultural sphere and were in fact ethnically close to Japan. This book traces the development of anthropology in Japan from 1884 to 1952, providing substantial evidence of just how closely related knowledge and politics are in the modern nation-state.



Sakano Tōru

Born in 1961. Assistant professor at the Nihon University College of Economics. His research focuses on science and colonialism and on the social and ethical issues surrounding cutting-edge science and technology. Coauthor of Seimei kagaku no kin-gendai shi [The Modern History of Life Science] and Jinshu gainen no fuhensei otou [Questioning the Universality of Racial Concepts].

CINEMA



Tanaka Masasumi

Born in 1946. A researcher of cinema history renowned for his expertise in the study of Ozu. Author of *Ozu Yasujirō no hō e* [*Toward Ozu Yasujirō*] and *Ozu Yasujirō shūyū* [*A Tour of Ozu Yasujirō*] and editor of *Ozu Yasujirō, zen hatsugen* [*The Complete Statements of Ozu Yasujirō*].

Ozu Yasujirō to sensō **[Ozu Yasujirō and the War]**

By Tanaka Masasumi

Misuzu Shobō, 2005. 195x135 mm. 251 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 4-622-07148-7.

This work reveals the wartime experiences of one of the great directors of Japanese cinema, a subject that has until now been taboo. On seeing a seized copy of the Orson Welles film *Citizen Kane* in Singapore, which the Japanese army had occupied, Ozu is said to have exclaimed, "We can't possibly win a war against a country that produces movies as amazing as this!" This anecdote is often quoted as evidence of Ozu's liberal artistic temperament. Yet when he served as a soldier on the Chinese mainland in the 1930s, he was involved in poison-gas operations. Proof of this can be found in the diary that he diligently kept during his service. Japanese critics have been so busy divesting Ozu of politics and declaring him the personification of cultural nationalism that there has been an implicit taboo forbid-

ding any mention of this period of his life. Amid the current Ozu boom, this book is the only piece of research that has challenged the taboo.

Ozu viewed all the events occurring before his eyes with a calm, highly philosophical gaze, and in recording these events he deliberately removed any hint of sentimentality. Even when soldiers cut down enemies with their swords, Ozu calmly observed the similarities between their movements and those in samurai movies. This eye for detail permeates all of his films. This work is valuable in understanding both the abhorrence of the recent past that marked Ozu's postwar films and the spirit of systemic adaptability that meant the Japanese could not possibly have organized a resistance movement.

CULTURE

Bi to reishetsu no kizuna **[Bonds of Civility]**

By Ikegami Eiko

NTT Shuppan, 2005. 217x160 mm. 538 pp. ¥4,200. ISBN 4-7571-4116-5.

All classes of the Japanese have strived to bring the pleasure of beauty into their lives through such pursuits as haiku, Kabuki, and ikebana, and they have formed their concepts of civility through the literary arts. Ritualized arts performed in groups, such as *renga* linked verse and the tea ceremony, are textbook examples of socialization based on rules of decorum, and these public spaces devoted to beauty flourished during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), when a market economy developed rapidly and the literacy rate jumped.

While civility in a modernizing Europe had its roots in the decorum of royal courts, all of Japan, by contrast, was governed under a vertically structured, rigid social system. Within this setup, the author notes, there arose various types of

free and loose horizontal networks that bound private areas together, with most centered on the ideas of beauty and culture.

Ikegami published a work in English through the Cambridge University Press in February 2005 titled *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, coming out with this Japanese edition afterward. In it she focuses on networks and civility, analyzing how the consciousness of beauty gave rise to aesthetic civility in Japan, as well as the influence it has had on the political awareness and identity of the Japanese.



Ikegami Eiko

Professor of sociology at the New School University in New York and is director of the university's Center for Studies of Social Change. After working at Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc., completed a master's degree in regional studies at the University of Tsukuba. Received a PhD in sociology from Harvard University. In 2002 served as chair of the American Sociological Association's Section of Comparative and Historical Sociology.

No. 2: Contemporary Japanese Architecture

A number of contemporary Japanese architects have created architectural masterpieces around the world. The works of such creators as Isozaki Arata, Andō Tadao, Itō Toyō, and Sejima Kazuyo have been highly praised for their innovative designs and bold compositions, as well as their painstaking detail and the precision of their execution. While the visual aspects of these works are commonly featured in magazines, less is known about the concepts underlying them or their background. This article looks at some books that give a deeper understanding of contemporary Japanese architecture.

Books by Architects

Tokyo is rich in contemporary architecture, and a recommended guide to the structures of the capital is *Kenchiku MAP Tōkyō* [The Architectural Map of Tokyo] (Toto Shuppan, 2003). Also, although they are not famous, the strange complexes of different facilities or the minuscule shops that appear out of the jumbled, high-density chaos of the megalopolis form architectural subcultures of a sort, and are of enormous interest. Useful guides to such works are *Meido in Tōkyō* [Made in Tokyo] (Kajima Shuppankai, 2001) by 1960s-born architects Tsukamoto Yoshiharu and Kaijima Momoyo, and *Petto ākitekachā* [Pet Architecture] (World Photo Press, 2001) by Atelier Bow-Wow, a studio set up by Tsukamoto and Kaijima. Tsukamoto also puts forward some excellent theories on Japanese housing in “*Chīsa na ie*” no *kizuki* [Awareness of Small Houses] (Ōkokusha, 2003) and *Gendai jūtaku kenkyū* [Contemporary House Studies] (Inax Shuppan, 2004). A group of architects of the same generation as Tsukamoto and Kaijima called Mikan give a collection of ideas for renovating run-down housing complexes in *Dan-chi saisei keikaku* [Plans for Renovating Housing Complexes] (Inax Shuppan, 2001). Since the collapse of the bubble economy there has been great interest in sustainable methods that use existing buildings for a long time, rather than the scrap-and-build techniques typical of the period of high economic growth.

Among the books written by architects born in the 1950s are *Sejima Kazuyo tokuhon—1998* [Sejima Kazuyo Reader, 1998] (A.D.A. Edita Tokyo, 1998) by Sejima Kazuyo, *Harappa to yūenchi* [Empty Lots and Amusement Parks] (Ōkokusha, 2004) by Aoki Jun, and *Makeru kenchiku* [Losing Architecture] (Iwanami Shoten, 2004) by Kuma Kengo. Sejima does not usually write essays, but in her reader she talks about the path from her upbringing to her success as an architect, laying open her creative approach in the process. Kuma gives his criticism of the twentieth century’s style of “winning architecture,” which impacts heavily on the environment, and he proposes a softer, more passive model of “losing architecture.”

Books written by architects born in the 1940s, meanwhile, include Itō Toyō’s *Tōsō suru kenchiku* [trans. *Blurring Architecture*] (Seidosha, 2000) and Andō Tadao’s *Rensen renpai* [A Succession of Defeats] (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2001). Itō searches for a new model of architecture for the computerized information age, aiming for gentle, flowing spaces. Andō’s book, about the battle of continually entering competitions, gives readers insight into the special features of his work through comparison

with ideas produced by other architects working to the same specifications.

Criticisms of Architecture

A number of books enter into controversy over contemporary architecture. In *Gendai kenchiku tero izen/igo* [Contemporary Architecture Before and After Terrorism] (Seidosha, 2002), architecture critic Iijima Yōichi criticizes the architects born in the 1950s and 1960s. He argues that they became lethargic in the wake of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, shying away from powerful structures and sticking to designs offering only everyday sensations. In my own *Owari no kenchiku/Hajimari no kenchiku* [Architecture of the End, Architecture of the Beginning] (Inax Shuppan, 2001), I rebut Iijima’s criticisms, finding great potential for the future in contemporary architects’ honest, straightforward perspectives. I also attempt a thorough appraisal of contemporary architects in *Gendai kenchiku no pāsukeutibu* [Perspectives in Contemporary Architecture] (Kōbunsha, 2005). Huge developments continue unabated in twenty-first-century Tokyo, and in *Toshi no kanashimi* [The Sorrow of the City] (Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2003) architecture historian Suzuki Hiroyuki criticizes urban planning focused on economic considerations while deciphering the memory of different places. Nagashima Yukitoshi takes a detailed look at the structures erected on the streets by homeless people, who have fallen from society, in *Danbōru hausu* [Cardboard Houses] (Poplar, 2005).

There are also several titles looking at the historical perspectives of contemporary architecture. Isozaki Arata is an architect who has worked on projects around the world and is also known for his theoretical writing on architecture. In *Kenchiku ni okeru “Nihonteki na mono”* [trans. *Japan-ness in Architecture*] (Shinchōsha, 2003) he takes a close, critical look at the extent to which the Japanese concepts of architecture were established, changed, and used for political ends, while looking back over the different arguments concerning such classical masterpieces as the Grand Shrine at Ise and Katsura Imperial Villa. His ideas confront present-day Japan, which is leaning toward nationalism. A veritable intellectual battle unfolds in “*51C*” *Kazoku o ireru hako no sengo to genzai* [51C: Boxes to Contain Families, Postwar and Present] (Heibonsha, 2004) between architect Yamamoto Riken and various researchers regarding the form of the spaces that have largely shaped contemporary Japanese residences. In 2005 Japanese architecture lost one of its greats with the death of Tange Kenzō; Fujimori Terunobu gives a

careful analysis of Tange's ideas and the transitions in his designs in *Tange Kenzō* (Shinkenchikusha, 2002). The movement of Japanese architects into work overseas began with Tange, and he nurtured Isozaki and many other suc-

cessors. The whole history of twentieth-century Japanese architecture can be seen through Tange.

(Igarashi Tarō, architecture critic)

***Gendai kenchiku no pāsupekutibu* [Perspectives in Contemporary Architecture]**

By Igarashi Tarō

Kōbunsha, 2005. 173x118 mm. 306 pp. ¥850. ISBN 4-334-03315-6.

This book outlines Japanese architecture in the “post-postmodern” phase since the latter half of the 1990s. The first chapter covers the huge developments and the brand-name architecture of Tokyo, while the second moves on to the provinces to look at art museums and renovated buildings there. The third chapter

concentrates on residential buildings, and the fourth examines the relationship between cars and architecture, mainly with respect to metropolitan expressways. The book's final section looks at where the works by the architects of each generation stand in relation to each other.



***Harappa to yūenchi* [Empty Lots and Amusement Parks]**

By Aoki Jun

Ōkokusha, 2004. 195x140 mm. 237 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-86073-025-9.

The author takes one of the most intellectual approaches to design in modern-day Japan, as seen in his Louis Vuitton shops around the country. Amusement parks are places that lack nothing, where all the functions are fully laid on; empty lots are like empty sheets, which the user becomes subjectively involved with.

The author criticizes the former and is in favor of the latter, calling for a more formalistic approach to architecture.

***“51C” Kazoku o ireru hako no sengo to genzai* [51C: Boxes to Contain Families, Postwar and Present]**

By Suzuki Shigefumi, Ueno Chizuko, Yamamoto Riken et al.

Heibonsha, 2004. 210x148 mm. 186 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-582-54427-4.

51C refers to the standard C-type design for public housing designed in 1951, the 2DK (two bedrooms with a combined dining room and kitchen). This system had a great effect on postwar Japan, bringing about standardization of residences. This book features impassioned

arguments among the architectural planners who created the 51C, sociologists who argue against the image of the family fixed by the 51C, and architects who propose dwellings that go beyond the 51C.



***Gendai jūtaku kenkyū* [Contemporary House Studies]**

By Tsukamoto Yoshiharu and Nishizawa Taira

Inax Shuppan, 2004. 180x115 mm. 495 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-48725-117-5.

Compared to other countries, postwar Japan has a vast supply of small, experimental residences. The two authors are both architects who have planned outstanding dwellings; they deliberately avoid social or family questions in this book, approaching buildings in terms of the form of their particular spaces, or else

from their construction or their environment. Both architects are conversant with planning, and they put forward abundant commentaries. The book contains numerous plans of residences.

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

In January 2005, the 134th Akutagawa Prize for promising new fiction writers was awarded to the story "Oki de matsu" [Waiting off the Coast] by Itoyama Akiko (first published in *Bungakukai*, September 2005) and the Naoki Prize for experienced writers of popular fiction to *Yōgisha X no ken-shin* [The Devotion of Suspect X] (Bungei Shunjū, 2005), a murder mystery by Higashino Keigo.

Itoyama, 39, received the semianual award on her fourth nomination. She made her literary debut in 2003, winning the Bungakukai Prize for new writers. The following year, she received the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature, typically given to more seasoned writers. Her Akutagawa Prize-winning "Oki de matsu" illustrates the delicate friendship between a man and a woman, work colleagues who promise to destroy the data on the other person's computer if that person dies first. The story is loosely based on Itoyama's own experiences as a woman selling household appliances.

Naoki Prize winner Higashino, 47,



Higashino (left) and Itoyama pose with their prizewinning works.
Courtesy: Jiji Press

made his writing debut in 1985 with *Hōkago* [After School], which won the Edogawa Ranpo Prize for best mystery, and has had several bestselling novels, including *Himitsu* [Secret], which was turned into a movie. He has now been nominated six times for the Naoki Prize. His latest award-winning novel is about a genius mathematics teacher who comes up with a plan to cover up a crime committed by a woman he is in love with, and his classmate, now a physicist, helping a detective to solve the murder case.

Both prizes, named after novelists Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Naoki Sanjūō, were founded in 1935.

Success for Practical Guides and Web Books in 2005

Nonfiction books made something of a comeback in 2005, and there was an increase in sales of books first released as "blogs" (web logs) over the Internet. Two nonfiction paperbacks that sold over a million copies each during 2005 have been described as a reflection of the depths of the modern-day psyche. In *Atama ga ii hito, warui hito no hanashikata* [How Smart and Stupid People Talk] (2.2 million copies sold), professional literary instructor Higuchi Yūichi considers the current tendency toward foolish talk along with some ways to keep it in check. Writer Yamada Shin'ya uses some familiar examples to explain accountancy in *Saodake-ya wa naze tsuburenai no ka?* [Why Don't Bamboo Pole Vendors Go Broke?] (1.25 million copies). *Kore dake wa shitte okitai kojīn jōhō hogo* [The Least You Should Know About Personal Information Protection] by Okamura

Announcement

Murakami Haruki Symposium

The Japan Foundation will hold a symposium on the works of Murakami Haruki, one of the most beloved writers in the world today, from the standpoint of overseas translations of his works. Translators, critics, and others from around the world will gather in Japan to talk freely about the appeal of his books and the factors behind their stunning popularity.

Never before has a Japanese writer captured the imagination of so many young people around the world. As well as featuring discussions among people of various countries of the charm of Murakami's works, this symposium will also turn an eye to the social and cultural situations of the world's young people who love his books.

Considering how widely his works are read, we believe this symposium will provide a fresh perspec-

tive on Japan's relationship with the world, as his works can be seen as a new symbol of Japan in an age of globalization.

On the first day, American writer Richard Powers, who feels a kinship with Murakami, will deliver a keynote address. Following that, translators will participate in symposiums and workshops open to the public. There are also plans to have translators take part in a translation training camp and in public seminars in regional cities around Japan. Outside of the keynote speech, the primary language used will be Japanese; simultaneous interpretation will be available for English and Japanese.

When: March 25–26, 2006

Where: University of Tokyo
Komaba Campus

Program:

Saturday, March 25: Open symposium (Room 900, 13:00–18:00)

- (1) Keynote address: Mr. Richard Powers (American writer)
- (2) Panel discussion: Translators and critics from America, Europe, and Asia
- (3) Comparison of the covers of translated works
- (4) Murakami Haruki as seen in the world of films

Sunday, March 26: Workshops
(Facility TBA, 13:00–16:00)

- (1) Workshop 1: The wonderful world of Murakami as seen in translation
- (2) Workshop 2: Murakami's literature and the image of Japan in the context of globalization

Reservations are required for those wishing to take part. For more information, contact the Japan Foundation's Europe, Middle East, and Africa Section by email: <emea@jpf.jp>.

Hisamichi and Suzuki Masatomo sold 850,000 copies, because a large number of people were believed to be rather perplexed by the Personal Information Protection Law that came into effect in April 2005. *Waru no chie-bon* [The Book of Wicked Wisdom] (700,000 copies) gives some essential pointers for getting by without letting other people take advantage of you, and *Shinsaiji kitaku shien mappu shutoken ban* [Maps for Getting Home After an Earthquake: Greater Tokyo Edition] is a book of maps to help inhabitants of the capital find their way home on foot if they are stranded in the event of a major quake. These books are a reflection of another sign of the times, the unease many people feel about crime or natural disasters. At a time of slashed prices, budget-priced books sold well; half of the top 10 bestsellers were books in the ¥500–¥800 price range, featuring pared-down contents to keep their prices affordable.

The year's works seemed a bit more subdued than those of 2004, when there was an exciting boom in pure love stories, such as those by youngest-ever Akutagawa Prize winners Wataya Risa and Kanehara Hitomi. Instead of pure love between a man and a woman, though, there was something of a boom in stories of familial love in 2005. In his autobiographical *Tōkyō Tawā, Okan to boku to, tokidoki, Oton* [Tokyo Tower: Me and Mom, and Sometimes Dad] (900,000 copies), writer Lily Franky tells of his memories of his late mother. *Happī bāsudē* [Happy Birthday] by Aoki Kazuo and Yoshitomi Tami (500,000 copies) is an adult version of a children's book by the same name (700,000 copies) about a young girl abused by her mother, this time told from the mother's perspective. These books give some indication of the height of public concern over such problems affecting the family as juvenile crime, young dropouts who neither work nor study, and abuse.

In 2004 the only blog-inspired book to make the top 20 bestseller list was *Densha otoko* [Train Man] by Nakano Hitori (1.01 million copies), but these titles sold well in 2005. Two titles by young writer Yoshi, *Motto, ikitai . . .* [I Want to Live More]

(1 million copies) and the two-volume *Koi bana* [Flowers of Love] (blue volume, 560,000 copies; red volume, 570,000), were well received by female high-school students, not a demographic segment generally seen as heavy readers. Shiraishi Masanori's *Seikyō no Shiraishi-san* [Mr. Shiraishi of the Co-op] (850,000 copies) gained great popularity thanks to the humorous, straightforward advice dispensed by the author.

2005 bestsellers (list compiled by Tōhan Co.)

(December 2004–November 2005)

1. *Atama ga ii hito, warui hito no hanashikata* [How Smart and Stupid People Talk] by Higuchi Yūichi. PHP Kenkyūsho.
2. *Kaneko-shō* [Kaneko's Excerpts] by Ikeda Kaneko. Shufunotomoshia.
3. *Saodake-ya wa naze tsuburenai no ka?* [Why Don't Bamboo Pole Vendors Go Broke?] by Yamada Shin'ya. Kōbunsha.
4. *Shin ningen kakumei* [The New Human Revolution Vol. 14] by Ikeda Daisaku. Seikyō Shimbunsha.
5. *Kore dake wa shitte okitai kojiri jōhō hogo* [The Least You Should Know About Personal Information Protection] by Okamura Hisamichi and Suzuki Masatomo. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha.
6. *Motto, ikitai . . .* [I Want to Live More] by Yoshi. Starts Shuppan.
7. *Densha otoko* [Train Man] by Nakano Hitori. Shinchōsha.
8. *Shinpi no hō* [The Laws of Mystery] by Ōkawa Ryūhō. Kōfukuno-kagaku Shuppan.
9. *Mondai na Nihongo* [Problematic Japanese] edited by Kitahara Yasuo. Taishūkan Shoten.
10. *Waru no chie-bon* [The Book of Wicked Wisdom] edited by Kado Akio and Jinsei no Tatsujin Kenkyūkai. Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Setouchi Jakuchō Wins Nonino International Prize

Writer and nun Setouchi Jakuchō, 83, has been selected for the Nonino International Prize, an Italian prize awarded to people active in the inter-

national cultural sphere. Setouchi was awarded the prize for her achievements in literary experimentation, which show constant change and development, and her acute sensitivity as a Buddhist nun that features in her writing. The Nonino Prize is one of the awards granted in the field of literature and the arts by the Noninos, an Italian family of distillers. Past Nonino winners include Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul and director Peter Brook. Setouchi's novels *Hiei* [Mount Hiei] and *Jotoku* [Feminine Virtue] have been published in Italy.

Murakami Haruki's *Kafka on the Shore*

The *New York Times* chose Murakami Haruki's *Kafka on the Shore* (translated from *Umibe no Kafuka*) as one of the 10 best books of 2005. The novel was chosen, along with four other works of fiction and five works of nonfiction, from among all the books reviewed by the newspaper during 2005. Murakami's surreal novel focuses on two characters whose lives are linked: a 15-year-old runaway, who calls himself Kafka, in search of his mother and sister, and an elderly World War II veteran who can speak with cats.

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Interview with Isaka Kōtarō

Isaka Kōtarō is currently enjoying tremendous popularity among the nation's youth. The skillful composition and lingering after-impression of this young author's *Shinigami no seido* [Accuracy of Death], published in June 2005 (see page 6), caused a great stir among both general readers and hardened critics. *Japanese Book News* spoke to Japan's most talked-about young writer.

Japanese Book News: *Shinigami no seido* was cleverly put together as a series of short stories in a variety of styles, making up one narrative overall. What did you have in mind when you wrote the book?

Isaka Kōtarō: When I was writing I had movie images in my head. I decided to deliberately try to use a different type of movie—a gangster movie, a romance, a road movie, or whatever—for each part of the book. I tried to create a feeling of coherence across the whole book by bringing the character Death into each of the stories.

JBN: This character makes cold, harsh judgments, even when the character being judged is a likable person.

IK: I did that on purpose. The idea that death is bad is a human value. Humans have to die sometime, be it sooner or later. I took death as a premise and wrote stories about the events leading up to this event. I wanted to create a positive atmosphere, even though death is imminent—this was a new feeling I was aiming for. Fiction has this capability to excite and move us in unique ways that cannot be classified in the usual run of human emotions.

JBN: The characters in your books are often avid Dostoyevsky readers. Even the killers and thieves!

IK: Dostoyevsky is one of my ideal writers. He deals with the mysterious hidden within all of us, which—although difficult to grasp—leaves a breathtaking impression on the reader. There is something there that really moves you. If you made a film of his work, you would never be able to get that appeal across. I love that aspect of his writing. People have often said that my books are like screenplays, but I think the pleasure of a novel lies in the fact that it can't all be made into visual images.

JBN: I understand that as the author you like the second story, “Shinigami to Fujita” [Death and Fujita], most of all.

IK: Yes, that's right. Fujita is a gangster who goes to help his sworn brother, Akutsu, who has been captured by a rival. Akutsu feels uneasy about whether Fujita will win the battle, even though he believes in his strength. Death lets us know that Fujita will win the battle but die later—that's the reader's privilege. I love that feeling. The groundless trust that Akutsu has for Fujita, I really like that, too. I was rather pleased with myself, as I was able to end the story on a positive note despite Death's cruel decision. [Laughs]

JBN: I thought the sixth and final story, “Shinigami tai rojo” [Death vs. Old Woman], was also outstanding.

IK: The fourth tale is one of pure love, in which a young woman loses the lover she was destined to be with, but if I left her story there it would have ended on a tragic note. I didn't feel happy with that. So in the last story Death is

sent to her in her old age, and we find out all about her life after the death of her lover. Even when someone loses a person who is very special to her, she still has to go on living—I think that's really important.

JBN: Your writing uses deft devices that pull the reader into your work as fiction. You also aim some sharp messages squarely at modern-day society, though.

IK: I don't want people to read my books just to kill time just because they are fiction. I'm not trying to get across a specific message, like “vegetables are good for you,” but I want to set up some kind of vibration or transformation in the reader. I want my books to be a catalyst—a change in the readers' way of looking at things during their normal, everyday lives.

JBN: Some of your minor characters make some very cutting criticisms of modern society. Is this on purpose?

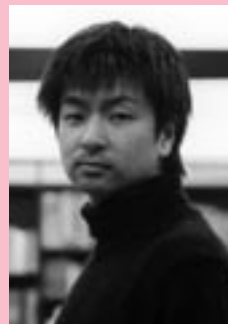
IK: It's not that I set out to criticize the whole world, but my own feeling of incongruity with society does come out in my work. If I were completely upfront about this, though, it would be quite preachy, and instead of taking notice the readers would shut me out. I want to be able to put this angst across through vehicles like humor or nonsense.

JBN: In your latest work, *Maō* [The Devil], you have some sharp criticism. Your warnings are aimed at a general public that relies on the Internet and TV for information and whose value judgments are easily controlled by the media, and at the way people's increasingly empty thinking is leading the world down a path toward disorder.

IK: That was meant to be a reflection that included myself—a self-admonition, if you like. It's sad that we should be going that way, but my writing includes an element of introspection, since I'm going that way, too.

JBN: What sort of books would you like to write in the future?

IK: In my past work I kept the stories interesting with tools like subplots, sudden twists in the narrative, and feelings of exhilaration. When I wrote *Maō*, though, I intentionally did without devices like that. That way I shed all my worries over what the readers would expect from me. Now I want to enjoy myself—to write plenty of subplots, plot twists, and all those other things I used to use, and to write more entertainment-type books. And I don't want to lose the idea of my work being a sort of catalyst. I want to write offbeat books, more like European films than Hollywood movies.



Isaka Kōtarō

Born in 1971 in Chiba Prefecture. Graduated from the Tōhoku University School of Law; is now a novelist living in Sendai. Best-known works include *Jūryoku piero* [Gravity Clown] (2003), *Chirudoren* [Children] (2004), and *Gurasuhoppā* [Grasshopper] (2004), which were all nominated for the Naoki Prize. *Yōki na gyangu ga chikyū o mawasu* [A Cheerful Gang Turns the Earth] (2003) is being made into a film due for release in spring 2006.