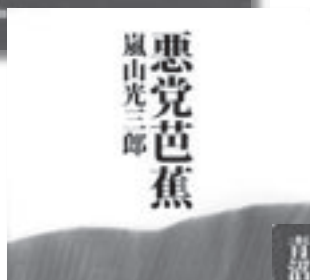


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Children's Books Today

Doi Yasuko

Since 1999 an increasing number of new children's books have been published in Japan, with as many as 5,064 appearing during 2005 (data from *Shuppan nenkan 2006* [Publishing This Year, 2006], Shuppan News Co., Ltd., 2006). The trend may be in part due to recent legislation passed as a result of anxiety about children abandoning reading: a December 2001 law promoting reading among children and a July 2005 law that aims to promote the culture of the written word.

A widespread movement to encourage reading is now underway, exemplified by the "10-minute morning reading exercise" commonly carried out in elementary and middle schools and visits by volunteers who read picture books and tell stories to elementary schoolers. Publishers are taking this into account in their product planning, boosting the proportion of short, easy-to-read books that can be enjoyed by many children, including those who are not so used to reading. This has led to an increase in the number of picture books with a strong visual content and works focused firmly on entertainment.

With this in mind, I want here to consider some recent publications and present some authors of picture books and other books for young readers, together with some of their representative works that exhibit a high level of sophistication and are popular with Japanese children.

* * * * *

In Japan the picture book genre flourished from the latter half of the 1960s to the 1980s, with many new authors appearing using diverse modes of expression. From the 1990s onward, however, relatively few new writers appeared. This sparse period kept readers' focus on the creators who started out in the earlier decades: their early works are considered classics of the genre, and both old and new works by these authors sell well today. More recent years, however, have seen the appearance of some new authors, although few in number, attempting new modes of expression.

The death of Chō Shinta, an established author with long-lasting popularity, in June 2005 was a considerable shock for Japanese readers. Commemorative exhibitions are being held and many magazines are issuing special-feature editions on him even today. Among his representative works are *Goro-goro nyān* [Cats That Travel by Plane] (Fukuinkan Shoten, 1984), *Kyabetsu-kun* [Little Cabbage] (Bunken Shuppan, 1980), and *Gomutama Pontarō* [Rubber-Headed Pontarō] (Dōshinsha, 1998). The liberated, nonsensical atmosphere of these works has captivated Japanese readers.



Kyabetsu-kun
[Little Cabbage] by
Chō Shinta (Bunken
Shuppan, 1980)

Adults were slow to recognize the quality of Chō's books when they were first published, although they quickly found popularity with children. Today, however, Chō is widely considered to be a representative author of picture books. Children respond with gut-reaction laughter to his bold use of color and the style of his illustrations—at first



Sora tobu tēburu
[The Flying Table]
by Sasaki Maki
(Fukuinkan Shoten,
2002)

glance one could think they had been done by a child—as well as the almost too insistent repetition seen in his text, which uses simple vocabulary including many onomatopoeic words.

Another very popular author of nonsense picture books, exhibiting a refined sense of line and stable composition, is Sasaki Maki. A recent work of his—*Sora tobu tēburu* [The Flying Table] (Fukuinkan Shoten, 2002)—tells the story of a young girl and her canine friend, who discover a strange flying table and travel to places including the South Pole, a maze, a railroad bridge, and the sea, making friends with all kinds of animals on the way.

Following Britain's lead, Japan also has a flourishing Bookstart movement to encourage reading from early ages. One writer producing picture books for babies and infants is Katayama Ken. His work is characterized by warm-colored watercolor illustrations and a distinctive style of figure drawing, as can be seen in his *Ki wa nan-nimo iwanai no* [The Tree Says Nothing] (Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 2005). In this book Katayama describes how a child clammers up his father in the park, making believe that his father is a tree—a delightful image of parent and child bonding through the enjoyment of each other's company.



Rufuran Rufuran
[Refrain Refrain] by
Arai Ryōji (Petit
Grand Publishing,
2005)

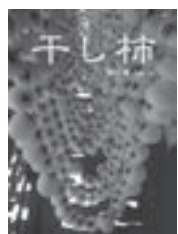
Until recently Japanese picture books have tended to concentrate on the mother-child relationship, but a growing number of books are now depicting the ties between father and child.

Another popular author of picture books with a distinctive style of illustration is Suzuki Kōji. In his *Gattan gotton* [Clickety-Clack] (Heibonsha, 2006) a reindeer drives a narrow-gauge railcar through a town, a volcano, and many other places. The repetition in the text satisfies the ear while Suzuki's vigorous use of color and bold compositions, together with his distinctive characterization, create a unique world.

A number of picture books with a strong visual element hit the shelves from the latter half of the 1980s to the first half of the 1990s. Among the authors who made their

debut in the period and still enjoy popularity today are Arai Ryōji and Kondō Kumiko. The world of Arai's books is colorful and fanciful. An internationally recognized creator, Arai received the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2005, in part thanks to a series of exhibitions of original illustrations by 11 Japanese picture-book authors held in England in 2001 under the title "The Art of the Japanese Picture Book." The exhibition was organized by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at the University of Surrey Roehampton, London, and was shown at the Birmingham Central Library, the Royal National Theatre, London, and the Hatton Gallery at Newcastle University. Arai's recent *Rufuran Rufuran* [Refrain Refrain] (Petit Grand Publishing, 2005) depicts a strange and colorful world and tells the story of a little girl called Refrain, who meets a prince in a forest and becomes his friend.

Kondō Kumiko, in contrast, presents the world of nature in a humorous manner. The pages of her books are packed to bursting with all kinds of insects in personified form. *Suku-suku nohara* [Growing Field] (AliceKan, 2001) begins with two pages of life-size drawings of the eggs of various insects that live in the fields. Following this, the lives of these insects are shown page by page. With its puzzle element of looking for "hidden objects" in the pictures, the personified insects' stories, and its scientific element,



Hoshi-gaki [Dried Persimmons] by Nishimura Yutaka (Akane Shobō, 2006)

the book is very popular with children. It could be described as combining the science picture book genre with that of the illustrated storybook.

As the picture book became an established genre in Japan, the assumption that it was something for infants fell by the wayside, leading to the publication of more nonfiction picture books that older children, aged from 10 to their teens, could enjoy. Outstanding works in this category include *Obāchan wa ki ni natta* [Granny's Turned into a Tree], a photo-illustrated book with text and photos by Ōnishi Nobuo (Poplar, 2002) about people who stayed on to the end in their village, set to disappear for the construction of a dam; and *Hoshi-gaki* [Dried Persimmons], with text and photos by Nishimura Yutaka (Akane Shobō, 2006), describing how Japan's traditional sweet delicacy is produced.

As a general tendency, a growing number of books aimed at young adults are being published, and there is an increasing trend toward blurred distinctions between certain categories: some children's books are proving popular with adults, while many novels intended for adults enjoy widespread popularity with children.

Fantasy fiction has been one area of particularly strong growth. The Harry Potter books have had sensational success in Japan, giving rise to a "fantasy boom" in the country. The works published as a result include outstanding books by Japanese authors as well as translations of foreign books.

Uehashi Nahoko is an ethnologist researching the aborigines of Australia. Her 10-volume series *Moribito* [Guardians] (Kaiseisha, 1996–2007) has won a broad readership ranging in age from kids as young as teenagers



Seirei no moribito [Guardian of the Spirit] by Uehashi Nahoko; illus. Futaki Makiko (Kaiseisha, 1996)

to adults. The books have as their protagonists Crown Prince Chagumu of the fictional kingdom of New Yogo, who has been rejected by his father the king, and the prince's female bodyguard Barusa, who once saved his life. The series describes political exchanges between the kingdom and neighboring countries. Barusa, too, has had to leave her home, her father having been caught up in a political conspiracy. The book creates a fantasy environment based on the author's unique worldview, describing not only the world inhabited by Chagumu and Barusa but also a place inhabited by spirits and suggestive of death.

People have bemoaned the fact that Japan has not produced good fantasy writers, but this is changing. Authors who read and thoroughly digested the Western fantasy genre as children are now beginning to produce works reflecting the Japanese environment and their own unique worldviews. These authors include Uehashi Nahoko, Itō Yū, Tomiyasu Yōko, and Saitō Hiroshi. Itō's *En no Matsubara* [Matsubara, Where Ghosts Dwell] (Fukuinkan Shoten, 2001) is set in the Heian period (794–1185); Tomiyasu's *Kakure-yama no bōken* [The Secret Mountain Adventure] (PHP Kenkyūsho, 2000) takes various strange creatures from Japanese folklore as its protagonists; and Saitō's series *Shirakoma-ki* [Tales of the Magic White Fox] (Kaiseisha, 1996–2006; four volumes have appeared so far) recounts the adventures of a white fox—a strange being that was thought to be capable of living for hundreds of years, sometimes as a kind of specter, sometimes acting as a god's messenger. From the earliest times the Japanese considered foxes to be magical creatures capable of changing form. In Saitō's books the fox changes into a human being and continues its travels for centuries, experiencing the changes from the late Heian (1088–1185) to the Kamakura period (1185–1336) and beyond.



Happi note [Happy Note-book] by Kusano Taki; illus. Tomoko Everson (Fukuinkan Shoten, 2005)

The authors of realistic children's books, another subgenre deserving attention, are overwhelmingly women born in the 1960s and 1970s. Their works deal with the worries of puberty and of growing up in general that are experienced by young boys and girls in their day-to-day lives.

Among books in this area are some that describe boys' growing up through participating in sports, including Asano Atsuko's *Batterī* [The Battery], a story about baseball (Kyōiku Gageki, 1996–2005; six volumes); Mori Eto's *Dive!!* on competitive diving (Kōdansha, 2000–02; four volumes); and Satō Takako's *Isshun no kaze ni nare* [Become a Gust of Wind] on athletics (Kōdansha, 2006; three volumes). These works are very popular with young readers.

At the same time, we are today seeing the appearance of a growing number of rewarding books that deal with friendship among girls at the age of puberty, their worries

(Continued on page 14)

FICTION



Satō Takako

Born in 1962. Won the MOE Grand Prix for Fairy Stories in 1989 for her first novel, *Samā-taimu* [Summertime], as well as the Sankei Award for Children's Books and Publications and the Japanese Association of Writers for Children Award in 1998, and the Robō no Ishi Bungaku Award in 1999, for *Iguana-kun no ojama na mainichi* [Days with a Bother-some Iguana]. This work won the 2007 Hon'ya Prize.

Issshun no kaze ni nare [Become a Gust of Wind]

By Satō Takako

Three volumes:

Kōdansha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 231 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-213562-7 (4-06-213562-0).

Kōdansha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 275 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-213605-1 (4-06-213605-8).

Kōdansha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 386 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-06-213681-5 (4-06-213681-3).

This story of youth traces the rivalry and friendship of two young protagonists, Ren and Shinji, who are members of their high school's athletics team. Ren is naturally talented and Shinji is the hard-working type; Satō tells their story powerfully, yet at times wistfully. All the ingredients of high school life are here: unexpected accidents, tough training, the warm-hearted coach and the characters on the team, fierce competition with other schools, and clumsy forays into young love. Satō depicts them all with great skill, taking readers back to their own days of youth.

This captivating work transports the reader to the athletics field to race as a member of the team. Many books make the reader empathize with the protago-

nists, but the feeling *Issshun no kaze ni nare* gives of becoming one with the setting of the story is a rare achievement. This is a mark of the realism with which Satō portrays the development and feelings of her teenage protagonists.

The vivid focus on minute details of short-distance races is fascinating—the movements of the athletes' muscles, the strategies employed by runners in their races, and even the feel of the wind. Satō brings to life the thrill of teamwork in her description of the 400-meter relay, an event in which success depends on each team member's ability as well as the strengths of their various combinations. *Issshun no kaze ni nare* is a masterful depiction of the ups and downs of young athletes.

Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru [It's Blowing Hard]

By Miura Shion

Shinchōsha, 2006. 195x140 mm. 512 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-10-454104-1 (4-10-454104-4).

Ten students live together in a rundown apartment in danger of collapsing at any time. One day they decide to start running, hoping to enter the Hakone Ekiden, a long-distance university relay race held every New Year between Tokyo and Hakone. The problem is that only a few of them have any athletic experience at all; the rest are a motley collection, including an *otaku* geek who spends his life immersed in manga comics and a theoretically minded academic. This is hardly the stuff from which a crack team of distance runners is made, but they do not let this put them off. The *ekiden* is an athletic event with a long tradition in Japan, and the Hakone Ekiden is the one most closely followed. Dreaming of one day entering this hallowed race, the students give it their all.

The story is based on a wildly improbable premise, and yet readers find themselves desperately urging these unlikely heroes on—maybe because just under half of the book is devoted to the climax of the Hakone Ekiden itself. Miura goes into fascinating detail of the *ekiden* that the 10 athletes must complete together, giving an exhaustive account of the runners' tactics at each stage of the race and all the work of the athletes and their supporters. Just as the course of the *ekiden* goes up mountain passes and down into valleys, the runners have their own ups and downs in life. As each runner slogs along his section of the course, Miura gives flashbacks of his past and the people around him. The way 10 such disparate people gradually come to think and feel as one is depicted compellingly in this book.



Miura Shion

For biographical information, please refer to the interview "In Their Own Words" on page 16.



Manazuru **[Manazuru]**

By Kawakami Hiromi

Bungei Shunjū, 2006. 192x132 mm. 272 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 978-4-16-324860-8 (4-16-324860-9).

Kawakami Hiromi

Born in 1958. Graduated from the Biology Department at Ochanomizu University. Belonged to a science-fiction group during her student days, when she began to write.

Worked as a middle school teacher after graduation but became a writer after her marriage and childbirth. Won the Akutagawa Prize in 1996 for Hebi o fumu [Tread on a Snake]. Her 2001 work Sensei no kaban [Teacher's Briefcase] became a bestseller, won the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize, and was made into a TV drama.

Manazuru is a groundbreaking new novel and a new direction taken by Kawakami Hiromi, one of Japan's most popular women writers. The book's protagonist, Kei, lives with her mother and middle-school-aged daughter. Her husband disappeared 12 years ago, and she subsequently has an affair with a married man who has children, but her missing husband never completely leaves her mind.

The only clue as to his whereabouts is a single word that he entered in his diary: *Manazuru*, the name of a small fishing port about 100 kilometers southwest of Tokyo. Drawn by her husband's mysterious memo, she visits the town many times, invariably being hounded by—and often conversing with—a ghostlike woman whom other people do not seem to see. The novel depicts the heroine's emotional

states and actions using highly distinctive, sensuous prose, without ever revealing who the shadowy figure is or where the husband has gone.

Kawakami creates her story with terse, choppy sentences that resonate and linger in the mind, giving fresh and deeper meaning to such familiar words as *chikai* (near), *tōi* (far), *nijimu* (smudge), *karada* (body), and *kimochi* (feeling). Such a distinctive style will no doubt be difficult to translate, but inasmuch as *Manazuru* is an attempt to take modern Japanese to its full poetic potential, some ambitious translators may be tempted to take on this daunting challenge.

Umi ni otoshita namae **[A Name Dropped in the Sea]**

By Tawada Yōko

Shinchōsha, 2006. 195x138 mm. 176 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-436103-8 (4-10-436103-8).

A woman falls into the sea in a plane accident. She is saved but loses her memory. With a bundle of receipts that she has on her as her only clues, she tries to recover her past. But although there are clear traces of her having lived, she no longer knows who she is. The story is symbolic of today's consumption-oriented society. Including the title work, this book consists of four short stories. All of them involve crossing borders, either in one direction or to and fro.

In "Jisa" [Time Difference] the protagonists are three gay men. Mamoru is a Japanese teacher at a German university. His lover, Michael, aspires to be a cartoonist and lives in Tokyo. Meanwhile, Manfred, who is German and in love with Michael, is a teacher of German in New York. All three live far from their land of birth,

make a living by teaching their mother tongue in a foreign country, and are involved in relationships across racial and national boundaries.

The homosexual theme could perhaps be seen as a metaphor for the crossing of sexual boundaries. What binds this complicated triangle together is the mobile telephone, crossing the boundaries of time. While their ceaseless telephone conversations make the barrier of time zones irrelevant, they are constantly aware of time differences. Having herself crossed borders, the author shuttles between and manipulates the German and Japanese languages as she portrays from her own unique viewpoint the uncertainties of life caused by the border-crossing lifestyles of this information age.



Tawada Yōko

Born in 1960. Educated at Waseda University and the University of Hamburg. Has written and won awards for novels in both German and Japanese. 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.

ESSAY



Sakai Junko

Born in 1966. Wrote a column for a magazine while still in high school. Graduated from Rikkyo University's College of Tourism, after which she spent three years working for an advertising agency before taking up full-time writing. Her work, informed by a pitiless power of observation of urban women just like herself, her witty vocabulary, and her consummate analytical powers, has attracted a following of enthusiastic fans.

Miyako to Miyako [Kyoto and Tokyo]

By Sakai Junko

Shinchōsha, 2006. 195x138 mm. 256 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-398505-1 (4-10-398505-4).

The Japanese have a special affinity for Kyoto. In 2005, 47 million domestic tourists—nearly a third of the country's population—visited the city. What makes it so popular? The author compares Kyoto and Tokyo from a range of viewpoints—language, flavors, manners, attitudes to life, university students' perceptions of the cities, and literary representations of them—and explains the allure of Japan's ancient capital from the perspective of a Tokyoite.

Many books have been written about the differences between these cities, but this one is an unusual take on them from the viewpoint of an ordinary young woman living in central Tokyo. When the author looked at life in her city—with its bright lights and urban loneliness—through the lens of Kyoto, unexpected facets of Japan's capital came to light. Other discoveries

came from looking at Kyoto from the viewpoint of Tokyo's fast pace of life. Sakai does not present dreamlike images of Kyoto, but rather seeks to break down the stereotypes surrounding it.

Her approach is not one of scholarly urban theory, though. She puts her finger on details that no one else has noticed, highlighting the subtle differences in the ways the cities' inhabitants view their respective urban spaces, the illusory image and misunderstandings surrounding Kyoto, and people's attachment to it.

Sakai's meticulous observation and witty critiques of urban culture have great appeal, but readers will be most stimulated by the abundant humor that informs her writing. The author's unique sense for language and superb use of metaphor make for an enjoyable narrative.

Oboete inai [I Don't Remember]

By Sano Yōko

Magazine House, 2006. 195x138 mm. 224 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-8387-1695-1 (4-8387-1695-8).

Picture-book author Sano Yōko gives full play to her freedom of spirit in this collection of essays, most of which were written when she was in her fifties. From her current perspective as a self-confessed "old biddy" of 68, she says, "In your fifties you're still young, still immature." To her observers, however, she has not changed at all.

Society, of course, is undergoing constant change. Sano recalls that when she was a child, families who owned their own telephones were "in a special class." They were always being bothered by people phoning up to speak to their neighbors, forcing them to go out and look for the intended recipient.

Sano was overjoyed, therefore, when she got married and had a phone installed in her own home. It soon became the

norm for every family to own a phone—indeed, nowadays it is common for each family member to have one—but how did she arrange dates with boyfriends in the days when she did not have a phone? Sano does not remember.

The author writes that if she were reborn, she would want to be born a woman again. Women can now become whatever they like. She does not think that she could become a master writer like Nagai Kafū or Uchida Hyakken, however. Sano is a vivacious, fun-loving, but in the end lonely free spirit.



Sano Yōko

Born in 1938 in Beijing. After graduating from the College of Art and Design of Musashino Art University, in 1967 went to Germany to study lithography at an art university in Berlin. After returning to Japan, she drew picture books while also doing design and illustration work. She won a Sankei Award for Children's Books and Publications for Ojisan no kasa [The Older Man's Umbrella] and the Kōdansha Publishing Cultural Award for Illustrated Books for Watashi no bōshi [My Hat].

NONFICTION



Aonuma Yōichirō

Born in 1968. Graduated from Waseda University. Became a freelance journalist after working in television production. Has actively pursued a career documenting crime and other news events and food issues. Author of Ōmu saiban bōshōki [The Farcical Aum Trials] and other works.

Kikan sezu: Zanryū Nihonhei 60-nenme no shōgen **[Nonrepatriation: Testimonies of Japanese Soldiers Who Did Not Go Home]**

By Aonuma Yōichirō

Shinchōsha, 2006. 197x140 mm. 336 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-10-466802-1 (4-10-466802-8).

Among the Japanese soldiers who fought in Southeast Asia during World War II, there were some who elected not to return to their home country. This in itself is not a new revelation, but the author—who was born in 1968 and thus never experienced the war—took great interest in the fact that some of the men were still living there, six decades after the war. He succeeded in tracking down 14 aging former soldiers in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and other countries and conducted lengthy interviews with them, the results of which are presented in this volume.

He asked the men, most of whom were around 80 years old, why they did not go home 60 years ago. The answers pointed to a variety of personal reasons, such as not having anywhere to return to, not hav-

ing a family in Japan, and desertion from a unit. The testimonies force a rethinking of Japan's postwar history, a period during which the concerns of these former soldiers were completely neglected while the country rushed headlong toward economic prosperity.

The tales these men tell also contain graphic accounts of the misery of war and describe the warmth and magnanimity of Asian societies that embraced these soldiers and provided them with families and places to live. The book is a timely and important document, preserving the testimonies of these former soldiers before it is too late.

BIOGRAPHY

Shugo o massatsu shita otoko **[The Man Who Obliterated the Subject]**

By Kanaya Takehiro

Kōdansha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 285 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-06-213780-5 (4-06-213780-1).

Anyone learning the Japanese language overseas will surely have heard of Mikami Akira. Many learners have studied his grammar in some form or other. But surprisingly few people know much about the man himself. Now the first critical biography of Mikami has been published. The author realized the great contribution made by Mikami in the field of Japanese-language education for foreigners, and was himself strongly influenced by him.

Interviews and other painstaking research produced a rounded picture of the linguist. In his youth Mikami wanted to be an art critic, but he became engrossed in the study of Japanese grammar while teaching at high school. It took much time and effort before Mikami's grammar was recognized, though. In 1942 he published the fruits of his research, but it was

largely ignored by the world of Japanese linguistics with the University of Tokyo at its apex. After World War II the linguist Kindaichi Haruhiko recognized Mikami's contributions, but this brought him little fame. Mikami's grammar finally came into its own with his 1960 publication of *Zō wa hana ga nagai* [Elephants Have Long Trunks].

There are now more than 2 million non-Japanese learners of the Japanese language worldwide. This book provides Mikami's fans with biographical facts about this grammarian as well as insight into the little-known world of the Japanese-language establishment, conservative even today, and the hardships that had to be overcome by the pioneers of modern grammar studies.



Kanaya Takehiro

Born in 1951. After graduating from the University of Tokyo, received an International Rotary Club scholarship to study at Laval University, Québec, Canada, where he earned a master's degree in linguistics. Received his doctorate in linguistics from the University of Montreal. Specializes in linguistic typology and Japanese education. After working in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and other positions, he has since 1988 headed the Japanese section of the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Montreal.

CRITICISM



Arashiyama Kōzaburō

Born in 1942. Worked as the editor-in-chief of the magazine Taiyō [The Sun] before becoming a writer. Won the Kōdansha Essay Award in 1988 for Shirōto hōchō-ki [Chronicle of an Amateur Chef] and the JTB Grand Prize for Travel Writing for Bashō no yūwaku [The Lure of Bashō] (title later changed to Bashō kikō [Journal of Bashō's Travels]) in 2000.

Akutō Bashō **[Bashō the Scoundrel]**

By Arashiyama Kōzaburō

Shinchōsha, 2006. 197x140 mm. 272 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-360104-3 (4-10-360104-3).

Haiku is reaching an ever wider audience around the world. Matsuo Bashō is the man credited with spreading haiku throughout Japan and securing its position as the shortest poetic form during the Edo period. He has been revered ever since as the great master of haiku.

Arashiyama voices his doubts over this established wisdom. He believes that Bashō was never the saint he is made out to be, and in arguing his case he makes no bones about painting Bashō as a scoundrel. Bashō seemed to have had no scruples about flattering the government of the time, for example; nor, apparently, was he unaware of the commercial aspect of his art. He had considerable business acumen, being able to band together a group of 300 rather dubious followers and earn a living by rattling off verse. Bashō was extremely

changeable. He is said to have lavished his affections on particularly gifted pupils, doing his utmost to help them develop as poets, only to later discard them by the wayside. It also appears that Bashō's aim with haiku was not, as is often believed, to make it the last word in elegant simplicity. He constantly reinvented himself by embracing new trends and styles, rather than sticking rigidly with immutable traditions.

Arashiyama's book gives a remarkable new perspective on Bashō the poet. Reading it, one realizes that Bashō was not someone who became a haiku master by attaining some marvelous enlightenment; he was instead an artist on a far larger scale. By casting Bashō in a new light, Arashiyama gives the reader a deeper appreciation of haiku.

HISTORY

Nihon saigaishi **[A History of Natural Disasters in Japan]**

Edited by Kitahara Itoko

Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006. 197x140 mm. 466 pp. ¥4,200. ISBN 978-4-642-07968-6 (4-642-07968-8).

This book details the history of natural disasters in Japan from ancient to modern times, covering fields including archaeology, seismology, volcanology, hydraulics, and civil engineering.

The numerous disasters examined here include earthquakes, floods, famines, and volcanic eruptions, and the book explores how major natural disasters, far from being momentary phenomena, have had a huge, lasting impact on society. That is why, while the disasters themselves may occur naturally, their effects have great historical significance.

From this comes the central thesis of this work, that disasters penetrate to the depths of society. This is a lesson the editors learned from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that struck Kobe and the surrounding region on January 17, 1995.

One feature of this book is its treatment not only of the destruction caused by natural disasters, but also of reconstruction in the postdisaster phase. Reconstruction signifies people's overcoming the devastation of a disaster. It forces society to expand social infrastructure in readiness for the next one. This task, in turn, can only be accomplished by state power, which means that the state must have the ability to rebuild after a disaster.

It must be noted, however, that this link between state power and rebuilding led to the prioritization of infrastructure projects over victim assistance in the reconstruction process following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.



Kitahara Itoko

Born in 1939. Graduated from Tsuda College and gained a master's degree in Japanese history from the Tokyo University of Education Graduate School. Appointed a part-time lecturer at Kanagawa University in 2004. Author of Jishin no shakaishi [The Social History of Earthquakes] and Kinsei saigai jōhōron [Information Theory of Modern Disasters].



Inoue Shōichi

Born in 1955. Became professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in 2002. Received a master's degree in engineering at Kyoto University after graduating from the university's Faculty of Engineering. Won the Minister of Education Award for Art for Nanban gensō [Southern Barbarian Fantasy] and the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities for Tsukurareta Katsura Rikyū shinwa [The Fabricated Myth of the Katsura Imperial Villa].

***Yume to miwaku no zentaishugi* [The Promise and Allure of Totalitarianism]**

By Inoue Shōichi

Bungei Shunjū, 2006. 173x112 mm. 432 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-16-660526-2 (4-16-660526-7).

This book compares the fascist or totalitarian regimes of Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union with the contemporaneous government of Japan from the viewpoint of architecture. Fascist administrations in Italy and Germany erected a succession of massive structures to assert their authority and to give people a vision of the unfolding future. Those who rose to power in Japan during the late 1930s, by contrast, considered architecture a luxury and restricted the construction of buildings requiring the heavy use of steel and other metals. Most of the structures they erected were crude, wooden barracks. This, the author contends, points to a fundamental difference with European fascism. He argues that Japanese leaders were not fascist so much as simply operating under a wartime regime.

Inoue's attempt to overturn a widely accepted notion is backed by his broad knowledge of cultural history and analysis of intriguing case studies. The widespread practice of using traditional *kawara* tiles as roofing material for otherwise modern buildings, for example, has frequently been cited as indicating militaristic or fascist inclinations during this period. Inoue refutes this theory by providing an explanation rooted solely in architectural history.

Inoue's book is full of similar assertions. Some of these are no more than hypotheses and will require further study, but the text is nonetheless full of stimulating and original ideas. It is a seminal work shedding new light on how architectural styles reflect political ideology and nationalism.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

***Za peninshura kuesuchon* [The Peninsula Question]**

By Funabashi Yōichi

Asahi Shimbunsha, 2006. 195x145 mm. 751 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 978-4-02-250241-4 (4-02-250241-X).

This nonfiction work consists mainly of interviews relating to issues surrounding North Korea, including its nuclear and missile development programs, the abduction issue, and the crisis in the Six-Party Talks. The title refers to a "question," rather than a "problem," to show that there is no ready answer to issues relating to North Korea.

Tanaka Hitoshi, then director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, first met North Korean representative "Mister X" in a suite on the top floor of the Swiss Hotel in Dalian, China, on November 17, 2001, a little over two months after the September 11 terrorist attacks. "Mister X" was a pale, gentle-looking man of average height and build and appeared to be in his mid-forties. Calling himself Kim

Chol, he said he was a member of North Korea's National Defense Commission. This is the kind of material contained in the interviews that dominate this work, which also contains highly detailed accounts of surrounding circumstances and portraits of the figures who appear. What emerges is a vivid depiction of ongoing contemporary historical events.

While historians seek to discern major historical currents by means of documentary evidence and logic, nonfiction writers depict the current reality. The outcome of the "peninsula question," including the rise of China in the Six-Party Talks, remains unclear.



Funabashi Yōichi

Born in 1944 in Beijing. Joined Asahi Shimbunsha in 1968 after graduating from the University of Tokyo's College of Arts and Sciences. Served as American General Bureau chief for Asahi Shimbunsha. Has won numerous awards, including the Vaughan-Ueda International Journalist Award. His works include *Ajia Taiheiyō fūjōn* [trans. Asia-Pacific Fusion: Japan's Role in APEC], which won the Asia Pacific Grand Prix Award, and *Dōmei hyōryū* [trans. Alliance Adrift], which won the Shinchō Arts and Sciences Award.

MANAGEMENT



Inamori Kazuo

Born in 1932. Graduated from the Faculty of Engineering of Kagoshima University. Founded Kyoto Ceramic Co., Ltd. (now Kyocera Corporation) in 1959. Served as president and chairman before being appointed chairman emeritus in 1997. Founded the Inamori Foundation in 1984 and established the Kyoto Prizes, awarded annually to people who have contributed to the progress and development of humanity. Nurtures his successors as director of the Seiwajuku, a training school for young managers.

Amēba keiei **[Amoeba Management]**

By Inamori Kazuo

Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 2006. 195x138 mm. 259 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-532-31295-4 (4-532-31295-7).

This work illuminates the management philosophy of one of modern Japan's most renowned entrepreneurs, Inamori Kazuo, chairman emeritus of Kyocera Corporation and honorary advisor of KDDI Corporation.

Starting with the difficulties he encountered when founding Kyocera, Inamori describes his experiences at the head of the company and the management method he developed through them, which he calls "amoeba management." The term *amoeba* refers to small groups formed within the company. As a company grows and its operations expand, it becomes impossible for the president to oversee the entire firm. Inamori therefore decided to divide the company internally into small groups and give these organizations independent responsibility for making profits.

In other words, each group had to live by its own resources and abilities.

To increase employees' will to participate, Inamori came up with ideas like "hourly accounting charts." Employees thus came to share the ideas of the firm's top executives and to view things from a managerial perspective.

"Amoeba management" has a flaw, however. With each group pursuing its own profits, clashes of egos become more frequent. In other words, the overall harmony of the company is in danger of being compromised. To overcome this problem, Inamori stresses that the top executives who lead a company must have character and a philosophy of seeing the whole picture.

CULTURE

Momongā tai Mikoshi nyūdō: Edo no bakemono-tachi **[Momonga vs. Mikoshi Nyūdō: Specters of the Edo Period]**

By Adam Kabat

Kōdansha, 2006. 214x150 mm. 271 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-212873-5 (4-06-212873-X).

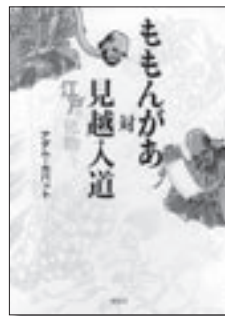
The American author of this work, nicknamed Yōkai Hakase ("Professor Goblin"), uses *bakemono* (ghosts, goblins, and other monsters) as a medium for examining the culture of Edo-period Japan. He has researched Japan's "phantom literature" since the 1990s, when he became interested in the *bakemono* of the Edo period, and has produced several books on the creatures.

This time his passion has led him to focus on the "ecology" of the monsters depicted in popular illustrated storybooks of the era. In his book's first part Kabat describes representations of the different types of *bakemono*. In the second part he goes on to look at love and sex among them, and in the third part he deals with their clothes, food, and homes. The author

has a profound affection for *bakemono*, and while the monsters' words and activities are comical enough in themselves, Kabat's writing on them is filled with a typically Edo sense of humor.

The primary material this book examines is written in *hentai-gana*, a form of the Japanese *kana* syllabic script that uses many variant characters not found in modern Japanese. Kabat explains the structure of this literary genre and the effect created by the way illustrations are positioned relative to the text.

By interpreting the existence of these far-from-everyday beings as a projection of human life, the author affords us a fascinating insight into the imagination and aspirations of the ordinary people of the Edo period.



Adam Kabat

Born in 1954 in New York. Researcher of Japanese literature. Came to Japan after graduating from Wesleyan University, Connecticut, in 1981. Professor at Musashi University since 1988. Author of *Edo bakemono zōshi* [Storybook of Monsters of the Edo Period] and *Edo kokkei bakemono zukushi* [Compendium of Comical Monsters of the Edo Period].



Komatsu Narumi

Born in 1962. Began her writing career in 1989. Has received critical acclaim for her nonfiction works, particularly interviews with athletes, Kabuki actors, and others. Is the author of Nakata Hidetoshi: Kodō [Nakata Hidetoshi: Heartbeat], Ichirō on Ichirō, and Saraba Kankurō: Jūhachidaime Nakamura Kanzaburō shūmei [Farewell to Kankurō: Succession to the Acting Name of Nakamura Kanzaburō XVIII].

Wa o tsugu monotachi [Inheritors of Japanese Tradition]

By Komatsu Narumi

Shōgakukan, 2006. 195x135 mm. 231 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-09-387677-3 (4-09-387677-0).

This book is a collection of interviews conducted by a nonfiction writer. The 22 interviewees are, as the title suggests, artists and craftsmen in traditional fields who are expected to become leading figures in their respective domains.

The best way of describing the book's contents may be to give a representative listing of the professions covered: *shōgi* (a chess-like board game) player, shamisen (a three-stringed instrument) player, shōbue (a bamboo flute) player, master of the Takeda school of horseback archery, maker of sumac wax candles, performer of the *biwa* (Japanese lute) style formerly played by the samurai of Satsuma (now Kagoshima Prefecture), Kyogen actor, Noh actor, Tsugaru *urushi* (lacquerware) craftsman, maker of iron teakettles, head of a school of the incense ceremony,

rakugo storyteller, maker of traditional fans, Bunraku puppeteer, shakuhachi player, calligraphy artist, and cormorant fisherman.

Some of these traditional fields are not well known even to modern-day Japanese. Most of the interviewees are still in their thirties and forties and should continue to preserve and help develop these arts for many years. The book is an easy-to-read introduction to traditional Japanese culture and is recommended for foreign readers interested in this topic.

MANGA

Ōoku [The Inner Palace]

By Yoshinaga Fumi

Hakusensha, 2005. 182x130 mm. 199 pp. ¥571. ISBN 978-4-592-14301-7 (4-592-14301-9).

Hakusensha, 2006. 182x130 mm. 233 pp. ¥590. ISBN 978-4-592-14302-4 (4-592-14302-7).

(Only vols. 1 and 2 have been published in book form; the rest of the story continues to be serialized.)

At the start of the Edo period, a strange disease strikes. Affecting only young men, it causes rapid death, decimating the male population. As a result, the roles of men and women are reversed: A woman becomes shogun and is rumored to have 3,000 of the finest physical specimens of men gathered in her harem in the inner palace.

Yoshinaga's story unfolds from this fanciful premise, and while from the plot alone one might expect a parody or even a joke, *Ōoku* is nothing of the sort. Strange it may be, but as one reads the book it becomes clear that the story is put together based on actual historical events that took place around the Tokugawa shoguns, within the power structure of the ruling Edo shogunate. Yoshinaga has succeeded

in injecting this work with the ingredients of a gripping historical drama: romance, suspense, a complex web of interrelated characters, and warrior spirit. With these elements skillfully intertwined, one can keenly feel the psyche and the emotions of the men and women forced into this peculiar situation. The welling up of a fateful love is almost painful in the way it tugs at the heartstrings.

Ōoku is a work of entertainment that comes under the category of girls' manga, but in reality it goes much further than that. It is a work of considerable depth that addresses the question of what it means to be a man or a woman in a feudal society, making the reader ponder anew questions of gender.



Yoshinaga Fumi

Born in 1971. Won an award in the girls' category of the twenty-sixth Kōdansha Manga Award in 2002 for *Seiyō kottō yōgashiten* [Antique Bakery]. Her best-known work, this was dramatized for television as *Antiku—Seiyō kottō yōgashiten*. Won an award for excellence in the manga category of the 10th Japan Media Arts Festival Award in 2006. *Ōoku* is being serialized by Hakusensha in the monthly magazine *Melody*.

No. 7: Traditional Japanese Sports

Sumo and judo are traditional sports that have spread far beyond Japan's borders. Many of sumo's highest-ranking athletes hail from countries other than Japan, and judo now belongs to the international domain, having been a part of Olympic competition since the 1964 games in Tokyo. Speakers discussing these two sports need provide no detailed explanation even when addressing a multicultural audience. Still, the volume of published material on their origins and histories is rather small in view of their global popularity. The following introduces several books that trace the history of these sports and describe key figures in their development.

Sumo and Martial Arts

Of Japan's traditional sports, those that are performed with bare hands include sumo and martial arts like judo and karate. Sumo is a combat sport similar to modern amateur wrestling, save that the participants wear nothing but a *mawashi* (loincloth). Similar wrestling styles in countries around the world are believed to have influenced one another during their development. In *Rikishi hyōhaku* [The Wandering Sumo Wrestler] (Ozawa Shōten, 1985), Miyamoto Tokuzō traces sumo's origins from the Eurasian continent, notably Mongolia and the Korean Peninsula, to the shores of Japan and its subsequent spread as a Shinto ritual from western to eastern Japan. He employs cultural anthropological analytical tools and a storytelling style to describe the sport's evolution into its present form. A contrasting work is *Sumō no rekishi* [History of Sumo] (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1994) by Nitta Ichirō, a researcher of Japan's legal history. His book objectively details the history of Japan's professional and amateur sumo, drawing on the author's own experience as an amateur *rikishi* (sumo wrestler).

There are two main genres of Japanese martial arts performed with bare hands and in uniform: the grappling-based styles centered on jujitsu (*jūjutsu*) and those that derive from karate, which give prominence to blows. The distinctions between these genres are not always clear-cut, though, for jujitsu employs strikes to the body as well as moves to counter them, just as karate utilizes grappling techniques and measures to defend against them. There is nonetheless a difference in focus.

A myriad of jujitsu schools existed until the Edo period, and many are still preserved as historical styles, but with the disappearance of the warrior class and neglect of military arts following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the various schools fell into decline. It was Kanō Jigorō, a student at what is now the University of Tokyo and a disciple of the Tenjin Shin'yō and Kitō styles of jujitsu, who integrated the various techniques and incorporated a *randori* approach of freestyle competition (rather than a focus on a fixed sequence of moves) to found the Kōdōkan school of judo. Judo began as an amalgamation of traditional jujitsu schools, as I describe in my *Budō o ikiru* [Martial Arts as a Way of Life] (NTT Shuppan, 2006); while the incorporation of *randori* turned it into more of a sport than a discipline, it nonetheless preserved the centrality of personal development, adopting *dō* (way) in its name, rather than *jutsu* (technique).

The Kōdōkan was just one private school that, along with the Dai Nippon Butokukai (Greater Japan Martial

Virtue Society), played a central role in judo's historical evolution. The Butokukai was established in 1895 to preserve the traditions and equipment of the samurai, which were in danger of being lost, and promote the development of martial arts. It enjoyed the support of the police and the Home Ministry, and it built training halls around the country, making a significant contribution to the popularization of various martial arts. Some members advocated a radical spiritualism during World War II, however, prompting the Allied Occupation authorities to disband the organization in 1946. Because the Butokukai issued judo ranks independently of the Kōdōkan, the two groups considered each other rivals before the former was dissolved. Following the war, when the Kōdōkan became the predominant organization in the judo world, many former Butokukai members left Japan to teach overseas.

Among them was Michigami Haku, whose career is detailed closely in Magami Hiroshi's *Hēshinku o sodateta otoko* [The Man Who Raised Geesink] (Bungei Shunjū, 2002). Michigami was a graduate of the Budō Senmon Gakkō, a Butokukai school for the training of judo instructors, who moved to France and turned the French judo population into the world's largest. He was also the teacher of Anton Geesink, the first non-Japanese world judo champion and gold medalist at the 1964 Olympic Games. This account is valuable in demonstrating that the Kōdōkan was not the only organization responsible for judo's popularization outside Japan.

In addition to throws, judo employs a variety of *newaza* techniques to hold or pin opponents on the mat. From around the turn of the twentieth century until the early 1940s, contests among college-level (*kōsen*) students deviated from Kōdōkan rules in allowing the use of *hikikomi* techniques to deliberately force an opponent to the ground at the start of a match and in enforcing no time restrictions. This gave rise to a variety of new techniques. In his autobiographical novel *Kita no umi* [The Northern Sea] (Shinchōsha, 2003), Inoue Yasushi describes his student days that were devoted almost exclusively to *kōsen* judo.

Maeda Mitsuyo, a top fighter in the Kōdōkan's early days, engaged in contests in Brazil with athletes of other martial arts. His teachings spawned what has come to be called Brazilian jiu-jitsu, centered on ground techniques. Kimura Masahiko was a dominant judo champion from around the mid-1930s to mid-1940s and a product of *kōsen* judo. He writes in his autobiography, *Waga jūdō: Gureishī jūjutsu o taoshita otoko* [My Judo: The Man Who Defeated Gracie Jiu-jitsu] (Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 2001), of traveling to Brazil and defeating Helio Gracie, one of the founders of the Gracie school.

While aikido does not involve matches and thus cannot be described as a sport, it is nonetheless concerned with body techniques that are central to martial arts. The mysteries of this tradition are revealed by aikido master Shioda Gōzō in *Aikidō jinsei* [The Aikido Life] (Takeuchi Shoten Shinsha, 1996).

There are innumerable schools of karate, which is representative of the type of martial art centered on strikes and blows. Based on scholarly research, Kinjō Akio concludes in his *Karate denshinroku: Genryū-gata to denrai no nazo o toku* [The True Chronicle of Karate: Unraveling the Enigma of Original Forms and Their Transmission] (Champ, 2005) that karate's origins can be traced to the historical contact between China and Okinawa. Kojima Kazushi and Tsukamoto Yoshiko, meanwhile, present a detailed account of the hitherto unrevealed biographical

background of Ōyama Masutatsu, who founded the full-contact school of Kyokushin karate during Japan's turbulent early postwar days, in their *Ōyama Masutatsu seiden* [The True Story of Ōyama Masutatsu] (Shinchōsha, 2006).

The spread of ground-technique-centered Brazilian jiu-jitsu and full-contact karate have led to greater interaction among the various martial arts since the 1990s. I describe such modern-day developments in my *Shikō suru kakutōgi: Jissensei, kyōgisei, seishinsei to hen'yō suru genjitsu* [The Musings of Combat Sports: Their Practical, Competitive, and Spiritual Nature and Changing Realities] (Kōsaidō Shuppan, 2002).

(Matsubara Ryūichirō, professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo)

***Sumō no rekishi* [History of Sumo]**

By Nitta Ichirō

Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1994. 195x138 mm. 353 pp. ¥2,427.
ISBN 978-4-634-60400-1 (4-634-60400-0).



Sumo began as a Shinto ritual some 1,300 years ago and evolved over the centuries into a popular spectator sport. The author is the faculty advisor of the University of Tokyo's sumo team and is a sumo enthusiast himself, participating actively in students' practice sessions.

***Hēshinku o sodateta otoko* [The Man Who Raised Geesink]**

By Magami Hiroshi

Bungei Shunjū, 2002. 195x138 mm. 240 pp. ¥1,762.
ISBN 978-4-16-359220-6 (4-16-359220-2).



Judo has gone through a number of changes in its evolution into an international sport, including the introduction of weight classes and new rules. The book describes the passion with which Michigami Haku endeavored to popularize judo overseas, particularly in France, and how he earned the lifelong enmity of the Kōdōkan by coaching Anton Geesink into a world champion.

***Budō o ikiru* [Martial Arts as a Way of Life]**

By Matsubara Ryūichirō

NTT Shuppan, 2006. 195x138 mm. 281 pp. ¥2,300.
ISBN 978-4-7571-4108-7 (4-7571-4108-4).

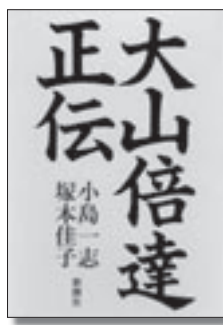


This book explores aspects of the history of Japan's martial arts that are overlooked in official, often mythologized accounts of the Kōdōkan school of judo, including its coexistence and rivalry with the Dai Nippon Butokukai, *kōsen* judo, and overseas judo federations. It also describes how the techniques banned in Kōdōkan contests are now being actively employed in modern combat sports that are derived from various martial arts.

***Ōyama Masutatsu seiden* [The True Story of Ōyama Masutatsu]**

By Kojima Kazushi and Tsukamoto Yoshiko

Shinchōsha, 2006. 198x145 mm. 620 pp. ¥2,300.
ISBN 978-4-10-301451-5 (4-10-301451-2).



Ōyama Masutatsu created many fictions in the course of his efforts to establish and popularize full-contact karate as a martial art independent of traditional karate. The authors strip away the veneer to describe Ōyama as a life-size figure grappling with the realities of the ethnic Korean community in postwar Japan. (This book was introduced in *Japanese Book News* No. 51, p. 9.)

(Continued from page 3)

about the future, and the problem of truancy. Representative works in this category are Kusano Taki's *Happi nōto* [Happy Notebook] (Fukuinkan Shoten, 2005) and Ōshima Masumi's *Honkon no amai tōfu* [Sweet Tofu from Hong Kong] (Rironsha, 2004).

Notwithstanding the titles mentioned here, it is extremely difficult to find works of outstanding value among the large number being published. Nevertheless, noteworthy books are being published year after year. The number being translated into foreign languages, particularly for young readers, is still small, but I believe that many books would be just as enjoyable to foreign readers as they are to their Japanese fans. I very much hope that

as many as possible of the titles described here will be translated before too long.

Doi Yasuko

Researcher, International Institute for Children's Literature, Osaka.

International Institute for Children's Literature, Osaka (IICLO)
Opened in 1984 in Osaka Expo Park. As a resource, information, and research center on children's books, the IICLO collects, conserves, and makes available for public perusal materials relating to children's literature, organizes exhibitions and lectures, and conducts research on children's literature.

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Events and Trends

(April to June 2007)

Sports Novels by Female Authors

There has been a succession of books lately by female authors about people pursuing some sport, and many of them have garnered considerable attention. The first of these was probably Mori Eto's *Dive!!* (Kōdansha), published from 2000 onward for a teenage readership. Satō Takako's *Isshun no kaze ni nare* [Become a Gust of Wind] (Kōdansha) was recently awarded the Hon'ya [Bookseller] Prize, and Miura Shion's first book since winning the Naoki Prize, *Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru* [It's Blowing Hard] (Shinchōsha), has created quite a stir. Asano Atsuko has written a number of books aimed at teenagers, and her *Batterī* [The Battery] (Kyōiku Gageki), a drama that deals with baseball, has been made into a manga and was released as a film this year. All of these works share the common theme of a group of younger people striving together toward the same goal and growing as humans in the process.

A number of these books appear to be in the publication pipeline, and readers seem unlikely to turn from the simple beauty of the sports novel anytime in the future.

2007 Hon'ya Prize

The winner of the Hon'ya [Bookseller]

Prize is selected by booksellers from around the country as the book they most want to sell. The winner of the fourth Hon'ya Prize, announced on April 5, was Satō Takako's *Isshun no kaze ni nare* [Become a Gust of Wind] (Kōdansha). Ten Japanese novels published between December 1, 2005, and November 30, 2006, were nominated for the prize, and bookstore employees voted on these to select the best. The first volume of *Isshun no kaze ni nare* was published in August 2006, the second in September, and the third in October; as a result of being published in rapid succession like this, the three volumes had sold in excess of 700,000 copies as of April this year.

In second place for the prize was Morimi Tomihiko's *Yoru wa mijikashi arukeyo otome* [Walk, Young Woman, for the Night Is Short] (Kadokawa Shoten), a story of love between university students told through appealing prose and charmingly quirky ideas. In third place was Miura Shion's *Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru* [It's Blowing Hard] (Shinchōsha), the tale of a group of 10 university students who, despite being amateurs with no racing experience, aim to compete in the Hakone Ekiden, a tough, long-distance relay race that has become a customary part of the Japanese New Year. Just under 800 bookstore em-

ployees put forward their entries for the award, an increase of over 250 from the previous Hon'ya Prize. A fair to promote the winners and the nominees is planned for bookstores around the country.

Mizuki Shigeru Takes French Comic Prize

Manga artist Mizuki Shigeru's *Non Non Bā* was awarded the 2007 prize for Best Comic Book on January 27 at the thirty-fourth Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême, the international comic festival held in the city of Angoulême in the west of France. Mizuki is known for his works on Japanese *yōkai* specters, and his prizewinning work was the French version, published last year, of his autobiographical manga *Non Non Bā to ore* [Me and Grandma Non Non]. The festival was hosted by the city of Angoulême, and is known as a manga prize event with a history of openness to works from abroad. Over-taking comics by local artists to take the award was a splendid achievement, and Mizuki was the first Japanese person to win this honor. Grandma Non Non is a woman who used to come to help out at Mizuki's home in the city of Sakaiminato in Tottori Prefecture. Every night she would tell the young Shigeru tales that had been passed

down locally of ghosts and specters. Mizuki says that 70%–80% of the specters in his manga are based on the stories Grandma Non Non told him as a child.

Mizuki was born in 1922. His best-known works include *GeGeGe-no-Kitarō*, *Kappa no Sanpei* [Sanpei the Kappa], and *Akuma-kun* [Devil Boy].

Kōdansha Holds International Manga Competition

Kōdansha's popular weekly manga magazine for adults, *Morning*, is holding the International Manga Competition (IMC) to commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. The IMC aims to seek out and develop new talent, and applications were accepted from around the world. The official competition site is in 10 languages in addition to Japanese, making it a truly international competition. There have been domestic competitions in various different fields that have been international in name, but many of these are only in Japanese and English.

The winner of the grand prize will receive \$5,000, and the two runners-up will each receive \$2,000. The prizewinners will be announced on the *Morning* website around September 2007, after the works submitted to the competition have been screened. The winning works will also be published in the leading manga magazine. The authors of the winning manga will then be paired with experienced editors from *Morning*, who will work with them on the development of their manga. With the publication of the prizewinners in the magazine and also as separate volumes in Japan and other countries, the IMC represents a major chance for up-and-coming manga artists. It is certain to attract the attention of people around the world hoping to make a name for themselves in the world of manga.

Literature Prize for Youths

The first winners of the Jūnisai no Bungaku [12-Year-Olds' Literature] Prize, which is aimed at elementary school children and presented by Shōgakukan, were announced on March 1. The grand prix winners were *Tsuki no sakana* [Moonfish]

by Oimoto Aoi, a sixth-grader from Toyama Prefecture, and *Mentaiko ōkoku to tarako ōkoku* [Spice Pollack Roe Kingdom and Cod Roe Kingdom] by Inoue Yuki, a fourth-grader from Kanagawa Prefecture. A total of 2,205 entries were submitted. The publishing industry has shown considerable interest in younger authors recently. In 2005 Minami Natsu, a 15-year-old, was awarded the Bungei Award—established by Kawade Shobō Shinsha—for her *Heisei mashinganzu* [Heisei Machine Guns].

The prize for elementary schoolers was established with the hope of bringing out the special imagination of children. At a press conference, the two young winners made comments worthy of adult authors: Oimoto said she wanted to write about offhand, everyday matters, while Inoue said that if she wrote again it would be a mystery or detective novel. The prize-winning works have been gathered into a single volume and published as *Jūnisai no bungaku* [Literature of 12-Year-Olds].

Japan Mobile Phone Novel Award

The novel *Kurianesu—kagirinaku tōmei na koi no monogatari* [Clearness: An Almost Transparent Love Story] by 26-year-old Towa was selected for Japan's first mobile phone novel award, copresented by Mainichi Shimbunsha, Starts Shuppan, and Mahō no iRando, a web design firm. This is the first literary prize in Japan aiming to find fresh talent in the genre of novels transmitted by mobile phone. There were 2,375 entries; Towa's novel scooped the prize in fine style after all the other entries were eliminated during two rounds of readers' votes. *Kurianesu* went on to be published as a book in February by Starts Shuppan.

There have been many works recently that started out as Internet or mobile phone novels and went on to become million-selling books. Mika's *Koizora* [Love Sky], for example, started life as a mobile phone novel before being published in two volumes by Starts Shuppan, selling over 1.2 million copies. A particular feature of mobile phone novels is that the sen-

tences are kept short, with few descriptive passages and a great deal of dialogue and monologue, as the displays of mobile phones can only show 100 or so characters at a time. Most novels are printed using vertical writing, but mobile phone novels are written horizontally when published as books in order to preserve the feel of reading the novel on a mobile phone display.

Shiba Ryōtarō Work Published in English

Shiba Ryōtarō's *Dattan shippūroku* [trans. *The Tatar Whirlwind: A Novel of Seventeenth*



Century East Asia] has been published in English by the American publisher Floating World Editions under the Japan Foundation Special Program for Translation

and Publication of Japanese Literature. The work was translated by Joshua A. Fogel, Canada Research Chair of York University, Canada. The book is on sale in the United States and elsewhere through Amazon and other outlets, priced at \$39.95.

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Boiled Eggs and Breadth

It seems not so long ago that Miura Shion became a well-known literary name. She made her debut in 2000 with the novel *Kakutō suru mono ni maru* [The Fighter Gets the Kudos], which was followed by books like *Getsugyo* [Fish on the Moon], *Watashi ga katarihajimeta kare wa* [I'm Talking About Him], and *Mukashi no hanashi* [Old Stories]. She also attracted attention with collections of essays originally published on the web: *Shion no shiori* [Bookmarks from Shion] and *Otome nageyari* [Giving Up Girlhood]. In 2006 her novel *Mahoro ekimae Tada Benriken* [The Tada Handyman's Shop in Front of Mahoro Station] was awarded the 135th Naoki Prize. *Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru* [It's Blowing Hard] came out in September 2006. The new book, which takes the annual Hakone Ekiden relay road race as its primary motif, was extremely well received, earning a chorus of approval on the Internet and in bookstores.

Miura appears to enjoy considerable momentum in her writing career. And yet, as she tells it, "I didn't originally intend to become a novelist. I wanted to be an editor, and I applied for a job at a publishing company. The publisher's hiring officer suggested I'd be better off becoming a writer, but I was set on the idea of editing, so I said, 'No way.' Later on, after he started working as a literary agent, he suggested it again. Since I still hadn't found a job, I decided to try my hand at writing a novel, and that became my first book."

The literary agency Boiled Eggs Ltd. was established by Murakami Tatsuō, who had previously worked as an editor and planner for 22 years at the publishing firm Hayakawa Shobō. He launched the firm as a new type of enterprise devoted to discovering and nurturing writers and producing their work. Miura was the first novelist hatched by the agency.

Writers with agents are virtually unheard of in Japan, where most authors are self-employed. What advantages does the agency provide Miura? "I seldom get interrupted by phone calls when I'm concentrating on my work. The writing, of course, is a one-person job, and the ideas are all up to me. But management, negotiations, copyrights—my agency takes care of all of that for me. They're experts, so I can rely on them. I'm grateful to have people who go beyond what a publishing company does and understand me as an individual writer. I think it's necessary."

Miura is, of course, a talented writer, but the keen eye behind the scenes that discovered and supported her talent is also quite rare. Perhaps it was the fusion of these abilities that won her the Naoki Prize in such a short time.

Miura is a versatile stylist. Each of her novels is related in a different voice, while her essays, which eschew the serious world of her fiction to cast a humorous light on everyday events, make readers laugh out loud. This range is attributable to an acute sensitivity that sustains breadth in a writer, and to an enormous amount of reading.

"I used to read 60 books a month," notes the author. Even now, with so many demands on her time, Miura reads a great deal. Now that she writes books of her own,

though, her preferences have changed. "I've stopped reading books by living authors, because if someone's writing work that's really great, it will make me feel like I might as well give up," she laughs. "If I read something that's too good, I feel less like writing myself. It seems only natural for dead authors of the past to be great, though."

Her tastes also show great range. "I love manga, so when people tell me my writing is manga-like, I take it as a compliment. Both words and images can express both depth and simplicity. I don't set out to draw on or mimic manga in my novels, though. The way of expressing things is completely different."

Miura says her latest book, *Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru*, would have been three times as long had she depicted events realistically. For this reason she set things up so that she could introduce her entire cast of characters at the very beginning and get right into the story. Some have called this manga-like and unrealistic, but she argues: "I think this method works in a novel, too. I interviewed a lot of people over the course of six years to get the details right. I actually rode down hills on a bicycle to try to physically experience the speed that a runner achieves. I drew on experience and imagination in writing it."

Although she has never done any running herself, Miura presents vivid scenery and psychological portraits of the athletes. Here, as in *Mahoro ekimae Tada Benriken*, she depicts the nuances of her male characters with remarkable skill. "The men in my novels lead an existence far from ordinary 'family' life. If there's a man and a woman, the reader thinks that maybe they'll fall in love or get married. When the characters are men, though, that doesn't happen. I'm interested in people who are struggling in places that are outside the ordinary, places where they can't be content."

She also says "happiness comes only from discovering your own strength in the midst of hardship," not from empty dreams of everyone getting along together nicely. This idea always seems to be running through her novels.

Which of her books would she like people outside Japan to read? "I'd really like to see some translations of *Mahoro* and *Kaze*. I even think they could be made into Hollywood movies. If the *ekiden* race in *Kaze* seems too obscure, they could turn it into a coast-to-coast marathon in the movie version," she laughs.

(Okano Hirofumi, freelance writer)



Miura Shion

Born in 1976. Graduated from the School of Letters, Arts, and Sciences at Waseda University. In addition to novels, her works include *Shion no shiori*, a series of essays appearing in the web-based publication *Boiled Eggs Online* (viewable at <www.boiledeggs.com>), and *Sanshirō wa sorekara mon o deta* [And Then Sanshirō Left Through the Gate], a collection of essays about books.