

JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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FALL 2007

Japanese Book News is published quarterly by the Japan Foundation mainly to provide publishers, editors, translators, scholars, and libraries with up-to-date information about publishing trends in Japan and brief descriptions of the content of selected new books. The opinions and views expressed in the essays and new title summaries are not necessarily those of the Japan Foundation or the advisory board.

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Reflecting on My Book Tour

Kirino Natsuo

(Not available online)

(Not available online)

FICTION



Morimi Tomihiko

Born in 1979. Won the Japan Fantasy Novel Grand Prix in 2003 for his first novel, *Taiyō no tō* [*The Tower of the Sun*]. Other works include *Yojō-han shinwa taikēi* [*An Outline of the Four-and-a-half Tatami-Mat Myth*] and *Kitsune no hanashi* [*The Fox's Tale*].

Yoru wa mijikashi arukeyo otome [Walk, Young Woman, for the Night Is Short]

By Morimi Tomihiko

Kadokawa Shoten, 2006. 194x135 mm. 304 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-04-873744-9 (4-04-873744-9).

In Kyoto, a vivacious young woman dives with reckless abandon into a used book fair at a shrine and a college festival. She has a delightful time, meeting a succession of oddball characters and happening across a series of surreal events. An older boy who attends the same university as her tries to save her from danger but only gets drawn into the commotion himself.

The breezy narration moves this story briskly forward, giving readers the sense of being on a roller-coaster with an unknown destination. The vivid, fascinating episodes are a continuous source of delight and surprise, culminating in a picture-perfect happy ending. Even though this world is clearly a product of the author's wild imagination, by the end of the book readers will be desperate to extend their stay.

This is literary entertainment at its finest, with slapstick comedy leading to an enchanting romantic finale. Boasting song, dance, laughs, and love, this is a book to put one in mind of classic movies from the golden age of Hollywood.

The author, Morimi Tomihiko, is just 27 years old. Having won the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize with this novel, he is a rising star of Japan's literary scene. (MT)

Yureru [Sway]

By Nishikawa Miwa

Poplar, 2006. 194x135 mm. 224 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-591-09303-0 (4-591-09303-4).

This is the novel based on the 2006 movie *Yureru* [Sway], which was voted best Japanese film of the year at the Mainichi Film Awards and received critical acclaim during the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival. It was written by the director herself.

The story probes deep into the hearts of two brothers, torn apart by the death of a childhood friend. The older brother, Minoru, has taken over the family business, a gas station in the countryside. The younger brother, Takeru, is a successful photographer in Tokyo. Meeting for the first time in a long while at their late mother's memorial service, they later head out for a trip to a ravine with their childhood friend, Chieko. She was once Takeru's girlfriend, but now Minoru is secretly in love with her. While crossing

a suspension bridge with Minoru, Chieko falls to her death—but did Takeru see the two crossing the bridge together? A murder trial ensues.

During the trial, Takeru believes his older brother, but his conviction sways as Minoru's testimony changes and Takeru ultimately sells his brother out. In a magazine interview, Nishikawa has said, "This is the story of Judas betraying Christ." The book is a composite of the perspectives of the brothers Minoru and Takeru, Chieko, the brothers' father, and the lawyer. It backtracks into the past of the characters and cuts into their swaying emotions in ways that could not be expressed in the movie, successfully depicting how we humans are dangerously susceptible to change. (SH)



Nishikawa Miwa

Born in 1974. Was involved in the production of director Kore-eda Hirokazu's film *Wandafuru raifu* [trans. *After Life*] while a student at Waseda University. Made her screenwriting and directorial debut with *Hebi ichigo* [trans. *Wild Berries*]. Released in 2006, *Yureru* received honors at the 61st Mainichi Film Awards and other award festivals.



Aoyama Nanae

Born in 1983. Won the Bungei Award in 2005 for *Mado no akari* [Light in the Window]. In 2007 received the 136th Akutagawa Prize for *Hitori biyori*.

Hitori biyori **[A Perfect Day to Be Alone]**

By Aoyama Nanae

Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2007. 194x137 mm. 176 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-309-01808-9.

Humans basically live their lives alone. This is the story of a contemporary woman who lives according to this idea naturally, without forcing herself into it.

The protagonist is Mita Chizu. She has graduated from high school, and is making a living for the time being as a *furitā*, a “freeter” flitting between temporary jobs. When her mother, a teacher, gets sent abroad for training, Chizu goes to live with Ginko, a 71-year-old distant relative who lives on her own.

Thus the two women of different ages begin their shared existence, one in which they both seem to be living alone. Although Ginko’s house looks onto the nearby station platform of a private railway line, it has been left out of the redevelopment of the station area because of the strange layout of the streets. Every

morning the station is packed with people bound for busy Shinjuku, a contrast to the occupants of the house who idly watch them from the veranda. Perhaps the house itself symbolizes the way the two women, together but living alone, distance themselves from society.

Chizu’s mother advises her to go to university, but Chizu can think only about how much it will cost. Not wanting to feel indebted, she steps back from her mother and from society. Even when she gets a boyfriend, from the start she thinks about how the relationship will end.

This book shows the lifestyle and mindset of young people today, each living their own lives in a “oneness” that is different from solitude. (MK)

Mizuumi no minami **[South of the Lake]**

By Tomioka Taeko

Shinchōsha, 2007. 197x137 mm. 192 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-315005-3.

The latest work from Tomioka Taeko is a historical novel, albeit one with strong nonfictional overtones, about the Ōtsu Incident. On May 11, 1891, Crown Prince Nicholas Alexandrovich of Russia (later Tsar Nicholas II) was touring the town of Ōtsu on the shore of Lake Biwa when he was attacked by Tsuda Sanzō, one of the policemen guarding his route. This was an extraordinarily serious incident at the time, one that had the potential to affect the fate of the entire nation.

Many researchers have examined the Ōtsu Incident to date, and there is already a historical novel dealing with the attack, Yoshimura Akira’s classic *Nikorai sōnan* [The Nicholas Disaster]. The mainstream view of the events is as follows: Tsuda’s crime was an outburst of nationalistic samurai resentment toward the powerful

Russian state. To avoid international turmoil the Japanese government sought to execute him, but the judiciary maintained its independence when the nation’s chief justice refused to hand down a death sentence.

Tomioka, however, moves beyond the grand historical sweep of the events to focus on a forgotten aspect: the figure of Tsuda himself. In her book she succeeds in depicting the human irrationality in him—the kind of characteristic that causes a person to lash out and commit an inexplicable act before realizing it. It may be better not to view this book as a historical novel; it is an attempt to deconstruct the concepts that readers bring to bear when reading such books, and could be treated as the product of a more radical form of literary thought. (NM)



Tomioka Taeko

Born in 1935. Poet and novelist. Her varied work includes *Tomioka Taeko shishū* [The Tomioka Taeko Poetry Collection], the novel *Hiberunia-tō kikō* [Travels to the Isle of Hibernia], and the critical biography *Saikaku no kanjō* [The Emotion of Saikaku]. Was involved with the scripting of the 1969 film *Shinjū ten no Amijima* [trans. The Love Suicides at Amijima]. Has won the *Osaragi Jirō Prize*, among other awards.



Uehashi Nahoko

Born in 1962. Author of children's literature. Currently an assistant professor in the Department of Tourism in the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Kawamura Gakuen Woman's University. Seirei no moribito [*Guardian of the Spirit*], the first volume of her Moribito series, won the Noma Newcomer Prize for Juvenile Literature, the Sankei Award for Children's Books and Publications, and other awards.

***Kemono no sōja* [The Beast Player]**

Uehashi Nahoko

Vol. I (Tōda-hen): Kōdansha, 2006. 194x142 mm. 320 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-06-213700-3 (4-06-213700-3).
Vol. II (Ōjū-hen): Kōdansha, 2006. 194x142 mm. 416 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-213701-0 (4-06-213701-1).

This work belongs to the genre of “other-world fantasy.” Anything goes in stories of this kind, from mythical lands and imaginary creatures to preposterous story lines, meaning that readers tend to be left feeling empty unless they can immerse themselves in the world depicted. *Kemono no sōja*, however, features a realism that sets it apart from other fantasy stories. The book gives readers a vivid sense of feeling the wind, smelling the smells, and basking in the light of this world, while scenes such as the one in which the protagonist befriends a giant birdlike beast feel as if they are unfolding before one's eyes. Readers will be unable to put this book down as the excitement mounts relentlessly, with the dynamic battle scenes, in particular, inspiring an overwhelming sense of awe. Above all, one is moved by

the manner in which the protagonist fights gallantly despite being buffeted about by fate.

The author is a cultural anthropologist engaged in research on the aborigines of Australia, so there is a realism to the countries and lands in which the plot takes place, as well as their history and traditions, that suggests the story is closely linked to her research. Japanese anime has produced such masterpieces as Miyazaki Hayao's *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*. It is no exaggeration to say that this work—one of the greatest Japanese fantasy novels—bears comparison with these cinematic classics. (MT)

ESSAY

***Monogatari no yakuwari* [The Role of Stories]**

By Ogawa Yōko

Chikuma Shobō, 2007. 173x108 mm. 128 pp. ¥680. ISBN 978-4-480-68753-1.

The works of author Ogawa Yōko have been translated into many languages and published in France, the United States, and other countries. This is a collection of three speeches Ogawa gave on the subject of storytelling. Citing such works as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Jean-Henri Fabre's *Souvenirs entomologiques* [trans. Fabre's *Book of Insects*], Elie Wiesel's *Night*, and Paul Auster's *I Thought My Father was God: And Other True Tales from NPR's National Story Project*, Ogawa explores the role of storytelling and the work of an author. A reading of this book provides an insight into why Ogawa, like Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana, has transcended borders and been accepted by such a broad readership.

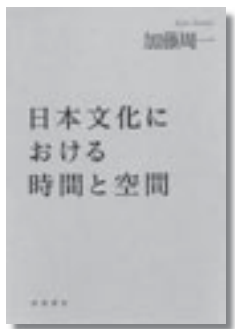
“When people encounter a reality that is very hard to accept,” states Ogawa,

“they try, for the most part subconsciously, to somehow come to terms with that reality by shaping and reshaping it to make it fit the landscape of their own minds. They are effectively creating a story.” Stories, thus, are already present in people's everyday lives, and Ogawa argues that the job of an author is to capture these stories in words. Authors therefore “travel at the very back of humanity” and “pick up things that people have surreptitiously or accidentally dropped,” she writes. “Novels are a way to leave a sign that these things did once exist in this world.” (MT)



Ogawa Yōko

Born in 1962. A selection from her short story collection *Ninshin karendā* [trans. *Pregnancy Diary*], whose title story won the Akutagawa Prize, appears in the December 2005 issue of *The New Yorker*. A film version based on the French translation of her novel *Kusuriyubi no hyōhon* [*The Ring-Finger Specimen*] was released in 2005. Her novel *Hakase no aishita sūshiki* [trans. *The Gift of Numbers*] is available in English.



Katō Shūichi

Born in 1919. Literary critic and author. Is well versed in French literature and classical Japanese literature. Discovered European literature while studying in France as a medical student. Has taught at universities around Japan and the world. Received the Osaragi Jirō Prize for Nihon bungaku shi josetsu [trans. A History of Japanese Literature].

***Nihon bunka ni okeru jikan to kūkan* [Time and Space in Japanese Culture]**

By Katō Shūichi

Iwanami Shoten, 2007. 194x137 mm. 272 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 978-4-00-024248-6.

This text on Japanese culture is the condensation of a lifetime of intellectual exploration by an eminent scholar of a broad range of art and philosophy. The author draws on wide-ranging examples from Japan's architecture, pictorial art, and literature, looking also to Japanese patterns of action and religious beliefs and even linguistic issues like Japanese word order, in this treatise on the nation's culture. Among all of this two key concepts rise as central to Japan's character: time and space.

One of this book's striking qualities is the way it addresses Japan's culture within a global context, an approach made possible by the author's time overseas and his knowledge of world art and literature. Katō has lectured on Japan and its culture in Canada, Germany, and many other

countries, and it is fair to call this book in part a distillation of his dialogues in those places with foreign people interested in Japan.

The central conclusion is straightforward. Katō argues that Japan's culture is governed by an overarching concept of "now" as equivalent to "here," which is characterized by a thought process that begins with the parts and moves on to address the whole. Since the essence of the culture is to focus on this "now = here" equation, the Japanese tend to pay attention to events outside their own space only when they impact conditions inside that space. In addition to being a clear explication of the characteristics of Japan's culture, this is a work rich in hints for interpreters of Japan's actions within the international community. (NM)

CULTURE

***Kyōto no heinetsu: Tetsugakusha no toshi annai* [Kyoto's Normal Temperature: A Philosopher's Guide to the City]**

By Washida Kiyokazu

Photographs by Suzuki Risaku

Kōdansha, 2007. 193x136 mm. 256 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-06-213812-3.

Washida Kiyokazu is an academic specializing in philosophy, but he is known also as an observer of fashions in the field of sociology and an essayist who wins fans with his eloquence. This book is his urban guide to Kyoto, his hometown. Readers get off a train at Kyoto station with the author, walking with him to board the number 206 bus outside the station's gates. This bus runs a circuitous route throughout the city, along which Washida's entire life lies—all that is sacred, profane, and educational in it. These terms refer to the city's temples and shrines, its old pleasure districts, and its universities.

The author gets on the bus and observes the city from the intimate perspec-

tive of one who lives there. Coming along for the ride is the photographer Suzuki Risaku. His black-and-white shots do an excellent job of capturing the "normal temperature" of Kyoto—not too hot and not too cold, but filled with the warmth of the lives of the city's residents. Old cities like Kyoto, writes Washida, have large trees, religious facilities, and suburban neighborhoods, all of which are "places where the world opens its mouth." The streets are home to eccentric characters, and people there are invariably attracted to the strange and the amusing. He sums Kyoto up as "a metaphysically enticing city." This is no ordinary tourist guide, but a philosophically fulfilling introduction to Japan's ancient capital. (NM)



Washida Kiyokazu

Born in 1949. Philosopher. Served as professor at Kansai University and Osaka University. Has been vice-president of Osaka University since 2004. Received a Suntory Prize for Bunsan suru risei [Scattered Reason] and Mōdo no meikyū [The Labyrinth of Fashion].

Suzuki Risaku

Born in 1963. Photographer. Is currently an associate professor in the Department of Inter Media Art at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Received the Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award in 2000.



Uchizawa Junko

*Born in 1967. Investigative reporter and illustrator. In addition to slaughterhouses, has examined libraries, bookstores, bathrooms, and printing presses and binderies. Aside from writing, conducts bookbinding workshops and holds exhibits of unique handmade books. Illustrated Matsuda Tetsuo's *Insatsu ni koi shite* [In Love with Printing], which won a silver Gesner Award, presented to books about books.*

Sekai tochiku kikō **[Tour of the World's Slaughterhouses]**

Written and illustrated by Uchizawa Junko

Kaihō Shuppansha, 2007. 195x136 mm. 368 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 978-4-7592-5133-3.

In this nonfiction book, city-born Uchizawa takes the reader on a tour of slaughterhouses, starting at Japan's largest facility in Shibaura and moving on to slaughterhouses in the United States, Iran, India, South Korea, and other countries. Using neat line drawings and vivid text in her "illustrated reportage" technique, Uchizawa shows the process from the slaughtering of livestock through the butchering of their carcasses.

Different countries have different attitudes toward slaughtering animals. In Mongolia, people able to butcher livestock are afforded great respect, and in Egypt, slaughtering is a job given by the gods. On the other hand, in India, for example, one can still hear discriminatory remarks about those in the slaughtering business. In Japan, discussion of slaugh-

tering cannot avoid Buddhist precepts about taking life, the sense of impurity, and the history of discrimination. The average reader therefore has little chance to see what the places where meat is produced are like.

A Buddhist scholar maintains that this is not just for religious reasons, but also because urbanization has led to places where animals are slaughtered being hidden from view, and thus avoided. This is something that all developed countries are either facing now or will face in the future.

This reasonably priced reference work lets us see the difference in values toward slaughtering between countries and between generations, and shares with us the voices of people working in slaughtering, giving us a deeper understanding of the profession. (SH)

SOCIETY

Karyū shikō: Manabanai kodomotachi, hatarakanai wakamonotachi **[Heading for the Lower Class: Children Who Do Not Learn, Young People Who Do Not Work]**

By Uchida Tatsuru

Kōdansha, 2007. 188x129 mm. 232 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-213827-7.

Uchida Tatsuru is a specialist in modern French thought, but he is also active as a commentator, bringing to bear his broad learning and keen insight into contemporary society. His arguments can take unanticipated turns, but for the most part they are incisive views that get to the heart of things. In this book he displays this talent admirably.

Karyū shikō takes up some conspicuous trends among young Japanese today and sums them up in two categories: children who do not learn and young adults who do not work. Uchida notes the problem of falling academic skills afflicting Japan today. This is not because today's children are less intelligent than those in the past, or because students who want to

study are unable to make the efforts that their schoolwork requires. Rather, argues the author, these youths feel they can live even without the knowledge that schools offer, and they are avoiding onerous years of study. He takes a similar view of Japan's NEETs—those not in education, employment, or training, a population that some estimate to be as high as 850,000—stating that these young people are similarly evading hard work and charting a course for the bottom rungs of the social ladder.

Although not a sociologist or pedagogist, Uchida casts a keen eye on the human aspects of these issues, offering his valuable, fundamental observations on the ways in which today's Japanese youths are choosing to live. (NM)



Uchida Tatsuru

*Born in 1950. Currently a professor in the School of Letters at Kobe College. Specializes in modern French thought, film theory, and martial arts theory. Works include *Ojisan teki shikō* [The Thought of Middle Aged Men] and *Sensei wa erai* [Teacher, You're Great].*



Minami Jikisai

Born in 1958. Zen monk. Has published works based on Buddhist thought, including *Kataru zensō* [A Zen Monk Speaks] and *Nichijō seikatsu no naka no Zen* [Zen in Everyday Life].

Rōshi to shōnen **[The Old Teacher and the Boy]**

By Minami Jikisai

Shinchōsha, 2006. 193x133 mm. 112 pp. ¥950. ISBN 978-4-10-302131-5 (4-10-302131-4).

Humans in the modern age are burdened with many troubles. That is why all people are searching for something by which to guide their lives. Bookstores in Japan are always full of self-help titles about how to live and how to solve one's troubles. *Rōshi to shōnen* is the diametric opposite of these books.

"Master, who am I? What is it to live, to be human, to be me?" An earnest boy visits a teacher every night seeking answers to these questions. Reading the exchanges between the boy and the teacher, who responds with sincerity, is like reading a beautifully written fairy tale.

Yet however serious the boy's questions may be, the old teacher does not attempt to give answers. He teaches the boy, and the reader, that rather than being given an answer, fretting and searching

deeply within oneself is the key to finding guidance. Although the book provides no answers, by the end the reader is overcome with a feeling of warmth radiating from deep inside.

The author gave up his career as an office worker to become a Buddhist monk at the age of 26. This work is a superb introduction to the world of Zen, the teachings that took shape in China and then crossed to Japan, where they developed in new and distinctive ways. (MT)

Ki o ueyo! **[Plant Trees!]**

By Miyawaki Akira

Shinchōsha, 2006. 190x130 mm. 224 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 978-4-10-603572-2 (4-10-603572-3).

This book is a record of the author's work to put into practice his concept of regenerating "real forests" suited to the original environment of a locality.

Miyawaki has planted some 30 million trees across 1,500 places in Japan and overseas. He has managed to regenerate forests in this country for disaster prevention and nature conservation that over the space of 20 to 30 years revert to almost completely natural conditions, while overseas he has regenerated areas of tropical rainforest.

The core of Miyawaki's thinking is that the source of all living organisms on Earth is the forest. It is not just a question of planting lots of trees, however. The forests have to be so-called *chinju no mori*—the sacred groves that grow around Japan's Shinto village shrines.

The author says that the Japanese term *chinju no mori* is now part of the regular vocabulary at meetings around the world of the International Association for Vegetation Science. According to Miyawaki, *chinju no mori* embody the wisdom of human coexistence with nature that the Japanese people have cultivated over 4,000 years. He explains that it is forests like the *chinju no mori* that are the truly native forests of an area, not the primeval forest and not the artificial stands of trees we see today. Bringing back this native forest is the way to restore the vegetation of the Earth. He maintains that it would be possible to regenerate this native forest over 98% of the surface of Japan. (MK)



Miyawaki Akira

Born in 1928. Plant biologist. After serving as a professor at Yokohama National University, became director of the Japanese Center for International Studies in Ecology in 1993. Works include *Nihon shokusei shi* [Japan Plant Journal].

ECONOMICS



Nomura Susumu

Born in 1956. Nonfiction writer. Studied at Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines from 1978 to 1980. Since then has researched and written on the Asia-Pacific region, cutting-edge medicine, and other fields. Won both the Ōya Sōichi Non-fiction Literature Prize and the Kōdansha Non-Fiction Award for Korian sekai no tabi [Korean World Travel] in 1997.

Sen nen, hataraitte kimashita: Shinise kigyō taikoku Nippon

[The Work of a Thousand Years: Japan, the Land of Long-Established Businesses]

By Nomura Susumu

Kadokawa Shoten, 2006. 173x109 mm. 248 pp. ¥705. ISBN 978-4-04-710076-3 (4-04-710076-5).

Packed into the mobile phone is the wisdom and technology of long-established Japanese businesses. The coating that prevents the leakage of electromagnetic waves was developed by a former gilding company established 300 years ago; the crystal oscillator that acts as a frequency filter and allows the signal to be picked up anywhere was developed by a wireless maker established during the Meiji period (1868–1912). This book looks at the technology of Japan's time-honored companies in the heart of such cutting-edge products. It analyzes the technical strength of these companies, their human-resource strategies, their sense of social contribution, and the secrets they have in common that have kept them in business.

No other country in the West or in Asia has over 100,000 companies dating back over 100 years. Why have so many remained in Japan? Nomura gives five points that these businesses share: (1) succession is determined by ability, not blood ties; (2) technology is adapted to the changing times; (3) the company changes with the times, but the core business stays the same; (4) the company stays within its means, without engaging in speculation; (5) townspeople who contribute to society are valued.

This book gets to the “heart” of Japan's managers and workers who have developed and passed on timeless technology. It is also a discussion of Japan's business culture, asking the question of what a business that aids society is. (SH)

HISTORY

Ise Jingū: Mori to heiwa no shinden **[Ise Jingū: A Shrine of Forests and Peace]**

By Kawazoe Noboru

Chikuma Shobō, 2007. 216x157 mm. 374 pp. ¥3,800. ISBN 978-4-480-84272-5.

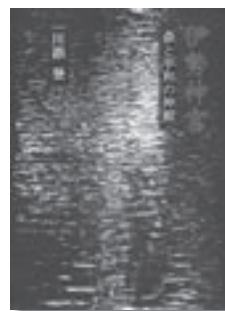
The shrine of Ise Jingū is the spiritual home of the deities of Japan and a symbol of the nation's culture. In this book, the architectural scholar Kawazoe Noboru approaches Ise Jingū from the standpoint of popular studies.

Kawazoe was born in 1926, and was nearly 20 years old when World War II ended. Educated under the old system, he completed elementary and middle school before the war. He recounts how a school trip during his third year of middle school was his first visit to Ise Jingū. That took place in 1940, or 2,600 years after the legendary enthronement of Emperor Jinmu. Although Kawazoe's early memories are of an era of militarism, he came to understand that the structures of Ise Jingū are actually shrines of forests and peace. The book brings aspects of this

spiritual history into an empirical study of the shrine.

Why would a scholar of architecture take this approach? The reason lies in the way Kawazoe views architecture, as “an ideological form of expression through visual spatial awareness, something that speaks to people throughout the ages.”

Kawazoe maintains that Ise Jingū is a “masterpiece of architecture, with a classical balance,” noting at the same time that it is a “marvelous achievement of the modern age.” There is a contradiction here, but as a location in tune with the “unending, low-pitched melody that reverberates within the hearts of the Japanese people,” Ise Jingū overcomes the contradiction beautifully. (MK)



Kawazoe Noboru

Born in 1926. Graduated from the Department of Architecture at Waseda University. After serving as editor-in-chief of Shin kenchiku [New Architecture], began a career as an architect-critic in 1957. Served as a member of the executive committee at the 1960 World Design Conference. Established the think tank Communication Design Institute in Kyoto in 1970. Received the Mainichi Publishing Culture Award for Tami to kami no sumai [Homes of the People and the Gods].



Nihon Teikoku Rikugun to seishin shōgai heishi [The Imperial Japanese Army and Soldiers with Psychological Disorders]

Edited by Shimizu Hiroshi

Fuji Shuppan, 2006. 217x160 mm. 386 pp. ¥5,800. ISBN 978-4-8350-5754-5 (4-8350-5754-6).

Shimizu Hiroshi

Born in 1936. Professor emeritus at Saitama University and former national chairperson of the Japanese Association on Disability and Difficulty. Has published widely on the practical application of education for children with disabilities, including Ikiru koto manabu koto [Living and Learning], the collected lectures of guest speakers to his classes while a professor at the Faculty of Education at Saitama University.

Shimizu specializes in the history of disability and of education for disabled children. In this study, he gives a scientific analysis of clinical diaries still remaining from Kohnodai Military Hospital (now Kohnodai Hospital, National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry) in Chiba, where 10,000 soldiers with psychological disorders, including intellectually impaired draftees, were admitted during World War II.

As well as taking so many lives, war leaves behind countless victims suffering from psychological problems. Toward the end of World War II, many people with intellectual disabilities, who did not know who Japan was fighting against, or even the meaning of war, were conscripted. The army's reformatory units, into which were

placed soldiers deemed a threat to military discipline or public morals, had many soldiers with psychological disorders. This book brings to light for the first time the indoctrination to instill martial spirit in them, the culture of mental and physical brutality, and the severe punishments they had to endure. How and why were these men made into soldiers? What did they do in the army, and how were they treated in hospital? Shimizu has verified medical certificates and the testimony of foot soldiers and sergeant majors to get to the truth.

As of March 2005, there were 84 former soldiers with psychological disabilities still in hospitals. Their interviews in the latter half of the book provide a valuable record for the study of war and post-traumatic stress disorder. (SH)

BIOGRAPHY

Sekai de ichiban ureteiru kusuri [The Most Acknowledged Medicine of the World]

Yamauchi Kimiko

Shōgakukan, 2007. 195x140 mm. 256 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-09-389700-6 (4-09-389700-X).

Statin drugs are lipid-lowering agents that can reduce the risk of stroke or heart disease by one-third. There are said to be 30 million people around the world currently benefiting from these drugs. This book is a critical biography covering half of the life of the discoverer of statins, Endō Akira, doctor of agriculture of Sankyo Co., Ltd. (now Daiichi Sankyo Co., Ltd.).

Endō was born into a farming family in Akita Prefecture and studied at Tohoku University, known for its work in organic chemistry to extract useful substances such as hinokitiol from oriental plants. He entered Sankyo after graduating, and was involved with pectinase cultures and other microbiological research. While he was studying in the United States, the relationship between cholesterol and heart disease was becoming a social problem,

and he threw himself into research on cholesterol blockers. After returning to Japan, he discovered a substance extracted from blue mold that acted to inhibit the enzyme that synthesizes cholesterol. However, his work was not rated highly by his employer, and statin drugs were first commercialized by Merck & Co. Yamauchi gives the background to the discovery of the drugs and the obstacles between Japan and the United States relating to their patenting. She carefully spells out the achievements of Endō, who fully deserves a Nobel Prize.

These days, governments are mobilizing to tackle the metabolic syndrome. It should, perhaps, be more widely known that a Japanese scientist foresaw this, some 30 years ago. (SH)



Yamauchi Kimiko

Born in 1962. After graduating from Waseda University, worked as an announcer at a commercial broadcaster and as a magazine reporter before becoming a freelance writer. Works include Kokuchi sezu [Without Notifying], Umi o wataru inochi [A Life Crossing the Sea], and Kanja no iibun [The Patient's Case], a work that received the Shōgakukan Nonfiction Award in 2006.

No. 8: The World of *Yōkai* (Japanese Monsters)

Yōkai (or *bakemono*) is the collective term for a vast array of supernatural creatures found in Japanese folklore, literature, art, and popular culture. These include the child-like *kappa* who live underwater and feed on cucumbers and human livers; *tengu*, winged creatures with long noses who often spirit away young children; and *rokuro-kubi*, deceptively beautiful women whose necks can stretch at will. At times scary or grotesque, at times funny or even adorable, images of such *yōkai* are firmly established in the popular imagination, commonly appearing in manga, anime, and even television commercials.

The figure perhaps most responsible for creating this modern *yōkai* culture is cartoonist Mizuki Shigeru. His postwar creation Kitarō, a forlorn monster-child born in a graveyard, acts as a kind of liaison between the human and *yōkai* worlds. Kitarō's numerous permutations over the years, including a recent cartoon series and live-action movie, attest to his enduring popularity.

Academic studies of more traditional *yōkai* date back to the Meiji period. The philosopher Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), who examined a wide variety of supernatural phenomena, claimed that superstition was a hindrance to modernization. Inoue's six-volume *Yōkaigaku zenshū* [Collected Works on Monster Studies] (Kashiwa Shobō, 1999–2001) still holds interest today. In contrast to Inoue, Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) took a more positive, albeit subjective, view of the supernatural, laying the groundwork for modern research. For example, his famous assertion that *yōkai* appear in specific places while ghosts latch on to specific people is still widely debated. Yanagita's *Tōno monogatari* [Tales of Tōno] (Kadokawa Shoten, 2004), first published in 1910, and *Yōkai dangi* [Reflections on Monsters] (Kōdansha, 1977), first published in 1956, are considered classics in the field.

Part of the appeal of *yōkai* lies in their bizarre, often comical visual representation. *Hyakki yagyō emaki o yomu* [Understanding Picture Scrolls Depicting the Night Procession of Monsters] (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1999) focuses on the classic mid-sixteenth-century picture scroll and its numerous variants over the ages. The original scroll depicts an assortment of oddly shaped monsters who roam the streets of the capital late at night. On closer inspection these monsters turn out to be weird combinations of people, animals, inanimate objects, and demons.

The late Edo period and early Meiji era saw a flourishing of *yōkai* art meant for mass consumption. Kokusho Kankōkai has been publishing reproductions of important works in this genre periodically over the past 15 years. *Toriyama Sekien gazu hyakki yagyō* [The Illustrated Monster Collections of Toriyama Sekien] (Kokusho Kankōkai, 1992) is a complete reproduction of Sekien's "illustrated encyclopedias" of monsters, dating from 1776. *Kuniyoshi yōkai hyakkei* [A Collection of Kuniyoshi's Monsters] (Kokusho Kankōkai, 1999) introduces the work of the brilliant *ukiyo-e* artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861), whose exuberant *yōkai* have a unique humor and vitality. *Kyōsai yōkai hyakkei* [A Collection of Kyōsai's Monsters] (Kokusho Kankōkai, 1998) looks at the work of Edo-Meiji artist Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), who re-invented images of traditional *yōkai* as objects of satire mimicking the Japanese rush for Westernization.

Chūō Kōron Shinsha has been reissuing classic *yōkai* studies in accessible paperback editions. Particularly noteworthy is *Nihon yōkai hengeshi* [A History of Japanese Monsters] (Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2004) by Ema Tsutomu. Ema's study, originally published in 1923, is a seminal work that attempts a chronological history of *yōkai* beginning with ancient mythology. Ema's use of examples from literature and art is in sharp contrast to the approach taken by folklorists such as Yanagita who relied almost exclusively on oral traditions.

On a more recent note, Miyata Noboru's 1985 study *Yōkai no minzokugaku* [Folklore Studies of Monsters] (Chikuma Shobō, 2002) is important for reevaluating *yōkai* as belonging not only to a distant rural culture but to a contemporary urban setting as well.

The cultural anthropologist Komatsu Kazuhiko is at the forefront of *yōkai* studies today and has written numerous books on the subject. His work *Yōkaigaku shinkō* [New Thoughts on Monster Studies] (Shōgakukan, 1994) examines *yōkai* within the context of *kami* (gods), natural phenomena, and both rural and urban societies. Of special interest to Komatsu is the concept of *ikai*, or supernatural worlds separated from the real world either temporally or spatially. In *Ikai to Nihonjin* [The Japanese and the Supernatural] (Kadokawa Shoten, 2003), Komatsu uses picture scrolls to elucidate the uncanny found in popular legends such as Urashima Tarō's voyage to the Dragon Kingdom or the slaying of the demon Shutendōji in his mountain lair not far from the capital. Komatsu has also edited an eight-volume collection of representative essays in the field entitled *Kai no minzokugaku* [Folklore Studies on the Supernatural] (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2000–01). Each volume looks at a different aspect of the supernatural: spirit possession; monsters; *kappa*; demons; *tengu* and mountain witches; ghosts; outsiders and sacrificial offerings; and boundaries.

In 1997, Komatsu began a long-term research project at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, his home institution. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to *yōkai* studies, he invited scholars from various fields to participate. For example, Kagawa Masanobu researches how *yōkai* were commercialized during the late Edo period in the form of toys and other artifacts. Yokoyama Yasuko examines *yōkai* within the context of Kabuki and other performing arts. As a participant in this project, I look at *bakemono* in Edo *kusazōshi* (a form of popular literature that combines illustrations and text in a manga-like fashion). I have published several volumes of annotated versions of these stories; and in *Edo kokkei bakemono zukushi* [Humorous Monster Stories of Edo]

(Kōdansha, 2003), I examined the relationship between humor and Edo monsters.

One of the fruitions of Komatsu's research group has been the publication of *Nihon yōkaigaku taizen* [Anthology of Japanese Monster Studies] (Shōgakukan, 2003). Contributing scholars include Suwa Haruo, who re-examines the difference between *yōkai* and ghosts from an art history viewpoint; Takada Mamoru, who has written extensively on the supernatural in Edo literature and performing arts; Tsutsumi Kunihiro, who analyzes the

religious significance of *yōkai* in literature and legend; and Hashizume Shin'ya, who has done research on haunted-house attractions in amusement parks. The wide range of topics and approaches found in this one volume is indicative of the multifaceted nature of *yōkai* research today.

(Adam Kabat, Japanese literature researcher; professor, Department of Japanese and East-Asian Studies and Comparative Culture, Musashi University)

Toriyama Sekien gazu hyakki yagyō [The Illustrated Monster Collections of Toriyama Sekien]

Editorial supervision by Takada Mamoru

Kokusho Kankōkai, 1992. 262x190 mm. 348 pp. ¥7,600. ISBN 978-4-336-03386-4 (4-336-03386-2).

Toriyama Sekien (1712–88) was an artist of the Kanō school who had a strong predilection for monsters. Sekien's "illustrated monster collections," dating from 1776, are reproduced in their entirety in this handsome edition. This important work is a good example of how the

line between popular legend and individual creativity becomes blurred when "monster art" is produced as a commodity for mass consumption.



Yōkai no minzokugaku [Folklore Studies of Monsters]

By Miyata Noboru

Chikuma Shobō, 2002. 148x105 mm. 272 pp. ¥1,000. ISBN 978-4-480-08699-0 (4-480-08699-4).

This work, originally published in 1985, parts ways with more traditional folklore studies by examining *yōkai* in the context of contemporary society. Miyata reexamines the work of Inoue and Yanagita and then extends his study to include *yōkai* in urban legends and popular culture, including references to icons such

as Mizuki Shigeru's Kitarō, Godzilla, and Dracula.

Kai no minzokugaku (2) yōkai [Folklore Studies on the Supernatural (Volume 2) Monsters]

Edited by Komatsu Kazuhiko

Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2000. 195x138 mm. 452 pp. ¥3,800. ISBN 978-4-309-61392-5 (4-309-61392-6).

This one volume is a collection of representative essays on *yōkai*, including classic essays by such scholars as Yanagita Kunio and Ema Tsutomu as well as recent, lesser-known scholarship. The essays are arranged under

five general topics. *Yōkai* are examined both from a historical perspective and as products of modern culture, while the final section focuses on specific creatures from among the vast pantheon of Japanese monsters.



Edo kokkei bakemono zukushi [Humorous Monster Stories of Edo]

By Adam Kabat

Kōdansha, 2003. 188x130 mm. 248 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-258265-0 (4-06-258265-1).

This study examines monsters in *kibyōshi*, humorous manga-like stories written between 1775 and 1806. In these works, once scary monsters adopt new personas as "outsiders" trying desperately to mimic the ways of the Edo sophisticate. The book elucidates how these commercialized and entertainment-

oriented monsters act as "reverse mirrors" that satirize the aesthetics of a highly urbane society.

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

On July 17 the 137th Akutagawa Prize was awarded to *Asatte no hito* [The Day-After-Tomorrow Person] by Suwa Tetsushi. In this work the narrator attempts to solve the mystery surrounding the disappearance of his uncle, a man who had the habit of using his own made-up words, by reading the diary his uncle left behind and reexamining a novel he wrote about his uncle some time before. Earlier this year Suwa's work won the Gunzō Prize for New Writers, making the Akutagawa Prize the second literary honor he has received for this debut book.

The Naoki Prize, meanwhile, went to Matsui Kesako for *Yoshiwara tebigigusa* [An Introduction to Yoshiwara]. In this novel, set in the Yoshiwara pleasure district of Edo (Tokyo), a resident relates the facts behind the mysterious disappearance of an *oiran*, a high-class female entertainer, at the height of her popularity. Matsui has been involved in Kabuki scriptwriting and production, and has written introductory guides to this performing art.

In related news, Ogawa Yōko and Kawakami Hiromi have joined the Akutagawa Prize selection committee, while Asada Jirō was added to the Naoki Prize selection committee.

First Kenzaburo Ōe Prize Awarded

In May 2007 the first Kenzaburo Ōe Prize, sponsored by Kōdansha, was awarded to 34-year-old Nagashima Yū for his cycle of short stories *Yūko-chan no chikamichi* [Yūko's Shortcut]. The award was established to commemorate the 50th year of Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburo's writing career and the 100th anniversary of the founding of Kōdansha. It also reflects a desire to restore the language of literature, which has grown sterile amid a modern society dominated by information technology, and seeks to bring the power of young writers' words out into the world.

Ōe, the sole jury member, selected the winner, choosing among all works published during 2006. The prize carries no cash award; instead, the winning work will be translated into Eng-

lish, French, or German and published around the world.

Nagashima won the Akutagawa Prize for his short story "Mō-supido de haha wa" [Top Speed Mama], the title story of his debut collection published by Bungei Shunjū in 2002. Another story contained in this work, "Saidokā ni inu" [Dog in a Sidecar], received the Bungakukai New Writers Award, and in June 2007 a film adaptation of the story was released, attracting significant interest.

International MANGA Award

On June 29 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the recipient of its first-ever International MANGA Award, which aims at promoting the dissemination of manga culture around the world by recognizing the talents of non-Japanese manga creators. Selecting from 146 entries from 26 countries and regions, the ministry presented the International MANGA Award to Lee Chi Ching from Hong Kong for his *Sun Zi's Tactics*, a manga that depicts military maneuvers devised by the ancient Chinese strategist. Encouragement Awards were presented to runners-up KAI from Hong Kong, Benny Wong Thong Hou from Malaysia, and Madeleine Rosca from Australia. The Japan Foundation invited the winner and runners-up to Japan to attend an award ceremony on July 2. The award recipients remained in the country until July 10 for a series of activities that included meeting with Japanese manga creators, as well as visiting publishers and other manga-related organizations.

Tokyo International Book Fair

The 14th Tokyo International Book Fair (TIBF) was held July 5 to 8. The major book event expanded from last year, with some 770 companies from 30 countries in attendance. Among the numerous visitors to the fair were representatives from bookstores, libraries, and schools around Japan, in addition to foreign publishers and general readers.

The number of foreign publishers participating in the event has quickly risen over the past few years, and copyright negotiations have become

more frequent, especially for children's books, whose visual aspect makes them easily understandable regardless of language. According to TIBF organizers, the sudden increase this year is due in part to news circulated by word of mouth that the Belgian company Clavis Publishing, which first exhibited at the children's book section of the fair three years ago, sold rights to some 50 titles at last year's event. The fair expects to see further growth in the number of participants from around the globe in coming years.

Children's Picture Book Gallery

The International Library of Children's Literature (ILCL) has created an online collection of picture books from Japan, Europe, the former Soviet Union, the United States, and other countries called the Digital Gallery of World Picture Books. The gallery can be accessed at <www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery> and is available in both Japanese and English. The ILCL was founded in 2000 as a branch of the National Diet Library, making it the first national library in Japan devoted to children's literature, and opened to the public in 2002. Since then it has promoted activities related to children's reading.



Kotori no kuni [Land of the Little Birds], 1929, by Okamoto Kiichi. (Courtesy: ILCL)

Reexamining Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

July 2007 marked the 80th anniversary of the death of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927). Last year a new English-language Akutagawa anthology translated by Jay Rubin was published as *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories* (Penguin Classics). In addition to Akutagawa's well-known

works, the collection contains nine of his stories appearing in English translation for the first time, including “Ogata Ryōsai oboegaki” [trans. “Dr. Ogata Ryōsai: Memorandum”], “Chūgi” [trans. “Loyalty”], and “Uma no ashi” [trans. “Horse Legs”]. In June a “reverse-import” version of Rubin’s anthology appeared in Japanese as *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke tanpenshū* [The Collected Short Works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke] (Shinchōsha). According to Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, whose *Sekai bungaku toshite no Akutagawa Ryūnosuke* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke as World Literature] also appeared in June 2007, in Russia—a leading country in the translation of Akutagawa’s work—an Akutagawa anthology was published by Hyperion Publishing House in 2002 with assistance from a Japan Foundation Grant, while a five-volume edition of Akutagawa’s complete works was published in Chinese in 2005.

Today, eight decades after his death, Akutagawa is being read in 40 countries around the world, and studies and translations of his many works continue to appear. As more Japanese become aware of the views of foreign specialists, the possibility exists that a new image of Akutagawa may yet emerge.

Obituary

Ōba Minako, 76, author, May 24, 2007.

Ōba was born in Tokyo. In 1945 she assisted atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima around the end of World War II, an experience that became a starting point for her writing. Ōba began writing seriously while living in Alaska. In 1968 she published her debut *Sanbiki no kani* [Three Crabs], which depicted the lives of ordinary Americans. The novel won both the Gunzō Prize for New Writers and the Akutagawa Prize. In 1982 her *Katachi mo naku* [Loneliness] received the Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Prize, and she won the 1986 Noma Literary Prize for *Naku tori no* [trans. *Bird’s Crying*]. Her complete writings, from novels to essays and criticism, are being published in the 10-volume *Ōba Minako zenshū* [The Complete Works of Ōba Minako]. The first woman to serve on the selection committee for the

Akutagawa Prize, which she did from 1987 to 1997, Ōba was a female author active at the forefront of contemporary Japanese literature.

Nakagami Kenji Manuscript Discovered

An original manuscript of Nakagami Kenji’s representative work *Sennen no yuraku* [A Thousand Years of Pleasure] was recently discovered. The writer’s works have been widely translated in France and other countries. He received the Akutagawa Prize in 1975 for his novella *Misaki* [trans. *The Cape*], making him the first author born in the post-World War II era to win the prize.

Announcements

Publication Grants

The Japan Foundation supports the publication of books related to Japan in various languages with the aim of promoting Japanese studies and understanding of Japan around the world. More than 50 grants were made through this program last year. Here we present a small sampling of titles that have been published with this grant support.

- Original Works
 - *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*, Shirane Haruo, Columbia University Press, USA (English)
 - *Full Metal Apache: Transactions Between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*, Tatsumi Takayuki, Duke University Press, USA (English)
 - *Japanese Popular Prints*, Rebecca Margaret Salter, A&C Black Publishers Ltd., UK (English)
- Translations
 - *Kafka a la Platja* [Kafka on the Shore], Murakami Haruki, Grup Editorial 62 s.l.u., Spain (Catalan)
 - *Yastikname* [The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon], Sei Shōnagon, Metis Publishing, Turkey (Turkish)
 - *Tancuj, tancuj, tancuj* [Dance, Dance, Dance], Murakami Haruki, Slovart Publishing Ltd., Slovakia (Slovak)
 - *Tokyo Studies*, Yoshimi Shun’ya and Wakabayashi Mikio, Communication Books, Korea (Korean)

Publishers interested in publishing a translation of a Japanese work or an original work on a Japan-related topic are invited to contact the Japan Foundation after confirming all terms and conditions. Additional information and application forms are available on the Japan Foundation website. Submissions for the fiscal 2008–09 program will be accepted until November 20, 2007.

Publishing Guide Online

The Japan Foundation and the Publishers Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE) jointly publish the



Practical Guide to Publishing in Japan. This booklet contains helpful information in English concerning the Japanese publishing industry and the purchase and sale of book copyrights. The 2005 edition

may be viewed online at the PACE website: <www.pace.or.jp>.

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Editing, Translation, Design, and Production

Japan Echo Inc.

Printed in Japan on recycled paper
 © The Japan Foundation 2007
 ISSN 0918-9580

A Tale of Love and Murder in Modern Japan

At 28, Yoshida Shūichi wrote his first novella, which was awarded the Bungakukai New Writers Award. Five years later, he won the Akutagawa Prize for *Pāku raifu* [Park Life] (2002) and the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize for *Parēdo* [Parade] (2002), becoming the first writer to be acclaimed as a budding talent in both *jun bungaku* (serious literary fiction) and *taishū bungaku* (entertainment-oriented literature).

This son of a liquor store manager on the southern island of Kyushu, who had no ambition to be a writer and spent most of his twenties as a day laborer in Tokyo, has now published the 420-page *Akunin* [The Bad], cementing his reputation as one of the most promising writers of his generation. More ambitious than his previous 14 books, his latest work combines a gripping murder mystery with a moving tale of love, loss, and redemption.

“I managed to bring together most of the themes I’d pursued in my previous books and expand on almost all the main characters I’d written about before,” states Yoshida. “I’m confident my readers will emerge with an accurate image of Japan today if they read this book.”

Yoshida’s novels can be broadly categorized into two types. One consists of provincial stories set in his hometown of Nagasaki, where young boys long for city life and wrestle with the dilemma, as he writes in *Nagasaki ranraku zaka* [Nagasaki’s Rough and Merry Slope] (2004), of whether “to leave the town, or stay there in silence.”

Yoshida’s other genre is contemporary urban love tales. The heroes of these stories, like their creator’s old self, tend to be blue-collar laborers who are much less talkative than his average-office-worker heroines. The romances often take place in Tokyo’s trendy hotspots, but that does not mean these stories are light reading, as social anxiety and the fusion of insecurity and disdain lurk in the background.

In *Akunin*, Yoshida has successfully merged these two categories. By picking Kyushu as the murder scene and throwing all his distinctive characters into the mix, the author creates a psychological drama that explores the many facets not only of the murderer but also of the survivors and other people affected by the killing.

Yoshida skillfully avoids any unbuttoned outpouring of emotion while welcoming his readers into the private emotional space of each of his characters. These include the central figure, the killer Yūichi, who is shy, socially clumsy, and single-mindedly in love; his last girlfriend Mitsuyo, who met him through an online dating service, fled with him following the crime, and stayed with him until his arrest; Yūichi’s grandmother, who raised him in the absence of his runaway mother; the victim’s father, who cannot accept the fact that his daughter was a user of online dating sites; and an initial murder suspect, who is the spoiled son of a wealthy *ryokan* (inn) owner and feels no guilt about his dalliances with women.

“I used to tell stories from the eyes of my protagonists, trying to get into their minds, but this time I was penning as if I were just sitting in a passenger seat and observing

the characters and their personas,” says Yoshida. Besides distancing himself from the characters in the novel, which was originally serialized in the *Asahi Shimbun*, he intentionally shifted the viewpoint of the narration among his protagonists, appearing to alter his position almost every few days to keep readers entertained. Creating a climax to each day’s installment was a real challenge, but the novel is tightly crafted, with the relentless buildup of tension keeping readers on their toes.

The newspaper serialization, his first, expanded his fan base from people of his own generation to much older readers. “Men in their seventies said they felt extremely sorry for Yūichi, as though they were his grandfather,” recalls the writer, who received piles of fan mail.

Nor is his readership limited to Japan. In South Korea, where almost all of his books have been translated, enthusiastic fans flock to his book signings, recounting passionately how they can relate to his characters. Fueled by reader enthusiasm in Taiwan, translations of three of Yoshida’s books are now being produced, in addition to the five titles already in circulation.

As his fan base spreads into the rest of Asia, Yoshida plans to expand his horizons beyond Kyushu and Tokyo. “I want to write stories based in Korea and Taiwan, and to focus more on the similarities than the differences between Japan and other Asian countries,” he says.

There are also growing opportunities for Yoshida in the worlds of television and cinema. Two of his earlier works were made into TV dramas and two into films, including *Water*, based on his debut work, *Saigo no musuko* [The Last Son], which he himself directed. His experience with the 28-minute film, however, convinced him that he was a writer who works best alone, rather than a director, who works with a team.

Despite Yoshida’s determination to keep growing as a writer, understanding his blue-collar roots remains his major preoccupation. “I grew up with workers in the countryside and still share something in common with them,” asserts Yoshida, now a resident of Tokyo. “Their language may not be too sophisticated, but I push them to express themselves and want to speak for them in their local vernacular.”

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Yoshida Shūichi

Born in 1968. Graduated from Hosei University’s Faculty of Business Administration. Fond of water for its purity, shapelessness, and transparency, and often uses watery settings like swimming pools, hot springs, and Tokyo Bay in his novels. Likes to read French authors, such as Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Stendhal, and the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. His award-winning *Pāku raifu* and *Parēdo* will soon be available in French.