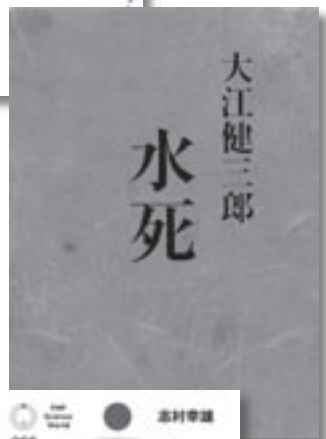
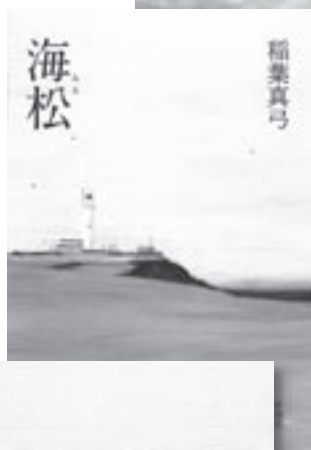


# JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

# 64

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# Images of Shanghai in Twenty-first Century Japanese Fiction

Chō Kyō

Few cities have appeared in modern Japanese fiction as often as Shanghai. While New York and Paris have frequently provided writers with inspiration, Shanghai has featured far more regularly than either of these cities as a fictional setting for novels and short stories.

Shanghai's relative closeness to Japan is undoubtedly one factor in this, but the reasons go beyond mere geographical proximity. Shanghai seems to exert a particular fascination over Japanese readers.

In the years following the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century, Shanghai developed into East Asia's first Western-style city. In the closing years of the Edo period (1603–1868), Shanghai provided Japanese visitors with a glimpse of a superficial and somewhat crude reproduction of a Western city. With the rapid modernization that took place in Japan following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, however, the semicolonial city of Shanghai came to stand as a symbol of the dangers posed to Japan by the Great Powers. Shanghai eventually became known as the *mato*, or “demon city.” It was a place with a strange hypnotic allure, along with a demonic power to corrupt and

defile. The city reeked of decadence and depravity. Coined by the novelist Muramatsu Shōfū (1889–1961), the *mato* term encapsulates the complex mixture of attraction, contempt, curiosity, and fear that Japanese of the time felt toward this strange and alien city. When Muramatsu used the term in the title of his book on Shanghai in 1924, it shot to popularity as a metaphor for the city.

The Japanese images of Shanghai and of China stand in a complex relationship. Shanghai has not generally been re-



Tsujihara Noboru's 2004 *Jasumin* [*Jasmine*].

garded as a microcosm of China. In fact, the two tend to evoke quite different associations in people's minds. As symbolized by the foreign concessions that existed until World War II, Shanghai was often seen as a European-style city that just happened to exist within Chinese borders. Although the great city was ostensibly part of China, it had almost no typically Chinese characteristics. Instead, it was characterized by Western-style architecture, cosmopolitan streets full of people from all over the world, glittering neon signs, and exotic women in dance halls. Lurking in the shadows behind this attractive façade lay a darker side to the city: thieves, gamblers, swindlers, drug

dealers, and prostitutes. It was this contradictory imbalance that combined to stimulate the creativity and imaginations of Japan's writers in the years following their country's modernization.

Beginning in the 1930s, Shanghai took on another kind of attraction for the Japanese. As military interference in politics increased following the February 26 Incident in 1936, oppression and censorship made Japanese society increasingly constricted. People began to travel to cosmopolitan Shanghai to escape from the stifling intellectual climate that prevailed in Japan. Since the Meiji era (1868–1912), Shanghai had been the only free port not to require passports, making it an easy place to visit. A passenger ferry sailed regularly between Kobe and Shanghai, and numerous writers visited Shanghai during the early years of the Shōwa era (1926–89).

After a long lull during the postwar years, Japanese interest in Shanghai began to revive as China switched to a market economy. The city developed rapidly in the closing years of the twentieth century. A succession of new skyscrapers appeared and the skyline seemed to change on an almost daily basis. Today, Shanghai is full of energy and excitement, and its swirling, breathless pace can have a dizzying effect on visitors. The number of Japanese visitors and residents has surged: some 40,000 Japanese people currently live in Shanghai. As the Chinese city rises to rival Tokyo as an East Asian metropolis, the number of novels and short stories set there is on the rise once again.

One of the first examples of this renewed burst of interest in Shanghai as a fictional setting was Kirino Natsuo's *Gyokuran* [*Jade Magnolia*], published by Asahi Shimbunsha in February 2001. Against strong opposition from her parents, a woman quits her editing job in Tokyo and flees to Shanghai to escape a triangular relationship. In her heart, she harbors another motivation for coming. She wants to trace an uncle who lived in Shanghai during the 1920s and disappeared suddenly nine years after the war. As her investigations take the protagonist back in time, the dividing line between reality and illusion blurs. The novel contains an interesting and unusual depiction of human character against the backdrop of two interwoven periods of time.

Another recent novel to present contrasting visions of old and new Shanghai is Tsujihara Noboru's *Jasumin* [*Jasmine*] (Bungei Shunjū, 2004). The protagonist Waki Akihiko goes to Shanghai in 1989 to study the effectiveness of Japanese development aid. Waki is following in the footsteps of his father, who studied in Shanghai in the 1930s and later became a movie actor in Chinese com-

edies. During the war, his father got caught up in espionage activities and disappeared one day in suspicious circumstances. He has not been heard from for forty years. Akihiko uses his free time to visit a film set where director Xie Han is making a film featuring a lead character based on Akihiko's father. He meets a Chinese actress named Li Xing and becomes embroiled in a series of complex romantic entanglements.

The novel contains detailed descriptions of Shanghai in the 1990s. At the time, redevelopment was limited to a relatively small part of the city, and many prewar buildings still survived. The author worked in a trading company before becoming a full-time writer, speaks good Chinese, and is clearly well versed in the history of Shanghai. His experiences are employed effectively in the narrative, and the atmosphere and appearance features of the city are brought vividly to life.

Many works have adopted a similar practice of juxtaposing modern Shanghai with nostalgia for its semicolonial past. Part of the reason for this must surely be the lingering power of the image of Shanghai as “demon city.” In this diabolical metropolis, there is nothing out of the ordinary about sudden disappearances or inexplicable events. Fast-paced Shanghai offers the ideal setting for an author looking to weave a plot.

Shanghai often appears in detective novels as the scene of a crime. Typical in this regard are two novels that came out in quick succession in 2004: Nishimura Kyōtarō's *Shanghai tokkyū satsujin jiken* [The Shanghai Express Murder Mystery] (Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha) and Uchida Yasuo's *Shanghai meikyū* [Shanghai Labyrinth] (Tokuma Shoten). Featuring seedy nightclubs, jazz singers and their tangled affairs, mobsters squabbling over territory, corrupt politicians, and the machinations of the mafia, these novels show the familiar dark side of Shanghai as the “demon city”—a paradise for those who live outside the law.

Not that the old image of the city is used wantonly. If anything, detective writers tend to be somewhat cool and indifferent to this urban context. The fictional space of Shanghai within detective novels bears no genetic relationship to the historical “demon city.” Within the formula of the genre, the choice of city is essentially arbitrary and amounts to little more than playing with form. The association between crime and Shanghai is inspired by impatience with the hegemonic power of money and the rampant, uncontrollable multiplication of desire.

Shanghai also appears as a setting in several horror novels. One of these is *Shanghai aibyō: Blood the last vampire* [Ephemeral Shanghai: Blood the Last Vampire] (Fujimi Shobō, 2001) by Fujisaku Jun'ichi, set not in modern Shanghai but in the foreign cantonments of the 1930s. The main plot involves the doomed romance between a Robin Hood-like vampire figure and a poor woman working in a textile factory. The author, who has also worked as an anime director, combines past and present and flits between Shanghai and Yokohama to create a fantasy world uniquely his own.

Surprisingly, Shanghai has also featured in Japanese historical novels. One of these is *Shanghai* [Shanghai] (Kōdansha, 2008) by Saeki Yasuhide, part of the author's popular *Kōtai yorai Inashū ibun* [Strange Tales from the Liege Vassals of Ina Province] series dealing with an Edo-

period samurai family in modern-day Nagano Prefecture. In this novel, the Shanghai of the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) serves somewhat incongruously as a setting for samurai warriors from feudal Japan.

As a general rule, historical fiction in Japan deals with events and people from Japanese history, particularly the Edo period. It is highly unusual for a historical novel to be set in a foreign locale. In this novel, Shanghai provides backdrop for the action of the plot, but the novel does not deal with Chinese history or historical figures. Nevertheless, it remains a rare exception to the general rules of historical fiction.

It is no coincidence that Shanghai has appeared so often in genre fiction. In setting their novels and stories in Shanghai, authors are merely responding to the interests and tastes of their readers.

Although Shanghai has long been a popular setting for Japanese fiction, a little-noticed change has taken place over the last five years or so.

In Koike Mariko's *Niji no kanata* [Over the Rainbow] (Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2006), a couple travel to Shanghai to escape the dreary grind of their daily lives. In this novel, Shanghai no longer carries any tint of the “demon city,” and the prejudice, fear, and contempt contained in that term have disappeared. At long last, Shanghai has become just another foreign city, like Paris, London, or New York.

This tendency is particularly marked in Koike Mariko's “Shanghai nite” [In Shanghai], carried in the November 2004 issue of *Shōsetsu Gendai* magazine. In this story, the protagonist Yūko is invited by her friend Amano Hisako, who works in Shanghai, to pay a visit after an interval of six years. While there, Yūko encounters her former boyfriend, Naruse Osamu, for the first time in six years and is shocked to discover that she still has feelings for him.

In this story, events in Tokyo are seen only via reminiscences about the past—the stage of the main action is Shanghai. The plot remains fixed in a contemporary setting, and there are no digressions to Shanghai's days as a “demon city” in the lead-up to World War II.

Fukuda Yasushi's *Shanghai taifūn* [Shanghai Typhoon] (Kōdansha, 2008) marks a symbolic turning point. The protagonist Nomura Misuzu loses her job after being responsible for a major slip at work. She splits from her boyfriend at the same time and resolves to start her own business in Shanghai. While grappling with differences in culture and ways of doing business, she overcomes stiff competition and eventually achieves success. The story was also broadcast as an NHK television drama in September 2008. One of the things that make the story stand out is its portrayal of Japanese characters living and prospering in a foreign city. Shanghai is shown as a place where you can succeed if you work hard; as an international city in an age of increasing globalization.

In this sense, the four-volume novel *Gankū Shanghai*

(Continued on page 14)



Vol. 1 of Takagi Nobuko's 2009 *Gankū Shanghai* [Suffering and Happiness in Shanghai].



## FICTION



Ikezawa Natsuki

Born in 1945. His wide range of works includes poetry, novels, essays, translations from English and Greek, and book reviews. Has won numerous awards, including the Akutagawa Prize in 1988 for "Sutiru raifu" [trans. "Still Life"], the Yomiuri Prize for Literature for Haha naru shizen no oppai [Mother Nature's Breasts] and the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for Mashiasu Giri no shikkyaku [The Fall of Macias Guili] in 1993, the Shiba Ryōtarō Prize in 2003 for overall literary achievements, and the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 2007.

## Kadena

By Ikezawa Natsuki

Shinchōsha, 2009. 197 x 136 mm. 440 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-10-375307-0.

It is the summer of 1968, and four spies are working to smuggle military secrets out of Kadena Air Base in Okinawa and disrupt the US bombing of North Vietnam. Chōei lost his parents and older brother in the World War II Battle of Saipan; he now runs a parts shop in Okinawa. Frieda-Jane, a sergeant major, was born to an American father and Philippine mother. Taka, a drummer in a rock band, was abandoned by his father for a life on the mainland and lost his mother to suicide. And the Vietnamese-born Annan is Chōei's childhood friend from Saipan.

The four have little in common aside from living in Okinawa, sharing neither age, nationality, ethnicity, nor language, and none has complete knowledge of everyone else involved. The only thing to connect them is their participation in a dangerous plan that leaves them nothing

to gain, spurred on not by patriotism but by a sense of camaraderie and a desire to "follow their feelings" in coming to the aid of a Vietnamese girl. They are individuals playing at being heroes, they aver self-mockingly, rather than antiwar ideologues. But the story provides a rousing depiction of the characters' pride in acting of their own accord, rather than marching to another's tune.

During the writing of this novel the author was also editing a collection of world literature. The task made him realize anew that an "interest in postcolonialism and the frontier, an understanding of the female perspective, and a reliance on the power of the story's setting" lie at the heart of his literary approach; indeed, these three elements are very much alive in this work. (SH)

## Miru [Water Weed]

By Inaba Mayumi

Shinchōsha, 2009. 197 x 135 mm. 176 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-470902-1.

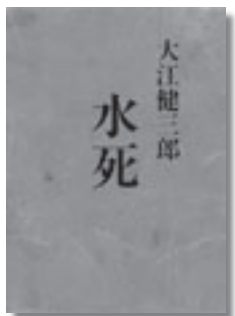
*Miru* is a collection of four stories, perhaps the most compelling of which are the title piece, which won the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature in 2008, and its sequel "Hikari no numa" [Marsh of Lights]. Together, they tell the story of a single woman in her middle years who builds a house on some hillside property she has bought by an inlet on the Shima Peninsula. Marked by a precise and subtle prose style, the stories describe the quiet moments she spends here when she can steal away from her solitary life in Tokyo, escaping back to nature with her faithful cat, far from the chaos of the big city. No major events take place, there are no dramatic twists in the plot, and the world the stories describe could hardly be more confined. The interest and pleasure they provide come instead from following the pro-

tagonist's thoughts and feelings, and from the supple prose itself as the author describes the observations and discoveries her protagonist makes in the course of her daily life. The work is marked by the delicate sensibility that has always been a hallmark of fiction by Japanese women, and stands firmly in the traditions of the finest short story writing. As she writes in "Miru": "The things I grow close to during my time here are barely tangible, almost without form. The firelight, the water in the marshes, the clay and the fungi, and the murmuring of the trees' branches against the walls of the house." Watching crowds of fireflies as they rise from the marsh below her house, she is able to muse that, "Although I will someday die, we will live on." The collection is studded with similar moments of revelation and insight. (NM)



Inaba Mayumi

Born in 1950. Won the Fujin Kōron Prize for new women writers for Aoi kage no itami o [The Pain of Blue Shadows]. Ended the long period of literary dormancy that followed in 1992 with the Women's Literature Prize-winning Endoresu warutsu [Endless Waltz]. Won the Hirabayashi Taiko Award in 1995 for Koe no shōfu [The Voice Prostitute]. Her short story "Miru" [Water Weed] won the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature in 2008 and became the title of this collection, for which she won the Education Minister's Art Encouragement Prize in 2010.



Ōe Kenzaburō

Born in 1935. Graduated from the University of Tokyo. Received the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for "Shiiku" [trans. "The Catch"]. Received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. Chooses works to receive the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize, established in 2006; these are then translated into such languages as English and French. His works include Sayōnara, watashi no hon! [Farewell, My Books!] (see JBN No. 47) and Rōtashi Anaberu Rī sōkedachitsu mimakaritsu [Chilling and Killing My Beautiful Annabel Lee] (see JBN No. 57).

## Suishi [Death by Water]

By Ōe Kenzaburō

Kōdansha, 2009. 192 x 135 mm. 437 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-06-215460-4.

Ōe Kenzaburō is known as a staunch defender of the spirit of postwar democracy, but his latest novel sees him examining another theme: the fanatical nationalism that dominated the years leading up to Japan's defeat in World War II. For Ōe, the novel marks a return to the problem of the father that he addressed in his 1972 novel *Mizukara waga namida o nuguitamau hi* [trans. *The Day He Himself Shall Wipe My Tears Away*]. As with many of Ōe's works, the novel's protagonist is Chōkō Kogito, an author bearing a close resemblance to Ōe himself. Chōkō decides to write a novel about his father, an "ultra-nationalist" who drowned while out in a small boat on a swollen river just before the end of the war. The author sets out for a village on Shikoku to examine a collection of documents left behind in a red

leather trunk following his mother's death. Intertwined with this story is another plot dealing with a young theatrical group that is working on a play based on one of Chōkō's works. The novel ends on a note of hope for the future, with a bold declamation from a gifted young actress in the troupe: "Men are rapists! The state is a rapist! It's time for us women to revolt!" Written in a simple and supple style, and bolstered by clear, searching, and rigorous thought, there is no question that this novel marks a new pinnacle in the development of what Ōe himself has referred to (after Edward Said) as his "late style." (NM)

## Muri [Hopeless]

By Okuda Hideo

Bungei Shunjū, 2009. 194 x 135 mm. 544 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-16-328580-1.

Formed by the merger of three smaller towns, Yumeno—a name meaning "dream town"—is a city without a future. With its finances on the brink, a review of welfare benefits is underway. A scarcity of decent jobs and marriage prospects has led to a high proportion of broken homes. Station-area storefronts are eaten with rust, and pachinko parlors and mass retailers perch on either side of the city's main thoroughfare. Housewives have turned to prostitution and cult religions, and local politicians, building contractors, and organized crime syndicates vie for control of the city's few spoils. High school students chafe at the impasse of daily life.

The plot revolves around five residents: a social worker, a former gangster, a female high school student, a supermar-

ket security guard, and a city council member. As their lives deteriorate, a stark portrayal emerges of modern life in Japan's provincial cities. Yet there is none of the weariness of a social documentary. On the contrary, the author's superb pacing draws the reader in despite there being no prospect for a happy resolution, and the character depictions remain captivating throughout. In these pages readers will meet cowardly, petty members of the bourgeoisie with pretensions of self-importance. Eventually their weaknesses become their undoing, causing the reader to sympathize with the wretchedness of their condition and heave a sigh of relief at their fleeting displays of humanity. This is a splendid human farce that evokes a sense of warmth amid a bleak landscape. (MT)



Okuda Hideo

Born in 1959. After working as a copywriter made his literary debut in 1997 with *Uranbāna no mori* [The Forest of Ullambana]. Received the Ōyabu Haruhiko Prize in 2002 for *Jama* [Annoyance], the Naoki Prize in 2004 for *Kūchū buranko* [Flying Trapeze], the Shibata Renzaburō Award in 2007 for *Ie biyori* [Fair Weather House], and the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature in 2009 for *Orinpikku no minoshirokin* [Olympic Ransom].



Nakamura Fuminori

Born in 1977. His debut novel *Jū* [The Gun] won the Shinchō New Author Prize in 2002. His other works include *Tsuchi no naka no kodomo* [Child in the Ground] (see JBN No. 47), winner of the Akutagawa Prize in 2005, and *Nani mo ka mo yūtsu na yoru ni* [On a Night When All Is Misery] (see JBN No. 62). *Suri* won the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize in 2010 and will be translated and published abroad.

## **Suri** **[Pickpocket]**

By Nakamura Fuminori

Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2009. 195 x 135 mm. 179 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-309-01941-3.

This story's protagonist is a master pickpocket whose gifted hands allow him to steal vast sums from the rich; vivid and suspenseful pocket-picking episodes are portrayed right from the opening and continue throughout. Unexpectedly, the thief finds his sympathies drawn to a young boy forced into the same dark trade by his mother. In the face of the yawning gap between the hardship of his present life and any hope of a brighter future, the master pickpocket becomes the boy's only source of guidance. A story of the humble bond between two kindred souls develops against a backdrop of darkness.

But an even greater evil threatens to entangle the master pickpocket in the form of Kizaki, a leader in the criminal underworld. Kizaki relates a story about a French slave who lived fortuitously by

doing exactly as detailed in the "notebook of fate" kept by the aristocrat who owned him. The crime lord orders the pickpocket to perform three tasks; the punishment for failure is death. "If you try to run," Kizaki threatens, "I'll kill that child you've grown so fond of."

With the merciless code of the underworld threatening his life, can he resist performing the tasks set forth in Kizaki's own "notebook of fate"? It is left to the readers to interpret the story's outcome. Looming on the pickpocket's horizon, though, is an even greater obstacle than the tremendous evil that confronts him. This brilliant, suspense-filled work dares to portray an evil of such limitless as not even the likes of Dostoevsky ever explored. (SH)

## **Watashi no akakute yawarakana bubun** **[My Soft, Red Parts]**

By Hirata Toshiko

Kadokawa Shoten, 2009. 193 x 135 mm. 191 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-04-873971-9.

This novel is a sensitive portrayal of a woman's recovery from loss. Protagonist Manami falls into a profound sense of loss after parting with her boyfriend, Yūji, around the same time as the death of her close senior colleague, Kageyama. Unable to work, she unthinkingly boards a train and alights at a strange town far removed from the city.

At first she is unable to bury her sense of loss. The "Station Hotel" located painfully far from the station, the cafeteria that serves nothing but children's meals, and the manager of an apartment where she stays, with its glaring red walls, serve as symbols of her loneliness. "There are small birds in my chest," she laments. "My dreams are red, red like blood."

But she finds herself coming to terms with her feelings as she gradually grows

accustomed to life in the small town.

"Kageyama's death was neither respectable nor foolish," she tells herself. "It was just right." Manami begins a dialog with her departed colleague and the former boyfriend now many miles away. She comes to realize that accepting her "soft, red parts" amounts not to a jettisoning of her past, but rather to making use of her experiences in the here and now. At this point she finally begins to recover, albeit slowly.

While helping to carry a portable shrine during a town festival, Manami spots someone bearing a striking resemblance to Kageyama, and finally manages to bid farewell to Yūji. With her "long walk" at an end, she begins the journey back to a normal life. (MK)



Hirata Toshiko

Born in 1955. A poet, novelist, and playwright. Won the first New Contemporary Japanese Poets Prize in 1983. Her *Shi nanoka* [Seven Days of Poetry] won the Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize in 2004. Won the Noma Prize for New Writers for Futari-nori [Two on a Bicycle] (see JBN No. 47).



Fujitani Osamu

Born in 1963. Made his debut as a novelist with *Andante mottassera chizu* [*Andante Mozarella Cheese*] in 2003. His 2008 work *Itsuka kan'oke wa yatte kuru* [*The Coffin Will Someday Come*] was a candidate for the Mishima Yukio Prize. *Fune ni nore!* was nominated for the 2010 Hon'ya [Bookseller] Prize.

## ***Fune ni nore!* [Get On Board!]**

By Fujitani Osamu

Vol. 1: JIVE, 2008. 194 x 134 mm. 288 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-86176-579-7.

Vol. 2: JIVE, 2009. 194 x 134 mm. 304 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-86176-681-7.

Vol. 3: JIVE, 2009. 194 x 134 mm. 256 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-86176-735-7.

This novel is a vessel for all that it means to be young: the limitless brilliance of the time, the seemingly endless exertion and sweat, and the bottomless despair. The main character and his friends each commit themselves body and soul to love, friendship, and music in a spectacle that is at once dazzling in its beauty and choking in its pathos. Perhaps because the novel is about music, though, it remains an exhilarating read without ever growing stifling. Its careful depictions of the atmospheres unique to orchestras, trios, solos, and other classical music ensembles impart a special sense of how it feels to be a musician.

The work is also imbued with depth by its philosophical exploration of the mean-

ing of life. Beyond the solid portrayals of music lessons, the joys of falling in love, and everyday scenes from school and home, at critical junctions the novel reveals a philosophy that repeatedly questions this lifestyle. This approach grows even more profound in the wake of a traumatic heartbreak, and this element will resonate strongly with readers.

To be sure, the protagonist experiences colossal tragedies during his three years in high school. It could also be said, though, that visiting the extremes of both joy and sadness grants him the happiest possible high school experience. The powerful impact of this work will leave a lasting impression in the hearts of readers. (MT)

## **ESSAY**

### ***Seigen kyokusen* [Sine Curves]**

By Horie Toshiyuki

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2009. 190 x 132 mm. 199 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-12-004037-5.

In modern Japanese, most people make little distinction between *essei*, derived from “essay,” and *zuihitsu*, the equivalent Sino-Japanese term. But this new collection, which won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature, makes it clear that Japanese *zuihitsu* writing continues to be a distinct genre—one quite different from the Western tradition represented by such writers as Montaigne. Japanese *zuihitsu* can often be hard to tell apart from the novel or short story. Etymologically meaning to “follow the brush,” *zuihitsu* allows the writer to move freely from subject to subject and has been an important part of Japanese literature since medieval times.

Horie is one of a number of contemporary writers keeping the tradition alive in the twenty-first century. The book has no table of contents, instead consisting of 46

short essays divided by brief headline-like subtitles. Many of the essays deal with mundane, everyday objects, such as the sine curves referenced in the title, the starchy paper wrappings that provide an easy-to-swallow coating for pills, the breast pockets on men’s pajamas, various approaches to moistening the back of a stamp, and the fasteners used to fix bandages. From these unlikely starting points, Horie ranges freely over the natural sciences, music, poetry, and languages. Although the collection might seem at first like little more than a collection of random musings, a close reading reveals the care and effort that has gone into every word of the elegant, finely pitched Japanese. Anyone with an interest in *zuihitsu* would do well to read this book. It is a superlative example of the genre. (NM)



Horie Toshiyuki

Born in 1964. Made his debut as a novelist in 1995 with *Kōgai e* [*To the Suburbs*]. Won the Akutagawa Prize in 2001 for “*Kuma no shikiishi*” [*The Bear’s Paving Stone*], the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature in 2003 for “*Sutansu dotto*” [*Stance Dot*], and the Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Prize and the Kiyama Shōhei Literary Prize in 2004 for *Yukinuma to sono shūhen* [*Yukinuma and Its Environs*]. A professor at Waseda University since 2007.





Shimura Yukio

Born in 1935. A technical journalist who currently lectures on venture capital theory at Kanazawa University's Common Institutes for Education and Research. His other works include *Gijutsu rikkoku: Nihon no genten* [Technology-Based National Development: The Origins of Japan], *Dokusōteki gijutsu-sha no jōken* [Conditions for Creative Engineers], and *Dare ga hontō no hatsumeisha ka* [Who Is the Real Inventor?].

## Warau kagaku: Igu Nōberu shō [Funny Science: The Ig Nobel Prize]

By Shimura Yukio

PHP Kenkyūjo, 2009. 172 x 110 mm. 240 pp. ¥800. ISBN 978-4-569-77440-4.

The Ig Nobel Prize has a special reason for finding favor among the Japanese. It first gained recognition in Japan after being awarded to the inventors of karaoke and the Bowlingual, a device that purports to interpret between humans and dogs. There have so far been 13 Japanese Ig Nobel recipients; this is nearly a tenth of the 180 winners in the prize's history, and it matches the number of Japanese to win the actual Nobel Prize in the scientific categories.

The book details the award's 40 different categories and the selection process. It offers a look at science that provokes both laughter and thought and a description of the laugh-filled awards ceremony, which stands in complete contrast to its august counterpart.

The author opens with an explication

of Henri-Louis Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* and goes on to analyze both the scientific and humorous nature of the prize. Among Japanese researchers' diverse achievements that have won them the award are a study titled "Pigeons' Discrimination of Paintings by Monet and Picasso"; a chemical investigation of a bronze statue in the city of Kanazawa that fails to attract pigeons; and the discovery of a way to extract vanillin, which gives vanilla its fragrance and flavor, from cow dung. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that Japan is an Ig Nobel great power. Other achievements including *kaiten-zushi* (conveyor-belt sushi bars) also appear to hold great promise for being honored with this award, providing a reason for Japan to stay tuned to developments. (MK)

## CRITICISM

### Kigo no tanjō [The Birth of Kigo]

By Miyasaka Shizuo

Iwanami Shoten, 2009. 173 x 105 mm. 224 pp. ¥700. ISBN 978-4-00-431214-7.

*Kigo*, literally "season words," are seasonal indicators that are an intrinsic part of haiku poetry. Standard *kigo* for representing the various seasons and festivals are referred to using *saijiki* (*kigo* glossaries), yet this has created a problem: it is difficult for regions with differing latitudes and longitudes—to say nothing of countries that do not have four seasons—to incorporate standardized *kigo* into locally penned haiku. The author advocates using *kigo* in accordance with geography, rather than according to their classification in *saijiki*. He also traces the development of *kigo* and Japanese people's sensitivity to the changing seasons as far back as the dawning awareness of daily life in the Jōmon period (ca. 10,000–300 B.C.), as well as the ways in which this perception has changed over time.

It has been surmised that Jōmon people derived a sense of life and death from seasonal change. The author is therefore proposing a return to the roots from which *kigo* were born. Also of interest is Miyasaka's interpretation of *Oku no hosomichi* [trans. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*], a poem-filled travelogue by the master Matsuo Bashō (1644–94). Bashō's journey of 150 days and roughly 2,400 kilometers was aimed at interacting with nature and discovering new *kigo*, and it resulted in a challenge to the values held by contemporary haiku circles.

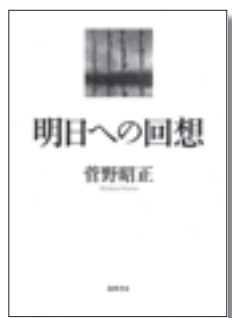
By instilling knowledge of *kigo*, this work will impart an understanding of the perception of seasons that runs beneath the surface of Japanese literature. It will also grant tremendous freedom to haiku poets in other countries. (SH)



Miyasaka Shizuo

Born in 1937. Haiku poet and president of the haiku magazine *Take* [Peaks]. Professor emeritus at Shinshū University. Received the Modern Haiku Association's Prize in 1995, the first Yamamoto Prize for Literature for Haiku *karada kan* [Physical Sense of Haiku] in 2001, and the Yomiuri Prize for Literature (in the essays and travel journals category) for *Katarikakeru kigo: Yuruyaka na Nihon* [Expressive kigo: Flexible Japan] in 2007. Author of *Chū* [Air] and seven other volumes of haiku poetry.





**Kanno Akimasa**

*Born in 1930. Literary critic and director of the Setagaya Literary Museum. Received the Education Minister's Art Encouragement Prize in 1984 for Shigaku sōzō [Poetics Creation], the Yomiuri Prize for Literature in 1985 for Suteфанu Mararume [Stéphane Mallarmé], and the Japan Art Academy Award in 1999 for Nagai Kafū junreki [A Survey of Nagai Kafū]. Member of the Japan Art Academy since 2003. Recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon.*

## **Asu e no kaisō** **[Reflections for Tomorrow]**

**By Kanno Akimasa**

Chikuma Shobō, 2009. 195 x 135 mm. 223 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 978-4-480-81504-0.

This is an autobiography-cum-memoir by one of Japan's leading literary critics and scholars of French literature. The book begins by considering the cultural background of the 1930s, the decade when the author was born and the height of the Japanese modernist movement just before the country plunged into a lengthy period of war. The reader expects this to be followed by recollections of the author's early years. Instead, the book jumps to the mid-1940s and the closing months of World War II. From the munitions factory where the author is conscripted to produce tanks for the war the novel moves to descriptions of the postwar black market.

Against the backdrop of this upheaval, the young man falls in love with literature. He reads avidly, exchanging ideas with friends and teachers, and eventually

decides to major in French literature. In a time of confusion in Japanese politics Kanno admits to a passing flirtation with political activism as "a perfectly ordinary student" would, but otherwise strives to remain a "nonpolitical person." He immerses himself in the works of French authors like Valéry, Malraux, Sartre, and Robbe-Grillet, eventually deciding to become a scholar of French literature. The chronicle comes to an end with Kanno's graduation in 1953. This vivid and evocative portrait of a young man's life amid the chaotic social climate of the wartime and postwar years is an interesting and valuable record of the times, written by an honest and forthright man of letters. (NM)

## **Biyondo Ejison** **[Beyond Edison]**

**By Saishō Hazuki**

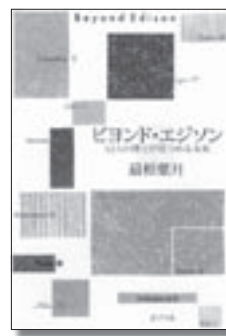
Poplar, 2009. 195 x 135 mm. 288 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-591-11152-9.

This nonfiction work explores the ways of thinking of scientists working at the forefront of their respective fields. The author introduces 12 Japanese scientists and their research into fields ranging from parasitology to paleontology, agricultural meteorology, acoustic engineering, and neurology. It also elaborates the motives that led them to pursue their scientific careers by listing the biographies and other works they read as children, raising a cry of encouragement for their never-ending bid to go "beyond Edison" in their exploration of the unknown.

One such scientist is Kita Kiyoshi, a parasitologist working on the development of a treatment for African sleeping sickness. Kita chose to become a scientist after reading a biography of the doctor and philosopher Albert Schweitzer

(1875–1965). Although knowing individuals have criticized Schweitzer's piano recitals and lectures as "publicity stunts," his recognition of the necessity of funding provided Kita with guidance in his career as a research scientist.

Neurologist Hoshi Minako, meanwhile, is working to discover the causes of Alzheimer's disease. Hoshi found herself attracted to the primatologist Jane Goodall's sense of spirituality and was able to overcome her own personal anguish by reading Goodall's autobiography, *Reason for Hope*. According to Hoshi, "In the end, all that's left is the truth." (MK)



**Saishō Hazuki**

*Born in 1963. Nonfiction writer. Writes on themes including sports, education, and the relationship between humanity and science and technology. Her works include the 1997 Shōgakukan Nonfiction Award-winner Zettai onkan [Perfect Pitch] and Hoshi Shin'ichi: Sen'ichi wa o tsukutta hito [Hoshi Shin'ichi: The Man Who Wrote 1,001 Stories], which won a total of five literary awards in 2007–8. Member of the JBN Advisory Board.*



Gotō Masaharu

*Born in Kyoto in 1946. A nonfiction writer who mainly addresses sports and medical problems. Won the Kōdansha Prize for Nonfiction for Tōi ringu [Distant Ring] in 1990 and the Ōya Sōichi Prize for Nonfiction for Ritān matchi [Return Match] in 1995. His other works include Bera Chasurafusuka: Mottomo utsukushiku [Vera Caslavskā: Most Beautiful] (see JBN No. 43).*

## ***Kiseki no gaka* [Painter of Miracles]**

**By Gotō Masaharu**

Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 135 mm. 279 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-06-215950-0.

In this nonfiction work the author introduces the artist Ishii Kazuo (1943–). Ishii lives in a rundown row house and delivers newspapers to train stations to make ends meet as he fervently paints pictures of goddesses. He becomes a professional painter at age 49 thanks to an encounter with Shimada Makoto, president of the venerable Kaibundō bookstore in Kobe. A serious illness prompted Shimada to concentrate on activities of genuine importance. He receives a phone call from Ishii, who asks Shimada to come and view his paintings. As the artist would later recount, “I thought such a person would be able to understand me.” Upon seeing the paintings Shimada is stunned: it is as though he can hear the breathing of this lonely soul as he works meticulously to fill in the white canvases.

When the author asks him why he chose to paint goddesses, Ishii mumbles, “Well, I feel like they’ve descended from heaven . . .” To complement his reticence, the author has included interviews with people who have purchased his paintings, all of whom are struggling with painful experiences. One lost a daughter to illness; another was diagnosed with cancer. Yet all of them are healed after offering their prayers to Ishii’s paintings.

Shimada and Ishii develop a bond akin to that shared by Vincent van Gogh (1853–90) and his younger brother Theo (1857–91), who was an art dealer by trade. In this tranquil and heartwarming work, the author explores the question of why people paint, and why others are so drawn to their works. (SH)

## **JAPANESE THOUGHT**

### ***Nihon henkyōron* [Japan as a Marginal Country]**

**By Uchida Tatsuru**

Shinchōsha, 2009. 173 x 108 mm. 256 pp. ¥740. ISBN 978-4-10-610336-0.

It is often said that Japanese people love to read on the topic of their national character, and this treatise adds one more volume to the countless works on this subject. The author supports his assertions with a wide body of academic research, allowing him to move freely among literature, philosophy, mass culture, martial arts, international politics, and the uniqueness of the Japanese language as he uses plainspoken, unadorned prose to zero in on the essential elements in this captivating work.

Yet as Uchida himself makes clear, rather than presenting new arguments, this work is more aptly described as an assimilation and reconstruction of existing contentions from the likes of cultural anthropologist Umesao Tadao, political scientist Maruyama Masao, anatomist

Yōrō Takeshi, and psychoanalyst Kishida Shū. Yet from these he has drawn a novel conclusion. Simply put, it is that while Japan is unable to set global standards on its own, remaining on the margins of power may not be such a bad thing, as the country has a keen ability to learn how to conform to these standards. The author admits to bolstering his argument with a significant amount of rhetoric. But Uchida’s Japan theory is nonetheless unique and captivating for having been constructed by a Japanese rather than borrowed from abroad, and for being neither masochistic nor self-congratulatory. (NM)



Uchida Tatsuru

*Born in 1950. Currently a professor in the School of Letters at Kobe College. His numerous works include Karyū shikō: Manabanai kodomotachi, hatarakanai wakamonotachi [Heading for the Lower Class: Children Who Do Not Learn, Young People Who Do Not Work] (see JBN No. 53). Nihon henkyōron received the 2010 Shinsho Award.*



Kamata Tōji

*Born in 1951. Philosopher, theologian, and professor at Kyoto University's Kokoro Research Center. A qualified Shinto priest who also writes Shinto songs. His numerous other works include the four-part Ōdōron [Old-Young Theory] and Reiteki ningen: Tamashii no arukeorōji [The Spiritual Person: Archeology of the Soul].*

## ***Kami to Hotoke no deau kuni*** **[The Country Where Buddha and the Gods Meet]**

**By Kamata Tōji**

Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2009. 190 x 127 mm. 264 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-04-703449-5.

The author regards Japanese religion as a fusion of Shinto and Buddhism. Today most people in Japan tend to view Shintoism as something entirely distinct from Buddhism. But this perception was the result of the Edict for Separation of Shinto and Buddhism that the Meiji government pursued after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Prior to this, a synthesized version of the two religions existed, and it is here that the author attempts to uncover the quintessential Japanese spirituality.

To be certain, there are fundamental differences in the ideologies of the two religions. Yet according to the author, Japan was successful in fusing these two inherently disparate philosophies.

He furthermore sheds light on several critical periods during the formation of this synthesis, such as the seventh and

eighth centuries, when Shugendō, an ancient religion centered on ascetism, and the *Ritsuryō* system of law were established; the demise of the *Ritsuryō* system and the deification of the imperial family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which allowed for the establishment of a separate fundamental deity; and the period in which National Learning (a movement that emphasized Japanese classical studies) rose to prominence under Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843). This can be taken as a religious movement that gave rise to the Meiji Restoration. National Learning then developed even further with the emergence of such figures as Deguchi Onisaburō (1871–1948), a founder of the Ōmoto religion, and the ethnologist Ori-kuchi Shinobu (1887–1953). (MK)

## **MANGA**

### ***Torokeru tekkōjo*** **[The Melting Steelworks]**

**By Nomura Munehiro**

Vol. 1: Kōdansha, 2008. 182 x 128 mm. 128 pp. ¥580. ISBN 978-4-06-352247-1.

Vol. 2: Kōdansha, 2009. 182 x 128 mm. 128 pp. ¥580. ISBN 978-4-06-352258-7.

Vol. 3: Kōdansha, 2009. 182 x 128 mm. 128 pp. ¥580. ISBN 978-4-06-352284-6.

When it comes to comics, Japan is a major world power. Manga themes range from friendship and love to battle, crime, laughter, and tears. This series is an example of the many inspiring manga titles that revolve around seemingly mundane topics. It is a comedy concerning the lives of a group of steelworkers. The knowledge it conveys on welding tools, machinery, accidents, and other aspects of their trade is truly fascinating. It also weaves a warm and absorbing account of the lives of the craftsmen and their families.

Welding is a demanding job, and the workers are constantly exposed to such dangers as hot bits of steel landing on their bare skin, extreme heat searing their eyes, and serious burns. Nonetheless, the

characters take pride in their work and cannot help but allow their professional curiosity to become piqued by the quality of the welds they see outside their workplace—be they on shelves, bicycles, or billboard frames at baseball fields.

Many of the welding jobs at this steelworks must be done quickly, and overtime has become a matter of course. The characters grumble as they work to get the job done right, looking forward to the chance to relax with their families during the annual company vacation. By including such facets of their lives, this manga provides a lively snapshot of the workers who form the basis of Japan's *monozukuri*, or culture of craftsmanship. (MT)



Nomura Munehiro

*Born in 1975. Worked part-time jobs after graduation from high school as he sought to become a manga artist. At age 25 went to work as a welder at a steelworks in Hiroshima, where he continued for seven years while drawing manga as a hobby. Became a professional manga artist after receiving Ibuningu [Evening] comic magazine's award for newcomers in 2007. Torokeru tekkōjo is currently being serialized in Ibuningu, where it debuted in 2007.*

## No. 2: Mishima Yukio

In the second installment in this series, we explore the works of Mishima Yukio, one of the highest-profile Japanese authors in the modern era. Following an overview of his writing and life is an introduction to films made from three of his best-known works.

### The Masks That Genius Wears

It is well known that Mishima Yukio harbored a desire for an early death; in fact, for this “aristocrat of the spirit,” leaving the world in a beautiful way was a lifelong dream.

In “Aporo no sakazuki” [The Cup of Apollo], an essay dating from his early years, Mishima discusses a young man who appears in the Georges de Porto-Riche play *Le Vieil homme*. The young man is fascinated by the evening sun—not the pure light of morning or the energetic, blazing sun of the afternoon, but the ripe, swollen sun of the evening as it slips over the horizon. Despite his tender years, the young man has learned to find beauty in extinction. Mishima writes: “In my younger days, I too could find no meaning in the sun’s existence beyond its death in the sunset each evening.”

The precocious Gakushūin (Peers School) student who is the protagonist of Mishima’s early story “Shi o kaku shōnen” [trans. “The Boy Who Wrote Poetry”], written while the author was in his teens, is warned by his teacher, “Don’t try to become Schiller. You should strive to be Goethe.” The aspiring young poet mutters angrily: “I don’t want to be Goethe. Goethe’s an old man. Schiller is young. I prefer Schiller.” Youth represents a dangerous attractiveness that adults have lost. It is in youth, not maturity, that the beauty of extinction is to be found.

His flamboyant life and dazzling literary creations often obscure the fact that Mishima was an outsider who regarded himself as unfit to be part of society. This tendency can be seen quite clearly in the most famous work of Mishima’s early period, the novel *Kamen no kokuhaku* [trans. *Confessions of a Mask*]. For a time, the title persuaded some readers that the book’s confession was a fabrication, but few people today read the story as anything but a young man’s true “confession” of his homosexuality. Since gay people were still shunned and excluded from society at the time the book appeared, the author had no choice but to hide behind a mask.

There can be little doubt that many of the episodes recounted in the book were drawn from Mishima’s own experience—such as the fascination he had from his childhood years with the “princes destined to die” in European fairy tales, or the strange attraction the narrator feels to the Baroque painter Guido Reni’s depiction of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian.

Mishima’s unconventional life as a writer combined with his homosexual tendencies to make him acutely aware of his status as an outsider. In time, the author’s sense of his own strangeness grew into a feeling of entitlement and a conviction that he was not subject to the same constraints as ordinary people. It was an approach that was typical of a man who had lived as a member of the intellectual elite from early childhood.

Most people might shrink at the thought that they were unfit for society, but in Mishima’s case it served only to swell his pride. He came to feel contempt for bourgeois respectability and advocated a life of flamboyant unconventionality.

Mishima’s bizarre final hours shocked many people. What could have driven him to such an end? Various theories have been put forward, but essentially the problem is one we will never understand. His suicide was the act of a “spiritual aristocrat” who lived and died on an elevated plain far above anything that normal human beings can comprehend.

Tragedy is the fitting mode for the chosen ones. While comedy sings the praises of life, tragedy points in the direction of a beautiful death—a fitting end for the heroic figure who has been specially marked by fate.

Mishima was attracted to death as he was to beauty. Ultimately, death and beauty became the same thing—but only in literature, within the world of words. In “Shi o kaku shōnen,” he observed: “Written love shines more brightly; love sung of in poetry is more beautiful by far.” One might assume that the same could be said of death; that written death too would be more beautiful than the real thing. Ultimately, however, Mishima decided to step beyond the confines of the written word.

Mishima liked to write about the lives of the upper classes. This made him diametrically opposed to the predominant “I-novel” writers of the time, whose books were normally based on the miserable and poverty-stricken lives of the authors themselves. Mishima’s taste for the high society can be seen in such works as *Kyōko no ie* [Kyoko’s House], *Yakaifuku* [Evening Dress], the play *Rokumeikan* [trans. *The Rokumeikan*], and in the four novels known collectively as *Hōjō no umi* [trans. *The Sea of Fertility*]. It is as though Mishima yearned to distance himself from the dark, dank world of the I-novel. In this sense too, perhaps, he felt that the regular conventions did not apply to him.

In my opinion, Mishima’s greatest masterpiece was *Kinkakuji* [trans. *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*]. This novel allows us to see a quite different side of the author from the aloofness of the man unfit for normal society. Instead we are shown almost the exact opposite: the isolation and sensitivity of a vulnerable, easily wounded young man.

Based on a true event, the novel tells the shocking story of a young Buddhist acolyte who sets fire to a famous temple in Kyoto. The first-person narrator (the monk Mizoguchi) is a born stutterer who is ostracized by society. He leaves the small village on the Japan Sea coast where he has grown up and sets off to become an apprentice monk in Kyoto.

He stares in wonder at the temple pavilion every day.



Gradually, his obsession with the beauty of the building turns to hatred, and in the end he sets fire to the temple. The story is told by the arsonist himself, but the narrator betrays none of the arrogance or disreputability of the typical villain. Instead, he is depicted as withdrawn and unable to communicate with others. He struggles to come to terms with himself as a person unfit for society.

Mishima Yukio took this weak young man and used him as the main character in one of his finest works. The success of the novel makes me believe that ultimately

Mishima's pose as a spiritual aristocrat, along with his arrogance and haughtiness, was nothing but a mask, and that beneath the mask he too had a character marked by weakness and humility similar to that of the young man in his novel. Perhaps that is what makes him and his work so attractive.

(Kawamoto Saburō,  
literary and film critic)

## An Introduction to the Films

### **Enjō [Conflagration] (1958)**

**Directed by Ichikawa Kon**

A film version of *Kinkakuji*. One of the masterpieces of the great director Ichikawa Kon. With a screenplay by the director's wife, Wada Natto, the film vividly portrays the relationship between a young man growing up in a poor village on the Japan Sea coast and his father. Young lead Ichikawa Raizō gives an impressive performance as the depressive young acolyte whose stutter makes him struggle to communicate with others.

Following complaints from *Kinkakuji* officials, the temple is known in the film as *Shūkakuji*. For the fire in the final scene, Ichikawa burned down a half-size replica of the temple he had built on the banks of a river in the Arashiyama district of Kyoto. The black-and-white photography of cameraman Miyagawa Kazuo, who also worked on Kurosawa Akira's *Rashōmon*, gives the film a dark beauty.



Enjō  
© 1958 Daiei Motion Picture Co.  
DVD available from Kado-kawa Pictures, Inc. (¥4,935)



Shiosai  
© 1964 Nikkatsu Corp.

### **Shiosai [The Sound of Waves] (1964)**

**Directed by Morinaga Kenjiro**

The original 1954 novel *Shiosai* [trans. *The Sound of Waves*] is a love story so conventional and straightforward that it is hard to believe it is by Mishima Yukio. A young fisherman and an innocent woman living on a small island fall in love. At the time, Mishima was drawn to the brightness of ancient Greece and wrote this fresh romance, reminiscent of the tale of Daphnis and Chloe, under the conviction that a beautiful body was more important for human beings than the spirit.

Mishima's model for his story's setting was the island of Kamishima in Mie Prefecture's Ise Bay, home to a small population of fishermen and pearl divers. The story has been adapted for the cinema five times—in 1954, 1964, 1971, 1975, and 1985—and is a classic of youth cinema.

### **Haru no yuki [Spring Snow] (2005)**

**Directed by Yukisada Isao**

A film version of the first installment of Mishima's *Sea of Fertility* tetralogy, *Haru no yuki* [trans. *Spring Snow*]. Mishima himself spoke of the novel as a tragic love story in the style of court literature and said he had aimed to depict the feminine grace typical of courtly culture.

A young man and woman from the aristocracy enter into a forbidden love affair during the Taishō era (1912–26). The man falls sick and dies. The combination of an aristocratic setting and the delicate depiction of the beauty of young death is typical of Mishima's work. The director Yukisada Isao had a major hit with the love film *Sekai no chūshin de, ai o sakebu*, based on the novel of the same title [trans. *Socrates in Love*].

Francis Ford Coppola and Chen Kaige are two more directors who harbored an ambition to make films based on works by Mishima.



Haru no yuki  
For sale only in Japan

(Continued from page 3)

[Suffering and Happiness in Shanghai] by Takagi Nobuko (Nikkei Publishing, 2009) is similar. The main character is a woman in her fifties who runs a beauty salon in Shanghai. The novel depicts her long and lonely journey to happiness. Shanghai is revealed as a place where a person can find fulfillment in love as well as success in business.

It is interesting that the protagonists in both stories are women. In Japan there has long been a belief that it is more difficult for women to become successful in business, and this prejudice probably lurks in the cultural background to the story. In fact, it is true that many of the Japanese entrepreneurs in Shanghai are women. It is perhaps easier for a talented female to succeed independently in Shanghai, away from the shackles of Japanese society. These two novels incorporate these hopes and expectations, perhaps unconsciously. Shanghai is a city in which ambition and competitiveness affect every aspect of work and life. On the other hand, the unbridled openness of the city's money worship can also serve as a tonic for people who have grown up in the more secretive and stifling atmosphere of Japan.

A particularly interesting entry in the catalogue of Japanese tales of Shanghai is Yoshida Shūichi's "Shanghai mikan" [Shanghai Tangerine], published in the January 2008 issue of *Gunzō*. All the characters in the story are Chinese; there is not one single Japanese character. The only slight connection with Japan is the mooted possibility that the girlfriend of one of the main characters might find a job in the Japanese entertainment industry one day.

Not only are the social conditions and atmosphere of Shanghai described with remarkable accuracy, but the story also depicts the thoughts and feelings of young people in Shanghai with great skill. If the story were ever translated into Chinese, I think most readers would never suspect that it was the work of a Japanese writer. I have no idea how Yoshida went about researching his story or how he managed to obtain his information on life in Shanghai, but I am moved and impressed by the fact that Japanese authors are able to write so well about the city.

These changes in the fictional depictions of Shanghai overlap with the disappearance of the "demon city" legend and its disappearance from the stage of history. Some people may continue to use the word *mato* when discussing Shanghai in Japanese, but the metaphor has lost the hypnotic suggestive power it once had. When the "demon city" lost its legendary status, its magical allure was dispelled at the same time.

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Chō Kyō (Zhang Jing)

Born in Shanghai in 1953. Received his doctorate in comparative culture from the University of Tokyo. Currently a professor at Meiji University. His previous publications include *Koi no Chūgoku bunmei shi* [A Cultural History of Love in China] (Chikuma Shobō), for which he won the 1993 Yomiuri Prize for Literature, and *Kindai Chūgoku to "ren'ai" no hakken* [Modern China and the Discovery of "Love"] (Iwanami Shoten), for which he won the 1995 Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities. His 2004 *Bunka no ofusaido/nōsaido* [The Offsides and No Sides of Culture] (Iwanami Shoten) was introduced in JBN No. 43.

## Events and Trends

### Chinese Poet Takes the Mr. H Prize

Chinese-born Sendai resident Tian Yuan has been chosen by the Association of Contemporary Japanese Poets to receive the 60th Mr. H Prize, awarded to an outstanding collection of poetry by a newcomer. Tian won the prize for a collection written in Japanese titled *Ishi no kioku* [Memory of Stone] (Shichōsha, 2009). This is the first time the prize has gone to a Chinese-born poet.

Tian Yuan was born in Henan Province in 1960 and first came to Japan in the early 1990s on a Japanese government scholarship. In 2000, he entered the doctoral program at Ritsumeikan University, where he special-

ized in Japanese literature. He received his doctorate in 2003 for a dissertation on the poetry of Tanikawa Shuntarō. He currently teaches Chinese at Tōhoku University in Sendai, and has translated numerous contemporary Japanese poets into Chinese. In addition to a two-volume selection of Tanikawa's verse, he has translated works by Tsujii Takashi, Tamura Ryūichi, and Kitazono Katsue. He has also published a selection of his own poems in Chinese, along with an English version titled *Beijing-Tokyo Poems Composition*. He has won prizes for his poetry in China, the United States, and Taiwan. In Japan, he won the first Literary Prize for Foreign Overseas Students in 2001. In 2004, he published his first collection

of poems in Japanese, *Sōshite kishi ga tanjō shita* [And So the Shore Was Born] (Shichōsha). In 2005, he was the editor of the three-volume *Tanikawa Shuntarō shi senshū* [Selected Poems of Tanikawa Shuntarō] (Shūeisha). He has also edited a Japanese-language anthology of Chinese new-generation poets translated by Takeuchi Shin (Shigakusha).

The prize-winning collection is Tian's second in Japanese, and comprises 26 poems, including "Sekitome ko" [Lake Dam], a lament for the Sichuan earthquake. The selection committee praised the collection for being written on "a grand scale quite different from the confined world into which contemporary Japanese poetry has fallen."

## Supporting Translators

The public and private sectors have both launched projects to help develop the skills necessary for quality translations from Japanese into other languages. The aim is to make Japanese literature more widely available around the world.

The government-run project involves a translation competition run by the Agency for Cultural Affairs with the aim of discovering and developing talented translators. The model for the scheme is the Shizuoka International Translation Competition, which was run by Shizuoka Prefecture from 1995 to 2008; its final awards ceremony was held in 2009. The government-run contest will adopt the same format as this earlier competition, with translators choosing one piece from a selection of three in two categories: fiction and criticism. Each of the pieces comes in at around 30–50 pages of Japanese (with one page calculated as 400 characters). As well as English, each competition is expected to include translation into German, French, or Russian. University of Tokyo professor Numano Mitsuyoshi, one of the people involved in the project, says: “Translation is a job requiring a huge investment of time, often for little reward. There are aspiring translators out there with potential, but at the moment we’re not providing the right environment to help them make the most of their talents.” Numano points out that Japan lags behind other countries in terms of the support it provides for translators. “There is increasing interest in Japanese literature around the world at the moment; it’s essential that we do what we can to develop talented translators in order to respond to this interest.”

Starting this year, meanwhile, the Japan Foundation will provide backing for a program run by the University of London and the University of East Anglia in England to hone the skills of young translators. The latter school, which boasts a creative writing program that counts Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan among its alumni, has run translation workshops focusing on a variety of languages every summer for the past ten years. Japanese is included in the program

for the first time this year. The July workshop will be led by author Tawada Yōko and her English translator. Participants will spend around a week working on translations of Tawada’s works, alongside the author and her experienced translator. The Foundation will provide support for accommodation costs and participation fees as part of its efforts to build a network of young translators.

## Electronic Book Publishers Association of Japan Founded

Thirty-one publishing companies including Kōdansha, Shōgakukan, and Chūō Kōron Shinsha have established the Electronic Book Publishers Association of Japan, with the aim of agreeing on universal standards for electronic publishing. This move comes against the background of rapid growth in the market for digital e-readers following the launch of Apple’s iPad in April and with rumors rife that a Japanese version of Amazon’s popular Kindle e-reader will go on sale in the near future.

At a meeting in Tokyo, Kōdansha vice-president Noma Yoshinobu, who will chair the new association, said that the companies involved wanted “to get actively involved in digital publishing, and to build a market that matches the needs of Japanese readers.” Among the points the group will address are: (1) protecting the interests and rights of copyright holders; (2) ensuring consumer convenience; and (3) working to ensure cooperation and coexistence between digital and paper formats. The association will set up four subcommittees tasked with examining contract issues, digitization standards, and research on e-readers.

## Obituary

*Inoue Hisashi, playwright and novelist, April 9, 2010.*

Began writing comedy for the Furansu-za theater in Asakusa, Tokyo, while a student at Sophia University. Worked as a writer for television after graduation, making his name as scriptwriter for *Hyokkori hyōtan jima* [The Madcap Island], a puppet show broadcast on NHK from 1964. In 1972 he won the Naoki Prize for *Te-*

*gusari shinjū* [Handcuffed Double Suicide], a novel depicting the life of a writer of satirical fiction in the Edo period (1603–1868), and took the Kishida Kunio Drama Prize the same year for the play *Dōgen no bōken* [The Adventures of Dōgen]. In 1981 he was awarded the Nihon SF Taishō Award for *Kirikiri-jin* [The People of Kirikiri], a fantasy in which a sleepy village in northeastern Honshū declares independence from Japan. In 1984 he formed the theater troupe Komatsu-za, for which he produced numerous outstanding plays, including *Chichi to kuraseba* [trans. *The Face of Jizō*], about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and *Hakone Gōra Hoteru* [Hakone Gōra Hotel] (see *JBN* No. 49).

## Announcement

### International Book Fairs

New publications introduced in recent issues of *Japanese Book News* will be exhibited at the Japan Foundation/PACE booth at international book fairs held in São Paulo, Brazil (Aug. 12–22, 2010); Frankfurt, Germany (Oct. 6–10, 2010); Belgrade, Serbia (Oct. 2010); Moscow, Russia (Dec. 1–5, 2010); Doha, Qatar (Nov. 25–Dec. 5, 2010); Casablanca, Morocco (Feb. 11–20, 2011); and Riga, Latvia (Feb.–Mar. 2011). When not specified above, exact dates are to be announced.

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# The Beginning of the End of Kiki's Story

Kiki, a peppy young witch-in-training, and her cynical black cat, Jiji, are perhaps the most famous and beloved characters in all the films directed by Academy Award-winning animator Miyazaki Hayao. The young witch and cat are not the original creations of Miyazaki, though, but of an acclaimed children's book author, Kadono Eiko.

Although the film has captured the essence of her charming story *Majo no takkyūbin* [trans. *Kiki's Delivery Service*], those who want to experience this adorable little pair with more depth should refer to Kadono's original, with its rapid pace, absorbing story line, and believable detail.

"My story is a fantasy, but even fantasies need to be grounded in reality," says Kadono, who as a child found the story of Aladdin's magic lamp to be contrived and unbelievable. "The ability to fulfill any wish by magic rings untrue. That's why I gave Kiki only one magical power," which is to fly through the air on a broom.

Flight is admittedly unrealistic for humans, but the message Kadono wants to convey is that "everybody has

one magical power, or passion," which gives each individual his or her own unique character and vitality. With a shaky command of her broom, Kiki at first has an inferiority complex about her ability to fly. But as she delivers parcels by sailing through the air, she discovers that she is transporting not only material things but also invisible qualities, such as her empathy, enthusiasm, and energy. She then begins to take pride in her magic while winning the townspeople's hearts . . . and their orders.



*Sorezore no tabidachi*, illustrated by Satake Miho (Fukuinkan Shoten Publishers).

For Kadono, writing is her magic ability. Yet it took her 35 years to discover it. Straight out of university, she briefly worked at a publisher before moving with her designer husband to Brazil, only to return home after two years and give birth to a daughter. She had no intention of becoming an author, but her former university teacher recommended she write a nonfiction book based on her extraordinary life in São Paulo. She made her writing debut at the age of 35, and "kept writing, scrapping, and rewriting over and over again," she recalls. Kadono enjoyed the process and was surprised at her own passionate devotion. "This is magic for me," she says.

Subconsciously, perhaps, Kadono had been paving her way to becoming a writer since childhood. In her youth she created fantasies in her mind as a means of escaping the hardships of losing her mother at the age of five and living in the chaos and poverty of early postwar Japan. "Reality was harsh, so I imagined all sorts of different worlds, which gave me the energy to thrive," Kadono confesses. "That's why I want children to come freely into my world, savor it, and create their own stories." Children's literature cannot transform the world overnight, she

admits, but she believes that it does possess the power to bring about such change. "My mother died young and left me in immense sadness and pain, but she also gave me a great gift—the joy of storytelling."

Kadono published the first *Majo no takkyūbin* novel in 1985. The book won the Shōgakukan Award for Children's Literature, the Noma Prize for Children's Literature, and a place on the 1986 International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Honor List. The book, which is today available in English, Italian, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, and Swedish, led to the anime film adaptation in 1989, and was even made into a musical in 1993.

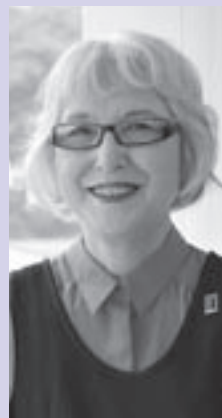
The author continued to write about Kiki's adventures for 24 years, completing the sixth and final volume of her series in late 2009. In the final installment, *Sorezore no tabidachi* [Each and Every Departure], Kiki, who was 13 years old in the first volume, is now in her mid-30s, and has become the mother of two 13-year-olds of her own—twins no less! There is something touching in the way she worries about her children, who are the same age as she was in the early tales, as they prepare to depart on their own great journey into life. Meanwhile, Kiki's loyal (but opinionated) feline companion Jiji also has a family. Everyone is on tenterhooks as they wait to see if Kiki's son and daughter are ready to stand on their own two feet.

Many readers say they are disappointed to see the series come to an end, but the 75-year-old writer says she wanted to wrap it up while she was still able to do so.

"I'm getting old, and so are my earliest readers. I just can't let Kiki be young forever," states the author. "Kiki's story has come to an end, but I hope each reader will start his or her own story from here."

Today Kadono is still actively penning books for children. One of her works in progress is about a ghost; another is a fairy tale with an element of horror. She hopes that her stories will arouse curiosity, nurture creativity, and nourish and support the different experiences of each and every one of her readers.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



## Kadono Eiko

Born in 1935. Did bookbinding for novels written by American author Donald Richie, also her teacher at Waseda University, and wrote her thesis on the American writer Carson McCullers. Briefly worked at a publishing company, Kinokuniya Co., following graduation, but left and spent two months travelling to Brazil by ship. Despite her intention to emigrate, she returned to Japan after two years via an around-the-world route. Debuted as a writer in 1970 with her first and only nonfiction work, based on her experiences in São Paulo. Kadono now lives in the ancient city of Kamakura near her favorite seaside.