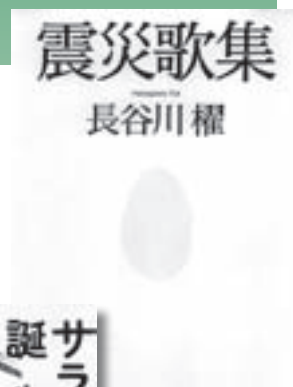


JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

70

WINTER 2011



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国際交流基金

Around the World on the Wings of Haiku

Natsuishi Ban'ya

My work as a haiku poet took me overseas for the first time in 1993, when I traveled to China. Since then, I have given lectures and readings at university symposiums, international poetry festivals, and haiku events in more than a dozen countries on four continents.

In recent years, my haiku have been translated into English and other languages and have appeared in a growing number of anthologies and individual collections published in Japan and elsewhere.

Haiku has taken me around the world. I am astonished by the journeys I have made, riding on the back of a magical dragon with haiku for wings.

In early July this year I had the honor of attending the 21st Medellin International Poetry Festival in Colombia, where I gave no fewer than seven readings of my haiku. In addition to older pieces, I read several new poems I had composed since arriving in Colombia. These received a resounding bravo from the audience of roughly 5,000 people.

Kamigami kara mazushisa e no sakamichi uta wa hanabi

On the slope
from gods to poverty
a song is fireworks

Todos wa atsui nami shijin wa taiyō

“Todos” is a hot wave
a poet
the sun

People in Latin America are passionate about music and poetry, and Colombia is no exception, despite the harsh reality of daily life for many people. The local culture is built on the idea of mutual support and encouragement.

Todos means “everyone” in Spanish. The word struck me as the perfect encapsulation of the mood of the Colombian audience—everyone expressing themselves spontaneously but coming together to form a warm-hearted community of the spirit at the same time.

The connection between travel and poetry has ancient roots in Japan, going back to the legends compiled in the *Kojiki*, Japan’s first book. It runs as a constant theme through the *Manyōshū*, an eighth-century collection of poetry, and the *Tosa nikki*, a poetic travel diary written by Ki no Tsurayuki in the early tenth century. Throughout history, some of the finest Japanese poets have been almost as famous for their travels as for their verse, such as Saigyō (1118–90), Bashō (1644–94), and Taneda Santōka (1882–1940). The list could go on and on.

The discoveries and surprises of life on the road plant the seeds of new poems, communicating fresh emotions

to readers and passing on the experiences to later generations. This is a tradition with deep roots in Japan.

In September 2000, along with haiku poets from many countries, I was one of the founders of the World Haiku Association in Slovenia. Believing strongly that haiku can be created in all the languages of the world, the World Haiku Association encourages efforts to write and publish haiku in different languages and supports the creation of new haiku as the essence of poetry.

My travels around the world to promote haiku have brought me a wealth of unexpected experiences.

The thing that has given me more pleasure than anything else has been to see my verses published overseas. Thanks to the efforts of Araki Tadao, former Japanese ambassador to the Vatican State and a tireless campaigner on behalf of haiku in Germany and Italy, a collection of haiku entitled *Haiku: Antichi e moderni* (Haiku: Ancient and Modern) was published by Garzanti Editore in Italy in 1996. Three of my verses were included in romanized Japanese and Italian translation. As far as I am aware, this marked the international debut for my haiku.

The first independent collection of my verse to be published overseas was *A Future Waterfall*, which came out from the Red Moon Press in the United States in 1999. This volume, which comprised 100 haiku in romanized Japanese and English translation, had a big impact on haiku fans in the United States—not all of whom approved of my approach to the form. But the book has been well supported by readers, and a revised second edition from the same publisher brought the book to international readers in 2004. The title was taken from the following haiku:

Mirai yori taki o fukiwaru kaze kitaru

From the future
a wind arrives
that blows the waterfall apart

This haiku has also been included in a Japanese high school textbook, where it is unfortunately accompanied by a foolish explanation claiming that the word *taki* (waterfall) is used as a *kigo* (season word) for summer. In fact, the waterfall in this haiku transcends any Japanese sense of the seasons. The poem deals with a space and time in which future and present collide. The haiku reveals quite a different face when it is translated into English.

The original Japanese haiku, consisting of three segments (not quite the same as lines in an English poem) of five, seven, and five morae, has become a minimalist American-style poem made up of three lines of four, five, and eight syllables. The Japanese word *fukiwaru* (describ-

ing something being parted by the wind) has been transformed into the English verb “blow apart,” with its hints of the devastation caused by a bomb blast. By this process of change and substitution, a natural part of translation, the original Japanese haiku has become a short avant-garde American poem. I do not regard this process in passive terms—the way I see it, the translation does not betray the original so much as it opens up new territory and unleashes new potential.

In 1998 I published a book in Japan called *Chikyū junrei* [Earth Pilgrimage] (Rippū Shobō). In 2000 this appeared in a Slovenian translation as *Romanje po zemlji* (Apokalipsa), with an additional chapter on “Animistic Japan” that did not appear in the original. This was followed in 2007 by an Italian version, *Pellegrinaggio terrestre* (alba libri), which incorporated two additional chapters, “Macedonian Road” and “Genoa: A Sword of Light.” In this edition, all the haiku were featured in three languages: Japanese, English, and Italian.

As I travel the globe, my haiku too cross borders and become stronger. Today, I am delighted to see my verses available in a wide diversity of languages around the world.

One particularly enjoyable and attractive book was a collection of haiku published in Hungary in 2007 under the title *Madark / Birds: 50 haiku* (Balassi Kiadó). This book contains fifty of my verses, each dealing with a different species of bird, in English, Hungarian, and handwritten Japanese script (with calligraphy by the author), along with watercolor illustrations by the Hungarian artist Éva Pápai. One thing I found interesting was the editor’s decision to print the brush calligraphy I had provided not in black but in a soft red ink. This was an innovation that would never have occurred to a publisher in Japan, and a creative way of increasing the appeal of the collection as a piece of visual art. The following verse appeared in that volume:

Perikan no kuchi ni wa shi yori omotai sakana

A fish
heavier than a poem
in the pelican’s mouth

One of the most popular of my verses has been the *Sora tobu hōō* (Flying Pope) series. I have given readings from this series at international poetry festivals in Macedonia in 2003, in New Zealand in 2005, in Italy in 2006, in Japan in 2009, and in Colombia in 2011. It has always gone down extremely well, provoking a big audience reaction and spontaneous laughter.

Three books containing verses from this series have been published in three different countries. First, a collection in Japanese and English appeared in India as *Flying Pope: 127 Haiku* (Cyberwit.net) in 2008.

Kodomo to kirin ni dake miete iru sora tobu hōō

Flying Pope
visible only to children
and a giraffe

In Japan, the series was published in 2008 as *Flying Pope: 161 Haiku* (Koorosha), with monochrome drawings by Shimizu Kuniharu.

Jukusui no rōba e tsunami sora tobu hōō

Tsunami toward an old woman
deeply asleep
the Pope flying

The collection grew into a kind of picture book for grownups, imbued with a sense of black humor and hinting at the major changes that have come over the world in the early years of the twenty-first century.

In 2010, the attractive little volume *Il Papa che vola: 44 haiku* (Rupe Mutevole) collected 44 poems from the Flying Pope series in Japanese and Italian.

Dare mo ga wasureta higan no sora o tobu hōō

The Pope flies
in the sky of the other world
everybody forgets

This haiku contains a veiled criticism of the many foolish people in the contemporary world who have become so self-absorbed that they have lost touch with the religious and philosophical traditions that can help to keep the ego in check.

Many poets I first met at international poetry festivals and haiku events and whom I now count as my friends have helped me to publish multilingual editions of my verses in their home countries. These friends include Leons Briedis in Latvia, Vasile Moldovan in Romania, and Dragan J. Ristić in Serbia.

In 2011, a bilingual English and Japanese anthology compiling 500 of my haiku was published in the United States as *Turquoise Milk* (Red Moon Press).

Kumo kara no koe wa hikari no uma o umu

Voices from the clouds
give birth
to a horse of light

I look forward to further travels around the world, for myself and my haiku, on the back of this horse of light.

Natsuishi Ban'ya



Pen name of Inui Masayuki, born in Hyōgo Prefecture in 1955. Received an MA in comparative literature from the University of Tokyo in 1981. Has taught at Meiji University since 1992. Prominent as an international promoter of haiku composition and translation, he has given talks and readings in more than a dozen countries. Currently director of the World Haiku Association, of which he was a founding member in 2000. His award-winning haiku have been published in translation around the world.

FICTION



Isozaki Ken'ichirō

Born in 1965. Began his first novel just before turning 40, while working in a trading company. Won the Bungei Prize in 2007 for *Kanjin no kodomo* [*The Essential Child*] and the Akutagawa Prize in 2009 for *Tsui no sumika* [*The Final Home*] (see JBN No. 63). This latest work was awarded the Bunkamura Deux Magots Literary Prize in 2011.

***Aka no tanin no uri futatsu* [Total Strangers, Peas in a Pod]**

By Isozaki Ken'ichirō

Kōdansha, 2011. 194 x 134 mm. 171 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-216882-3.

Isozaki Ken'ichirō's latest novel is an enigmatic piece of work. It opens with an account of the mundane life of a worker in a chocolate factory in what seems to be the mid-1950s. The man has a son and a younger daughter; when the boy grows up he starts working in the same factory as his father and falls in love with a nurse who works in the factory clinic. The nurse is already promised to someone else, but the son seizes her from the wedding reception and forces her to marry him instead. In due course, the new couple have a son and daughter of their own, just like the boy's parents. His younger sister, meanwhile, scoops a literary newcomer's prize and becomes a full-time author. The novel thus covers three generations in short order. By the end of the story, the original daughter is a 55-year-old writer—

bringing the course of the novel more or less up to the present day.

What makes this novel particularly interesting is the way the narrative is intercut with detailed discursions into the origins of chocolate and its early reception in Europe. From here, a narrative unfolds that mixes fact and fiction, incorporating historical figures from Columbus to the Medici family. The result is a deliberately ambiguous and diverse narrative that combines a multigenerational family chronicle of a chocolate factory worker in late twentieth-century Japan with a rich piece of historical fiction set in Europe. The novel has a unique flavor and texture all its own. The title itself is a puzzle, but no doubt this too is a deliberate ambiguity on the part of the author. (Numano)

***Hitojichi no rōdokukai* [The Hostages' Reading Club]**

By Ogawa Yōko

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2011. 197 x 134 mm. 256 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-12-004195-2.

On the opposite side of the world from Japan, tragedy overtakes a group of tourists traveling when their minibus is attacked by antigovernment guerrillas after a visit to some ruins. Seven of the tourists are taken hostage along with their guide. In the course of rescue operations, a bomb set by the guerrillas detonates and the trapped hostages are all killed. Two years later, it emerges that a tape recording used to monitor the guerrillas' movements also happened to catch the conversations of the hostages during their captivity. The recordings are broadcast in a series of radio programs, in which hostages write stories based on memories and take it in turns to read them to their fellow captives.

The hostages come from disparate backgrounds. Some of their tales deal with indelible memories from the past;

others choose to focus on memories of everyday life. One thing common to all of them is an exchange of emotion with other people, either in the course of everyday life or in the face of extraordinary events. The hostages have no idea that their words are being recorded—they are simply sharing their deepest memories with a group of people thrust together in the same unfortunate circumstances. But when the recordings are broadcast, the stories make a deep impression on everyone who hears them.

Although each narrative stands alone, two factors—the recollection of a vivid moment from the past, and the power of the hostages' voices to reach out from beyond the grave—bring the disparate parts of the book together into a unified whole. (Chō)



Ogawa Yōko

Born in 1962. Awards include the Kaien Prize for New Writers in 1988 for *Agehachō ga kowareru toki* [*When the Swallowtail Breaks*], the Akutagawa Prize in 1991 for "Ninshin karendā" [trans. "Pregnancy Diary"], the Yomiuri Literary Prize in 2004 for *Hakase no aishita sūshiki* [trans. *The Housekeeper and the Professor*], and the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize in 2006 for *Mīna no kōshin* [*Mīna's March*] (see JBN No. 50). Her novel *Neko o daite zō to oyogu* [*Swimming with an Elephant While Holding a Cat*] was profiled in JBN No. 61.



Hakoniwa toshokan **[Sandbox Library]**

By Otsuichi

Shūeisha, 2011. 189 x 134 mm. 304 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-08-771386-2.

Otsuichi

Born in 1978. Won the *Jump Novel/Non-Fiction Grand Prize* aged 18 for *Natsu to hanabi to watashi no shitai* [Summer, Fireworks, and My Dead Body], and debuted as a professional writer the following year. His 2003 novel *Gosu risutokatto jiken* [Goth Wristcut Case] won the *Honkaku Mystery Grand Prize*. Numerous other works include *ZOO* and *Kurai tokoro de machiawase* [A Dark Meeting Place]. Has written in a wide range of genres, including mystery, horror, and romance.

The remarkable advances in communication technology that have transformed society over the course of the past few years have also had a considerable impact on literature. As well as the recent digital publication boom, new media outlets such as blogs and *keitai shōsetsu* (novels written for mobile phones) are striking examples of the influence that high-speed devices have had not only on the way novels are published but on the relationship between authors and their public, and the way readers consume written texts.

This collection of stories began as part of a project hosted on Renzaburo, the online presence of the Shūeisha publishing company. The website ran a feature called Otsuichi's Novel Recycling Factory, in which readers sent in manuscripts and Otsuichi chose those he considered

worthy of rewriting. This book contains the rewritten versions of six stand-alone stories, all set in the same town. All six have young people as their main characters, but the stories themselves range widely across genres, from offbeat depictions of student life to a murder mystery.

The original texts are also available online, allowing readers to compare Otsuichi's rewritten versions with the originals. In the afterword, Otsuichi evaluates the submissions as he first saw them and discusses the intentions behind his rewrites. It is not too much to say that this reader-participation model of novel-writing represents a strikingly new form of literary expression. (Chō)

Tomosui **[Tomosui]**

By Takagi Nobuko

Shinchōsha, 2011. 197 x 134 mm. 191 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-10-351608-8.

Exchanges between writers from Japan and other countries in Asia have been increasingly frequent and productive in recent years. This latest work by Takagi Nobuko illustrates the trend toward a new kind of Asian consciousness particularly well. As a professor at Kyushu University, Takagi has been responsible for a project entitled "Soaked in Asia," as part of which she has visited ten countries around Asia over the course of five years. The results of her travels were published in three volumes in 2011. These were a collection of travel essays entitled *Ajia ni hitaru* [Soaked in Asia] (Bungei Shunjū); *Tengoku no kaze* [Wind in Paradise] (Shinchōsha), a collection of stories in translation by ten Asian writers; and the present volume, *Tomosui* [Tomosui].

This book collects ten short stories,

each inspired by the author's visit to a different Asian country. Fields full of chilies in Korea, the view from a hotel in Shanghai, the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, clogged with made-in-Japan motorbikes, a violent rainstorm on a Kuala Lumpur expressway . . . the book includes a wide variety of Asian scenes, all of them vividly and memorably described.

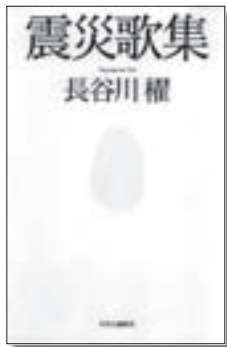
Perhaps the most impressive story is the title piece, inspired by the author's travels in Thailand. A man and a woman row a small boat out into a bay, where they catch a strange shellfish known as the Tomosui and suck its tasty juices together from the shell. The story is a masterpiece of polished sensuality that transcends conventional gender boundaries. (Numano)



Takagi Nobuko

Born in 1946. Won the *Akutagawa Prize* in 1984 for *Hikari idaku tomo yo* [To a Friend Embracing the Light]; the *Women's Literature Prize* in 1995 for *Suimyaku* [Water Veins]; and the *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize* in 1999 for *Tōkō no ki* [trans. Translucent Tree]. This latest work was awarded the *Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature* in 2010. Her novel *Gankū Shanhai* [Suffering and Happiness in Shanghai] was discussed in a featured essay in *JBN No. 64*.

POETRY



Hasegawa Kai

Born in 1954. A poet who has served as a judge for the haiku competition of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. After working as a journalist for the Yomiuri Shimbun, he dedicated himself to writing haiku full-time. His book *Haiku no uchū* [*The Universe of Haiku*] won the Suntory Prize. A collection of his haiku titled *Kokū* [*The Void*] won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature in 2003.

Shinsai kashū [A Collection of Poems About the March 11 Disaster]

By Hasegawa Kai

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2011. 197 x 127 mm. 151 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 978-4-12-004232-4.

Many writers have been drawn to the subject of the March 11 disaster and the nuclear crisis that followed. One striking example is the Fukushima poet Wagō Ryōichi. Previously a writer of rather difficult contemporary verse, Wagō suddenly shifted gears after the disaster, using Twitter to publish a series of poems written in plain, unadorned language. “I want to use words to fill the void that has been opened up in Fukushima. Words will overcome!” Wagō writes in the introduction to a book version of his new poems (Wagō Ryōichi, *Shi no tsubute* [Pebbles of Poetry] Tokuma Shoten).

Another is Hasegawa Kai, who chronicled the chaos of the aftermath in a series of tanka poems. Hasegawa is one of Ja-

pan’s best-known haiku poets—his decision to address the disaster in tanka rather than haiku is an interesting one.

Tsunami to wa / nami ka to bakari / omoishiga / sa ni arazu / yokozama ni / takerikuru bakufu

More than the big wave / I imagined it to be / The tsunami comes / Like a terrifying cataract / Surging in sideways from the sea

Fukkyū to wa / kenage na kotoba / sa wa aredo / ushinaishi mono / tsui ni kaerazu

Recovery: / An impressive word and brave / But / Those who have been lost / Will not return again (Numano)

DRAMA

21 seiki o shinjite miru gikyokushū [The Collected Plays: Daring to Believe in the 21st Century]

By Noda Hideki

Shinchōsha, 2011. 191 x 134 mm. 348 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-10-340516-0.

In the late 1970s, Noda Hideki was a dominant figure in youth culture, prominent as one of the dramatists and directors who helped create a new type of drama in Japan. Today, he is one of the heavyweights of the contemporary Japanese theater. Although his early work was marked by extensive use of wordplay, his more recent pieces have more depth, and Noda has become an impressive cultural critic. This compilation of three of Noda’s latest plays shows this aspect of his work to good advantage. The first piece, *Za kyarakutā* [*The Character*], is set in a calligraphy school and introduces a calligraphy teacher and his wife and pupils. At the same time, the play can be read as a comment on the Aum Shinrikyō sect re-

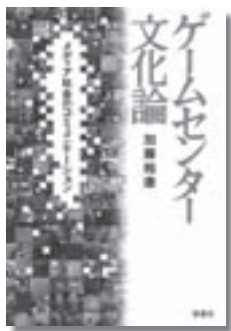
sponsible for the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system. In the second piece, *Omote ni deroi!!* [*Get Outside!!*], the main characters are a noh actor and his wife and a daughter. Each of the characters is trying to get somewhere—the wife to see a boy band, the father to Tokyo “Destiny Land,” and the daughter to a calligraphy master who is predicting the end of the world. In the end, the ties that bind them mean that no one is able to leave the house at all. The final piece, *Minami e* [*To the South*], depicts a group of frantic people living in the shadow of a volcano that is about to erupt, as rumors fly of a visit from the emperor. All three plays portray a nation in microcosm. (Numano)



Noda Hideki

An actor, playwright, and theater director born in 1955.

Founded the Yūme no Yūminsha (Dreaming Bohemian) theatrical group in 1976. Won the Kishida Kunio Drama Award in 1983 for his play *Nokemono kitarite* [*Descent of the Brutes*] and the Tsuruya Nanboku Drama Award in 1999 for his play *Right Eye*. In 2000 his play *Pandora no kane* [*Pandora’s Bell*] was awarded the Kinokuniya Drama Award, the Minister of Education’s Arts Encouragement Prize (in the theater category), and the Yomiuri Theater Award Grand Prize.



Katō Hiroyasu

Born in 1972. Completed the PhD program in the Graduate School of Communication Studies at Tokyo Keizai University. Currently an adjunct professor in communication theory and cultural sociology. Published works include *Komyunikēshon sutadīzu* [Communication Studies; co-author] and *Kodomo ni okeru terebi shichō kankyō* [Children's Television-Watching Environments].

Gēmu sentā bunkaron **[Game Centers: A Cultural Study]**

By Katō Hiroyasu

Shinsensha, 2011. 188 x 128 mm. 360 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-7877-1018-5.

Many people in Japan associate game centers with truancy, runaways, and juvenile delinquency. But for young people, they have a quite different significance. Although the large game consoles themselves may be similar to those found in other countries, young people in Japan use game centers in a markedly different way. This book considers the cultural role of game centers and their significance for young people as one of the most obvious manifestations of the youth subculture in contemporary Japan.

The author has carried out extensive interviews with the young people who frequent game centers and examines in depth how they have constructed a venue for communication by using these extraordinary spaces set apart from the everyday world.

One interesting aspect of the study is the light it sheds on the "Communication Notebooks" to be found in many game centers. Originally intended for customer feedback, the communication notes have been taken over by game scores, self-introductions, and pleas for advice on personal problems. The notebooks became communication tools, used as a venue for lively exchanges of ideas and opinions. This transformed game centers from places of simple entertainment into venues for social intercourse.

This pioneering study reveals for the first time how young people have used the communication notebooks to build social networks that go beyond the immediate circles of home and school. (Chō)

Takarazuka fan no shakaigaku **[Sociology of Takarazuka Fandom]**

By Miyamoto Naomi

Seikyūsha, 2011. 188 x 128 mm. 194 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-7872-3326-4.

The all-women theater of Takarazuka is one of the most widely studied subjects in Japanese popular culture, following groundbreaking research by Jennifer Robertson, Kawasaki Kenko, Tsuganesawa Toshihiro, and Watanabe Hiroshi. The present study focuses on social order within the Takarazuka fan community and provides a more thorough ethnological record than any previous study of the daily lives of fans, the social relationships between them, and the ways in which they support the Takarazuka stars.

The author's observations about the way that tickets are bought and distributed among fan club members are particularly interesting. This system plays an important part in maintaining order within the Takarazuka fan community. Ticket purchasing encourages smooth cooperation

between different fan clubs, while the distribution of tickets serves to confirm the structure and hierarchy within each club. Quite beyond the sociological import, it is clear that anthropologically speaking the fan clubs represent a structure of reproduction, and one that is inseparable from the Takarazuka star system. The book makes clear that the Takarazuka fan groups are not homogenous groups united by a fascination with a particular star but rather a complexly ordered system structured by a number of rituals, including ascent up the Takarazuka "student" hierarchy, ticket distribution, and the emotions of the fans themselves. (Yoshimi)



Miyamoto Naomi

Born in 1969. Earned a PhD in sociology from the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo, where she subsequently worked as a research assistant. Currently an associate professor in the College of Letters at Ritsumeikan University, specializing in historical sociology and sociomusicology. Published works include *Kyōyō no rekishi shakaigaku: Doitsu shimin shakai to ongaku* [Historical Sociology of Cultivated Taste: German Civil Society and Music].



Yaguchi Yūjin

Born in 1966. Earned a B.A. in English from Goshen College and a PhD in American Studies from the College of William and Mary. After a spell as assistant professor at Hokkaido University, is now associate professor in American studies and cultural theory at the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Works include *Hawai no rekishi to bunka* [History and Culture of Hawaii] and *Hawai to fura no rekishi monogatari* [Historical Tales of Hawaii and Hula].

***Akogare no Hawai* [Yearning for Hawaii]**

By Yaguchi Yūjin

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2011. 190 x 134 mm. 254 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-12-004192-1.

For people in postwar Japan, as the country recovered from the destruction of defeat and entered a period of rapid economic growth, Hawaii was a special place, at once symbolic of American modernity and a colonial-style paradise. But one of the things this book makes clear is that this fascination with Hawaii as a paradise on earth is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until large-scale white settlement began in the middle of the nineteenth century, Hawaii was an island of countless palm trees and taro plantations. It was only after Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1898 and the local white elite began to build luxurious hotels that the image of Hawaii as a Pacific Paradise really took off against the backdrop of the burgeoning consumer culture of the times. For most Japanese

immigrants, meanwhile, Hawaii was an island of hard toil in the plantations. Even in Japan, however, the idea of Hawaii as paradise began to take shape as early as the 1920s, when several second-generation Japanese-Hawaiians became prominent singing stars.

After the war, the image of paradise fuelled an unprecedented Hawaiian boom. This book provides a clear picture of the kinds of people who visited Hawaii throughout the pre- and postwar period and how they got there, showing clearly how the Japanese experience of Hawaii spread from athletes and entertainers to the general population. This thorough historical account provides a thought-provoking opportunity to reconsider the significance of Hawaii for the Japanese people over the course of the twentieth century. (Yoshimi)

SOCIETY

***Sararīman tanjō monogatari* [How the Salaryman Was Born]**

By Hara Katsumi

Kōdansha, 2011. 187 x 128 mm. 335 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-06-216776-5.

Two things symbolize the life of the Japanese salaryman more than anything else: mountains of paperwork and the daily commute. In the popular mind the salaryman exists as a harried worker, hurrying to the office on a crowded commuter train and spending the day on paperwork before heading home on the same train at night. Despite the advances in mobile telecommunications in recent years, white-collar workers—from the clerical worker who spends the day at her desk to the manager preparing for meetings and the salesman doing his rounds—have still not broken free from the chains of the daily commute and the mounds of paperwork.

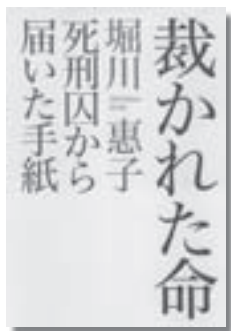
This book charts the early career of the salaryman in the context of big-city life in the 1930s, when the salaryman began to assume his role as the lead player in mod-

ern Japanese society, tracing a day in the life of an office worker via an account of the modern appliances and devices that made their debuts during these years. The book looks at both the gadgets used to monitor the salaryman's movements (commuter trains running at regular intervals, automatic doors, and timecards), as well as labor-saving tools such as automatic pencil sharpeners, staplers, and calculators, and office automation devices from index card filing systems to pressure duplicating machines, automated address printers, and the facsimile machine. The section on the development of index card systems is particularly interesting. The book makes clear that the prototype for today's information society was already present in analogue form at the birth of the salaryman. (Yoshimi)



Hara Katsumi

Born in 1954. Pursued doctoral studies in German literature at the Graduate School of Arts of Rikkyō University and was a researcher at Humboldt University in Berlin in 2001–02. Currently a professor at the School of Education of Waseda University, specializing in representational studies and German literature. Numerous published works include *Shintai hokan keikaku* [Body Supplement Plan], *Kibun wa saibōgu* [Feeling Like a Cyborg], and *Popyurā saiensu no jidai* [The Age of Popular Science].



Horikawa Keiko

Born in 1969. Nonfiction writer and director of TV documentaries. Her book *Shikei no kijun: "Nagayama saiban" ga nokoshita mono* [Death Penalty Standards: The Legacy of the "Nagayama Trial"] won the Kōdansha Non-Fiction Award in 2010. Co-wrote *Chinchin densha to jogakusei* [Streetcars and Female Students] and *Nihon no sensō BC kyū senpan* [Japan's War and the BC-class War Criminals].

***Sabakareta inochi: shikeishū kara todoita tegami* [A Life Under Sentence: Letters from a Condemned Man]**

By Horikawa Keiko

Kōdansha, 2011. 188 x 133 mm. 351 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-06-216836-6.

The drama begins with a prosecutor's report of an armed robbery and murder in 1966. Four days after the killing, a 22-year-old man was arrested. The accused offered no alibi or mitigating circumstances, and after a six-month trial he was given the death penalty. The sentence was carried out five years later.

For several years before the sentence was carried out, the prosecutor received letters from the condemned man. These letters contained no hint of resentment—if anything, they were full of concern for the prosecutor. In the course of the correspondence, the condemned man forced himself to confront his crime. He started to discuss his affection-starved upbringing and described the spiritual changes he had

undergone inside his solitary cell. For the first time in his life, the condemned man had found someone he could talk to. Years later, the former prosecutor is tormented by his conscience, no longer certain that he did the right thing in seeking the death penalty.

The author traces the course of the condemned man's life and tracks down several of the relatives and friends who knew him best. One thing that emerges clearly is the hardship suffered by the man's family before and after World War II. The sections on the mother's death make for particularly painful reading.

The book is as an eloquent exposé of the imperfections inherent in the justice system. (Yonahara)

***Hōmuresu kajin no ita fuyu* [The Winter of the Homeless Poet]**

By Miyama Takashi

Tōkai Kyōiku Kenkyūsho, 2011. 188 x 135 mm. 272 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-486-03718-7.

The tanka is an ancient form of Japanese poetry consisting of five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. Despite the restrictions placed on the poet by the syllable count, the best tanka are capable of encapsulating a whole world of vivid description. In late 2008, an unknown poet created a stir in tanka circles when he submitted several poems to the poetry pages of a national newspaper. One tanka described waiting in line at a soup kitchen, using the melting watches of Salvador Dalí's *Persistence of Memory* as a motif. The poet's address was given as "homeless." For many readers, the idea of someone from an obviously educated background living on the streets became a potent symbol of the economic chaos of the times. The mystery poet continued to submit to the newspaper for nine months, and then fell silent.

The poet won widespread sympathy in the media, his plight symbolic of the grim reality for many people of all ages in Japan who have lost their jobs in the drawn-out economic slump. In this book, the author attempts to track down the homeless poet, creeping through slums where homeless men who have lost their homes are left to eke out an existence on the streets. Many of them are elderly, and in poor health. One of the men he meets once ran for the National Diet.

At the end of his journey, the author comes to believe that despite the hardships the homeless poet has endured, his gift for language has enabled him to reflect on his fate and find spiritual freedom. More than anything else, language has the power to connect people. In this, the author finds hints of hope. (Yonahara)



Miyama Takashi

Born in 1961. Worked for 13 years as a journalist for Asahi Shimbun until moving to Peru in 1998 to pursue an interest in immigration prompted by lawsuits filed by Japanese emigrants to the Dominican Republic. Has worked as a freelance journalist since returning to Japan in 2007. Works include *Nihon kara ichiban tōi Nippon: Nanbei dōhō 100 nen me no shōsoku* [A Record of 100 Years of Japanese Immigration to South America].

MEDIA



Satō Ikuya

Born in 1955. A sociology professor at the Graduate School of Commerce and Management at Hitotsubashi University.

Haga Manabu

Born in 1960. A professor in the Faculty of Integrated Human Science at Sophia University, specializing in sociology and religion.

Yamada Mamoru

Born in 1962. A professor at the Faculty of Letters, Arts, and Sciences of Waseda University, specializing in group/organization theory and theoretical and religious sociology.

Hon o umidasu chikara [The Power to Produce Books]

By Satō Ikuya, Haga Manabu, Yamada Mamoru

Shinyōsha, 2011. 215 x 152 mm. 571 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 978-4-7885-1221-4.

The Japanese publishing industry has been in a slump for a long time now, but the situation has become particularly serious over the past few years. Many bookstores have gone out of business, monthly magazines have ceased publication, and several long-established publishing firms have either gone bust or been absorbed into other lines of business. One of the distinctive things about the publishing crisis in Japan is that although sales are spiraling downward, the number of books being published is actually going up. Publishers are putting out more and more titles in an attempt to make up for declining sales. One result is that the lifespan of books has been reduced dramatically. In this context, the rapid obsolescence of books, the decline of liberal arts education, and the changes brought about by the

new online knowledge infrastructure are among the subjects that need to feature in any consideration of the “power that produces books.” This book focuses on academic publishing and examines the deliberation process leading to publication.

The book uses the three key concepts—“publisher as gatekeeper,” “mixed portfolio strategy,” and “group organization identity”—to analyze case studies from four academic publishers of different sizes and characters. Based on painstaking research and questionnaires, the thorough analysis provides a clear account of academic publishers’ decision-making process, although I might have liked to see a closer connection drawn between this and the question of the “power to produce books” within the context of the ongoing publishing crisis. (Yoshimi)

BIOGRAPHY

9/11 no hyōteki o tsukutta otoko [The Man Who Built the Twin Towers]

By Īzuka Makiko

Kōdansha, 2010. 194 x 131 mm. 367 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-06-213411-8.

Long before it became a terrorist target, the World Trade Center in New York was a major architectural project. This is the first comprehensive biography of Minoru Yamasaki, the second-generation Japanese-American who was its chief architect.

Based on extensive interviews and valuable contributions from those close to the architect, the book brings Yamasaki’s life and times into vivid relief. Yamasaki designed 250 buildings over the course of his prize-winning career.

Yamasaki’s architectural philosophy valued silence and exultation above all else. Yamasaki believed it was not enough for a building to be beautiful—just as important was that it should be pleasant to the touch and provide a comfortable living and working environment. The influence

of Japanese culture can also be seen in his work. Fiercely ambitious, Yamasaki was unafraid to confront criticisms head-on.

But his life was not without its hardships. In an age when prejudice against Japanese immigrants was still widespread in the United States, Yamasaki swam against the tide of the times and grasped his opportunity with both hands when it came, working himself up from the bottom to achieve international renown. Despite his success, Yamasaki remained an outsider throughout his life, both in the United States and in Japan. Perhaps his ambiguous position was one source of his creativity. Tracing the peregrinations of Minoru’s ancestors over several generations, this impressive biography depicts the sweeping saga of a Japanese-American family. (Yonahara)



Īzuka Makiko

A journalist and graduate of the School of Education at Waseda University. After working in a publishing company, moved to the United States in 1987. Based in Los Angeles, she has written about a variety of issues, including politics and economic and social issues. Works include Aru Nihonjin gei no kokuhaku [Confessions of a Japanese Gay Man], Jūdan no mukō gawa [In the Line of Fire], and Soshite boku wa jūkō o muketa [And Then I Pointed the Gun].



Hausu obu Yamanaka: Tōyō no shihō o Ōbei ni utta bijutsushō

[House of Yamanaka: The Dealer Who Sold the Art Treasures of East Asia to the West]

By Kuchiki Yuriko

Shinchōsha, 2011. 191 x 138 mm. 360 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-10-328951-7.

Kuchiki Yuriko

A journalist who received an undergraduate degree in liberal arts from the International Christian University in Tokyo, where she also earned a Master's Degree in public administration. Later pursued doctoral level studies in political science at Columbia University. From 1987 to 1992 was the deputy editor of Japanese Esquire. Works include Ferumēru zenten tōha no tabi [A Journey Through the Complete Works of Vermeer], Parutenon sukyandaru [Parthenon Scandal], and Nusumareta Ferumēru [The Stolen Vermeer].

Yamanaka & Co. was the foremost dealer of East Asian art in Europe and America between the late nineteenth century and World War II. The company was founded by Yamanaka Sadajirō, who was born in Japan in 1866 and moved to the United States at the age of 28. From its beginnings in New York, his dealership expanded to encompass branches in Boston, London, and Chicago. His clients included Charles Freer and the Rockefellers, and famous collectors from all over Europe.

Yamanaka's company made a crucial contribution in terms of introducing and boosting the reputation of East Asian art in Europe and America. Much of the Asian art that can be seen in leading West-

ern museums today was obtained through the offices of Yamanaka & Co.

But when war broke out between the United States and Japan, the company's assets were seized and the activities of Yamanaka & Co. came to an end. For a long time, the company was all but forgotten in Japan.

Based in the United States, the author has scoured the national archives for traces of the people who bought art from Yamanaka. The book reveals the full extent of Yamanaka's business and sheds revelatory light on the world of East Asian art collectors in the West. An important contribution to our understanding of American art history. (Yonahara)

HISTORY

Zusetsu: Heijōkyō jiten

[An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Capital at Heijō]

By Nara Bunkazai Kenkyūsho

Shūfūsha, 2010. 263 x 187 mm. 597 pp. ¥15,000. ISBN 978-4-903530-48-2.

The year 2010 marked 1,300 years since the capital was moved to Nara and a sophisticated city was built on the Chinese model. This illustrated encyclopedia was published to commemorate the anniversary. The contributors include leading experts from a wide range of fields—archaeology, bibliography, and architectural and garden history, as well as specialists in the restoration and preservation of art and monuments. The book uses numerous illustrations and photographs to provide an accessible account of the ancient capital and of the society and culture of the Nara period (646–794).

Unlike regular encyclopedias, this volume is arranged into chapters like an ordinary book. Part 1 discusses the historical significance of the establishment of a permanent capital at Heijōkyō. Part 2 de-

scribes the layout of the city and its architecture and provides an account of daily life in the city and exchanges with foreign states. Part 3 discusses the city after its abandonment, the discovery of its ruins, and the preservation of its monuments. Part 4 covers historiography and the latest trends in the field.

The detailed appendices are another outstanding feature of this volume: chronological tables, maps of the palace, detailed overviews of the political administration, the legal system, official posts and ranks, and the dates and destinations of diplomatic missions throughout the period. The bibliography at the back of the book represents an indispensable resource that not just specialists but all undergraduate and graduate students of ancient Japanese history will want to keep close to hand. (Chō)



Nara Bunkazai Kenkyūsho

The Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, established in 1952, is one of Japan's National Institutes for Cultural Heritage. It carries out academic research on cultural properties in the ancient city of Nara and excavates sites in the former capitals at Heijō and Fujiwara. The institute's preservation and restoration technology is used at excavation sites throughout Japan and around the world.

No. 8 Ōoka Shōhei

Ōoka Shōhei was a promising scholar of French literature when he was drafted to serve in the Philippines during World War II. His detached observations of the brutality and chaos of war provided the inspiration for a number of moving novels, several of which have been turned into successful films by some of Japan's leading directors.

A Witness to the Horrors of War

Ōoka Shōhei (1909–88) was a cerebral writer. His work was marked by a stripped-down style free from any self-indulgent display of emotion. He preferred to remain detached and objective, and cast a cool, observant eye over his material—including his own self.

In 1929, at the age of twenty, Ōoka entered the Faculty of Letters at the elite Kyoto Imperial University, where he studied French literature. He was particularly taken by the work of Stendhal and began to make a name for himself in literary circles as a promising Stendhal scholar soon after graduation.

If things had gone smoothly, Ōoka might have gone on to become an accomplished scholar of French literature. Instead, his life was changed irrevocably when war intervened.

Ōoka was conscripted in 1944, toward the end of World War II. He was thirty-five years old. Suddenly, this scholar with a wife and children to support was forced to become a soldier. It is hard not to feel that Ōoka was more than a little unlucky, given the fact that contemporaries such as Dazai Osamu and Sakaguchi Ango made it through the war without being mobilized.

Private Ōoka was sent to the island of Mindoro in the Philippines, where defeat was already in the air. Under attack from US forces, he fled into the mountains, where he contracted malaria and became separated from his unit. He wandered alone until he was captured by the Americans as a prisoner of war.

A man who had previously lived the life of a scholar suddenly found himself face to face with brutal reality, thrust into the extreme conditions of a World War II battleground.

After returning home to Japan at the end of the war, Ōoka published *Furyoki* [trans. *Taken Captive*] in 1952, based on his experiences as a soldier and prisoner of war. The book was well received, and Ōoka resolved to become a full-time writer. It is no exaggeration to say that Ōoka's experiences of the horrors and absurdities of war changed his life and transformed him from a scholar of French literature into a writer. Ōoka's wartime experiences remained central to his work for the rest of his career.

Published around the same time as *Furyoki*, *Nobi* [trans. *Fires on the Plain*] also depicts a lone soldier cut off from his unit in the late stages of the war, brought to the brink of cannibalism as he wanders the mountains of Leyte alone. Coming from a writer who had experienced the horrors of war at firsthand, this moving work had a powerful impact on readers.

The success of these two books made Ōoka a prominent figure among Japanese writers dealing with the experience of the war. But both works differed dramatically

from previous works of war literature. They contained no feverish depictions of fighting or the horrors of the battlefield. Neither was Ōoka interested in denouncing the cruelties or injustices within the military machine, or in criticizing the cruelty of war from a facile, humanistic perspective. There were no sentimental accounts of the deaths of fallen comrades.

Instead, Ōoka observes the absurdity and chaos of the battlefield in a detached, intellectual manner. He watches events unfold from a distance, determined to maintain his objectivity. Ultimately, even his own conduct on the battlefield is observed coolly, with a neutral eye. He maintains his faith in his former self—the young man who studied Stendhal and lived peacefully with his wife and family until he was plucked from his routine life by the army. His aim is to treat the war from the perspective of this individual personality. In his novels, the individual is marked by a typically modern strength of personality and a determination not to be carried away by events. This cool objectivity is unusual in Japanese literature, which has tended to be swept along on emotion and sentiment. Ōoka had studied modern Western literature closely and taken its lessons to heart.

Not all of Ōoka's literary output was directly inspired by the war. In *Musashino fujin* [trans. *A Wife in Musashino*], published in 1950, he depicts the story of a wife's infidelity in a manner reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Adultery was certainly a fitting subject for a former Stendhal scholar.

The novel also contains rich descriptions of the natural scenery of Musashino, the city on the outskirts of Tokyo where the story is set, and provides further evidence of Ōoka's keen interest in the topography of his locales. In this respect, this novel of an illicit love affair in Tokyo overlaps with the descriptions of the jungle settings in the Philippines that feature so prominently in *Furyoki* and *Nobi*.

This obsessive focus on the geology and topography of the stories' settings lifts the characters—whether they are adulterous wives or soldiers on a foreign battlefield—into a transcendental world beyond the borders of mundane reality. It is the intensity of this focus on nature that makes Ōoka Shōhei's books so distinctive and marks them out from the novels of war and adultery that had come before.

But even when depicting a transcendental world, Ōoka was unable to shake the memory of the brutal reality of war. In *Musashino fujin*, a wife living in leafy suburban Musashino (her husband is a scholar of French literature) has an affair with a young war veteran recently returned to Japan. The young man's experiences have left him unable to believe in postwar Japanese society. Neither can he place his trust fully in his lover, who is already married to someone else. The only thing this nihilistic young man

can believe in is the natural beauty of Musashino, the last remnants of which still survived at the time of the story. This is not a romantic, sentimental version of the natural world but a depiction based on detached and exacting observation.

As someone who had experienced the horrors of war at firsthand, Ōoka took a sober approach to life, valuing facts over ideology. As an old Japanese proverb has it, he believed that evidence is worth more than argument.

The dominant impression that remains after a reading of *Furyoki* and *Nobi* is not so much the curse of war as the natural scenery of the Philippines, seen through the eyes of a lone soldier stripped to his core. Similarly, the veteran in *Musashino fujin* is less interested in the arguments and controversies surrounding the war than in the natural scenery of Musashino.

This tendency can be seen to particularly impressive effect in *Reite senki* [The Battle for Leyte], the major work of the second half of Ōoka's career. In this book, Ōoka drew on a vast number of documents to put together a vivid recreation of the struggle between Japanese and American forces on the Philippine island of Leyte, one of the major battles of the Pacific War. This is not war history on the national level, as a conflict between states, but an entirely new kind of war history seen from the perspective of the individual soldier on the battlefield. The work is imbued with a determined spirit of resistance to authority that was typical of Ōoka Shōhei, a man who had witnessed the war for himself.

(Kawamoto Saburō,
literary and film critic)

An Introduction to the Films

***Nobi* [Fires on the Plain] (1959)**

Directed by Ichikawa Kon

Ichikawa Kon's masterpiece. The fictional *Nobi* may have been easier to make into a film than *Furyoki*, which followed the facts of the author's experience more closely. Features a highly distinguished performance by the inimitable Funakoshi Eiji as a Japanese soldier wandering lost in the mountains of the Philippines. Around a third of the film focuses on his fevered wanderings through a hellish landscape.

For European and American soldiers there was nothing particularly shameful about becoming a prisoner of war, but in Japan capture by the enemy was considered the height of dishonor. These differences in perception make an interesting perspective from which to study the film.



© 1959 Kadokawa Pictures, Inc. DVD available from Kadokawa Shoten. (¥4,725)

no image

***Musashino fujin* [A Wife in Musashino] (1951)**

Directed by Mizoguchi Kenji

This film by the great Mizoguchi Kenji was widely panned as a failure when it came out—a judgment that is hard to credit today.

Tanaka Kinuyo, the heroine of many of Mizoguchi's films, is outstanding as the beautiful wife, clad throughout in traditional kimono in a gesture of resistance against the postwar tide of Americanization.

Another attractive aspect of the film lies in its depiction of the semi-rural scenery of Musashino, which had still not been fully absorbed into the Tokyo conurbation when the film was made.

***Jiken* [The Incident] (1978)**

Directed by Nomura Yoshitarō

A film version of a nonfiction novel that typified Ōoka's allegiance to the doctrine that evidence is worth more than argument. A young man about to turn 20 has plans to marry a girl who was his classmate in elementary school. When the girl's older sister opposes the match, he kills her in a blind fury. The story seems to have been written with Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* in mind.

A good example of the breadth of Ōoka's interests, which encompassed real-life drama as well as the romantic subject matter of a novel like *Musashino fujin*.

no image

Japan Foundation Award Recipients Announced

The Japan Foundation Award recipients have been announced for fiscal 2011. At an awards ceremony on October 11, the Japan Foundation Award for Arts and Culture was presented to the Tambuco Percussion Ensemble from Mexico. The Japan Foundation Award for Japanese Language went to the Department of Japanese and Japanese Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. Augustin Berque of France won the Japan Foundation Award for Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange.

The Tambuco Percussion Ensemble consists of four Mexican percussionists who use a number of different types of *taiko* drums and other Japanese percussion instruments. The group has introduced numerous works by contemporary Japanese composers to audiences not just in Mexico but throughout the world. They have also been eager participants in collaborations with famous Japanese musicians on instruments including *koto*, *shakuhachi*, marimbas, and violin.

The Department of Japanese and Japanese Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University was founded in 1974, making it the oldest center of Japanese studies in the Middle East and Africa. The department provides vital training in Japanese language and culture to the next generation of scholars and works to improve under-

standing of Japan in the region. The department also publishes books and translations in fields ranging from literature to politics, and has made vital contributions to the understanding of Japanese culture in the Arab world.

Dr. Berque is a leading authority in Japanese studies. A retired professor at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris, he is an expert on the cultural geography of Japan. An encounter with Watsuji Tetsuro's *Fūdo* [trans. *Climate and Culture*] provided the inspiration for a series of groundbreaking studies on landscape and topography beyond the simple natural environment. His work has made a major contribution to the fields of geography, philosophy, anthropology, and Japanese studies. For many years he has also been a central figure in cultural exchanges between Japan and France, having served for four years from 1984 as the director of the Maison Franco-Japonaise in Tokyo.

Italian Prize for Ogawa Ito's Novel of Food and Romance

Il ristorante dell'amore ritrovato, an Italian translation of Ogawa Ito's best-selling novel *Shokudō katatsumuri* [English trans. *The Restaurant of Love Regained*] has won the Bancarella Prize for culinary themed books. The Bancarella Prize was founded in 1952 and is chosen by the nation's book-sellers. The first winner was Ernest

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Originally published in Japanese in 2008, *Shokudō katatsumuri* is the story of a young woman who returns to her rural hometown with a broken heart and discovers that her cooking has a magic ability to make people's dreams come true. The novel was made into a movie in 2010.

The Five-Mile Gap Wins Numerous Nonfiction Prizes

Kakuhata Yūsuke's *Kūhaku no go mairu* [The Five-Mile Gap] has scooped a succession of prizes for nonfiction writing, including the 42nd Ōya Sōichi Prize for Nonfiction and the 8th Kaikō Takeshi Prize for Nonfiction. The book also received the inaugural Umeshao Tadao Literary Prize for Mountains and Exploration, named for the recently deceased Japanese ecologist and anthropologist.

The Five-Mile Gap refers to a blank space on maps of the Tsangpo Gorge in a remote area of Tibet. This book contains a factual account of the author's solo exploration of this previously uncharted region. The book also introduces previous explorers and their attempts to solve the mysteries of the Tsangpo Gorge, and provides a serious examination of the meaning of adventure based on vivid personal experience.

Valuable Documents of Mining Life Republished

To mark the inclusion of the Yamamoto Sakubei Collection in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2011, Kōdansha has published a new edition of Yamamoto's depictions of life in the coalmines of Chikuhō in Fukuoka Prefecture (Kyushu). The first edition, published in 1967, had long been out of print.

Yamamoto Sakubei (1892–1984) worked in the mines for nearly 50 years, starting when he was just a child. As an artist, he was entirely self-taught. His sketches and drawings feature clear, faithful depictions of people at work and are highly prized as documents of a vanished world. The collection of pictures and text includes some 150 illustration plates,



From front left: Japan Foundation President Andō Hiroyasu; prize recipients Professor Karam Khalil, Head of the Department of Japanese, Cairo University; Augustin Berque. Back row and front right: Tambuco Percussion Ensemble.

and records in terse, laconic prose the unforgiving daily grind of the men who worked face to face with death in the coalmines.

Obituary

Komatsu Sakyō, 80, science fiction writer, July 26, 2011.

Komatsu was a pioneering figure in Japanese science fiction. His first stories appeared in an amateur journal while he was still a student. After graduation, he worked as a journalist on a financial newspaper and as a gag writer for stand-up comedians before making his debut as a science fiction author in 1962, when one of his stories was accepted by the *SF Magazine*.

Nihon chinbotsu [trans. *Japan Sinks*], published in 1973, was an epic

disaster novel depicting catastrophic floods that engulf the Japanese archipelago after tectonic plate movements. The book sold more than 4 million copies the year it was published and became a national phenomenon. It was later made into a movie. Other works included *Fukkatsu no hi* [Virus], which dealt with the mass panic caused by a deadly new virus, *Sayonara Jupitā* [Bye-Bye Jupiter], in which a group of people come face to face with a black hole, and *Shuto shōshitsu* [Tokyo Vanished], in which Tokyo disappears (Nihon SF Taishō Award). Many of Komatsu's vivid imaginings of the future and warnings about the relentless speed of scientific progress became bestsellers and major talking points.

Advisory Board

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Yoshimi Shun'ya, professor of information studies, University of Tokyo

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

Tsuka Hiroko, Managing Director
Arts and Culture Department
The Japan Foundation
4-4-1 Yotsuya, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 160-0004 Japan
Tel: +81-3-5369-6064; Fax: +81-3-5369-6038
Email: booknews@jpf.go.jp

Editing, Translation, Design, and Production

Japan Echo Inc.

Printed in Japan on recycled paper
© The Japan Foundation 2011
ISSN 0918-9580

Other Titles of Interest

Due to space limitations only 16 books can be introduced in the "New Titles" section. The following are additional works selected by the Advisory Board as worth sharing with Japanese Book News readers.

- *Matsuei* [The Descendent]. By Itoyama Akiko, Kōdansha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-06-216737-6. A man approaching retirement is living alone when his front door keyhole disappears one day. A wry depiction of loneliness in the face of encroaching old age.
- *Toronpuruiyu no hoshi* [The Trompe l'Oeil Star]. By Yoneda Yukari, Shūeisha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-08-771391-6. Winner of the Subaru Prize for Literature, awarded to ambitious works by new writers. When people and things start disappearing from around the protagonist, a bizarre series of events begins to unfold.
- *Shashin de aruku okuno hosomichi* [A Photographical Walk Along Bashō's Narrow Road]. By Hisatomi Tetsuo, Sanseidō, 2011. ISBN 978-4-385-36507-7. Contains the full text of Bashō's haiku diary, as well as commentary, information on the poetry, and photographs of the sites today.
- *Shi no tsubute* [Pebbles of Poetry]. By Wagō Ryōichi, Tokuma Shoten, 2011. ISBN 978-4-19-863193-2. A compilation of poetry published via Twitter starting just six days after the March 11 disaster.
- *Rojin* [Lu Xun]. By Fujii Shōzō, Iwanami Shoten, 2011. ISBN 978-4-00-431299-4. Lu Xun is among the most cherished of foreign writers in Japan. This critical biography traces his life from the perspective of his journeys through the cities of East Asia.
- *Gaikōkan no arakaruto* [Diplomacy A La Carte]. By Kondō Seiichi, Kamakura Shunjūsha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-7740-0507-2. Japan's Commissioner for Cultural Affairs discusses diplomacy from the perspective of culture and cuisine.
- *Neko no sanpomichi* [Footpaths for Cats]. By Hosaka Kazushi, Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-12-004199-0. The author takes a leisurely stroll through childhood memories in this gentle-paced collection of essays.
- *Samonakereba yūyake ga konnani utsukushii hazu wa nai* [If Things Were Otherwise, Sunsets Would Not Look So Beautiful]. By Maruyama Kenji, Kyūryūdō, 2011. ISBN 978-4-7630-1108-4. Philosophical musings by a writer based in rural Azumino.
- *Mirai chan* [Little Miss Future]. By Kawashima Kotori, Narokusha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-904292-09-9. An attractive collection of photographs documenting a year in the life of a young girl, full of heartwarming emotion and vividly captured moments.
- *Sayonara Amerika* [Farewell America]. By Moriguchi Katsu, Miraisha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-624-90027-4. A collection of photographs examining life in Okinawa since the 1950s.
- *Edojidai no wagashi dezaian* [Japanese Confectionary Design of the Edo Period]. By Nakayama Keiko, Poplar, 2011. ISBN 978-4-591-11809-2. Traces the origins of Japan's traditional confectionary back to the Edo period.
- *Aidoru shinkaron* [The Evolution of Pop Idols]. By Ōta Shōichi, Chikuma Shobō, 2011. ISBN 978-4-480-86408-6. A sociological study tracing the development of the Japanese pop culture personalities known as idols (*aidoru*) since the 1970s.
- *Sakurumura no jiba* [Circle Village: A Magnetic Field]. By Araki Yasutoshi, Kaichōsha, 2011. ISBN 978-4-87415-791-6. A definitive account of the Circle Village activist community, which had a major impact on intellectual life in postwar Japan.
- *Furatto karuchā* [Flat Culture]. Edited by Endō Tomomi, Serica Shobō, 2010. ISBN 978-4-7967-0298-0. A study of contemporary Japanese culture.
- *Fukkō no michi nakabade* [In the Middle of the Road to Recovery]. By Nakai Hisao, Misuzu Shobō, 2011. ISBN 978-4-622-07615-5. Reprint. The author records the year he spent providing counselling to victims and rescue workers following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995.
- *Chūka gensō* [Phantasms of China]. By Hashimoto Yū, Bensei Shuppan, 2011. ISBN 978-4-585-22013-8. A look at medieval Japanese cosmology from the 14th to 16th centuries.
- *Shūsen no seijishi* [A Political History of the End of the War]. By Suzuki Tamon, Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2011. ISBN 978-4-13-026225-5. How and why did Japan stop fighting World War II? This book explores the influence of the atom bombs, the Soviet entry into the war, and the Potsdam Declaration on the country's political and military leadership.

The Magic of Miyabe Miyuki's Mysteries

Miyabe Miyuki's books grab the reader from the first page and refuse to let go. Mysteries, science fiction, historical novels, horror, or fantasy—whatever the genre, this best-selling author has a rare ability to capture readers' imaginations and draw them into her fictional world.

Miyabe writes in a simple, accessible style, without resorting to difficult words or an ornate style. Much of her work deals with everyday experiences and feelings of conflict, loss, humiliation, infatuation, frustration, and heartbreak that readers can readily identify with.

"My main interest is in what happens when the everyday is transformed into something extraordinary," says Miyabe. "Peril and disaster often lurk behind the most mundane things, and ordinary people can suddenly find themselves caught up in crime. What I aim for in my writing is to come up with an exciting storyline that will set readers' pulses racing without straying too far from an everyday perspective."

Strongly influenced by Stephen King, Japan's queen of mystery places a greater emphasis on narrative structure, character development, and social context than on crime solving per se. In *Riyū* [The Reason], for example, inspired by King's horror classic *Carrie*, Miyabe uses a conventional narrative mixed with archive and documentary materials to develop a plot that is as absorbing as piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. In the 1,400-page *Mohōhan* [Copycat Killers], a killer carries out a series of theatrical murders simply to attract the attention of the media. Miyabe masterfully depicts the inner conflict of the female journalist who reports the killings. In *Kasha* [trans. *All She Was Worth*], Miyabe explores the world of bankruptcy and loan sharks. The plot deals with an elaborate web of lies and assumed identities, and bad debts that must be paid in blood as the price for living the good life.

Miyabe says the lack of traditional hero figures in her books is no accident. "I prefer my protagonists to be like the people next door," she laughs. Miyabe says she reread some of her earlier works for the first time in her 25-year career after the devastating earthquake that hit northern Japan in March 2011. The experience reassured her that there was no place in her stories for assertive, self-confident characters.

"Since I'm a weak kind of person myself, I suppose the main characters in my stories tend to be people from weak positions in society, rather than charismatic hero figures or people with some kind of outstanding ability. But I think a lot of readers feel they can empathize with my characters because they are so vulnerable. So in that sense, perhaps my weakness is also a strength," she says modestly. "All I can do is entertain readers in my own way."

Highly prolific, Miyabe admits that she cannot be considered a "conventional" or "pure" mystery writer. She enjoys blending traditional crime stories with elements of the modern psychological thriller, such as the convincing depiction of the evolving states of mind of the two female protagonists in *Kurosufuia* [trans. *Crossfire*]. Elements of science fiction also feature, such as when a high school

boy slips back in time to 1936 in *Gamōtei jiken* [The Gamo House Incident], where he witnesses the attempted Japanese coup d'état known to history as the February 26 Incident. She has also written fantasy novels for younger readers, such as *Bureibu sutōri* [trans. *Brave Story*], in which a boy enters a fantasy world in an attempt to save his parents' marriage. Several novels set during the Edo period (1603–1868) blend horror and historical fiction, such as in *Ayashi* [Something Fishy] and *Furueru iwa* [Trembling Rocks].

Whatever the genre, and no matter how thick the volume, her works are regular fixtures on the bestseller lists. Since her debut story, *Warera ga rinjin no hanzai* [Our Next Door Neighbor's Crime], she has scooped almost all of Japan's most prestigious literary prizes. Many of her books have been made into films, TV dramas, stage plays, and manga. Her stories are imbued with what might be described as the "Miyabe magic." Appealing to all five senses and featuring finely drawn psychological portraits of her characters, Miyabe—a well-known film lover and video game player—succeeds in creating a vivid visual impression through the sparing use of a few well-chosen adjectives. Her technique is simple yet sublime.

Another quality that makes Miyabe's stories such page-turners is the perfect balance between her prose style and the mood and tempo of her fictional worlds. Consciously or otherwise, she has captured the oral character of the Japanese storytelling traditions she first heard from her father, who used to tell her spine-tingling bedtime stories.

Today, this tireless author's works in progress include a novel being serialized in a newspaper, a sequel to her contemporary mystery *Na mo naki doku* [Nameless Poison], and two Edo-period serializations for different monthly magazines.

One thing unites all of Miyabe's work across a diverse range of styles and subject matter: Her rollercoaster stories all have the same power to hook readers and take them on a thrilling, often surreal, and supernatural ride. The convincing details and delicate touches with which she portrays her characters in the context of their daily lives make readers feel part of the story.

Miyabe's popularity has begun to extend beyond Japan. Her works have been translated into 19 languages.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Miyabe Miyuki

Born and raised in a traditional downtown neighborhood in the eastern part of Tokyo, where she still lives. Became a full-time author at the age of 23 after working in a law office. Among her numerous awards are the Naoki Prize for *Riyū* and the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature for *Na mo naki doku*. English translations of her work include *All She Was Worth*, *Crossfire*,

Shadow Family, *The Devil's Whisper*, *The Book of Heroes*, *The Sleeping Dragon*, *ICO: Castle in the Mist*, and *Brave Story*, which won the Association for Library Service for Children Batchelder Award.