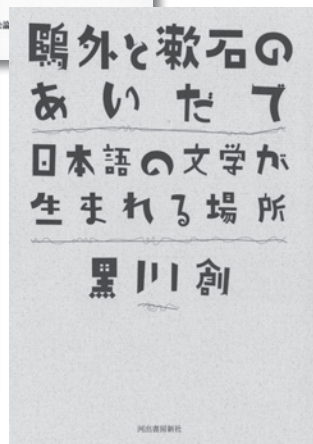
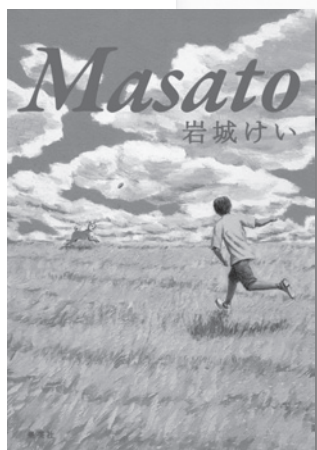
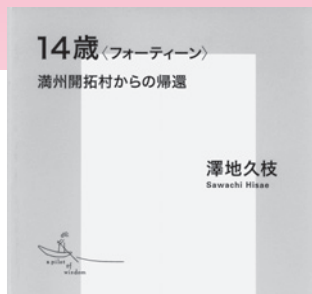


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Writing about the Tōhoku Disaster: Five Years On

Yonahara Kei

Five years have passed since the triple disaster that devastated large parts of the Tōhoku region on March 11, 2011. The number of those confirmed dead now stands at 15,893, with a further 2,565 people still listed as “missing.” The road to recovery has proved difficult, and even now more than 186,600 people are still living in temporary accommodations. Life in temporary housing means coming to terms with wrenching change, and in Fukushima prefecture it is thought that more people have now died from the stresses and upheavals of life since the disaster than lost their lives in the tsunami and its immediate aftermath. A large number of valuable books have been published giving insight into the disaster and what it wrought.

All kinds of people are engaged in the reconstruction process, which continues to this day. They include academics doing in-depth research on various aspects of the disaster as well as people working on concrete efforts to rebuild. In *Shinsai fukkō no seiji-keizai-gaku* [A Political and Economic Study of Post-Disaster Recovery], economist Saitō Makoto uses objective data to take a fresh look at the decision-making processes behind the government’s reconstruction policies and its response to the nuclear crisis. At the heart of his study is a suspicion that too many important decisions were rushed through in the first few months after the disaster. He makes two main points. The first is that on reconstruction, the government tried to do too much and came up with a reconstruction plan that was excessive. Saitō gives population figures for the various affected areas and geographical data in reconsidering the damage estimates that served as the basis for the reconstruction budget, and concludes that the initial estimates were too high. His second argument is that in responding to the nuclear crisis, the authorities focused too narrowly, producing an insufficient and inadequate policy. The disjointed response bogged down even as the effects of the nuclear accident increased qualitatively and quantitatively—something that can be traced back to the willingness to dismiss the situation as “unimaginable” or “inconceivable” immediately after the accident. The author emphasizes how vital it is to grasp the true nature of the situation based on scientific knowledge and data, and to make a rational response based on the resulting findings. At the same time, he says, the authorities should have the courage to set aside matters where reliable information is not immediately available until the true situation becomes clear.

In times of emergency following a major natural disaster, in addition to the assistance provided by government, the “solidarity economy” driven by charitable donations and volunteer activities in civil society also plays an important role. The two-volume *Shinsai to shimin* [Natural Disaster

and Citizens], edited by Nitagai Kamon and Yoshiwara Naoki, discusses the solidarity economy and community revitalization from a sociological perspective. In volume 1, they argue that the events of March 11, 2011 exposed the weaknesses of civil society, and that a greater awareness is needed of the important role that the solidarity economy has to play. Huge amounts of reconstruction funds were invested in the disaster areas under the rubric of “creative reconstruction.” But the authors point out that a lot of this spending was part of a growth strategy that aimed to reconstruct the Japanese economy as a whole through regional regeneration. This model of development tended to mean that reconstructing the daily lives of individuals affected by the disaster was given low priority, not only putting barriers in the way of the recovery of the lives of individual people but also creating divisions and antagonisms within affected communities. The authors encourage people to reconsider the solidarity economy as an alternative route within civil society, and encourage people to reconsider a new type of model of autonomy and aid within contemporary society.

Volume 2 of *Shinsai to shimin* discusses aid and care. It is a record of cooperation between volunteers, aid groups, professional caregivers, and social science researchers, whose aid efforts continue to be driven by the belief that life is about sharing burdens and helping others. Standing alongside those affected by the disaster, they take a fresh look at the question of what kind of aid is necessary to help traumatized people recover their dignity and independence. The book examines specific aid activities at various places, including efforts to create more personal encounters in disaster areas and attempts to give survivors an opportunity to make their voices heard, as well as activities of religious leaders who gather across faith lines. Buddhist temples played a major role in the relief effort following the Tōhoku earthquake, providing temporary shelter for people displaced from their homes as well as valuable spiritual care. One local doctor’s suggestion led to a new practice of Buddhist priests visiting people in hospital—a kind of Japanese-style chaplain—and there are hopes that this kind of scheme can be expanded further in the future.

But the daily lives of people touched by the disaster remain tough. Journalist Okada Hiroyuki’s *Hisai jakusha* [The Vulnerable of the Disaster Zones] is a book of reportage that focuses on the problems faced by many survivors on a daily basis: people whose homes have been lost, the elderly and infirm who struggle with restricted movement, the poor, and the special problems faced by young children. The book shows the struggles of ordinary people trying to rebuild their lives and livelihoods, as well as dramatic changes in the villages where they live. The author travels

to people's homes and places of work throughout Tōhoku, recording examples of how the weaker and more vulnerable members of society were left behind by the rebuilding process.

Another thing that has become clear with time is the plight of those who missed out on receiving aid because their homes happened to come through the disaster (more or less) intact. Immediately after the disaster, aid was concentrated on evacuation centers and temporary accommodation, and practically nothing was done for those who had been affected by the disaster but were still in their own homes. The fact that many of these people encouraged the authorities to prioritize the needs of others who were even worse off was a sign of their consideration for others, rather than a refusal to accept help. Volunteer groups played an important role in reaching out to these people, acknowledging them as a silent majority and encouraging them to speak up. These efforts eventually led to an increase in the assistance available to such people.

Victims of the disaster now live all over Japan. Many of them live in places where the climate, topography, and local customs are quite unfamiliar. It has also become clear that there is often a language problem—many people's feelings of isolation are exacerbated when they find that their Tōhoku dialect is not well understood in their new communities. *Hōgen o tsutaeru* [Communicating in Dialect], edited by Ōno Makio and Kobayashi Takashi, reports on a project that focused on the role that dialect can play in revitalizing a local community. Speaking about their memories of the disaster in local dialect allowed people to communicate their emotions more deeply and more exactly, and helped in their psychological recovery. The authors also notice that many traditional folk tales told in the local dialect contain lessons on how to deal with natural disasters. The book marks a re-acknowledgement of the power of dialect and introduces some of the efforts being made to ensure that it is passed on to the next generation.

Ikyō hisai [Disaster in a Foreign Land], edited by a project for recording the Tōhoku disaster experiences of Zainichi (expatriate) Koreans, contains interviews with the numerous people among the affected who have their roots in another country. Ethnic Koreans from different generations—from long-term residents whose families have been in Japan since before the war to newcomers who came to Japan for a variety of reasons, including marriage, study, and work—discuss their lives, their experiences of the disaster, and its aftermath in detail. Their experiences of the disaster are diverse and varied, but in general the more severely affected people were by the disaster, the more obvious the cooperation and mutual assistance between the Zainichi Koreans and their Japanese neighbors. Giving assistance as well as receiving it, they work to overcome their difficulties. The editors say that this widespread determination to live together was the project's most important finding.

Shinnami Kyōsuke's *Ushi to tsuchi* [Cows and Earth] is a non-fiction work that depicts the lives of Fukushima dairy farmers following the disaster. Two months after the disaster, due to the nuclear accident, the national government issued orders for all livestock within the mandated evacuation area to be slaughtered. This included some 3500 cows, but a number of dairy farmers refused to accept the ruling

and desperately sought a way to save their herds. Fiercely proud of their way of life, the farmers resolved that they and their animals would become living witnesses of the effects of radiation. They wanted to bring to people's attention the cruel devastation and injustice of the nuclear disaster, which had destroyed their town, deprived them of their livelihood, and severed their relationships with their communities. Eventually, the farmers' plight caught the attention of a team of researchers. A project began to analyze the mechanisms by which the animals absorbed radioactive materials, how these materials accumulate within the body, and how they are evacuated. The aim is to put this information to good use in food safety and to help regenerate livestock farming. The project continues today.

Mitarai Tamako's *Kesennuma nittingu monogatari* [Knitting in Kesennuma] tells the story of a group of women led by the author in the Miyagi town of Kesennuma, which was devastated by the tsunami, to launch a company making and selling knitwear. The author returned to Japan from Bhutan, where she had been helping the prime minister of Bhutan in promoting the country's tourism, and visited the disaster areas of Tōhoku to see the situation firsthand. Kesennuma suffered from major subsidence due to the earthquake, making it impossible to construct any new buildings for several years. Mitarai had the idea that with knitting, local women could start a business right away without even needing a factory—all they needed was wool and knitting needles. The town was a traditional fishing village, where fishermen would wear woolen sweaters knitted for them by their families. Many of the local women therefore had the necessary skills. After visiting the Arran Islands of Ireland for inspiration, Mitarai launched her company. She helped to polish the skills of the local women and introduced a flexible working style suited to each worker's individual circumstances. She worked hard to improve quality and boost the strength of the brand. This invigorating book tells the story of how the project not only gave the women employment but also helped them to rebuild their shattered confidence.

Five years after the disaster, a time has come when people can start to reexamine the reconstruction planning. We are starting to see efforts not simply to work as quickly as possible on tangible rebuilding projects with immediate results, but also to pass on these terrible experiences to the next generation and to ensure that something useful comes out of the disaster. The same is no doubt true of the efforts to record the experiences of those affected, from their various and diverse different backgrounds. The rediscovery of the strengths that these people have always possessed, and the traditional spiritual culture of Japan, have also provided a major support for the ongoing attempts to rebuild these devastated communities.

Yonahara Kei

Born in 1958. Non-fiction writer. In 2013, won the second Kawai Hayao Prize for Shurijō e no sakamichi [*The Uphill Road to Shuri Castle*], which retraced the footsteps of Kamakura Yoshitarō (1898–1983), who made important contributions to preserving and reviving Ryukyuan culture. Other works include Bireitō made [*All the Way to the "Beautiful Isle"*], which traced life in Taiwan during Japanese rule and depicted modern Okinawan history. Yonahara currently serves as a member of the JBN editorial committee.

FICTION



Nakajima Kyōko

Born in 1964. In 2010 Nakajima won the Naoki Prize for *Chiisai ouchi* [*The Little House*]. Other works include the story collection *Tsuma ga shiitake datta koro* [*When My Wife Was a Shiitake*] in 2013 and *Nagai o-wakare* [*The Long Goodbye*] in 2015.

A work of historical fiction narrated by a mountain goat's horn

Katazuno! [The Horn] By Nakajima Kyōko

Shūeisha, 2014. 188 x 130 mm. 392 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-08-771570-5.

When Naohide, nineteenth head of the Hachinohe family, a branch of the Nanbu family, dies, leaving only a daughter to succeed to the family name, the family hurriedly arranges to adopt a son from a cadet branch and have him engaged to the ten-year-old Nene. The one destined to be her husband and the 20th head of the family is Naomasa, just nine. Friends since childhood, the pair grow up and are eventually husband and wife in reality as well as in name. After two girls, they are finally blessed with the son they have longed for. Their happy life is torn apart just a year later, however, when both Naomasa and the infant Hisamatsu die suddenly. Rumors circulate that Toshinao, 27th head of the main Nanbu family, sent spies and had the father and son poisoned, but the facts are hard to substantiate. One

thing is certain: Toshinao, despite being Nene's uncle, has been watching for an opportunity to bring the lands of Hachinohe under his control. With little prospect of outright victory through a full-on clash, Nene herself becomes family leader and prevents civil strife and treason. Her extraordinary intelligence and decisiveness ensure that the line of the Hachinohe family survives and that their lands, despite their small size, survive a phase of plot and intrigue with its riches intact.

Unusual in a historical novel, this book is something of a fantasy narrated by a mountain goat with the gift of human speech—not just during its life but also after death, even when only a single horn remains. It is a bizarre conceit, but the author's skill as a writer allows her to carry it off quite naturally. (Chō)

Kawaii yononaka [Living in a World of Cute] By Yamazaki Nao-Cola

Kōdansha, 2015. 188 x 128 mm. 184 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-219497-6.

Mameko graduates from college and starts working at a manufacturing company. She has never had a boyfriend, something she herself blames on the fact that she is plain looking. One day the year she turns 32 she meets Taizō on a routine sales visit to a client. They become close and eventually fall in love. Taizō is a kind and dependable character and loves Mameko deeply. But he earns a pittance and has no savings. Mameko not only has to cover the costs of the wedding herself but also has to support the couple after they are married. Not that she resents this; in fact, it makes her happy. But things are tougher than she has imagined. Society judges women and men by different standards. A man who paid for his own wedding without depending on his parents would be praised as resourceful and responsible.

But a woman who does the same thing is liable to find herself pitied. Soon after the couple get married their household finances are in crisis and Mameko's siblings start to express their concern. Desperate for new possibilities, she resolves to start her own company.

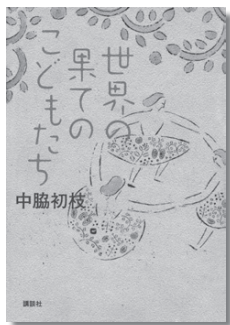
In Japan it is still the norm for the man to go out to work while the wife stays at home and deals with the housework. In that sense, the set-up in this story is unusual. But there is no hint of anything unrealistic, either in the development of the plot or the depiction of character. Through dialogue and detailed descriptions, Mameko is skillfully depicted as a character who resists, albeit hesitantly, the norms of her society. (Chō)



Yamazaki Nao-Cola

Born in 1978. In 2004 Yamazaki won the Bungei Prize for her debut work, *Hito no sekkusu o warau na* [*Don't Laugh at Other People's Sex Lives*]. Was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize in 2011 for *Niki no kutsujoku* [*Niki's Humiliation*].

An unconventional romance in contemporary Japan



Nakawaki Hatsue

Born in 1974. In 1992, at the age of 17, Nakawaki won the Botchan Prize for *Sakana no yō ni* [Like a Fish]. In 2013, she won the Tsubota Jōji Literature Prize for *Kimi wa ii ko* [You're a Good Child]. Other works include *Watashi o mitsukete* [Find Me].

*Three girls' lives
in wartime
Manchuria*

***Sekai no hate no kodomo-tachi* [Children at the End of the Earth]**

By Nakawaki Hatsue

Kōdansha, 2015. 190 x 131 mm. 384 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-219539-3.

Tamako is just a young girl when she leaves her village in Kōchi prefecture to migrate to Manchukuo (Japan's puppet state in Manchuria, 1932-45) with the rest of the family as "pioneer" colonists. Once there, she makes a number of important friends: Mija, who comes from a Korean family, and Mari, the daughter of rich parents. The three of them get lost far from home one day and stave off hunger by sharing a single rice ball. Experiences like this bring the girls close together, but after the chaos of the war and its aftermath they wind up in quite different situations.

Tamako is orphaned and raised by a Chinese family in China, while Mija experiences hardships as an ethnic Korean in Japan. Mari loses her family in the Yokohama air raids and grows up in an institution. In gentle, unstrained prose the author

describes the lives of the three girls in an age of turmoil. Painsstaking research has clearly gone into the absorbing and compelling story rich with the details of daily life. The three girls endure sometimes-cruel hardships, but in place of a conceptual critique of war, the story conveys their nobility and bravery as they struggle and survive. After almost 40 years, the three old friends finally meet again. This moving story by an author too young to have known the war years herself, full of sympathy and fellow feeling, convincingly recreates the lives of her grandparents' generation. (Nozaki)

***Daku onna* [Women Who Take the Initiative]**

By Kirino Natsuo

Shinchōsha, 2015. 190 x 131 mm. 288 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-466704-8.

This novel is set in 1972, in the dying days of the student movement in Japan. Naoko is a student at a university in Tokyo. She has always kept aloof from the student movement, but when her brother is killed in a struggle between rival groups she comes to hate the extremists more than ever. Not that she is a particularly ambitious student. She rarely attends classes and spends much of her time playing mahjong and sitting around in coffee shops. She smokes and drinks and sleeps around. But Naoko's behavior is driven by certain convictions. She shares the ideals of the movement just coming to prominence that aims to do away with discrimination against women and achieve equal rights with men. The book's title comes from a slogan used by the women's liberation movement at the

time, "Dakareru onna kara daku onna" (From women who are the objects of desire to women who take the initiative in desire). Naoko tries to live up to this slogan. Her apparently promiscuous relationships with men are part of her stance. But reality is harsher than Naoko has imagined. Her promiscuity leads men to belittle her as a "public toilet" [i.e., a convenience].

The student movement of the 1970s has been the subject of numerous books in the past. Many of the people involved have also published memoirs. But this novel is distinctive in focusing not on the student movement itself but on the women in its fringes. The novel vividly depicts the struggles and disappointments of young people in the years after the leftwing student movement began to subside. (Chō)



Kirino Natsuo

Born in 1951. Won the Mystery Writers of Japan Award for *Out* in 1998 [trans. Out], the Naoki Prize in 1999 for *Yawaraka na hoho* [Soft Cheeks], and the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for *Tōkyōjima* [Tokyo Island] in 2008.

*Feminists and the
student movement*



Iwaki Kei

Born in 1971. After graduating from a university in Japan, Iwaki moved on her own to Australia, where she lived for 20 years. In 2013, she won the Dazai Osamu Prize and the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize for Sayonara, Orenji [Farewell Orange] (JBN No. 80).

*Japanese teen
adjusts to life in
an Australian
high school*

MASATO [Masato]

By Iwaki Kei

Shūeisha, 2015. 188 x 130 mm. 232 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-08-771621-4.

Masato is a fifth-grade elementary school student who moves to Australia with his family when his father is sent there by the automaker where he works. He starts to attend a local school but finds it difficult to adjust to his new environment without any English. He attracts the attention of the school bullies and repeatedly gets into fights, leading to trouble with his teachers. But when Jake, one of the most popular students in the class, invites him to join the soccer club, Masato starts to enjoy life at school. His parents watch their son find his feet with mixed emotions. A conflict of opinion arises between his mother, eager for her son to attend university in Japan, and the father, who has no particular attachment to the idea of returning home. Masato himself comes to feel skeptical of his mother's attitude, socializing

exclusively with other Japanese and making little effort to assimilate into Australian society. The book's title is given in roman letters—reflecting Masato's development as someone comfortable in an international setting. At the same time, the novel realistically depicts the various troubles and heartaches he must live through before this is achieved. But the author clearly feels genuine support for this young person taking on the challenges of adjusting to a different culture, and believes in his future. Continuing on from its well-received predecessor *Sayonara, Orenji* [Farewell Orange], this powerful story overturns the assumption taken for granted among many Japanese that as a people they can only be truly at home in Japan. (Nozaki)

LITERARY CRITICISM

Ōgai to Sōseki no aida de [Between Ōgai and Sōseki]

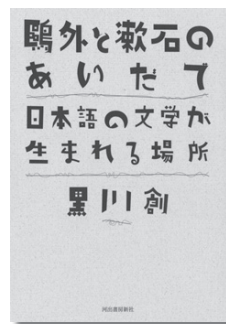
By Kurokawa Sō

Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2015. 188 x 128 mm. 292 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 978-4-309-02393-9.

Japan suddenly entered into unprecedentedly close relations with other Asian countries in the early twentieth century. As it established colonial dominions abroad, large numbers of Chinese and Korean intellectuals came to Japan, including many of the leading figures in the Chinese revolutionary movement, who soon developed close ties with Japanese socialists. This book by Kurokawa Sō reveals previously unknown aspects of the literary works of Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki, two of the most significant literary figures in modern Japan, by positioning them within this environment of cultural exchange. Sōseki drew on a female supporter of the Chinese revolutionary movement as the model for a main character in one of his novels, and depicted Japanese socialists in another. Ōgai, despite feeling

drawn to the socialists, held a position as a member of the government that prevented him from expressing sympathy for the movement in public.

Kurokawa's detailed research on women is also an important feature of this work. As fiction works by Ōgai's wife, Shige, make clear, many women at the time were beginning to shake free of the traditional domestic order and establish autonomous lives for themselves. This outstanding literary history vividly recreates a moment of dramatic change and depicts the reactions to those changes of some of the most important writers of the times. (Karube)



Kurokawa Sō

Born in 1961. Critic and novelist. In 2009 won the Yomiuri Literature Prize for Kamome no hi [Day of the Seagull]. In 2014 won the Itō Sei Literature Prize for Kokkyō Kanzenban [National Borders: The Definitive Version]. Other works include Akarui yoru [Bright Nights].

*Two literary
giants and the
changing society
of early twentieth-
century Japan*



Nakano Miyoko

Born in 1933. Professor emerita at Hokkaido University. She is also author of *Son Gokū no tanjō* [*The Birth of the Monkey King*], *Chūgoku no yōkai* [*Chinese Monsters*], *Sanzō hōshi* [*The Monk Xuanzang*], and numerous other works.

*The Sea of Japan
as an interface
among different
cultures*

***Nihonkai monogatari* [The Tale of the Sea of Japan]**

By Nakano Miyoko

Iwanami Shoten, 2015. 188 x 129 mm. 200 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-00-061040-7.

Nakano Miyoko is a scholar of Chinese literature whose works include the 10-volume complete translation into Japanese of *Xiyōu ji* (Jp. *Saiyūki*; Eng. *Journey to the West*), essays, and fantasies set in China and the “Western Regions” of Central Asia. This book is a geographical essay on the Sea of Japan. Treating her subject from an outsider’s perspective, she uses a dynamic and dramatic interpretation of documentary and visual sources to present a view of the sea from the perspective of the Other. In works like the *Journey to the West* and *Gulliver’s Travels*, the Sea of Japan is a wholly imaginary space. But after the great ocean journeys of the eighteenth-century explorer La Pérouse, the sea appeared on accurate maps of the world for the first time and acquired its present name.

Japanese have always regarded the sea as a kind of internal sea. For more than 1,000 years authorities in Japan issued no information to the outside world about its territories or its surrounding lands. It did not even survey Hokkaido. But it is clear from oral traditions and folk events that foreigners occasionally made an appearance from beyond that sea, and this book reveals clearly its rich alternative history. In the modern period, the sea was transformed into an area seething with the competing desires of various kinds of “Others.” (Yonahara)

***Jūryoku to no taiwa* [Conversing With Gravity]**

By Amagatsu Ushio

Iwanami Shoten, 2015. 188 x 129 mm. 190 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-00-061030-8.

Amagatsu Ushio, the internationally renowned butoh dancer and leader of the Sankaijuku dance company, looks back on his life and work in this book. Born in a coastal town in 1949, he often played by the shoreline, and was fascinated that water was heavier than air and mystified by pressure he felt when he dipped his hands into the sea. Later, he would find this feeling described in a poem by Rimbaud: “Elle est retrouvée / Quoi? – l’Éternité. / C’est la mer allée / Avec le soleil” (“It is found again/ What? Eternity/ The sea gone with the sun”), words he says taught him about the boundlessness of life that could transcend the limits of the physical body.

After growing up never feeling himself in a place where he felt he really belonged, he met Maro Akaji and Hijikata

Tatsumi, who were developing innovative styles of physically expressive art. In 1975, he founded the dance troupe Sankai Juku. Many of the troupe’s first admirers came not from Japan but from Europe. A person who stands or moves, he writes, is involved in nothing less than a dialogue with gravity. Dance, as an art form based on the human body, is also a dialogue with gravity. This book chronicles the author’s thinking about his art and details the activities in which he has been involved over the course of his career. The performing arts are transient compared to written texts and the plastic arts. But they can leave an indelible impression on the memory. (Yonahara)



Amagatsu Ushio

Born in 1949. Butoh dancer and choreographer. Founded the butoh dance company Sankai Juku in 1975. Known for innovative performances in which he paints his body white and shaves his hair. Since 1997, has also worked as an opera director.

*Autobiography of
one of the leading
figures in butoh
dance*

CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY



Oguma Eiji

Born in 1962. Professor at Keio University, where he specializes in historical sociology. In 1996, he won the Suntory Prize for Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen [*The Origins of the Myth of the Homogeneous Nation*]. In 2010 won the Kadokawa Foundation Prize for the novel 1968.

*The turbulent
twentieth century
of one Japanese
man*

Ikite kaette kita otoko [A Man Who Came Back Alive]

By Oguma Eiji

Iwanami Shoten, 2015. 173 x 107 mm. 396 pp. ¥940. ISBN 978-4-00-431549-0.

This book records the life of Oguma Kenji, an ordinary Japanese man who lived through the turbulent World War II years and up to the present, based on detailed interviews by his son, Eiji, a social historian who has written several well-received studies of nationalism and the student movement in postwar Japan. When his father remarks one day that he's never been fussy about his food "since my experiences in Siberia," the son decides to take a close look for the first time at his father's past, which he has previously learned only in fragments. In this book, he offers a portrait of modern Japan through his depiction of a "businessman of the urban underclass." Sent to the front at 19, Kenji encounters extreme conditions in a Siberian detention camp after the war, surviving temperatures as low as 40 degrees below freezing. He

returns to Japan aged 23 and works a succession of jobs before contracting tuberculosis at 25. He spends the next five years living in a treatment center. After a period of poverty and despair, he starts a successful sporting goods shop during the economic boom years and finally achieves a degree of stability. He becomes involved in social issues, including a court case brought by a group of Korean former soldiers in the Imperial Army seeking compensation from the Japanese government for their experiences of internment in Siberia. Kenji is presented as an embodiment of the wisdom developed through the energies and lives of ordinary Japanese. The father tells his son, "So long as there is hope, people can always find a way to go on living." The book contains inspiring lessons for contemporary society. (Nozaki)

Fōtīn: Manshū kaitaku-mura kara no kikan [Fourteen: My Return from a Pioneer Settlement in Manchuria]

By Sawachi Hisae

Shūeisha, 2015. 173 x 105 mm. 192 pp. ¥700. ISBN 978-4-08-720789-7.

As a young girl, the author moved to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo when her father went to work there and attended a local girls' school there until the war ended when she was 14. She returned to Japan a year later. This book documents her bitter experiences between the ages of 14 and 15. During the war she was an enthusiastic supporter of Japanese militarism. She never considered the idea that Japan might lose the war. She worked without complaint when she was mobilized to provide underage labor for the war effort. As the war situation went from bad to worse for Japan, she joined in efforts to relieve the plight of the Japanese farmers in the pioneer settler villages, where only women and children remained. With

the end of the war, the position of Japanese in Manchuria changed almost overnight. After the Soviet invasion and takeover by Communist troops, civil war broke out and the area came under the control of Kuomintang troops. Hisae was finally able to return to Japan, and it was only when she witnessed a horrific reality that she understood what had been taking place.

Reflecting her determination to look objectively at what she experienced 70 years ago, the author refers to herself throughout as "the girl" (*shōjo*). Sawachi Hisae has published many excellent works as a nonfiction writer, but until now had not treated her own experiences during the war. (Chō)



Sawachi Hisae

Born in 1930. Nonfiction writer. In 1978 won the Japan Nonfiction Prize for *Hi wa waga kyōchū ni ari* [*The Fire in My Breast*]. In 1985 she won the Kikuchi Kan Prize for *Umi yo nemure: Middouē kaisen no sei to shi* [*Sleep, O Sea! Life and Death at the Battle of Midway*].

*A memoir of a
teenage girl living
in wartime
Manchuria*



Kishi Fumiko

Another work of interviews with the author is Habataku eigajin jinsei [The Farflung Adventures of a Movie Maker].

Ishii Taeko

Born in 1969. Nonfiction writer.

Author of Osome: Densetsu no Ginza Madamu [Osome, the Legendary Madame of Ginza].

*Insider's account
of the wartime
Manchukuo Film
Association*

***Man'ei to watashi* [The Manchukuo Film Association and Me]**

By Kishi Fumiko and Ishii Taeko

Bungei Shunjū, 2015. 188 x 129 mm. 312 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-16-390314-9.

The Manchukuo Film Association was founded in 1937 as a “national policy company” in Shinkyō (present-day Changchun), the capital of Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria. The association’s impressive studios produced and distributed a series of movies including many that featured its billboard star Ri Kōran (Yamaguchi Yoshiko). But until now little has been known about what really went on inside the company, particularly after the end of the war. This book is an important testimony by one of the figures directly involved.

Kishi Fumiko was born in 1920 and started her career in film as an assistant editor at the age of 15. She joined the Manchukuo Film Association in 1939. The company employed Sakane Tazuko as Japan’s first female director before fall-

ing apart at the end of the war. At war’s end, Kishi and other employees headed northward to try to salvage the company’s equipment but were captured and sent to labor in mines even further into the interior.

In 1949 Kishi was embraced by the nascent Chinese film industry. As well as editing the nationalist film *Bai mao nū* [White-Haired Girl] in 1951, she also trained Chinese technicians and laid the foundations for today’s flourishing Chinese film industry. In 1953 Kishi returned to Japan but found herself rejected as a leftist contaminated by her collaboration with the Chinese communists. She continued to work as a freelance editor and has now revealed her version of the story at the age of 95. (Yonahara)

***Wasurerareta shijin no denki* [Biography of a Forgotten Poet]**

By Miyata Marie

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2015. 210 x 148 mm. 488 pp. ¥4,600. ISBN 978-4-12-004704-6.

The author’s father, Ōki Atsuo, was a prominent lyric poet in prewar Japan whose name is now all but forgotten. During World War II, he was sent to the front by the Imperial Army’s cultural division and wrote poems that described the sorrows of soldiers in beautiful language. Although these verses did not necessarily beautify the war effort, they were enough to label him a “war poet.” Despite having a son and three daughters, he had a lover and was often away from home. He also racked up huge debts that crippled the family finances. The author grew up regarding her father as an aloof and unlikely personality, and was happy to keep her distance. After his death, however, when she started to look through the manuscripts and other papers he left behind, the idea occurred to her of trying to

retrace her father’s life in a book of her own. This major work, now complete after many years in the making, vividly depicts the life of a man who dedicated himself to poetry, carried on passionate love affairs, and worked hard, and also portrays the times and many of its most important literary figures. In the second half of the book the author who is also a successful editor, includes her own reminiscences, making the work an important history of the literary world of twentieth-century Japan. Ōki kept on writing poems until the very end of his turbulent life. Even first-time readers are likely to be struck by the power of his poetry, quoted here extensively, and charmed by his passionate and self-contradictory character. The book won the 67th Yomiuri Prize for Literature. (Nozaki)



Miyata Marie

Born in 1936. Literary essayist and daughter of the poet Ōki Atsuo. From 1981 to April 1984, was editor-in-chief of Kōdansha’s Umi, the first woman to edit a major literary publication. Other works include Tsuioku no sakka-tachi [Authors in Memory], in 2004.

*The turbulent life
of poet Ōki Atsuo,
by his daughter*

HISTORY



Hosoya Yūichi

Born in 1971. Professor at Keio University, where he specializes in the history of international politics and British foreign policy. In 2010, won the Yomiuri Yoshino Sakuzō Prize for Rinriteki na sensō [Ethical Wars].

*A critical look at
Japan's insular
foreign policy*

Sengo-shi no kaihō 1: Rekishi ninshiki to wa nani ka [The Liberation of Postwar History I: How We See History]

By Hosoya Yūichi

Shinchōsha, 2015. 191 x 128 mm. 314 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-10-603774-0.

Differing perceptions of history are currently causing serious diplomatic difficulties between Japan and its neighbors. The Japanese government and media often display an attitude toward the war and colonial rule that lacks a broader international perspective, often voicing opinions that make sense only in the context of domestic debates. In this book Hosoya Yūichi, a specialist in international politics and diplomatic history, shows that this is a problem with deep roots that can be found throughout twentieth-century Japanese history.

The book's survey of the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of World War II is distinguished by its international perspective. The author's approach implies a criticism of previous

historians who have tended to view events only in how they appear from within Japan. The book shows that while the common understanding of international society changed significantly as internationalist ideals became widespread in the West after World War I, Japan remained out of step with the changing times and continued to see its national interest in very narrow terms. According to Hosoya, this typically Japanese lack of international outlook continued after World War II under the guise of "pacifism," and led to an attitude that made little effort to accept a share of the responsibility for maintaining the international order. This original history of modern Japan is reinforced by some biting criticisms of the current status quo. (Karube)

Media no tenkai [The Development of the Media]

By Katō Hidetoshi

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2015. 191 x 132 mm. 632 pp. ¥3,300. ISBN 978-4-12-004703-9.

This is a cultural historical overview of eighteenth-century Japan from the perspective of the development of mass media. "Media" here refers not only to print culture as a means of circulating information but more widely to communication among people, including the formation of various kinds of associations and the boom in travel. The author is a sociologist who has argued since the 1960s that by the eighteenth century Japan had already produced a culture that can be described as "modern." This book is a definitive new presentation of this view. In eighteenth-century Japan, associations called *ren* grew up, chiefly in the major cities as circles within which people could share poetry, scholarship, and other information across social divides. The information generated within these

groups then spread across the country through publishing and travel. The idea that people in the Tokugawa period were shackled within the strictly defined social groups of feudal society is a common but misleading view, the author argues. In fact, the development of a network of freely circulating culture in this period was a large part of the reason why Japan was able to modernize so quickly in the second half of the nineteenth century. This book is a bold attempt to redefine a period of history and do away with the image of premodern Japan as a closed society. (Karube)



Katō Hidetoshi

Born in 1930. Worked as professor at Gakushuin University, and director of the Japan Foundation's Japanese Language Institute, Urawa. Author of many books including Japanese Research on Mass Communication (1974) and Communication Policies in Japan (1978).

*The eighteenth-century roots of
modern Japanese
society*



Shimada Hiromi

Born in 1953. Scholar of religion and author. Served as professor at Japan Women's University. Numerous works include *Nihon no jūdai shin-shūkyō* [Ten Major New Religions of Japan], *O-haka no mirai* [The Future of Graves], and *Shinikata no shisō* [Thinking About Dying].

Religious and social change in modern Japan

***Sengo Nihon no shūkyō-shi* [A Religious History of Postwar Japan]**

By Shimada Hiromi

Chikuma Shobō, 2015. 187 x 129 mm. 336 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-480-01623-2.

Japanese society underwent dramatic structural changes between the prewar and postwar years. The devastation of the war, followed by the urbanization and advancement of capitalism of the rapid economic growth period starting in the mid-1950s, brought massive changes in people's spiritual lives. Workers flooded into the cities, the traditional religious practices and customs established in the early modern period were increasingly abandoned. Social changes brought about by the Cold War and later the collapse of the bubble economy also changed people's religious and spiritual lives. What have these changes left behind, and how were the changes related to wider society? The book answers these questions by looking at the emperor system, ancestor worship, and the "new religions."

One of the major factors behind the popularity of the "new religions" in the postwar years was the end of emperor-centered fascism based on State Shinto. Freedom of religion was protected in the new postwar constitution, and the emperor renounced the idea of himself as a "living deity." Shinto-derived faiths suppressed before the war began to flourish, while new religions with no system of ancestor worship expanded and grew. These were particularly attractive to poor young migrants to the cities, who were looking for a sense of community in their new homes. The new religions that rose to prominence in the 1970s reflected anxiety about the future as Japan's economic growth seemed to slow, eventually producing the Aum Shinrikyo cult. (Yonahara)

***Nihon to Isurāmu ga deau toki* [The Meeting of Japan and Islam]**

By Komura Akiko

Gendaishokan, 2015. 188 x 128 mm. 320 pp. ¥2,600. ISBN 978-4-7684-5757-3.

Japanese society is often said to be tolerant of different religions. It is certainly true that Buddhism and Shinto traditionally coexisted peacefully and today's strict ban on teaching any specific religion in public schools suggests a society that has maintained religious pluralism as one of its characteristics. In this book, however, Komura Akiko tells the story of a Japanese Muslim woman who complains that the teachers at her child's school lack any real understanding of Islam as a religion. In the early twentieth century, as Japan extended its involvement in China and Southeast Asia, many Tatar and Indian Muslims came to Japan and a number of mosques were built. This was brought to a temporary halt by World War II, but the number of Muslims coming to Japan started to increase steadily again in the

1990s, leading to increasing degree of multiculturalism in some areas. But although Islam may be tolerated as a foreign culture, there is little true understanding of it as a religion, and this lack of understanding has caused conflicts over the construction of graves, for example. Giving the specific example of Islam, this book makes clear that the increasing globalization of Japanese society involves problems that cannot be resolved simply by calling for greater understanding of other cultures. (Karube)



Komura Akiko

Born in 1953. Visiting fellow at the Sophia University Institute of Asian Cultures. Specializes in research on Japan and Islam, as well as research on Islam in other cultures and the religious aspects of life in Japan.

A look at the position of Muslims in Japanese society

No. 2: Multivolume *Zenshū* and *Kōza* Series: Literature, Folklore, Fine Art, and Manga

As in our last issue, in this section we take a look at recently published *zenshū* (sets of works by particular writers or on specific subjects) and *kōza* (“lecture series”)—formats that are not covered in JBN’s New Titles pages. Here we present one notable example each from the categories of literature, folklore, fine art, and manga.

***Ikezawa Natsuki kojīn henshū Nihon bungaku zenshū* [Ikezawa Natsuki’s Anthology of Japanese Literature], 30 vols. Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2014 and ongoing.**

Many anthologies of Japanese literature were published in the 1960s and 1970s, bringing together existing literary works as revised editions, but none had appeared for some time. Readers willing to purchase such multivolume collections had decreased in number. Where once display of *zenshū* had been a point of pride in the education-conscious middle class home, in reality people had limited space in their small homes to store them. The mass-market reader also knew that such works were easily accessible at their school or local public library.

Accepting these realities of the market, plans were made to publish a new kind of literature anthology, one compiled according to the taste and judgment of a well-known author. The success of this project—Ikezawa Natsuki’s *Sekai bungaku zenshū* [Anthology of World Literature]—generated new interest in literature anthologies and led to the publication of the new *Nihon bungaku zenshū* [Anthology of Japanese Literature] (30 vols., 2014) by Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Ikezawa heads his anthology with his own translation of the *Kojiki* [Records of Ancient Matters] into contemporary Japanese, and includes similar editions in today’s vernacular of *Ise monogatari* [The Tale of Ise] translated by Kawakami Hiromi, *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] by Kakuta Mitsuyo, *Hōjōki* [The Ten Foot Square Hut] by Takahashi Gen’ichirō, and *Heike monogatari* [The Tale of the Heike] by Furukawa Hideo. In addition to authors such as Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai, and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō who have also been included in conventional anthologies, this collection includes the works of folklorists, documentary writers, and essayists such as Minakata Kumagusu, Yanagita Kunio, Miyamoto Tsuneichi, Suga Atsuko, and Ishimure Michiko.

This compilation by Ikezawa has garnered high praise as a new manifestation of the “anthology of Japanese literature” format. Rather than purchasing the whole set, readers now choose the individual volumes they are interested in.

The publishers reveal their effort to cultivate a new readership by choosing currently active writers to translate classic works of literature. Such a translator line-up generates interest among readers. Modern Japanese translations of individual works of classical literature have been published before, but their inclusion in a multivolume anthology reflects Ikezawa’s distinctive touch as edi-

tor. Volumes of the set continue to be published and are selling well.

Anthologies of literature also gain new readers when their publication is complete; added to school and public library collections, they become available for use by yet another body of readers.

***Minshūshi no isan* [The Legacy of Popular History], 16 vols. Daiwa Shobō, 2012 and ongoing.**

Research on *minshū* or *shomin*—depending on the era, variously translated as commoners, ordinary people, general masses, general populace—has thrived in Japan. In particular, the publication by San’ichi Shobō of *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei* [Documents on the Lives of the Japanese Populace] (20 vols., 1973), drew attention to the field, one in which its lead editor, eminent ethnologist Tanigawa Ken’ichi, was a central figure.

Famous scholars in the area of folklore studies such as Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu had published works on folk and popular history, but these were highly specialized and academic. Tanigawa developed his own methodology distinct from academia, maintaining his integrity as an independent scholar. His work came to fruition in the *Tanigawa Ken’ichi zenshū* [Works of Tanigawa Ken’ichi] (24 vols.), published by Fuzanbō International.

Tanigawa’s achievements are enormous, including his co-editing—with Ōwa Iwao, the proprietor of the publisher Daiwa Shobō—of the present series, *Minshūshi no isan*. Daiwa Shobō is known for its books for general readers, practical guides, and manuals, but Ōwa is also the author of more than thirty scholarly titles such as *Nihon kodai shiron* [Essays on Ancient Japan], *Kamigami no kōkogaku* [Archaeology of the Gods], and *Kojiki seiritsu kō* [Thoughts on the Compilation of the *Kojiki*]. Like Tanigawa, Ōwa is also an editor, and the two planned the series together.

Published in 2012, the first volume was titled *Yama no hyōhakumin* [Mountain Gypsies] and included works such as *Sanka no shūen* [The End of the *Sanka* Wanderers] by Miyamoto Tsuneichi, who was well-known for his studies of the *jōmin* (common people). Volume 5, *Senmin* [Outcasts], inquires into the origins of outcasts, the roots of discrimination, the sources of attitudes regarding *kegare* (impurity), and when *kegare* came to mean *fujō* (unclean), examining the fact that members of the lower classes who were looked down upon as unclean have sustained Japan’s folk religion and folk performing arts. The studies adopt a historical and ethnological approach in considering the cultural factors that gave rise to groups discriminated

against (*hisabetsu*) from ancient times through the present day. Volume 2, *Oni* [Demons] looks into the nature of demons that have emerged and then vanished into the shadows of history. Volume 3, *Yūjo* [Prostitutes], considers the meaning of the word *yūjo* through a consideration of its origins and realities. Volume 4, *Geinō hyōhakumin* [Itinerant Performing Artists], seeks to portray a group unrepresented in official histories of Japan. Publication of the set is ongoing. The series is noteworthy as consisting not only of individual studies but also interviews and other types of accounts, for a more three-dimensional approach to the subject.

Tanigawa passed away in 2013, but with Ōwa Isao carrying on his spirit and methodology there is much to look forward to as the series moves toward completion.

***Nihon bijutsu zenshū* [Collection of Japanese Art], 20 vols. Shōgakukan, 2010.**

Perhaps the first notable postwar collection on Japanese art—one that launched a boom in art publishing—was *Genshoku Nihon bijutsu* [Japanese Art in Full Color] (20 vols.), published by Shōgakukan, in 1966. Subsequent collections, most of them large-format, included Shūeisha's *Nihon bijutsu kaiga zenshū* [A Collection of Japanese Art and Painting] (25 vols., 1976) and Kōdansha's *Nihon bijutsu zenshū* [Collection of Japanese Art] (24 vols. and 1 supp., 1990). Individual collectors were the focus of such works in the 1960s and 1970s, and as printing technology improved over time color plates became more detailed while bookbinding formats also changed. There is, of course, demand for such art collections from individuals, but they are also purchased by school and public libraries. In recent years the trend has leaned toward expensive, large-format editions.

Shōgakukan's *Nihon bijutsu zenshū*, which came out in 2010, is its first such collection in twenty years, and commemorates the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of Shōgakukan. The four-member editorial committee includes Tsuji Nobuo, director of the Miho Museum; Izumi Takeo; Yamashita Yūji; and Itakura Masaaki. What distinguishes this collection is its exploration, through art, of Japanese identity and the nature of Japanese art. This can be seen in the way it organizes the works presented, and the project's aims are revealed also in the order in which its volumes are being issued. The first title released was volume 2 of the collection, *Hōryūji to Nara no jiin* [Hōryūji Temple and the Temples of Nara] (Asuka and Nara Periods I). Focusing as it does on the temples that are the source of Japanese fine arts and crafts—and a topic both familiar and of interest to a great many Japanese—this initial release would determine the success or failure of the project. The second volume released was *Jakuchū, Ōkyō, miyako no kisō* [Jakuchū and Ōkyō and Artistic Imagination in the Capital] (vol. 14, Edo Period III), featuring Itō Jakuchū, an artist whose popularity has exploded in recent years.

The order of the volumes will naturally be chronological, but the collection also innovates with the inclusion of thematic volumes such as *Higashi Ajia no naka no Nihon bijutsu* [Japanese Art in East Asia] (vol. 6) and *Shinkō to bijutsu* [Belief and Art] (vol. 11). The nineteenth volume

released was *Nihon bijutsu sōseiki* [The Origins of Japanese Art] (vol. 1, Jōmon, Yayoi, and Kofun Periods) while the final volume to be released was *Nihon bijutsu no genzai mirai (1996-nen kara genzai)* [The Present and Future of Japanese Art (1996 to Today)] (vol. 20). The hope that the volumes will be kept and referred to often over many years can be observed in this compilation.

Planning such a substantial set of art books is not easy, and involves considerable costs related to handling of copyrights and image-use permissions. With the onset of the digital age, such collections may one day shift from paper-based to digital formats, but for the time being paper editions are likely to enjoy the most demand.

***Tezuka Osamu manga zenshū* [The Manga of Osamu Tezuka], 400 vols. Kōdansha, 1977–1997.**

Known as the “God of manga,” Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989) stands at the pinnacle of the world of Japan's postwar manga. Tezuka's works have appeared in various media, including adaptations for animation, film, theater, television, radio, and merchandise associated with their main characters.

Tezuka Osamu manga zenshū, published by Kōdansha, came out over two decades, from 1977 through 1997, a period roughly centered around his death. The collection includes eighteen supplementary volumes of essays, interviews, and other non-manga works. Based on this earlier series, *Tezuka Osamu bunko zenshū* [Osamu Tezuka Paperback Collection] was published from 2009 to 2012, containing no essays or interviews but incorporating some manga not included in the *Manga zenshū*. Since May 2015, the 200 volumes of the *Bunko zenshū* have been made available as e-books through digital download.

Tezuka went to medical school and was a medical doctor. He began writing while in university and by around 1950 his work was being serialized in manga magazines. He enjoyed success with hits such as *Tetsuwan Atomu* [Astro Boy], *Janguru taitei* [Kimba the White Lion], and *Ribon no kishi* [Princess Knight]. In 1963, the popularity of the animated television series *Tetsuwan Atomu* [Astro Boy] paved the way for other works to make the transition from manga to animation for television. Many well-known manga authors such as Ishinomori Shōtarō, Akatsuka Fujio, Yokoyama Mitsuteru, and Fujiko Fujio were influenced by Tezuka, as, too, have contemporary authors.

Today, the word “manga” is known around the world, due in no small part to the role played by Tezuka. Although it is difficult to sum up Tezuka's vast body of work, perhaps “humanism” or insatiable “curiosity” are a good place to begin. This much is clear from the work he wrote, his character, and his actions.

As a medical doctor, Tezuka wrote a medical dissertation and authored more than fifty non-manga books. He was truly a genius.

(Kiyota Yoshiaki, President, Shuppan News Co., Ltd.)

Mishima's Entertainment Fiction

A little-known novel by Mishima Yukio (1925–1970), who would have been ninety years old in 2015, has been enjoying brisk sales. *Inochi urimasu* [Life for Sale] was first serialized in the magazine *Shūkan Pureibōi* [Weekly Playboy] in 1968 and was published by Chikuma Shobō as a *bunko* pocket-size book in 1998. Written with a light and fast-paced touch, the story about a man who fails at suicide and puts his life up for sale is also loaded with entertaining highlights.

Over seventeen years after its publication in book form some 40,000 copies were sold, but in July 2015 sales took off after the books were wrapped with a new “belly band” (*obi*) saying: “Kakure kaisaku shōsetsu o hakken” (Hidden extraordinary work of fiction discovered!). Within less than two months 100,000 copies were printed. It went through twenty-one printings. Women in their thirties to fifties appear to be the book’s main readership.

Yowamushi Pedal on a Roll

The manga series *Yowamushi pedaru* [Yowamushi Pedal, or The Cowardly Cyclist] is about a group of senior high school boys crazy about bicycle road racing. Its unique characters and the intense competition among them drives the stories’ popularity.

Forty-two volumes and a total of 14 million copies have been printed. The series was adapted for a television anime series and also performed on stage. The film version was released in August 2015.

Serialization of *Yowamushi pedaru* began in the *Shūkan Shōnen champion* [Weekly Boys Champion] in 2008. Small and timid otaku-type Onoda Sakamichi has been riding a “mommy bike” from his home in the country to shop in Tokyo’s Akihabara electronics district—a 90-kilometer round trip. The strength and skill gained from those trips blossoms when he gets a chance at road bicycle racing, and he rejoices in the grueling intensity of the racing, competing with both friends and rivals.

Author Watanabe Wataru (b. 1971) made his debut as a manga artist at age 15, when he won the Shūeisha publishing company’s Hop Step Award. He is also a three-time winner of the Akatsuka Award. A devoted bicyclist himself, Watanabe rides 150 kilometers a week and participates in road racing; he writes *Yowamushi pedaru* to share the joys of cycling with readers, he says. What he considers important is to give the story a sense of reality and immediacy, and make it readily graspable to ordinary readers.

In the anime version for television, which began in 2013, computer graphics (CG) and hand-drawn characters were combined to enhance the sense of reality of the racing scene. “CG techniques have gotten so good that the images blend seamlessly with the hand drawings. When I saw on TV how all the bicycles—each with their distinct shapes and ways of being pedaled and differing speeds—were running so beautifully together, I was really thrilled,” says Watanabe.

The stage version began in 2012, and a total of six works have been staged so far, with the scale expanded each time. Holding just handlebars, the cyclists enact their “riding” onstage with skillful footwork, while skillful effects and lighting make their performance surprisingly convincing. The latest *peda-sute* (“pedal stage”) was performed in October and November 2015, with a total of twenty-seven performances in four major cities including Tokyo and Nagoya.

Three-day Comiket Attracts 550,000

The Comic Market (Comiket), mecca of manga and anime *otaku* (enthusiasts), was held in Tokyo in August 14–16, 2015. A total of 550,000 attended, according to the organizer of the market, which marked the 40th anniversary of its opening. Among the attendees were many Japan-loving tourists from other countries.

Comiket is a marketplace where individuals sell self-published works (called *dōjinshi*), most offered at a few hundred yen per book. Generally a few dozen pages long, they are

called *usui hon* (“thin books”) by fans. Among the wide variety of these *dōjinshi*, a phenomenon this year are works on the theme of the video game “Touken Ranbu” (Wild Sword Dance), in which legendary swords turn into handsome young men.

Many at Comiket attend with a particular artist in mind, and head there directly as they enter the market. They go primarily to exchange views on manga face-to-face with the sellers, and as just a secondary objective, they may purchase a work or two from them.

Another special attraction of Comiket is the opportunity for “cosplay” (costume and role-play), when fans appear in public wearing costumes and accessories to represent specific manga characters. Use of accessories more than 30 centimeters long was not allowed for safety and other reasons, but the restriction was removed in 2011, making it easier to dress up as popular characters. At the 2015 market, cosplay of “Touken Ranbu” characters was popular.

Dazai Osamu “Begs” for Akutagawa Prize

On September 7, 2015 three letters were discovered written by novelist Dazai Osamu (1909–1948) in his mid-20s to his mentor Satō Haruo (1892–1964), poet and novelist and member of the Akutagawa Prize selection committee. One letter, written with a brush on a roll of paper four meters long on January 28, 1936 when Dazai was 26 years old, reads: “Over the past year, I have been dragged this way and that by the Akutagawa Prize. It has taken over my life completely. . . . If the prize passes me by again this time I will have to wander again in a dense fog. Please help me. Mr. Satō, please don’t forget me. Don’t abandon me.” Dazai never did win the Akutagawa Prize.

Kōno Tatsuya, associate professor of Jissen Women’s University, discovered the letters when organizing documents kept by the family of Satō Haruo. “These letters are very important in reconsidering the relationship between Satō and Dazai,” says Kōno. “They are also valuable for knowing not just Dazai’s own state of mind

early in his career but for learning how the Akutagawa Prize, which was launched in 1935, would go on to become such a prestigious prize.”

Tanizaki Prize Goes to Ekuni Kaori

On August 24, 2015, Ekuni Kaori received the 51st Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize (sponsored by Chūō Kōron Shinsha) for her *Yamori, kaeru, shijimichō* [Geckos, Frogs, and Butterflies] (Asahi Shinbun Shuppan). In 2004 she won the Naoki Prize for *Gōkyū suru junbi wa dekiteita* [I Was Prepared to Wail].

Yamori, kaeru, shijimichō revolves around a five-year-old boy named Takuto, who has the mysterious ability to talk with geckos, frogs and other insects. It depicts daily events involving Takuto, his family and others around him.

Three New Works by Murakami Haruki

Popular novelist Murakami Haruki has published three new works in Japanese in quick succession: *Murakami-san no tokoro* [Murakami's Place] (Shinchōsha), *Shokugyō to shite no shōsetsuka* [A Novelist by Profession] (Switch Publishing), and *Raosu ni ittai nani ga aru to iun desu ka* [What Is There in Laos?] (Bungei Shunjū).

Murakami-san no tokoro, published in July 2015, is a collection of questions and answers based on email exchanges. For 17 days in January 2015, Murakami invited questions and inquiries by email, and after reading all the 37,465 messages received, he answered 3,716 of them. For this book Murakami selected 473 of these Q&A exchanges. Earlier, too, after he published the full-length novel *Umibe no Kafuka* [trans. *Kafka on the Shore*] in 2002, he invited messages from its readers and compiled them as *Murakami Haruki henshūchō Shōnen Kafuka* [Kafka on the Shore Official Magazine].

Shokugyō to shite no shōsetsuka, published on September 10, gives a detailed account of Murakami's style of writing as well as the course of his life starting from his disillusionment with the student movement toward the

end of the 1960s, to his running of a jazz music café, and to his being recognized overseas as a writer. Through the Internet and his own writing, Murakami listens to the voice of readers and sends them his message. In this book he writes, “Like the water that collects from the melting of snow in the mountains, material for my writing collects within me. And then, one day, when I can no longer keep it dammed up (which is probably the best case), I sit down at my desk and start writing a new novel.”

Raosu ni ittai nani ga aru to iun desu ka, published on November 21, is a 10-chapter collection of travel pieces. It talks about his travels in Laos and Italy, eating in the United States as well as Finland—a country visited by the main character of *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to kare no junrei no toshi* [trans. Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage]—and other countries. Murakami also visits Kumamoto, where he held a secret reading session and met the prefectural mascot character, Kumamon.

Novels about Edo-period Painters

A number of fiction works about painters of the Edo period (1603–1867), such as Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), have been published either in book form or as magazine serials.

Sawada Tōko's *Jakuchū* (Bungei Shunjū) is about the life of Itō Jakuchū, the Kyoto painter active in the mid-Edo period, a nonconformist artist elaborately depicting plants and animals with unusual compositions. While carefully tracing historical facts, Sawada mixes in the bold and imaginative conjecture that the death of the painter's wife is a major driving force behind his creation of masterpieces. Sawada was nominated for the 153rd Naoki Prize for this work.

Saijō Naka's *Gontakure* [Unruly Fellows] (Kōbunsha) is also set in Kyoto, describing how two painters, Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–1799), a disciple of Maruyama Ōkyo, and Soga Shōhaku (1730–1781), an independent artist, rise to fame by influencing

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Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

Itō Masanobu, Managing Director
Arts and Culture Department
The Japan Foundation
4-4-1 Yotsuya, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 160-0004 Japan
Tel: +81-3-5369-6060; Fax: +81-3-5369-6038
Email: booknews@jpf.go.jp

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each other. Highly entertaining, the work incorporates the painters' major paintings here and there into the story that engages the reader's imagination.

Two serialized works of fiction relating to the ukiyo-e painter Katsushika Hokusai were coincidentally written in the literary magazines, *Shōsetsu Shinchō* (Shinchōsha) and *Shōsetsu Gendai* (Kōdansha) by Asai Makate and Kaji Yōko, respectively. Asai's work titled “Kurara” [Dizziness] focuses on the life of Hokusai's daughter, Ōi, who assisted her father in his work and also engaged in painting herself. Asai says that when she saw Ōi's *Yoshiwara kōshi-saki no zu* [Illustrations of the Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarters] she became intensely curious to know “how Ōi, while helping her father as a professional painter, developed and displayed her originality.” Kaji's series, titled “Hokusai mandara” [Hokusai Mandala], on the other hand, tells about the circumstances around Hokusai as seen from Ōi's viewpoint. This story explores why, although he had many disciples, none of them stood out, thus dealing with Hokusai's career as an independent artist.

Nakajima Kyōko: Fearless in Fiction

The year 2015 was a glorious year for writer Nakajima Kyōko. Best known until then for her 2010 novel *Chīsai ouchi* [The Little House] (see JBN No. 66), which was made into a film, she has now won three notable literary awards for her first historical novel, *Katazuno!* [The Horn!] (see p. 4), and another prestigious prize for the short story collection *Nagai owakare* [The Long Goodbye].

The latter two novels hold special significance among Nakajima's twenty-one hardcover books, as they feature types of protagonist she had long wanted to depict, but had waited years to find the right voice and the right form to write about them. The heroine of *Katazuno!* is Japan's only known female feudal lord, about whom scarce documentary information exists. *Nagai owakare* is based on episodes about her own father, whose memory was failing in the last ten years of his life.

The impetus to write *Katazuno!* came in the fall of 2010 when Nakajima visited the town of Tōno in rural Iwate prefecture. The excursion had been planned for pleasure, but Nakajima happened upon the grave of Nene, a woman famous for having held the reins of feudal power there in the early seventeenth century. Nakajima had learned the story of Nene several years earlier but on this trip discovered from local documents how this brave woman saved her domain after the assassinations of its lord, her husband, and then her son. A few months after Nakajima's visit to Iwate, the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011 struck the northeastern coast of Japan, including the city of Hachinohe, which was Nene's birthplace. A similar disaster had occurred in 1611, during Nene's lifetime.

"After finding her grave and experiencing the mega-quake, I felt it was my destiny to tell her story," says Nakajima, who returned to Tōno, visited Hachinohe, and walked through the areas affected by the disaster. "I felt as if Nene was with me, encouraging me to write."

Inspired by historical facts and driven by unseen powers, Nakajima created a novel of historical fantasy. She also draws on the rich folklore of the Tohoku region to propel her story, utilizing supernatural creatures like *kappa* water sprites and *bake-neko* monster cats. These creatures play key roles, adding humor to the tragic tale of Nene, who became the Buddhist equivalent of a nun and battled against the shrewd and cold-blooded uncle who sought to take over her family's lands.

A major force in the novel, however, is the idea of the "horn." Nakajima learned about an ancient ritual involving a horn taken from the serow, a species of mountain goat. During an annual festival the horn was used to channel a human voice to reprimand people for their sins and wrongdoings. The fearless author uses this horn as the narrator of her story. She even makes the horn Nene's soul mate, appearing to her in her dreams at times of crisis.

The epic story also offers valuable insights into the present day, as Nene's policy of avoiding useless wars is as relevant today as it was in her era. "Leaving her homeland for the turmoil-ridden Tōno and co-existing with the

local inhabitants," the author notes, "Nene undergoes torments akin to those we face over territorial and tribal issues today."

About the same time when Nakajima was writing *Katazuno!*, an editor asked her to write a short story. She started writing about people visiting an amusement park, but ended up focusing on an aged wanderer. "My mind must have been occupied with my father," Nakajima admits. That story introduced the anguish of family members as they try to care for an aging elder.

Nakajima's editor encouraged her to make it a series, which led her to write seven additional linked novellas depicting the challenges her father-like character and his family face over a number of years, until he passes away on New Year's Eve. Published as the hardcover novel, *Nagai owakare*, Nakajima vividly portrays the harsh reality of dementia, which slowly but surely destroys the cognitive functions of the sufferer and breaks the heart of his loved ones. The book not only recounts actual incidents such as the protagonist forgetting his family members' names, but it also introduces heart-warming episodes. In one passage, the father responds with compassion to the despair of his daughter who has broken up with her boyfriend, though his words spill out as gibberish. "It was hard to write about my own father, but my mother and sister liked the story, which is a great comfort to me," she says.

Nakajima's parents were both scholars of French literature. Raised in a house full of books, she developed an early passion for reading and writing. She made her literary debut in 2003 with the groundbreaking novel *Futon*, based on Tayama Katai's novel of the same title. Ever since, she has produced stories well grounded in literary history and crafted with an inimitable sense of humor and great wisdom. *Itō no koi* [Itō's Love], for example, is a love story inspired by accounts of the nineteenth-century British travel writer, Isabella Bird, who traveled around Japan with a young Japanese male interpreter. *Heisei dai-kazoku* [One Big Family in the Heisei Era] is a racy comedy of a modern-day family of four generations. *Pasutisu* [Pastis] is an appetizing pastiche (as the pun of the title suggests) of short stories, in which Nakajima, for instance, sets the early twentieth-century writer Tsubouchi Shōyō to translate the mid-twentieth century playwright Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

We look forward to the versatile Nakajima continuing to earn wide acclaim and enthrall readers of all ages.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Nakajima Kyōko

Born in 1964. Her Naoki Prize-winning *Chīsai ouchi* was translated into Korean, Chinese and French. Works available in English are *Tsuma ga shiitake datta koro* [When My Wife was a Shiitake], which won the Izumi Kyōka Award; "Go, Japanese!"; and "Things Remembered and Things Forgotten" in *Granta* magazine.