

Shima wa bokura to [The Island Stays with Us]

By Tsujimura Mizuki

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島はぼくらと

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Akari, Kinuka, Genki, and Arata are high school students living on Saejima, a fictitious island in the Seto Inland Sea. Cut off from the mainland, tiny Saejima has no high school of its own, and the four teenagers must board a ferry every day to travel to a school on the mainland.

The novel depicts the inner lives of these young people during the emotional upheaval of adolescence. At the same time, it reveals the daily lives of the people around them through their eyes, creating a kind of tableau of provincial life.

The youngsters are islanders, intimately familiar with the small village where they grew up. At the same time, they spend most days in school on the mainland, which gives them a double perspective. This mobile, "in between" point of view makes them particularly astute in their observations of emigrés who have escaped the confines of the island and settled on the mainland.

The novel is meticulously constructed, with remarkable attention to detail. The stories of the individual characters stand alone but appear to the reader not as unrelated fragments but as threads woven together into a single tapestry.

Perhaps the novel's greatest strength is its gentle, rhythmic language. Tsujimura's subtle writing conveys both the tranquility of provincial life and the feeling of suffocation young people can experience in rural communities, especially on a remote island. With its unusual setting for a contemporary coming-of-age novel, Tsujimura's book makes skillful use of literary techniques carefully attuned to the tastes of the urban reader. (*CK*)

Tsujimura Mizuki

Born in Yamanashi Prefecture in 1980. Received the Mephisto Award in 2004 for her debut *Tsumetai kōsha no toki wa tomaru* [Time Stops in the Cold School Building]. Further received the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for New Writers for *Tsunagu* [Link], which was later made into a film, and the Naoki Prize for *Kagi no nai yume o miru* [Dreams Without Keys], which was made into a television drama. Other works include *Kōri no kujira* [Frozen Whale], *Boku no mejā supūn* [My Measuring Spoon], and *Surō Haitsu no kamisama* [The God of Slow Heights].

辻村 深月

1980年山梨県生まれ。2004年に『冷たい校舎の時は止まる』でメフィスト賞を受賞しデビュー。のちに映画化された『ツナグ』で吉川英治文学新人賞、ドラマ化された『鍵のない夢を見る』で直木賞を受賞。他に『凍りのくじら』『ほくのメジャースプーン』『スロウハイツの神様』など。



離島に住んでいながら、毎日本土に通うという設定は物語の展開に奥行きをもたらした。彼らは島の人間であり、故郷のことをよく知っている。一方、毎日島を離れて、本土で学校生活を送るから、離島から外の世界を眺めると同時に、外から島を眺めるという視点も併せ持っている。故郷を脱出してきた移住者の姿を捉えるには、この移動的・中間的なまなざしは力を発揮する。そして、他者を見ている間に、4人の高校生も成長し、恋愛や友情などさまざまな人間関係を経験する。

細部に至るまで緻密に構成されている。人にはそれぞれ違う物語があるのに、この作品の登場人物の人生は互いに無関係の断片ではなく、一つの物語の中に巧みに組み込まれている。

何よりも律動的な文体が小気味よい。地方生活ののどかさが、離島の暮らしに特有の閉塞感とともに、繊細な筆致で捉えられている。青春小説としては珍しい設定で、大都市の読者を意識した手法も功を奏している。(CK)

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