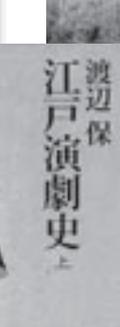
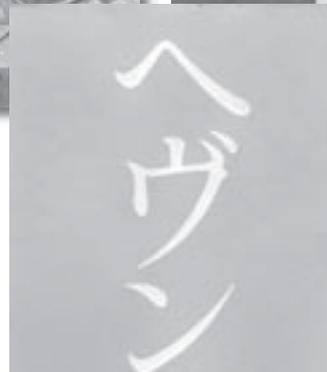


# JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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# Edogawa Rampo

## Pioneer of Japanese Detective Fiction

By Kida Jun'ichirō

The two most highly regarded Japanese writers of detective fiction are Matsumoto Seichō (1909–92) and Edogawa Rampo (1894–1965). Neither man wrote simple whodunits. Seichō was famous for probing the distortions lurking beneath the surface of Japanese society and exposing the social ills of the economic boom years after World War II. Rampo, on the other hand, used an imaginative, fantastical style to shed light on the hidden longings and desires of wartime Japan, and remains much read today.

Perhaps the ideal introduction to Rampo's style is the 1925 short story "Yaneura no sanposha" [The Walker in the Attic]. The protagonist suffers from chronic boredom, drifting from job to job and finding no pleasure in life's entertainments. He comes to know an amateur detective and, impressed by his friend's knowledge of the criminal underworld, derives pleasure from pretending to commit crimes, trailing random strangers and going about disguised in women's clothing. Soon after moving into a new boarding house, the man discovers a loose ceiling board in the top of his closet. He crawls through the gap and is enraptured by the sight of the beams and rafters of this hidden world. He starts to walk among the roof beams several times a day, as if obsessed.

But the man's explorations do not end there. The story veers off sharply from the everyday as he begins to spy on his fellow boarders through gaps in the floorboards. When he learns that one of the boarders is often to be found fast asleep directly beneath one of these openings, he hatches a plan to kill the man by lowering a fatal dose of morphine into his open mouth. His plan succeeds, but his crime is eventually discovered by his friend the detective.

As this summary of the plot makes clear, this is no simple crime tale, but an imaginative depiction of a character's twisted state of mind. The appearance of the detective at the end of the story serves merely to bring it to a conclusion. Clearly, the author's main interest is in depicting the protagonist's strange mental state as he peeps down through the boards into the private lives of his neighbors below. Indeed, so convincing is the depiction that the reader might be forgiven for wondering whether the author had similar tendencies himself.

Edogawa Rampo was born Hirai Tarō in 1894 in the town (now city) of Nabari in Mie Prefecture. His father, originally of samurai stock, worked as a local government clerk. Rampo fell in love with mysteries as a young schoolboy, when his mother would read to him from the translations of foreign stories serialized in the papers. By the time he was in middle school he was avidly devouring the work of pioneering Japanese adventure and mystery writers like Oshikawa Shunrō (1876–1914) and Kuroiwa

Ruikō (1862–1920). Earlier still, a little handmade magazine put together with friends had sown the first seeds of an ambition to become a writer, and he later compiled small magazines with printing blocks he had purchased himself.

The year he left middle school, the family business failed. In the face of these straits, Rampo moved to Tokyo and enrolled in the politics and economics department at Waseda University. He took up lodgings in a printing firm, where he worked to support himself and immersed himself in books in his spare time. It was here that he first encountered the works of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) and Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930). Until then, he had known only the slightly old-fashioned, romantic styles of mysteries popular in Japan at the time, and this first encounter with modern detective fiction was an eye-opening experience.

After graduation he did a wide variety of jobs. He worked in a trading company, sold typewriters, toiled in a shipbuilding company, ran a used bookstore, and edited comic books. He even worked selling noodles from a cart. He never stayed long in any one place, and had no regular job—in this, he might seem to

resemble the fictional attic walker in his story. But there was one essential difference: his love of detective fiction never waned, and he was still passionately absorbed in his own writing. The launch of the specialist magazine *Shin-seinen* [New Youth] in 1920 was a major spur to his efforts, and after some temporary setbacks he published his first stories—"Nisen dōka" [trans. "The Two-Sen Copper Coin"] and "Ichimai no kippu" [The Ticket]—to considerable acclaim. "At last, Japan has a mystery writer who can stand comparison with those of the West," said one critic. With the publication soon after of "D-zaka no satsujin jiken" [The D-Slope Murder Case] and "Shinri shiken" [trans. "Psychological Tests"], Rampo made up his mind to become a full-time writer. Stories garnering particularly high praise were "The Two-Sen Copper Coin," whose plot turns on breaking a code, and "Psychological Tests," which applied the theories of the German experimental psychologist Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916). His stories stood out for the logic and skill with which their mysteries



A commemorative issue of *Hōseki* [Jewels] featuring Rampo's portrait. (From the collection of Kida Jun'ichirō)

were developed and resolved. In his later years, Rambo would define the art of mystery fiction as “writing that focuses on the enjoyment to be had from following the process by which an apparently impenetrable mystery, generally related to a crime, is gradually elucidated by a process of logical deduction.” This was certainly the aim of his own work.

Soon after writing these early works marked by logic and rationality, however, Rambo changed direction and began to concentrate his energies on fantasy and illusion and the depiction of abnormal states of mind, such as that described in “The Walker in the Attic.” In this, he was following the same path as his great idol, Edgar Allan Poe, another author known both for his detective stories and as a chronicler of the macabre and fantastic. For Rambo, who had recognized since his boyhood his own irresistible attraction to the bizarre, this fantastic, surreal style was an ideal match.

One example is the 1925 story “Panorama-tō kidan” [The Strange Tale of Panorama Island], in which a starry-eyed dreamer uses his close resemblance to a wealthy friend to pass himself off as the rich man and acquire a vast fortune, which he uses to build a huge “panoramic island” that he has fantasized about for years. This story is typical of Rambo, who was fascinated with the ideas of disguise and assumed identity. Another good example is the story “Oshie to tabi suru otoko” [trans. “The Man Traveling with the Brocade Portrait”] (1929), in which a man falls in love with a beautiful young woman depicted in brocade on a picture screen advertising a traveling peepshow. He asks his younger brother to look at him through the wrong end of a telescope. When his brother does as instructed, the man shrinks into nothingness and disappears into the darkness. The younger brother peers into the peepshow picture, and finds the love-struck hero in shrunken form inside, his arms flung happily around his beloved. The story mixes eerie supernatural elements with poetic realism and some remarkably vivid descriptions of an imaginary dimension.

Contemporary readers seemed to prefer these new tales of the fantastic and grotesque and Rambo became a popular writer, moving away from the logical, realistic style of his earlier detective fiction and publishing a succession of bizarre, sensational stories designed to appeal to a wider audience. These included “Injū” [trans. “The Beast in the Shadows”] (1928), “Kumo otoko” [The Spider Man] (1929), and “Majutsushi” [The Magician], “Kyūketsuki” [The Vampire], and “Ōgon kamen” [The Golden Mask] (all 1930). Many of these stories featured swashbuckling battles between mastermind criminals and Rambo’s super-sleuth Akechi Kogorō.

Eventually, the author came to feel that his writing had become mannered and that he was in a rut. Unable to return to the more realistic style of his early stories, he announced in 1932 that he was laying down his pen at the age of 42 and took off on a series of travels. The Second Sino-Japanese War had broken out the previous year, and the military authorities were starting to turn their attentions to writers like Rambo, whose stories were far removed from politics and contemporary thought. A previously published story called “Imomushi” [trans. “The Caterpillar”], for example, was suppressed on the grounds



First editions of “*Shinri shiken*” [trans. “*Psychological Tests*”], left, and *Kaijin Nijūmensō* [The Man with Twenty Faces]. (From the collection of Kida Jun’ichirō)

that its depiction of a wounded soldier repatriated from the front indicated antiwar tendencies. With the exception of the series of adventures featuring Akechi and his nemesis Kaijin Nijūmensō [The Man with Twenty Faces], the majority of Rambo’s works continued to be subject to censorship until the end of World War II in 1945.

Rambo spent his time compiling a scrapbook he referred to as *Harimaze nenpu* [A Chronicle in Clippings] and setting down a series of memoirs and opinions on writing known as *Suiri shōsetsu sanjūnen* [Thirty Years of Detective Fiction], in which he looked back on his career and assessed his work. (He would later extend this to cover 40 years.) He also used his personal library to deepen his knowledge of overseas detective fiction, thus gaining an understanding of the position of his own work within the tradition. After the war, he published a compilation of his criticism under the title *Gen’ei-jō* [Phantom Castle] (1951). This became something of a lodestar for Japanese detective fiction in the postwar reconstruction years, and helped to cement Rambo’s preeminent position in the history of the genre in Japan.

In later years, Rambo acted as editor and publisher of the mystery magazine *Hōseki* [Jewels], founded the Japan Mystery Writers Club (later known as Mystery Writers of Japan, Inc.), and donated a million yen of his own money to establish the Edogawa Rambo Award for Mystery Writers. He continued to be the most prominent figure in the field until his death in 1965, at a time when detective fiction in Japan was dominated by a socially realistic approach that could hardly have been further removed from his own style. More than 40 years later, though, he is still being read and his work reassessed, and increasing interest in popular culture has seen his work return to critical favor. Anthologies and complete editions of his works continue to be published, along with numerous critical studies of his oeuvre. This enduring popularity is surely the result of the originality of a style that tunnels to the depths of human nature and the glimpses it provides of the purity and passion so characteristic of detective fiction.



Kida Jun’ichirō

Born in 1935. Head of the Kanagawa Museum of Modern Literature, critic, writer, and translator. With others, launched a mystery society while a student at Keio University. In addition to his own detective fiction and criticism, he has written widely on culture, modern society, and bibliography. In 2008, won the Mystery Writers of Japan, Inc. criticism prize for Gensō to kaiki no jidai [The Age of the Fantastic and the Grotesque].

## FICTION



Yamada Amy

Born in 1959. Won the Bungei Prize for her debut novel *Beddo-taimu aizu* [trans. *Bedtime Eyes*] and the Naoki Prize for her 1987 work *Souru myūjikkū rabāzu onrī* [Soul Music Lovers Only]. Also won the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for *Fūmi zekka* [Incomparable Flavor] (see JBN No. 47).

## **Gakumon** **[Learning]** By Yamada Amy

Shinchōsha, 2009. 197 x 135 mm. 296 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-366813-8.

Despite its scholarly sounding title, this work is in fact a novel set against the backdrop of a Shizuoka Prefecture city. The central characters are a group of four friends born in 1962. Each of the four chapters focuses on their lives at four different points in their school lives—the second and fifth year of elementary school, the second year of junior high school, and the first year of high school. Their growth from childhood to adolescence and their experiences with love and sex are described over the course of their approach to adulthood. Readers will be especially charmed by the nostalgic atmosphere of the city setting and the author's tender portrayal of the protagonists. In an interesting approach, each chapter begins with a magazine article announcing the future death of one of the characters, save

for the last chapter, which concludes with the article. The lives of the characters shine all the brighter for the knowledge that none of us is destined to live forever.

The English translation for the Japanese title—*Gakumon*—to some extent fails to convey the stricter, harsher nuance of the Japanese term. Ordinarily it would be unthinkable to use it as the title for a novel. No doubt the author uses this unusual yet memorable heading to describe the characters who grow up as “favorite pupils” of that mysterious concept of yearning, and it stands as an apt description of the complex mingling of the lyricism and sensuality of their determined lives. (NM)

## **Hevun** **[Heaven]**

By Kawakami Mieko

Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 134 mm. 255 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-215772-8.

This book by rising star Kawakami comes a year and a half after she won the Akutagawa Prize in 2008. Whereas her other works are intricately woven and challenging to read, her first full-length novel is written with surprising simplicity and clarity and is being hailed as a foray into new literary territory. The story, whose central theme is violent bullying in junior high schools, is told through the eyes of a fourteen-year-old male student subjected to relentless torment for having a lazy eye. Instead of putting up resistance, the boy chooses to suffer in complete resignation. His single kindred spirit is a female classmate suffering a similar treatment for being “dirty.” Eventually the two are tricked into coming to a park where they are made to suffer torment so appalling as to make readers

cringe. These raw and realistic portrayals of bullying are counterbalanced with a near-complete presentation of the range of philosophical and religious debates surrounding violence committed against the weak. As well as addressing some of the social problems now facing Japan, Kawakami's simple yet profound new work stands as a dazzling testament to her literary talent. There can be little doubt that it has cemented her reputation as one of the most important young authors working to expand the boundaries of contemporary Japanese literature. (NM)



Kawakami Mieko

Born in 1976. Novelist, musician, actress, and poet. Calls herself a “writing singer.” Won the Akutagawa Prize in 2008 for *Chichi to ran* [Breasts and Egg] (see JBN No. 57).



Uehashi Nahoko

Born in 1962. Currently a professor at Kawamura Gakuen Woman's University, where she specializes in cultural anthropology. Besides the first two volumes of the *Kemono no sōja* series (see JBN No. 53), she has written numerous other fantasy novels, including the *Moribito [Guardian]* series and *Tabibito [Traveler]* series. *Kemono no sōja* has been adapted into a television anime series.

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

By Uehashi Nahoko

Vol. III (Tankyū-hen): Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 140 mm. 487 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-215632-5.

Vol. IV (Kanketsu-hen): Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 140 mm. 429 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-06-215633-2.

The first two volumes of this epic work were published in 2006 (see JBN No. 53). Now, three years later, come two more installments likely to enchant readers with their astonishing scope and sheer entertainment value. There is no hint of the preposterous plots and transparent artificiality that often mar fantasy writing. Instead, the books create the sense of a real and vividly imagined fantasy world: you can almost feel the breeze as it blows, and smell the scents it carries with it from another world. Not only are the main characters convincingly drawn, but the imaginary creatures—from the “King Beasts” and “Fighting Serpents” down to the humblest of insects—are all brought realistically to life. Drawn into this other world, the reader shares the joys and suffering of the characters from the very first page.

The two new volumes are sure to thrill readers with even more drama and incident than the previous two. The devastating final scene, in particular, is likely to bring tears to many eyes. But the books offer more than simple entertainment. At the end of the final volume, the reader is left with a striking message about what is most important to us in our lives in this world. It is no exaggeration to say that this series is one of the masterpieces of world fantasy, taking its place alongside *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and the animated film classics of Miyazaki Hayao. (MT)

## ***Sagi to yuki*** **[Heron and Snow]**

By Kitamura Kaoru

Bungei Shunjū, 2009. 195 x 135 mm. 263 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-16-328080-6.

Set in the peaceful interlude between the two world wars, this masterpiece of the mystery genre presents an attractive and finely crafted fictional world that vividly evokes an urban culture in which literature and the other arts were able to thrive. The book won the 141st Naoki Prize in 2009.

The main character of the story is Eiko, a young lady from the upper classes living in Tokyo, capital of the burgeoning Japanese Empire. Sensitive and somewhat naive, she grows gradually in maturity and stature as she comes to understand more about the darkness and light in the world. Full of curiosity, Eiko is also prone to action that puts her in chancy situations. Protecting and advising her, and helping her to tease out solutions to challenging riddles, is the ever-

reliable Bekku Mitsuko, affectionately known as Beckie, the family chauffeur.

The plot revolves around the little mysteries the two women encounter and solve in the course of their daily lives. Seen from a gentle, innocent young woman's perspective, everything—beautiful things like art as well as such less attractive aspects of life as discrimination, inequality, and malice—seems to take on a fresher, more vivid hue. As the story builds to a climax, little touches of the extraordinary reveal gaps in the facade of the everyday world, hinting menacingly at historic changes in the offing. Marching closer all the time is the war that will soon sweep away the world of tranquility and peace the two women have known. (MT)



Kitamura Kaoru

Born in 1949. Won the 1991 Mystery Writers of Japan Prize for *Yoru no semi [The Evening Cicada]*. His other works include *Hitogata nagashi [Floating Dolls]* (see JBN No. 51).



Isozaki Ken'ichirō

Born in 1965. Began writing novels just before turning 40 as a side job while working for a trading company. Won the Bungei Prize in 2007 for his debut work, *Kanjin no kodomo* [*The Essential Child*]. His other works include *Me to taiyō* [*Eye and Sun*] and *Seiki no hakken* [*The Discovery of the Century*].

## ***Tsui no sumika*** **[The Final Home]**

By Isozaki Ken'ichirō

Shinchōsha, 2009. 193 x 132 mm. 144 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-10-317711-1.

The title story of this volume won the 141st Akutagawa Prize for Isozaki in 2009. In an interview after the award was announced, the author remarked that he had set out to write a novel in the style of “Kafka, Borges, and García Márquez.” But his story is marked by a strange brightness that is quite different from anything to be found in these authors’ works.

Each memorable scene is described clearly and realistically, as the story moves fluently from one time and place to another. The descriptions of people and places are highly pictorial, written in flowing, almost musical prose.

But the problems that plague the protagonist could hardly be more severe. His wife refuses to speak to him; he endures a succession of complicated and unfulfilling entanglements with women; and on top of

everything, he finds himself facing impossible demands at work. Even in the face of a frequently absurd world, however, he never gives in to despair. His resilience is apparently built on a belief in the long-term healing powers of the passage of time, and a faith in the fabric of the universe—as symbolized by the titular “final home” shown to him by an elderly architect toward the end of the story. Something about this abiding optimism seems distinctively Japanese, Asian, or Buddhist. Perhaps it is this sensibility that makes this work so different from the fiction of Kafka and the rest. (MT)

## **POETRY**

### ***Chūkai suru mono—Okai Takashi shishū*** **[The Annotator: A Collection of Poems by Okai Takashi]**

By Okai Takashi

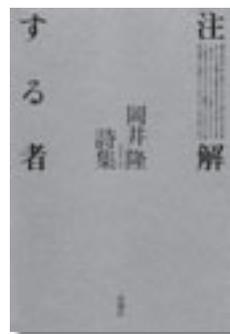
Shichōsha, 2009. 195 x 135 mm. 113 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-7837-3139-9.

For half a century now, ever since his emergence as an avant-garde poet in the 1950s, Okai Takashi has been a leading figure in the world of Japanese tanka poetry. This volume contains 21 of his prose poems, most of them taking the form of reflections on literary or artistic works of the past. Inspired by an old book or poem, the poet creates new writing in the form of “annotations.”

In “Sokushitsu no chibusa” [*The Concubine’s Breasts*], for example, Okai quotes a tanka about a daimyo’s wife whose hands have to be amputated after death from the breasts of a young concubine she has clutched in her dying moments. The tanka is itself an allusion, inspired by a story taken from *In Ghostly Japan* by Lafcadio Hearn (1805–1904, better known in Japan by his naturalized

name Koizumi Yakumo). With the Hearn story fresh in his mind, Okai enters a Tokyo Station hair salon where his “tension-knotted” shoulders are kneaded and massaged by a tall young barber: “Time and again his hands clutched at my body.” Unlike the unfortunate young concubine and the dying wife, however, Okai himself has “no breasts.” From such musings and reflections, a new poem is born.

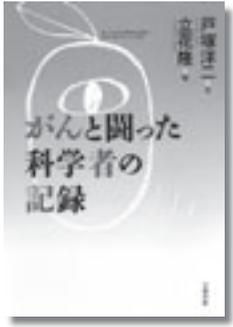
Okai Takashi has said with pride that a poet is a kind of artisan, and that a tanka is therefore a work of craftsmanship. He has claimed he would rather be called a skilled poet than a talented one. This attitude makes him a past master when it comes to appreciating the subtleties of a poem. As he savors the details of these previous works, his annotations turn into impressive verse in their own right. (MK)



Okai Takashi

Born in 1928. Poet and literary critic. Has been involved in the Imperial New Year’s Poetry Reading since 1993. Winner of numerous awards, including the 2007 Tōson Kinen Rekitei Award for his *Okai Takashi zen kashū* [*The Collected Poems of Okai Takashi*]. Elected a member of the Japan Art Academy in 2009. *Chūkai suru mono—Okai Takashi shishū* [*The Annotator: A Collection of Poems by Okai Takashi*] won the Takami Jun Prize in 2010.

## BIOGRAPHY



Totsuka Yōji

Born in 1942. Physicist. In 1998 he made the world-first discovery that neutrino particles have mass. Died of cancer in 2008.

Tachibana Takashi

Born in 1940. Commentator on a wide range of subjects, including politics, society, and science. Author of numerous works, including *Uchū kara no kikan* [Return from Outer Space].

### ***Gan to tatakata kagakusha no kiroku*** **[Record of a Scientist Who Battled Cancer]**

By Totsuka Yōji, edited by Tachibana Takashi

Bungei Shunjū, 2009. 194 x 137 mm. 367 pp. ¥1,667. ISBN 978-4-16-370900-0.

Totsuka Yōji was a particle physicist whose detection of mass in neutrinos made him a contender for the Nobel Prize. This book is a compilation of entries from a blog he wrote anonymously during the last eleven months of his life, following his diagnosis with the colon cancer that ultimately killed him. The online diary has now been edited into book form by members of the scientist's family and his journalist friend Tachibana Takashi.

The subject matter varies widely. Some days, Totsuka describes his struggles with the side effects of his cancer treatment. While carrying out scientific observations of his own disease based on the data, he also explores the relationship between science and Buddhism. There are reminiscences about Totsuka's Nobel Prize-winning mentor Koshihara Masatoshi and

descriptions of the flowers he sees while walking near his place of work. That Totsuka was able to write so impressively and at such length in the face of death must have been partly thanks to the support of his many faithful readers, who would follow the blog updates day and night.

But toward the end of his account Totsuka confesses to the terror he feels at times at the thought that the world will go on without him. "We may understand philosophically that death terrifies us because of our biological survival instinct," he writes. "But that doesn't make it any less terrifying." Even at the very end, he never stopped thinking deeply. His life was an embodiment of the truth that reflection and thought are the greatest wisdom of which human beings are capable. (SH)

## ARCHITECTURE

### ***Ise Jingū*** **[Ise Shrine]**

By Inoue Shōichi

Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 137 mm. 559 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-06-215492-5.

Recently, young Japanese have become increasingly interested in spiritual matters, in particular the subject of Shinto and its shrines. At the very top of this hierarchy of religious institutions sits Ise Shrine.

Ise Shrine's natural construction is held to represent the very essence of Japanese tradition. Some, however, contend that its buildings are not examples of religious architecture; still others argue that shrines were not originally a part of Shinto worship, and that in fact their design was influenced by the appearance of large Buddhist temples.

Author Inoue Shōichi is an architectural authority and noted cultural commentator. In this work he addresses the various assertions surrounding the shrine's architecture—ranging in date

from the Edo period (1603–1868) to the present—in a straightforward and illuminating manner. According to one example he recounts, many who visited the shrine from Europe and the United States from the Meiji (1868–1912) through the Taishō (1912–26) eras likened the thatched-roof buildings to private residences, finding them plain and shabby.

This impression is only natural, since the shrine to this day retains the architecture of centuries ago. The question is the provenance of that style and the era of its adoption. Inoue refutes the explanation set forth in recent years that it was based upon Chinese palace architecture, thus renewing the fascinating question of where and when in history the buildings' archetypes originated. (MK)



Inoue Shōichi

Born in 1955. Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. Won the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities for *Tsukurareta Katsura Rikyū shinwa* [The Fabricated Myth of the Katsura Imperial Villa]. His other works include *Yume to miwaku no zentaishugi* [The Promise and Allure of Totalitarianism] (see JBN No. 52).

## PERFORMING ARTS



Watanabe Tamotsu

Born in 1936. Kabuki researcher and critic. Professor emeritus of the Open University of Japan. His works include *Chūshingura: Mō hitotsu no rekishi kankaku* [*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers: An Alternative Sense of History*], which won the Hirabayashi Taiko Award and the Kawatake Prize, *Mokuami no Meiji Ishin* [*The Meiji Restoration of Kawatake Mokuami*], and *Kabuki no kotoba* [*A Glossary of Kabuki Terms*] (see JBN No. 43). Wrote a feature article on “Japanese Traditional Theater” for JBN No. 49.

### *Edo engekishi* [A History of Performing Arts in the Edo Period] By Watanabe Tamotsu

Vol. I: Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 135 mm. 509 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-06-215570-0.

Vol. II: Kōdansha, 2009. 194 x 138 mm. 519 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-06-215571-7.

Leading theater critic Watanabe Tamotsu brings to bear his long-honed talents and wealth of knowledge in this two-volume history of the performing arts of Japan’s Edo period (1603–1868). With over 1,000 pages spanning the entire Edo period, the work is a lengthy one, but its crisp, incisively written prose lets readers enjoy it in much the same way as a full-length novel. The main focus is on Kabuki, which originated, developed, and evolved into a classical performance art in the span of this single historical era. The work also includes a thorough examination of other genres, including Noh, Kyogen, and Bunraku, and traces the overall development of performing arts.

This is no dry, scholarly historical investigation. Watanabe presents colorful

portraits of the actors and writers of the time, and his vivid descriptions create the impression of having seen the performances with his very own eyes. The author has succeeded splendidly in his stated goal of writing “an interesting historical account” in which “the characters and history spring from the pages.” The spotlight comes to rest on writers and renowned Kabuki actors—such as Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725), Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829), and Kawatake Mokuami (1816–93)—as well as individuals behind the scenes, throwing the relationship between the arts and the historical period into sharp relief. This classic work is destined to be consulted as a lasting and cardinal history of the field. (NM)

## SPORTS

### *Yami no naka no tsubasa-tachi: Buraindo sakkā* *Nihon daihyō no kutō* [Wings in the Dark: The Struggles of Japan’s Blind Soccer Team]

By Okada Hitoshi

Gentōsha, 2009. 194 x 135 mm. 235 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-344-01686-6.

Okada Hitoshi interviews the visually impaired players of Japan’s national “blind soccer” team to document the development of the sport from its earliest days to the staging of an Asia-wide tournament.

In blind soccer, players rely on sound—bells inside the ball and calls of “Voy!” made by players as they move—to help them pick out their teammates and aim for the opposition’s goal. Despite the use of protective headgear, the risk of serious injury is so high that many schools for the visually impaired refuse to allow the sport to be played as part of regular class or extracurricular activities. What makes people want to play despite the risks involved? One of the players in-

terviewed explains by describing the freedom he feels on the field of play. “I sometimes wonder if this is why my eyes went bad,” he says quietly.

The book is happily free of the sense of reticence that often marks interviews with disabled people, and the author resists sentimental presentations of the players’ life stories. Instead, there is palpable respect for the thrill of the sport itself and the dedication of the players. As one player says: “It’s not that we have overcome our disability and started playing soccer. Instead, we came up with a kind of soccer that we could enjoy the way we are.” This is a reading experience that refreshes the spirit. (SH)



Okada Hitoshi

Born in 1964. Worked for a publishing company before becoming a freelance writer. Author of *Kyaputen Tsubasa shōrigaku* [*The Winning Philosophy of Captain Tsubasa*] under the pen name Fukagawa Shuntarō.



**Kōno Fumiyo**

Born in 1968. Manga artist. Her 2004 work *Yūnagi no machi, sakura no kuni* [trans. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*] earned her the grand prize in the manga division of the Japan Media Arts Festival sponsored by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Shinsei Prize, one of the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Awards.

## ***Kono sekai no katasumi ni* [In a Corner of This World]**

**By Kōno Fumiyo**

Vol. I: Futabasha, 2008. 210 x 148 mm. 148 pp. ¥648. ISBN 978-4-575-94146-3.

Vol. II: Futabasha, 2008. 210 x 148 mm. 140 pp. ¥648. ISBN 978-4-575-94179-1.

Vol. III: Futabasha, 2009. 210 x 148 mm. 156 pp. ¥648. ISBN 978-4-575-94223-1.

Kōno Fumiyo stretches the boundaries of manga dealing with war in her latest work. The first story opens with a scene in which the main character Suzu is nearly abducted from Hiroshima by a ghost-like figure during her childhood, prior to the outbreak of World War II. The folktale-like rendering is maintained consistently throughout the entire graphic novel.

Perhaps this tone is appropriate given that over 60 years have passed since the end of World War II and the atomic bombings, and to many people alive today these events are indeed taking on the sense of “long, long ago.” It follows that strictly realistic portrayals are not the only means of passing down stories of the war to new generations; indeed, by adopting this tone

Kōno is able to convey the truth all the more effectively.

Rather than describing the tragedy of the war itself, she focuses on people's daily lives and feelings during that period. She brings a humorous touch to things like making do with insufficient food supplies and practicing for air raids with the neighborhood association. Readers will gain the sense that people found pleasure and lived brightly no matter how insufficient resources were or whatever scarcity had to be faced. And as people's daily lives are portrayed with increasing detail, a stronger impression emerges of the tragic nature of the war that brought these lives to an end and the cruelty of the atomic bombings. (MT)

# FOLKLORE

## ***Miyamoto Tsuneichi ga totta Shōwa no jōkei* [Miyamoto Tsuneichi's Scenes of the Shōwa Era]**

**By Miyamoto Tsuneichi**

Vol. I: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2009. 210 x 148 mm. 256 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-620-60639-2.

Vol. II: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2009. 210 x 148 mm. 256 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-620-60640-8.

The renowned folklorist Miyamoto Tsuneichi (1907–81) spent a significant part of his life walking the length of Japan—from Hokkaidō in the north to Kagoshima in the south—performing fieldwork. It is said that he walked 160,000 kilometers in total and stayed at more than 1,200 private residences. During these journeys he took photographs, the total number of which is estimated to reach an astounding 100,000. This work collects around 850 of these photos spanning the 25 years from 1955 to 1980 (years 30–55 of the Shōwa era) into two volumes.

For captions, quotations appear from works by Miyamoto that relate to the subjects. In his own words, the snapshots were taken as “nothing more than stand-

ins for notes” rather than as a form of artistic expression; as such, they are more highly valued as folklore and cultural resources. In collecting such a large number of them, this work serves as an invaluable resource for clearly conveying the atmosphere and mood of this period in Japan's history. And the photographs—which include vivid portraits of workers and children from poor farming and fishing villages, terraced rice paddies and traditional Japanese wooden houses, and urban alleyways—go beyond mere cultural assets to touch the hearts of modern Japanese. “I simply took pictures of the things that I needed to remember,” said Miyamoto—a statement that has taken on altogether greater significance today. (NM)



**Miyamoto Tsuneichi**

Born in 1907. Died in 1981. One of Japan's greatest folklorists. Left a vast legacy of research from the fieldwork he conducted all over Japan from before World War II to the era of high economic growth. Author of numerous classic tomes, including *Wasurerareta Nihonjin* [trans. *The Forgotten Japanese: Encounters with Rural Life and Folklore*] (see JBN No. 61).

## PHILOSOPHY



Tanigawa Gan

Born in 1923. Died in 1995. One of postwar Japan's leading poets and thinkers. Anthologies of his poetry include *Daichi no shōnin* [*Merchant of the Land*] and *Tenzan* [*Tenzan*].

Iwasaki Minoru

Born in 1956. Professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Specializes in philosophy and political ideology.

Yonetani Masafumi

Born in 1967. Associate professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Specializes in the history of Japanese and social thought.

## Tanigawa Gan serekushon [A Selection of Tanigawa Gan's Writings]

By Tanigawa Gan

Edited by Iwasaki Minoru and Yonetani Masafumi

Vol. I: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2009. 195 x 136 mm. 484 pp. ¥3,200. ISBN 978-4-8188-2000-5.  
Vol. II: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2009. 195 x 136 mm. 452 pp. ¥3,200. ISBN 978-4-8188-2001-2.

In addition to creating innovative poetry with genuine appeal, from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, Tanigawa Gan organized movements for miners and farmers in Kyushu and spearheaded the movement to establish cultural associations, or circles, in the region. He is also said to have coined the phrase “Demand solidarity, fear not isolation,” the slogan used by the Zenkyōtō alliance of student movements in the late 1960s.

When this period ended, though, the man who had wielded such ideological and poetic influence retreated into literary silence. He offered the words, “The king of the moment has died,” in accordance with his perception that it was “becoming

impossible to assume that a few lines of words can be placed on a scale and balanced against this world.” To Tanigawa, in other words, to write a poem was to gamble on the moment when the arms of a scale waver after a few lines of words are measured against the weight of reality. Therein lies his life as a renowned poet and the reason behind his silence.

These two volumes offer a complete reconstruction of the legendary poet's works—from his ideological struggles and poetry to his dissertations on the author Miyazawa Kenji. It is an outstanding reference for the contemplation of a revolutionary period in Japanese history. (MK)

## HISTORY

## Marebito-tachi no Okinawa [Okinawa Through the Eyes of Visitors]

By Yonahara Kei

Shōgakukan, 2009. 173 x 109 mm. 256 pp. ¥740. ISBN 978-4-09-825032-5.

In Japanese, the word *marebito* means “visitor.” This alternative history of Okinawa focuses on exchanges between locals (*uchinanchu* in Okinawan) and outsiders drawn to the islands. The book introduces four of these visitors, from a legendary late Heian-period (794–1185) warrior to a Jewish-born doctor and missionary. Perhaps the most moving section describes the relationship between Iha Fuyū, the founder of modern Okinawan studies, and his teacher Tajima Risaburō.

Dispatched from Tokyo in the 1890s to teach at a middle school in Okinawa, Tajima devoted himself to a study of the *Omoro sōshi*, an ancient anthology of Okinawan songs and poems. But the sudden loss of his young wife and their only child led him to disappear without trace, leaving all his papers to his protégé Iha.

The young Okinawan scholar carried on with the work as he wondered about his mentor's whereabouts. When it was published twenty years later, the completed study brought the *Omoro sōshi* to the attention of the wider world. The author depicts the exchanges between teacher and pupil and their tragic separation, as well as bringing into sharp relief the dawn of Okinawan studies, itself essentially the history of people's lives.

Throughout the book there is a sense of mourning and nostalgia for Okinawa, a part of Japan buffeted particularly hard by history. Part of this nostalgia probably stems from the author's background as a frequent visitor to the islands since losing her Okinawa-born parents at an early age. In a sense, she is one of the *marebito* herself. (SH)



Yonahara Kei

Born in 1958. Began writing reportage for magazines in 1988. Her many works include *Monogatari no umi, yureru shima* [*Island in the Seas of Stories*] and *Bireitō made* [*All the Way to Ilha Formosa*].



## Senryōka Nihon [Occupied Japan]

By Handō Kazutoshi, Takeuchi Shūji, Hosaka Masayasu, and  
Matsumoto Ken'ichi

Chikuma Shobō, 2009. 195 x 138 mm. 464 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 978-4-480-85791-0.

Handō Kazutoshi

Born in 1930. Has authored numerous works on history.

Takeuchi Shūji

Born in 1936. Author of several works on wartime history.

Hosaka Masayasu

Born in 1939. Won the Kikuchi Kan Award in 2004 for his historical research.

Matsumoto Ken'ichi

Born in 1946. JBN editorial committee member. His works include *Kaigansen no rekishi [A History of the Japanese Coastline]* (see JBN No. 62).

Japan was under the control of the US-led Occupation authorities for close to seven years following its defeat in World War II. This work attempts to cast light on this period through firsthand accounts from the authors on “what occupation meant for the Japanese.” Eighteen occurrences that took place during these years were chosen for inclusion.

A number of events are portrayed that relate to the grand scheme of postwar Japan—such as the national confession of Japanese guilt, the meeting between Emperor Hirohito and General Douglas MacArthur, the emperor’s renunciation of his claim to divinity, and Article 9 of the Constitution—as well as literary and morally related phenomena like Sakaguchi Ango’s

essay “Darakuron” [On Decadence] and strip shows. General historical events are also covered, including such baffling incidents as the disappearance of Shimoyama Sadanori, the first president of Japanese National Railways, during his commute to work and the discovery of his corpse, and Yukawa Hideki receiving the Nobel Prize.

Of particular interest is the way in which the three authors born in the 1930s—Handō, Takeuchi, and Hosaka—attempt to grasp the occupation years in the context of their relation to wartime and postwar Japan, while Matsumoto, who was born in 1946, has internalized the occupation, and instead exhibits a strong interest in Japan’s “Americanization” in the postwar years. (MK)

## Washinton Haitsu: GHQ ga Tōkyō ni kizanda sengo [Washington Heights: GHQ, Tokyo, and Postwar Japan]

By Akio Satoko

Shinchōsha, 2009. 197 x 140 mm. 384 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-10-437002-3.

For more than 20 years after the end of World War II, there existed in the heart of Tokyo a foreign enclave that ordinary Japanese citizens were forbidden to enter. Built on the western fringes of the Meiji Shrine, Washington Heights was a mini-America that provided housing for around 800 officers of the US Occupation Forces and their families.

Using Washington Heights as a symbol of the occupation policy of GHQ, the general headquarters for the Occupation Forces, the book draws on materials from the US National Archives and a diverse range of personal accounts to examine how the United States designed postwar Japan and promoted pro-American attitudes. A wide range of people make their appearance, from everyday citizens such as a bookseller who lived through the

Tokyo air raids to a retired officer who helped draft the Japanese Constitution and a second-generation Japanese-American assigned to intelligence operations. The book also sheds light on the role played by Washington Heights as a point of cultural exchange. The style of housing in the base had a major influence on the design of Japanese housing in the postwar years, while US military wives took what they had learned about the tea ceremony and flower arrangement to a global audience when they moved on.

Today Japan’s honeymoon with the United States appears to be over, as the country looks for a more autonomous role in the world. This book can provide useful clues to the international role that Japan might play following its baptism into American-style democracy. (SH)



Akio Satoko

Former television presenter. Began researching the Occupation when living in Washington as a fellow in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Her works include *Unmei no chōjo: Sukaruno no musume Megawati no hansei [Destined Eldest Daughter: Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesian Politics]*, for which she won the Asia-Pacific Special Prize.

Beginning in this issue, *Japanese Book News* presents a series of articles by Kawamoto Saburō, one of Japan's leading film critics, introducing works of Japanese litera-

ture that have made it to the silver screen. We hope these pieces will broaden our readers' horizons as they decide what to read, translate, or even watch next.

## No. 1: Kawabata Yasunari

We start the series with a look at the works of Kawabata Yasunari, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968. The overview of his representative works and their significance is accompanied by descriptions of some film versions that will add new layers to their enjoyment.

### Explorer of Beauty and Death

One of Kawabata Yasunari's best-known works, *Utsukushisa to kanashimi to* [trans. *Beauty and Sadness*], is the story of a male writer and two women. The title provides a concise summary of the main themes of Kawabata's writing. The motifs of beauty and sadness reoccur throughout the author's work, and are often hard to distinguish: Beauty becomes sadness, and sadness beauty.

The chief representation of beauty in Kawabata's *oeuvre* is women, a subject he deals with time and again in his work. In many cases, these characters are still girls, or else adult women who retain a hint of childishness. They are frequently seen and narrated from the perspective of a male protagonist. In this sense, they are passive beings, and it is through being seen and written about by a man that they become beautiful.

The best-known work of Kawabata's early period, "Izu no odoriko" [trans. "The Izu Dancer"] (1926) is a lyrical work narrated by a twenty-year-old student at the elite First High School, later incorporated into what is now the University of Tokyo. During a trip to the Izu Peninsula, he is captivated by a fourteen-year-old girl who belongs to a group of traveling entertainers he meets there. Throughout the story, everything we see and learn of the young girl is filtered through the point of view of the male protagonist. We never see the girl from her own perspective or hear her story in her own words.

The same is true of *Yukiguni* [trans. *Snow Country*] (1937), in which the story of two women, Komako and Yōko, is seen and narrated entirely from the perspective of Shimamura, the male protagonist who comes to know the women at a hot spring resort buried under deep snow. Although conversations do take place between the characters, the overall feel of the narrative itself is more like a monologue.

The affairs depicted in Kawabata's stories differ somewhat from normal ideas of modern love as a relationship between two individuals. The women are always subject to the man's gaze, and their stories are told exclusively from his perspective. In a strange way, love in Kawabata's fiction is something that men experience alone. This is love not as dialogue, but as monologue. And it is from this fact that the distinctive beauty of Kawabata's fiction is born.

*Yama no oto* [trans. *The Sound of the Mountain*] (1954) tells the story of Kikuko, a young wife living with her husband and his parents in her in-law family's home. Once again, she is seen entirely from the point of view of

Shingo, the father-in-law with whom she enjoys an unusually close rapport. Although she does occasionally give vent to her feelings, such as when she tells Shingo "I think I'd like to stay on with you here and give lessons," her story is told almost exclusively from the father's perspective; Kikuko herself remains essentially passive. This should not be understood as a mere idealization of the modesty expected of Japanese women at the time. The reason Kawabata's female characters appear so self-effacing is that we learn about them only via the monologue of the male protagonist.

In one scene in the novel, Shingo has Kikuko put on the *jidō* Noh mask representing a male child. "This one is a sprite. A symbol of eternal youth," he tells her. In a way, for Shingo (and for Kawabata himself), women are more closely akin to dolls than fully independent human beings. And what object could be more completely subject to the observer's gaze than a doll?

There is perhaps no better example of Kawabata's depiction of women as doll-like objects than "Nemureru bijo" [trans. "House of the Sleeping Beauties"] (1961), written when the author was in his sixties. In this story, a physically weakened old man spends his nights with beautiful young women who have been drugged into insensibility, and caresses them fondly while they sleep. The women are like ornaments that exist only to be looked at.

Among Kawabata's later works is a surrealist short story called "Kataude" [trans. "One Arm"] (1963), which opens with a young girl telling the first-person narrator, "I can let you have one of my arms for the night." She detaches her right arm as if it were a prosthesis and gives it to the man. He carries the arm home carefully and beguiles his time playing and talking with it.

These object-like women, subject to the male gaze and narrated from the point of view of the male protagonists, come to possess a kind of transparent beauty that makes them quite different from real women. They are glamorized and sanctified in a way that would never be possible in real life. The beauty that is Kawabata's subject matter is quite removed from beauty as it exists in the everyday world.

Perhaps this preference for "dolls" over real-life women stemmed from Kawabata's conviction that communication between people—and especially between men and women—was ultimately impossible, and the feelings of resignation and sadness that this conviction produced in him. In "Izu no odoriko," the narrator reflects on his own character: "I had come at nineteen to think of myself as a misanthrope, a lonely misfit, and it was my depres-

sion at the thought that had driven me to this Izu trip.”

Kawabata was born into a well-established doctor’s family, but lost his father when he was just three, followed by his mother when he was four. His grandmother died when he was eight, his sister when he was eleven. His grandfather, his last remaining relative, passed away when Kawabata was sixteen. The misanthropic “loneliness” referred to by the protagonist of “Izu no odoriko” seems to reflect these early encounters with death. One after another, the members of his family die, and the young child is left alone in the world. It is likely that the sadness that was an integral part of Kawabata’s life and work stemmed from these experiences.

Perhaps it is the sense of resignation that comes from this sadness that leads so many of Kawabata’s characters to withdraw into a fantasy world where they can gaze rapt at doll-like women rather than living a melancholy life in the midst of reality.

In *Yukiguni*, there is one memorable scene in which Shimamura watches a dying bee on the tatami in front of him as its life ebbs away. It was with a similarly delicate sensibility that Kawabata himself attempted to look fixedly at death itself.

(Kawamoto Saburō,  
literary and film critic)

## An Introduction to the Films

### *Izu no odoriko* (1933)

Directed by Goshō Heinosuke

In the Taishō era (1912–26), while he was a student at the prestigious First High School, Kawabata Yasunari traveled one autumn to the Izu Peninsula. This silent film is the first of several adaptations of the novella based on the trip. A student (played by Obinata Den) spending his vacation walking in Izu falls in with a group of traveling entertainers he meets at a hot spring at the Amagi pass. We might call it a kind of road movie today. The student becomes close with a young dancer in the troupe, and the two gradually open their hearts to each other. But ultimately, the two young people live in different worlds: He is a student at an elite school, and she a mere traveling entertainer. In the end, they part with sadness. Tanaka Kinuyo, who plays the part of the dancing girl, became one of Japan’s leading actresses.



Izu no odoriko  
© 1933 Shochiku Co.,  
Ltd.



Yama no oto  
© 1954 TOHO CO., LTD.  
For sale only in Japan

### *Yama no oto* (1954)

Directed by Naruse Mikio

An elderly businessman (Yamamura Sō) lives quietly in Kamakura with his wife (Nagaoka Teruko) and their son (Uehara Ken) and daughter-in-law (Hara Setsuko). The son does not love his wife, and keeps a mistress. The father takes pity on his underappreciated daughter-in-law, coming to feel more fondly toward her than he does toward his own daughter (Nakakita Chieko).

There are hints of romantic attraction in the relationship between the father and his son’s wife. The sadness and melancholy of an aging man as he enters his autumn years is brought out with great skill. Kawabata once said, “After defeat in the war, I pressed on ever more deeply into the native sadness of Japan.” The film is set in Kamakura, like Kyoto a former capital and a city unscathed by air raids, where the beauty of old Japan still survived intact.

### *Yukiguni* (1957)

Directed by Toyoda Shirō

A film version of Kawabata’s best-known novel, with its famous opening line: “The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.” A married man (Ikebe Ryō) leaves his wife and children at home and falls in love with the pure-hearted young geisha (Kishi Keiko) he meets in a hot spring resort covered under deep snow. Like “Izu no odoriko,” this is a depiction of ill-fated love between people from two different worlds. At the time it was common for Japanese writers and artists to live and work in hot spring resorts for long periods at a time. Kawabata’s original model was the hot spring town of Yuzawa, in Niigata Prefecture. Today, accessible by the Shinkansen bullet train, the town is full of large-scale resort hotels, and little of the isolated atmosphere depicted in the novel and film survives.



Yukiguni  
© 1957 TOHO CO., LTD.  
For sale only in Japan

## Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

The awards ceremony for the 142nd Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes was held on February 19 at the Tokyo Kaikan. There were two winners of the Naoki Prize: Sasaki Joh, for *Haikyo ni kou* [Praying to the Ruins] (Bungei Shunjū), and Shiraishi Kazufumi, for *Hoka naranu hito e* [My One and Only] (Shōdensha). There was no winner of the Akutagawa Prize—the first time since 1999 that no award has been made.

Sasaki made his literary debut with *Tekkihei, tonda* [The Iron Cavalryman Who Leapt], which won the All Yomimono New Writers' Prize in 1979. *Etorofu-hatsu kinkyū-den* [Urgent Telegram from Etorofu] took several awards, including the Mystery Writers of Japan Prize and the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize. Sasaki had been nominated for the Naoki Prize on two previous occasions: for *Berurin hikō shirei* [trans. *Zero Over Berlin*] and *Keikan no chi* [The Policeman's Lineage] (see *JBN* No. 56). His prize-winning *Haikyo ni kou* is a collection of stories about a detective who investigates a case on behalf of an acquaintance while on sick leave from the Hokkaido police force. There are six tales in all. In the title story, the detective visits a former mining town to look into the childhood background of a murderer who grew up there and encounters the killer as he strikes for the second time.

Shiraishi is the son of previous Naoki Prize winner Shiraishi Ichirō (1931–2004)—the first time the prize has gone to the child of another winner. Shiraishi started writing while

working in a publishing firm after leaving university. He became a full-time writer in 2003, and in 2009 won the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize for *Kono mune ni fukabuka to tsukisasaruya o nuke* [Remove the Arrow from Deep in My Chest]. His winning *Hoka naranu hito e* contains two novellas. The title story depicts a man from an impressive background living a mediocre existence as an office worker. When his marriage fails, his boss's kindness enables him to find his true love. "Kakegae no nai hito e" [Irreplaceable You] introduces a woman who is engaged to a co-worker from an elite background but is unable to break off from an older colleague who has worked his own way up from the bottom. The story deals with her struggles to find true love.

## Popular Children's Series Comes to an End

The highly popular series of children's books known as *Majo no takkyūbin* [trans. *Kiki's Delivery Service*], also the title of an animated film directed by Miyazaki Hayao, recently reached its conclusion. The first volume of the series, by author Kadono Eiko, was published by Fukuinkan Shoten in 1985. An animated movie based on the first volume became a huge hit, taking more than ¥2 billion at the domestic box office and establishing the reputations of both director Miyazaki Hayao and Studio Ghibli. Kadono has continued to provide Kiki's many fans with further installments of the saga in the 24 years since. The sixth volume completes the coming-of-age story of the eponymous young witch. Kiki, just 13 years old in the first installment, is the mother of twins when the final volume takes place. Parts of the series have appeared in English translation, and are also available in languages including Italian, Chinese, and Swedish. Look for an interview with Kadono in the next issue of *JBN*.

## 2009 Bestsellers

Japan's biggest book distributors, Tohan Corporation and Nippon Shuppan Hanbai Inc., have issued their lists

of the bestselling books for 2009. Topping both lists was Murakami Haruki's *IQ84*, a multi-volume novel that has become a phenomenon. (See *JBN* No. 62.) The first two volumes of the novel sold in remarkable numbers immediately after they were published in May 2009. The novel's publisher Shinchōsha said it had sold 1.23 million copies of the first volume as of December 17, 2009, and 1.01 million copies of the second. Murakami also topped the list of bestselling authors compiled by Oricon Ranking based on the estimated number of total copies sold.

## April Release for Third Volume of Murakami Bestseller

The first two volumes of Murakami Haruki's massive novel *IQ84* (see *JBN* No. 62) have each sold more than a million copies since their May 2009 publication. On April 16 this year, a third volume of the work will join them on bookstore shelves. The publisher, Shinchōsha, is launching with a first print run of 500,000 copies, one of the highest figures ever for any of its books.



The publisher has been advertising the third volume in newspapers. (Courtesy: Shinchōsha)

## New Manga Work Published in French

Manga artist Taniguchi Jirō has published a new manga in French, under the title *Mon Année* [My Year]. Taniguchi is a well-known creator whose works include *Botchan no jidai* [The Age of Botchan] (original story by Sekikawa Natsuo), a depiction of the Meiji era (1868–1912) based on the life and work of Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), the era's greatest author. It is unusual for a Japanese manga artist to publish a new work directly in a foreign language. *Mon Année* tells the story of a year of hardship and survival, depicting the lives of a young

girl with Down's Syndrome and her family. The manga is based on a story by a French author, and has been published in France, Belgium, and other parts of the Francophone world.

## Japanese Children's Lit Goes Abroad

The International Library of Children's Literature is located in Tokyo's Ueno Park. Founded in 2000 as a branch of the National Diet Library, the ILCL is celebrating its tenth year and commemorating the National Year of Reading, 2010, with an exhibit running through September 5 entitled "Children's Books Going Overseas from Japan."

The exhibit approaches its subject matter from a fascinating perspective, examining which children's works from Japan are selected and translated for different markets and exploring how the words and pictures are changed in accordance with local traditions and cultures. In all some 300 works, including both original Japanese books and translations published in more than 30 countries and regions, are on display.

Accompanying the exhibit are a series of lectures. On March 6, Kurita Akiko of the Japan Foreign Rights Centre will speak on her involvement in the translation and foreign publication of the picture book *Hiroshima no pika* [The Flash of Hiroshima]. On



An event poster displays some of the Japanese works that have been translated and published around the world. (Courtesy: ILCL)

April 24, fantasy writer Uehashi Nahoko (see p. 5) and translator Cathy Hirano will speak together on the topic of translation of *Seirei no moribito* [trans. *Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit*] as a collaborative endeavor. The lectures take place on the third floor of the ILCL; both the lectures and the exhibit itself are free to attend. For more details in Japanese, see <<http://www.kodomo.go.jp/event/exb/num/tenji2010-01.html>>.

## Guide to Japan's Prime Ministers Published

Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, a venerable publisher focusing mainly on historical texts, has published a new book presenting in-depth information on all of Japan's leaders in the modern era and their cabinets: *Rekidai naikaku shushō jiten* [Encyclopedia of Successive Cabinets and Prime Ministers], edited by Professor Emeritus Toriumi Yasushi of the University of Tokyo.

This book, the first of its kind, is a compilation of articles by historical specialists on the prime ministers who have held office since the foundation of Japan's modern governmental system in 1885, as well as the cabinets they led. In all 93 cabinets and 60 premiers are covered, from Itō Hirobumi [1841–1909] to Hatoyama Yukio [1947–]. Complete lists of ministers are provided for all cabinets, as are indices for looking up individual cabinets or events taking place while they were in power. The text also thoughtfully provides *furigana* phonetic readings for the difficult personal names and historical terms that fill the detailed articles, making this encyclopedia easy to read and use in research. The book also includes introductions to the historical political parties and some 300 pieces describing policies and incidents in the political, economic, and social spheres, thus fully fleshing out the eventful modern history of Japan. (2009. 832 pp. ¥9,500. ISBN 978-4-642-01453-3.)

## Kashimada Maki Takes Part in Book Fair in Moscow

Author Kashimada Maki was in Moscow on December 3–7 thanks partly to assistance from the Japan Founda-



Kashimada's talk with Slavnikova was a high-profile event at the fair.

tion's Grant Program for Cultural Presentation Abroad. There she attended the Eleventh Non/Fiction International Fair for High-Quality Fiction and Nonfiction and took part in a dialogue with the Russian writer Olga Slavnikova, winner of the Russian Booker Prize in 2006. The authors' discussion at this well-attended event touched on the influence of Russian writers on Japanese literature. There were several questions from the audience, including one on the impact of the Franco-Japanese film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* on Kashimada's novel *6000 do no ai* [Love at 6,000 Degrees] (see *JBN* No. 46). Translation and publication of the work in the Russian journal *Inostrannaya Literatura* [Foreign Literature] is being considered.

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## Iguana Girl Turns Manga Legend

In the annals of Japanese manga, Hagio Moto is often considered second only to the late Tezuka Osamu, the acclaimed graphic novelist and Astro Boy creator, because of her prolific output, pioneering techniques, and profound philosophical plots and themes.

In her parents' home in Kyushu, however, this artist receives no respect. Her mother and father, who dislike manga, once pressed Hagio to quit the job she loved and choose a more honorable career. Their aversion to comics has never abated, despite the many prestigious prizes their daughter has garnered and the sensation her works have made across the nation since her 1969 debut. Hagio fled this desperate struggle to the worlds of science fiction and fantasy, using manga as a vehicle to purge her own familial demons.

"For me, cartooning is an act of healing," Hagio confesses. "In my stories, mothers tend to either die young, or appear only in memories, because I subconsciously erased my real mother."

Over the past 40 years, Hagio has created a string of masterpieces, including her blockbuster series, *Pō no ichizoku* [The Poe Clan] (1972), in which she questions the *raison d'être* of mortal humans through the eyes of a vampire trapped for eternity in the body of an abandoned boy. As she admits, her agony and frustration over her parents are reflected in many of her complex stories. Hagio's parents are still alive and well, and continue to hate comics, but readers may not recognize the creator's hidden resentment until they see her *Iguana no musume* [Iguana Girl] (1991), in which Hagio portrays her emotion straightforwardly for the first time.



In this 52-page piece, Hagio shows how the mother affects the daughter's identity. After giving birth to an ugly baby, Rika, the mother avoids her and favors the normal, pretty child, Mami. The mother views Rika as a hideous-looking iguana, and the child adopts this self-image herself; but when her mother dies at the end of the story, Rika views her death mask and realizes that she was daughter to yet another ugly iguana. This tragic reconciliation is carried out amid a beautiful lyricism; throughout the work, Hagio employs apt humor to ease the heaviness of the theme.

"It took me years to write this story," says Hagio, who scrapped the story idea over and over again until she was capable of viewing herself from a third-person perspective. "I finally came to realize that the reason why I couldn't get along well with my mother is that I'm not a human, but a marine iguana" of the Galapagos Islands, which she happened to see in a video once. "I immediately empathized and associated myself with this animal, which seemed to be lamenting its failure to become a human, just like me."

*Iguana no musume* was a turning point for Hagio. Before then, she explains, she hesitated to write her manga about contemporary Japan, staging many stories in Europe or even outer space, as she wanted to escape from "ugly" reality and yearned for "something beautiful." Her epic 1974 tale *Tōma no shinzō* [The Heart of Thomas] and its alternative version, *Hōmonsha* [The Visitor] (1980), for example, are set in a boys-only German boarding school, while her classic 1975 sci-fi mystery *11 nin iru!* [trans. *They Were Eleven*] revolves around spacemen in a derelict starship. Today, Hagio says she can write stories about contemporary Japan without discomfort, although she still favors Western culture and characters, in particular "*beaux garçons*, as boys are beautiful and fun to draw."

Hagio's leads tend to be chic young men with large eyes and curly hair. For this reason she is generally considered the innovator of *shōnen-ai* (boys' love) stories. But the love she depicts in her engaging, deeply psychological dramas is purely platonic and replete with philosophical and abstract musings. Scholars and critics have written dozens of books and articles analyzing, discussing, and savoring her works.

Ever humble about her success, Hagio refuses to admit that she helped elevate the conventional "girl-meets-boy," rather than boy-meets-girl, formula of girls' comics to a rich and expressive art form. But there is no denying that her works shocked, fascinated, and inspired thousands of girls and even men, sparking a *shōjo* manga boom in the 1970s and opening the way for female cartoonists to develop the modern genre of girls' manga. Hagio's literary manga prompted avid fans like Mori Hiroshi and Onda Riku to become authors and novelize her stories, or write novels as an *hommage* to her works, while stirring other artists like Noda Hideki to turn her creations into plays, films, and TV and radio dramas. Amazingly enough, even 40 years after her debut, comic magazines carrying her feature stories continue to sell out instantly, appearing soon afterward in net-based auctions at 300% mark-ups.

Just as her icon Tezuka Osamu is dubbed the father of manga, Hagio is truly one of the most beloved mothers of *shōjo* manga, regardless of her "iguana girl" self-image.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



### Hagio Moto

Born in 1949. Received the Shōgakukan Comics Award for *11 nin iru!* and *Pō no ichizoku* in 1976; the Seiun Awards for comics three times; the first Tezuka Osamu Cultural Award for *Zankokuna kami ga shihaisuru* [The Savage God Reigns] in 1997; and the Nihon SF Taishō [Japan science fiction grand prize] for *Barubara ikai* [Otherworld Barbara] in 2006, the first time in 23 years for a manga to win this award.