



ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE

A Burden of Flowers

(*Hana o Hakobu Imoto*)

AUTHOR

Natsuki Ikezawa



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-001-5

Translator:

Otto Putz

Fiction Genre:

**Contemporary
Literature**

Originally Published by:

**Bungei Shunju (2000)(hc)
(2003)(pb)**

KEY POINTS

- **A masterpiece novel which won the 2000 Mainichi Prize, Daily Publishing Culture Award.**
- **Suspense of whether the brother facing the death penalty for possession of illegal drugs can escape his desperate situation.**

SYNOPSIS

Tetsuro Nishijima, who showed his talent for painting from early childhood and left his home right after he graduated from high school, has become a popular illustrator. In Thailand, Tetsuro meets a German woman, Ingeborg, who seduces him and introduces him to drugs: He then gets arrested and imprisoned in Bali for heroin possession. He faces the death penalty on charges of trafficking and possession of a large amount of heroin, which was a crime he did not commit. Tetsuro's sister, Kaoru, who is five years younger than Tetsuro, comes back to Japan from Paris and flies to Bali to bail out her brother. Perplexed by the heat of Asia that she has never experienced in Europe, Kaoru struggles hard to rescue her brother by negotiating with the consulate and lawyers. The story consists of those chapters that are about the struggle of Kaoru, and the other chapters about Tetsuro's reflection on his earlier days when he left his family in conflict with his father, and on his journeys in Asia after that.

These two different settings are described alternately in the novel. Tetsuro had already been on the verge of desperation even before he was arrested because of deep remorse. He met a boy, Tain, in Vietnam, and the image of Tain's mother, Anne, was in his heart when, using heroin by a river where he saw a drowning child he let the child die in front of him because he was under the influence of the drug. Both the brother and the sister have been far away from Japan, Tetsuro in Asia and Kaoru in Europe. Meeting again in Bali the Nishijimas find that they relate to each other deeply while going through thrilling turn of events in their struggle to avoid the death penalty, and both will be awakened to start a new chapter in their life. This epic story sheds light on the clash between Europe and Asia, life and death, and desperation and salvation. This is a cosmopolitan novel that depicts the homecoming and reclamation of a man who once was on the verge of catastrophe. *Hana wo Hakobu Imoto* (A Burden of Flowers) received the Daily Publishing Culture Award, in 2000.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natsuki Ikezawa (1945-) is a poet, translator, and novelist. After he dropped out of the Saitama University of Science and Engineering, he became a translator as he traveled around the world. After returning to Japan, he published his first poetry book, *Shio no michi* (The Road of Salt). Then he made his debut as a novelist in 1984 with the short story *Natsu no asa no seisou-ken* (The Stratosphere in the Summer Morning). Since then he published numerous novels as he journeyed through Okinawa, Hokkaido, and France.

AWARDS

1988 Akutagawa Prize, for *Sutiru raifu* (Still Life)
2000 Daily Publishing Culture Award, for *Hana wo hakobu imoto* (A Burden of Flowers)
2001 Ministry of Education Award for Art, for *Subarashii shinsekai* (Wonderful New World)
2007 Medal with Purple Ribbon

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Otto Putz studied Japanese literature at the University of Munich, and modern Japanese literature at Hokkaido University. Since 1993 he has worked as a freelance translator, writer and part-time university instructor. His major translations include Soseki Natsume's *I Am a Cat* and Kenzaburo Oe's *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* - the two works for which he won the Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature in 1999, Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Hell and My Blood is Someone Else's*, and Takehiko Fukunaga's *Flowers of Grass*.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE
Kutze, the Wheat Treader
(*Mugifumi Kuutze*)
AUTHOR
Shinji Ishii



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-002-5

Translator:

Thomas Jordi

Fiction Genre:

Coming of Age Novel

Originally Published by:

Rironsha (2002)

Shinchosha (2005)(pb)

KEY POINTS

- **A Joji Tsubota Literature Prize winning novel.**
- **A masterpiece of Bildungsroman: despite all the joys and sorrows he went through, the music-loving boy grows up and heads for paradise.**

SYNOPSIS

My grand father was possessed by music, and my father, who was a mathematics teacher, was obsessed with the prime number. I was nicknamed "Neko (Cat)" because I was good at imitating the call of creatures including cats. I was just a baby when the three of us, my grand father, my father and myself, moved to that port town. In the year I entered elementary school I found myself all alone at home on a sultry midsummer night. Trembling in the dark I heard... tap, rat-a-tap, tap, rat-a-tap, tap ... There, I saw a man in strange clothing--- only the shoes were black, and the rest was very yellow. The man was stamping on the ground. He gave his name as Kutze and said he was treading wheat. On that night, I made a decision to tread wheat side-by-side with Kutze when I grew up, to get far, far away on the yellow ground. Ten years passed after I had met Kutze, and various

things had happened before I grew up. The music played by the wind orchestra, to which my grand father belonged as a timpanist, was brilliant and brought me joy and inspiration. Then a rain of rats fell on the town. When the town was in calamity because of the damage caused by the surviving rats, I got rid of them by imitating cats, but the rats hid themselves in the darkness and became "dark rats (yami-nezumi)"

Later, I went to a highland city to become a musician. While I was away from the port town, a quack salesman came to the town. The salesman was very good at making false sales pitches and foisted fake products on the people. My father sank to the depth of despair because he had lost in the mathematics competition and later committed suicide.

Although I had experienced so much tragedy in my youth, through music I was transported to paradise.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shinji Ishii (1966-) is a novelist from Osaka, western Japan. After graduating from the Kyoto University of French Language and Literature, he worked for RECRUIT CO., LTD. as a magazine editor. In his leisure time he enjoyed fishing, traveling abroad, and sketching his pursuits, with which he gained attention and made his debut. In 1994, he launched his publishing career with his first novel *Amusuterudamu no inu* (The Dog in Amsterdam). In 2003, he won Joji Tsubota Literature Prize with *Mugifumi Kuutze* (Kutze, the Wheat Trader). Currently he lives both in old town Kyoto and in the port town of Misaki where he continues his works.

AWARDS

2003 Joji Tsubota Literature Prize, for *Mugifumi Kuutze* (Kutze, the Wheat Treader)

2004, 2006, 2007, 2009 Nominated for Mishima Yukio Prize

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Thomas Jordi was born in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1963. After graduating from Swiss Jazz School Bern, he studied electric bass at the Musicians Institute of Technology in Los Angeles. He studied the Japanese language and culture at the Free University of Berlin and at the Tokyo School of the Japanese Language in Japan. In 2006, he translated German pop lyrics into Japanese. Since 2007, he worked for the translation/interpreter-service company in Japan. He won the Distinguished Translation Award at the 7th Shizuoka International Translation Competition.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE

The Kingdom of Wind

(Kaze no Okoku)

AUTHOR

Hiroyuki Itsuki



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-003-5

Translator:

Isolde Asai

Fiction Genre:

Literary/Spiritual

Originally Published by:

Shinchosha (1985)(hc)

(1987)(pb)

KEY POINTS

- A thrilling and romantic adventure story by a peerless storyteller of the day.
- The dark side of a controlled society is revealed from the perspective of an outcast group of people in a mountainous region in Japan through the adventure of the leading character.
- What is "The Kingdom of Wind" which confronts the lead character, Taku, who tries to find the secret of his birth.

SYNOPSIS

Taku had lost his parents when the mine, where they were working in, was hit by a typhoon. Seven-year-old Taku was taken in by the Hayami family and grew up in a coastal region in Hokuriku. Having left Japan at the age of 18 and traveled around the world, 32-year-old Taku Hayami has become a travel writer. A publisher asked him to visit Mount Nijo near the ancient city of Nara, where he came across a group of people all wearing the same peculiar clothes, in happi coats, amongst whom he noticed a woman, "Tobu Onna" (Flying Woman), who was walking extraordinarily fast. Taku, who was intrigued by this "Flying Woman" and by the cultural atmosphere of the Nijo Mountain, later met the woman at a party hosted by Ikarino Sogyo, which was a huge company with 50 affiliated enterprises. This huge firm also had ties and connections with political circles, the media and with boryokudan (organized crime syndicates).

Taku learned that the woman, whose name was Ai Katsuragi, was a daughter of Tenro Katsuragi, the leader of Tenmu Jin Shin Kou, a religious group, and a descendant of nomadic people who used to live in the Katsuragi mountain region in Nara. However, in the process of Japan's modernization and formation of the concept of "citizens of the nation", while some remained loyal to their traditional way of living, others some volunteered to be assimilated into the village life.

After his encounter with those people who had been seeking a nomadic way of life Taku gradually realized the secret of his own birth. Amid the intensifying conflict between Ikarino Sogyo, which was more and more spoiled and vulgarized by the world, and Tenro Katsuragi, who was adhering strictly to the rules of his group, Taku gained a whole new worldview. He started his journey looking ahead, where there is a true country, "Kaze no Okoku" (The Kingdom of Wind).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hiroyuki Itsuki (1932-) is a novelist, essayist, critique, songwriter, and composer from Fukuoka. After he dropped out of the Waseda University of Russian Language and Literature, he became active in the fields of literature and songwriting. He traveled to the former Soviet Union and northern Europe. In 1966 when he returned to Japan he released *Saraba mosukuwa gurentai* (Good-bye Moscow Foolish Guards), and with this novel he won the 6th Shosetsu Gendai Prize for New Writers. Next year he won the Naoki Prize with *Aozameta uma wo miyo* (Look at the Paled Horse).

AWARDS

1967 Naoki Prize, for *Aozameta uma wo miyo* (Look at the Paled Horse)

1976 Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature, for *Seishun no mon Chikuhō-hen* (Gate of the Youth part Chikuhō)

2002 Kikuchi Kan Prize

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Isolde Asai, born in 1957, graduated from the Freiburg University of Education and came to Japan in 1981. She worked for 25 years teaching at the Japanese universities, and had professional experience as a translator and interpreter for 20 years. She was a member of Oriental Institute Committee, German Literature Promotion Committee, and German Translation Association. She received JaDe Prize in 2009.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

TITLE
**Ground Zero and
Other Stories**
(Bakushin)
AUTHOR
Yuichi Seirai

G-004-5

Translator:

Nora Bierich

Fiction Genre:

**Short Stories about
the A-bombing of
Nagasaki**

Originally Published by:

Bungei Shunju (2006)

KEY POINTS

- **A highly acclaimed collection of short stories about the prime experience of the A-bomb attack on Nagasaki and about the people who have lived there.**
- **Based in current Nagasaki, the author raises questions once again about the serious issues of the dropping of the A-bomb, and its effects on the lives of those who endured the bombing and its aftermath.**

SYNOPSIS

On the 9th of August 1945, during the Pacific War, the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Using those people who have lived around the bombsite as leading characters, the short stories contained in this book portray their horrific experiences of the A-bomb attack and the days afterwards. Who am "I" and where have "I" come from? "I" is the narrator of the story, "Tori (Birds)." He doesn't know his parents. There are columns in his family register, which are supposed to be filled by the names of his parents, but they are both blank, so his birthday too is unknown and is set as August 9, the very day when A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. He was just a baby when he was found crying in the rubble near ground zero. "I" was picked up by a woman, his foster mother, who fled from the site as fast as she could with "I" in her arms. He grew up, got a job, got married, had children and grandchildren, and celebrated his sixtieth birthday. Even so, he still

asks himself who he is over and over again. There were babies among those 74,000 who lost their lives because of the A-bomb attack, so he wonders if he might have been recorded as one of the deceased babies. "So when I think about the list of the deceased, I feel as if I were a phantom of someone who was included in the list at that time. This makes me feel that the whole 60 years of my life might have been just faint dreams and phantasms as well." In this story, "Tori (Birds)," this man in his sixties reflects upon his life and the remaining life that is much shorter than that he has already lived.

The author spends the least number of scenes on the devastation caused by the atomic bomb in 1945, but, since he is based in current Nagasaki, the land that has the memory of the A-bomb attack and is marked with a long history of Catholicism, he raises questions about the serious issue of the A-bomb attack once again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yuichi Seirai (1958-) is a novelist from Nagasaki. He graduated from the Nagasaki University of Education. After graduation, while working for the Nagasaki city government he debuted with *Jeronimo no jujika* (Geronimo's Cross) in 1995 and won the Bungakukai Prize for New Writers. In 2001, he won the Akutagawa Prize for *Seisui* (Holy Water), and in 2007 he won the Ito Sei Literary Prize and the Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize for *Bakushin* (Ground Zero), in which the story takes place in Nagasaki.

AWARDS

1995 Bungakukai Prize for New Writers, for *Jeronimo no jujika* (Geronimo's Cross)
2001 Akutagawa Prize, for *Seisui* (Holy Water)
2007 Ito Sei Literary Prize and Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize, for *Bakushin* (Ground Zero and Other Stories)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Nora Bierich studied philosophy and Japanese studies as major subjects at the Free University of Berlin. Receiving a Monbusho-research-scholarship, she stayed in Japan from 1989 to 1992. During this period her Japanese language ability improved quite well. After returning to Germany, she started translating and interpreting. Since the mid 80's she has been translating Japanese literature, starting with Yasushi Inoue, Haruki Murakami etc. She translated 4 books of Kenzaburo Oe and was awarded the Japan Foundation translator prize for her translation: *Sayonara, watashi no hon yo!* She recently translated Kazuki Kaneshiro's *GO* for JLPP.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

TITLE
minimal
(*minimaru*)
AUTHOR
Shuntaro Tanikawa

G-005-5

Translator:
Eduard Klopfenstein
Fiction Genre:
Poetry
Originally Published by:
Shichosha (2002)

KEY POINTS

- Poems in a new form with stanzas consisting of three lines written as the poet's fancy took him.
- A masterpiece collection of poems, in which "eternity" is woven by something that is the exact opposite of loquacity.
- Never-ending heart-lightening requiems for life and flowing rhythm of words that record the ticking time.

SYNOPSIS

Strictly and with unlimited gentleness the poet Shuntaro Tanikawa reduces the number of words to the point where he cannot reduce any more in composing the 30 poems included in this collection in three chapters. One of the poems in chapter one titled "Soshite (And)" is composed of a very small number of words as follows: When summer comes / the cicadas /sing again. Fireworks / freeze / in my memory. Distant countries are dim / but the universe / is right in front of your nose. What a blessing / that people /can die leaving behind /only the conjunction /"and." Several years before this collection of poems was issued, the author had become tired of himself for making it too easy to write a poem and being unable to see the world without the eyes of poet. He wanted to keep himself away from poetry, and not to write poems for a

while. Then, invited by his friend, he joined a gathering of "Yohaku Kukai," a haiku club, and came in touch with the world of haiku where the whole world is contained in the 17 syllables of a haiku poem. He also had an opportunity to visit China. During this relaxing trip to China, a number of short poems were written unexpectedly. It seems that, without being aware of it, the poet was synchronized with something that belongs to haiku and a certain type of Chinese poems, which is "exactly the opposite of loquacity." This book includes thirty poems in the "minimal" form, which was new to the poet himself at this point. This collection of poems was published in 2002 with newly translated English translation in the same book.

*Translators of the above-quoted poems: William I.Elliott and Kazuo Kawamura.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shuntaro Tanikawa (1931-) is a poet, translator, children's picture book author, and scriptwriter from Tokyo. He started writing poems when he was a high school student. His first collection of poems *Nijuoku konen no kodoku* (Loneliness for Two Billion Light-years) was published in 1952. Subsequently he has been active writing scripts, songs, critiques, and translations. In 1975, his *Maza gusu no uta* (Songs of Mother Goose) won the Japan Translation Cultural Award.

AWARDS

- 1975 Japan Translation Cultural Award, for *Maza gusu no uta* (Songs of Mother Goose)
- 1982 Yomiuri Literary Prize, for *Hibi no chizu* (A Daily Map)
- 1985 Modern Poetry Hanatsubaki Prize, for *Yoshinashiuta* (Yoshinashi Song)
- 1993 Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize, for *Sekenshirazu* (The Naif)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Eduard Klopfenstein, after graduating from the University of Bern, studied Japanese language and literature at Sophia University in Tokyo and at the University of Kyoto, as a Fellow of Education Ministry. He became a visiting scholar at the University of Kyoto in 1972, and studied the traditional theater, especially Ningyo-Joruri (Bunraku). He experienced research stays in Japan many times, while from 1989 to 2005 he was Professor of Japanology at the University of Zurich. Among his activities, he was a jury member of such translation prizes as the Noma Translation Prize, Japan Foundation Translation Prize, and International Translation Competition in Shizuoka. In April 2010 he was awarded the "Order of the Rising Sun" by the Japanese Government.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C TTITLE
Japanese Short Stories
(*Otogi Zoshi*)
AUTHOR
Osamu Dazai

G-006-5

Translator:

Verena Werner

Fiction Genre:

**Short stories based on
Japanese legends**

Originally Published by:

**Chikuma Shobo(1945)
Shinchosha(1972)(pb)**

KEY POINTS

- **A literary rendering of Japanese folk tales from one of Japan's foremost fiction writers of the 20th Century.**
- **A master work of Osamu Dazai's middle period, written when the war was nearing its end.**

SYNOPSIS

During the time of war in Japan, there were many writers who went silent or sold out their integrity as a writer to curry favor with the authorities, but Osamu Dazai was different. Sinking himself deep into the world of art, he continued to publish new works, which were nothing but manifestation of literature itself, and repeatedly broke new ground. The author wrote stories for this book in March 1945 amidst many difficulties, including daily air raids when the war was nearing its end. This excellent collection includes folk stories that all Japanese people know, such as "*Kobutori* (Taking the Tumor Away)," "*Urashima-san* (Mr. Urashima)," "*Kachikachi Yama* (Crackling Mountain)" and "*Shitakiri Suzume* (the Tongue-Cut Sparrow)." In telling all these stories, Dazai never forgets to make them sound humorous and gives the reader opportunities to gain a glimpse into the deep abyss of human nature.

"*Kobutori* (Taking the Tumor Away)" is about two old

men. Although both of them had a tumor on his face, the growth was not at all a problem for one of them, but a serious problem for the other who spent his days moping and feeling miserable about his tumor. "This is just a tragicomedy of so-called different characters. This is an issue that never leaves the deepest part of human life," wrote Dazai. "*Urashima-san* (Mr. Urashima)" lost his sense of time while having a good time with Otohime (Princess Oto). He found himself 300 years old when he returned, and could not find his birthplace any more. Dazai concludes that it is merely a preconceived notion of vulgarity to feel sorry for him just because he became 300 years old. He writes "The months and years save people. Forgetfulness saves people." Having fond memories of *Otohime* (Princess Oto) and Ryūgūjō (the Dragon King's Palace), which were no longer reachable for him, Urashima lived a happy life for a decade after that... This is a big leap, an adaptation, made by Osamu Dazai from a folk story to a radical work of literature.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Osamu Dazai (1909-1948) was a novelist from Aomori. Since he was seventeen he wanted to become a novelist and started visiting the novelist Masuji Ibuse, becoming his private pupil. At the same time he entered the University of Tokyo where he majored in French Literature. His first published novel in 1935 *Gyakko* (Backset) was nominated for the first Akutagawa Prize. Although he had repeatedly attempted suicide since he was a high school student, he was married in 1938 and continued publishing outstanding short stories: among those are *Fugaku Hyakkeu* (Hundred Landscapes of Mt. Fuji), *Kakekomi uttae* (Run and Plead), *Hashire Merosu* (Run, Meros). During WWII, he kept up his writing with works such as *Tsugaru* (Tsugaru), and *Otogi zoshi* (Japanese Short Stories). In 1947, he published the long novel *Shayo* (Sunset) and became established as a popular novelist. He then finished *Ningen shikkaku* (Failed to be a Human) and *Oto* (Cherry). His life ended at the age of 39 when he committed suicide by drowning, together with his mistress, Tomie Yamazaki.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Verena Werner, who stayed in Japan for 14 years, studied at Kobe University. After returning to Switzerland, she received her MA in Japanology, German Studies and Sinology. Since 2001, she has worked as research fellow and part-time instructor at the University of Zurich, and in 2003 she received her PhD at the university. Her translation works are titles of Mieko Kanai, Kenzaburo Oe, and Tsutomu Minakami.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE
Yuhi and Other Stories
(*Yuhi*)
AUTHOR
Yangji Lee



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-001-4

Translator:

**Verena Nakamura-
Methfessel**

Fiction Genre:

**Multi-cultural/
Self-identity**

Originally Published by:

Shueisha (1983)

KEY POINTS

- Akutagawa Prize winning novel that depicts the painful life of a Korean woman in Japan.
- Strikingly vivid works the author left in her tragically short life of 37 years.

SYNOPSIS

I cannot love my home country...Yuhi is born and brought up in Japan as a Korean living in Japan. With the ideal image of her home country, she enters a prestigious university in Korea to seek her roots, but never feeling at home in Korea nor fitting in the life with the Koreans, she returns to Japan. Yuhi's nationality is Korean but she is an only "sort of" Japanese. This collection of short stories contains the Akutagawa Prize winning *Yuhi* which

depicts the tragedy of a Korean woman living in Japan who is hurt in her home country and has no choice but to leave, *Sad Butterfly* that is her first work written during her stay in Seoul University as a student, and two other stories, *Kazukime* and *Anigoze*. The author was born as a Korean living in Japan, suffered from the discrimination and prejudice in her youth, torn between Japan and her home country Korea, and passed away suddenly at the age of 37 in 1992. The name piece is the record of a soul who sought for identity for her life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yangji Lee (1955-1992) was the second generation of a Korean family living in Japan. She visited Korea for the first time in 1980. After that she repeatedly visited Korea and was affected by the Korean culture such as musok (manners and customs of shamans and shrine maidens in Korea), gayaguem (the harp created in Gaya in old Korea), and pansori (old stories narrated with melody). She entered the Korean Literature Department of Seoul University in 1982, and wrote *Sad Butterfly* while she was a student there. The work was published in the magazine *Gunzo*. It was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize. After graduating from Seoul University in 1988, Lee died of acute pneumonia at the age of 37 in 1992.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Verena Nakamura-Methfessel studied Japanese language and literature at the University of Frankfurt, and her Magister (MA)-thesis deals with the work of the Japanese-Korean author Yangji Lee, focusing on her award-winning novel *Yuhi*. Currently she is researching her dissertation on the subject of Japanese-Korean literature, concentrating on the texts of Yan Sogiru.

AWARDS

1989 Akutagawa Prize, for *Yuhi*

REVIEWS AND ACCLAIMS

"It is not her premature death but the fact that we are reading a work of a genuine writer that impresses us on each page".--- Naomi Watanabe, critic.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE
Death Penalty
(*Jiyu shikei*)
AUTHOR
Masahiko Shimada



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-003-4

Translator:
Thomas Hackner
Fiction Genre:
Commercial
Originally Published by:
Shueisha (1999)

KEY POINTS

- **Written by one of Japan's most prominent and prolific contemporary writers.**
- **A long story that describes the last 7 days of a man who demands his right to kill himself, this novel describes his last lively and comically lived seven days.**

SYNOPSIS

Yoshio Kita, an ordinary company worker, has been feeling hopeless about his future since he was 13 years old. He checks out his bank account to confirm he has about one million yen and decides to kill himself one week later on Friday. It is to carry out the 'capital punishment at his free will'. How to spend his time until the day the 'capital punishment' is carried out? First, he arranges to meet a former porn actress and has a rich banquet with her. Then he makes a contract for his organs, meets his ex-girlfriend who broke up with him 6 years ago, meets an idol, Shinobu Yoimachi, and falls in love

with her, and writes and enacts a drama of his own abduction. But on one hand he loses his desire to exact revenge on his distressed ex-girlfriend, and on the other, a killer bothers him. Will Kita be able to kill himself as he plans?

This long novel describes a whole week of a man who demands his right to commit suicide and tries to carry it out. Given the fact that more than 30,000 people commit suicide annually in Japan, the author tried to express the subcurrent of society by asking us, "How do you spend a week if that's all you have now?" and telling us, "We can kill ourselves at our free will, but that freedom is harsh".

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Masahiko Shimada was born in 1961. He graduated from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, majored in Russian language. He made his debut with *Yasashii sayoku no tame no Kiyuukyoku* (The Cassation for the Soft Left-wingers) that appeared in the magazine *Kaien* in 1983 when he was a college student, and this piece was nominated for Akutagawa Prize. After that, he started writing with a light sense about young people's lives in new, suburban residential areas, with which Shimada gained attention as a new generation author. During 1991, he traveled around the world. One of his operatic librettos *Susei no Junin* (Dwellers in the Comet), which came out in 2000, was made into the Werner Herzog film, "Jr. Butterfly", in 2004.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Thomas Hackner, born in 1966 in Germany, studied Japanese Studies, German Literature and Philosophy at the University of Munich. He wrote his doctoral thesis on "Dada and Futurism in Japan". After teaching Japanese literature and cultural history at the University of Munich, he is now teaching in Japan. His translations include texts by Shinkichi Takahashi, Jun Tsuji, Tomoyoshi Murayama, Ryunosuke Akutagawa and Doppo Kunikida.

AWARDS

- 1984 Noma Literary Prize for New Writers, for *Muyu okoku no tameno ongaku* (Music for Sleepwalking Kingdom)
- 1992 Izumi Kyoka Prize, for *Higan Sensei* (The Other World Teacher)
- 2006 Ito Sei Prize for Literature, for *Taihai Shimai* (Decadent Sisters)
- 2008 Ministry of Education and Science Award, for *Kaosu no Musume* (Daughter of Chaos)

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE

The Case of the Sharaku Murders

(*Sharaku satsujin jiken*)

AUTHOR

Katsuhiko Takahashi



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

G-004-4

Translator:

Sabine Mangold
Yukari Hayasaki

Fiction Genre:

Crime/Mystery

Originally Published by:
Shueisha (1983)

KEY POINTS

- **Sophisticated combination of the mystery of Sharaku with that of the murder case.**
- **The young ukiyo-e researcher who comes very close to uncovering the true self of the "mysterious painter" and murder cases around him.**
- **An entertainment novel.**

SYNOPSIS

Atsushi Saga died mysteriously. Saga was a Tensho (seal script) calligrapher and a freelance researcher. Ryohei Tsuda, an assistant of Professor Shunsaku Nishijima who is an authority of ukiyo-e, sees Kokuhu again at Saga's funeral. Tsuda and Kokuhu, who is senior to Tsuda, used to be the members of the seminar of Professor Nishijima. Tsuda is surprised that Kokuhu, who used to be Nishijima's student, has been close to Saga, because the relationship between Nishijima and Saga has been in the state of cold war for five years due to conflicting opinions. Tsuda goes to an antiquarian bookshop and gets an art book from the shop owner, Mizuno, who is the late Saga's younger brother in law. Then his eyes are glued to the letters, "Toshusai Sharaku, former Chikamatsu Shoei", attached to a picture. In the late Edo period, there was a mysterious painter

named Toshusai Sharaku who suddenly disappeared after releasing 140 ukiyo-e prints in just 10 months. Who in the world is Sharaku? Having found a new theory, Tsuda tries to find a key to solving the mystery with Saeko who is Kokuhu's younger sister. However, Nishijima, who takes the achievement that Tsuda has made, is found dead and burned, and... The author won the Edogawa Rampo Prize, which is known as a gateway to success for new writers, for this long and authentic mystery novel in 1983. The author, who was an ukiyo-e researcher himself, successfully integrates ukiyo-e into a mystery. He wrote that the relationships between the characters are depicted through the process of solving the mystery of Sharaku prior to the occurrence of incidents, which served as the material for solving the murder case later in the book. The author has skillfully combined his wide and deep knowledge of ukiyo-e with a thrilling mystery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katsuhiko Takahashi (1947-) became a researcher of ukiyo-e and a full-time lecturer at Allen Junior College after graduating from the School of Commerce, Waseda University. In 1983, he won the Edogawa Rampo Prize for *Sharaku satsujin jiken*, which marked his debut as a novelist. He has written works in wide range of genres, which include action romance novels such as *Soumon dani* (The Soumon Valley) and *Ryu no hitsugi* (Dragon Coffin), historical novels such as *Homura tatsu* (Blazing Flames) and *Ka en* (Flaming Rancour), horrors, mysteries, popular novels whose setting is in a period in the past such as Edo period.

AWARDS

1983 Edogawa Rampo Prize, for *Sharaku satsujin jiken*

1986 Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for New Writers, for *Soumon dani* (The Soumon Valley)

1992 Naoki Prize, for *Akai kioku* (The Scarlet Memories)

2000 Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature Prize, for *Ka en* (Flaming Rancour)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Sabine Mangold, born in Berlin, studied History of Arts and Japanology at the Free University of Berlin. She lived in Japan as a lecturer for German of the Niigata University for three years, and became a translator.

Yukari Hayasaki, born in Japan, has lived in Berlin since 1985. She studied German at the Free University of Berlin, and started translation of Japanese literature together with Sabine Mangold in 1990. She teaches Japanese at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

TITLE
Hidaka
(Hidaka)
AUTHOR
Wahei Tatematsu

G-005-4

Translator:
Bruno Rhyner
Fiction Genre:
Adventure
Originally Published by:
Shinchosha (2002)

KEY POINTS

- **Four days in an extreme condition trapped in snow and ice.**
- **A man in the face of nature depicted based on actual cases of alpine accidents.**
- **What the young man thought and saw when he was dying.**
- **A masterpiece of mountaineering novel written by an author known for his active life.**

SYNOPSIS

Mount Poroshiri is the highest peak in the Hidaka mountain range in Hokkaido. Although concerned about the weather condition, a climbing party of six left for the summit. They were members of the alpine club of their university. While they were sleeping in a snow cave, they were caught by an avalanche and lost their lives. Miraculously, one of the members did not die instantly. The leader of the party, Noboru Odagiri, stayed alive for four days before freezing to death. Trapped and pressed by thick debris of avalanche snow, he was half frozen and half asleep. He then had a series of dreams about his future, in which he was with his girlfriend or his fellow members of the club. He survived for four days beside the other members of the party who had perished on the spot. What did he think and what did he dream about on the verge of

death? It was an actual case of alpine accident which occurred in 1965 that motivated the author to write this novel.

The author, who used to be a student movement activist, continued writing novels while traveling around Japan and other parts of Asia, frequently changing jobs. He had participated in environmental protection activities proactively for a long time and deepened his interest in Buddhism in his later years. This novel describes the passion of those who climb mountains despite the risks, the state of mind in an extreme condition and the powerlessness of human beings in the face of nature. It can be understood as an epic written by a remarkable writer. The author also used "the tragedy of Minya Konka" in 1981 as a material to write about human beings' yearning for mountains and confrontation with the wonder of nature.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wahei Tatematsu (1947-2010) received the Waseda Literary Prize for New Writers, for *Jitensha* (Bicycle) while he was still studying at the Faculty of Political Science and Economics, Waseda University. After graduating from university, he experienced various kinds of jobs. In 1973 he went back to his hometown, Utsunomiya City, and found a job at the city office, continuing his writing while working at the city office. He became a full time writer in 1979 and won many literary prizes since then. He was active and traveled around Japan and many other parts of the world.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Bruno Rhyner, born in 1956 in Switzerland, studied Japanese, Psychology and Chinese. His dissertation was on Morita Psychotherapy and Zen Buddhism. He lectured for twenty years on Japanese Psychology and Education at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at the University of Zurich. He translated Minako Oba's novel *Katachi mo naku*, which became a long selling bestseller, and Kiyohiro Miura's novel *Chonan no shukke*.

AWARDS

- 1980 Noma Literary Prize for New Writers, for *Enrai* (Thunder in the Distance)
- 1997 Mainichi Publishing Culture Prize, for *Doku—Fuubun: Tanaka Shozo* (Poison—Rumor: Shozo Tanaka)
- 2007 Izumi Kyoka Prize, for *Dogen Zenji* (Dogen, Zen Master)

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C TTITLE
**Human Experience
over Time**
(*Nagai jikan wo kaketa ningen no keiken*)
AUTHOR
Kyoko Hayashi

G-008-4

Translator:
Peter Raff
Fiction Genre:
War/History
No. of Words (Approx.):
43,925
Originally Published by:
Kodansha (2000)

KEY POINTS

- **A record of requiescat of the author who has survived for 55 years after the atomic bomb.**
- **Description of the author's relationships with friends who died from the atomic bomb and its aftereffects.**
- **Spiritual profession of the author living between life and death, questioning the meaning of our lives.**

SYNOPSIS

Since being bombed by the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki on August 9th 1945, "I" have been seeking for both physical and mental comfort. Sometimes she finds her peacefulness in her mother, her husband, or the pure eyes of her child, but all of them were momentary. After all, she has to go on with facing August 9th each year. People who suffered from the atomic bomb have to carry their atomic-bomb syndrome: "I" am destroyed on that day and have been living with lots of deaths, sending off many those who died. There are friends and teachers who had died from the bomb, but "I" have survived. Before her sixtieth birthday, "I" goes on a pilgrimage. "I have lived till this day. I'm okay now!" She shouts for joy. Then she wonders: Whom am I shouting for, and what is okay?

This novel features two stories; the name piece and *From Trinity to Trinity*. The author was bombed at 1.4 kilometers from the ground zero when she was on duty as a student worker at the factory. Based on that experience, she has been writing novels for requiescat and prayer. In *Human Experience over Time*, the author looks back on the latter half of her life and describes her relationships with her friends who died. In *From Trinity to Trinity*, the author questions the meaning of lives as one of all creatures. This work was written based on her experience of visiting the 'Trinity site' in New Mexico, in which the first nuclear test was taken in July 1945, and her compassion for the first nuclear-bomb victims: the deserted land and the creatures there. This novel was published in 2000, 55 years after the drop of the atomic bombs, and it won the Noma Literary Prize for excellent writers and their works.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kyoko Hayashi was born in 1930. In 1945, she was victimized by the atomic bomb which was dropped on the Mitsubishi armament factory at Ohashi in Nagasaki city, where she was working as a student worker. The place was near the ground zero, but she miraculously survived. In 1963, she was officially approved by the Japanese government as an atomic bomb victim. Based on this experience, she wrote *Matsuri no ba* (Place for the Festival) and won both the Gunzo Prize for New Writers, and the Akutagawa Prize in 1975. Since then she has been publishing stories as an atomic bomb survivor.

AWARDS

- 1975 Gunzo Prize for New Writers, and Akutagawa Prize, for *Matsuri no ba* (Place for the Festival)
- 1983 Women's Literary Prize, for *Shanghai* (Shanghai)
- 1984 Kawabata Yasunari Prize, for *Sankai no ie* (House of Three Realms)
- 1990 Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize, for *Yasuraka ni ima wa nemuri tamae* (Rest in Peace)
- 2000 Noma Literary Prize, for *Nagai jikan wo kaketa ningen no keiken* (Human Experience over Time)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Peter Raff started learning Japanese at Medical School at Tübingen, Germany in 1970, obtaining a scholarship from the Ministry of Education of Japan to perform postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Medicine, Kyoto University. Besides completing his PhD thesis in Kyoto, he studied Japanese language and culture. After returning to Germany in 1980 he obtained the state license to practice as a physician and, in 1981, a diploma as translator of Japanese from the Seminary of Oriental Studies at the University of Bonn. In 2001, he received the 3rd prize in the Shizuoka International Translation Competition. He completed a Master of Arts course in Advanced Japanese Studies and obtained an MA from the University of Sheffield in 2005.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM



JAPANESE
LITERATURE
PUBLISHING
PROJECT

TITLE
**Selected Works of
Kazuo Hirotsu**
(*Hirotsu Kazuo sakuhin shu*)
AUTHOR
Kazuo Hirotsu

G-009-4

Translator:
Asa-Bettina Wuthenow
Fiction Genre:
**Anthology/
Critical Essays/
Literary Short Stories**
Originally Published by:
Chuo Koronsha (1973-74)

KEY POINTS

- **Outstanding novels and critical essays have been carefully chosen from Hirotsu's long literary career.**
- **Supported by this prose mentality, his body of work remains fresh observing the emotions of ordinary people with genuine warmth.**

SYNOPSIS

"A mind that doesn't expediently interpret or undervalue reality; a mind that, as it sees reality for that it is, does not overcome with despair or desperation, or just randomly make lots of noise; a mind that for better or worse doesn't rush to make conclusions, but rather analyzes the object patiently" (*Sanbun Seishin ni tsuite* (On the Mentality of Prose)). Kazuo Hirotsu (1891-1968), whose work as a writer and critic straddled World War II, was a profound thinker regarding the position of the novel in society. Supported by that philosophy, his writing remains fresh to us today. His collected works include the well-known short story *Chimata no Rekishi* (A History of Society), the novella *Wakaki Hi* (Days of My Youth), and superb essays and critiques such as *Sanbun Seishin ni tsuite* (On the

Mentality of Prose), *Tokuda Shusei Ron* (On Shusei Tokuda), and *Ippon no Ito* (A Single Strand). In *Tokuda Shusei Ron*, he interprets and praises Tokuda, a leading Realist writer, who had lived a simple life into his fifties, before losing his beloved wife, since when he was led by his desire for a younger woman, and at the age of 71 produced his masterpiece, *Shukuzu* (A Microcosm of Human Life). Based on both Humanism and Realism, Hirotsu thus accepts the range of emotions that ordinary people have. He argued that the spirit of the artist should be patient, and carefully scrutinize its subject: "When people talk about the weakness of intellectualism, well why is it weak? And that being the case, then what does being strong mean? There are no writers around who put aside these questions to ponder in order to try to write a careful response." (*Ippon no Ito*).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After graduating from university, Kazuo Hirotsu (1891-1968) wrote critical essays and translations while working for a newspaper. Debuted as a writer in 1917 with *Shinkeibyō Jidai* (The Neurotic Age). Hirotsu wrote many works scrutinizing the realities of society, and also worked on translating Maupassant and Chekhov. In the post-war period he spent around 10 years working on *Matsukawa Jiken* (The Matsukawa Trial). The theme in his works throughout his life was 'Freedom and Responsibility'.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Born in 1960, Asa-Bettina Wuthenow studied Japanology in the University of Heidelberg and got PhD in the study of Kazuo Hirotsu. She started her career as a teacher in the University of Heidelberg and a high school, and now is teaching in the University of Mainz. Wuthenow translated the works of Hirotsu, as well as Sakutarō Hagiwara, Riichi Yokomitsu and others.

AWARDS

1963 Noma Literary Prize and Mainichi Publishing Culture Prize, for *Nengetsu no Ashioto* (Footstep of the Age)

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

TITLE

Tokyo Seven Roses

(Tokyo seibun rozu)

AUTHOR

Hisashi Inoue

J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

Translator:

Matthias Pfeifer

Fiction Genre:

Historical Novel /Humor

No. of Words (Approx.):

204,200

Originally Published by:

Bungei Shunju(1999)

Rights Sold (This Title,Other Languages):

French

Rights Sold (Other Titles):

Manzanar: My Town

G-011-3

KEY POINTS

- **Witty novel set immediately post WWII.**
- **Written by one of Japan's leading comic scriptwriters and novelists.**

SYNOPSIS

Tokyo Seven Roses, a long novel that took the author seventeen years to write. It is set in Japan during the waning months of the war and the beginning of the occupation. The form is that of a diary kept from April 1945 to April 1946 by Shinsuke Yamanaka, a fifty-three-year-old fan-maker living in Nezu, part of Tokyo's shitamachi (old-town) district. After the war, Shinsuke learns by chance that the occupation forces are plotting a nefarious scheme: in order to cut Japan off from its dreadful past, they intend to see that the language is written henceforth using the alphabet. To fight off this unheard-of threat to the integrity of Japanese culture, seven beautiful women—the Seven Roses—take a stand. They include Tomoe, whose husband perished in a B29 raid and whose stepfather has gone mad; Fumiko and Takeko, whose elder sister died in an air raid; Sen, another war widow; Tokiko, who lost

her parents and older brother; and Kyoko and Fumiko, whose entire families were wiped out. The seven, while resentful of Japan's leaders for having lured the country down the path to war, and painfully aware of their own responsibility in being so gullible, hate the United States. They set their sights on three powerful members of the education delegation who have come to finalize official policy regarding the Japanese language. The Seven Roses plan to use their charms to gain results, and succeed brilliantly. The men are photographed cavorting naked with Sen and others in a room at the Imperial Hotel and forced to sign a statement abandoning plans to alter the Japanese writing system. The year portrayed was a bleak and painful time for Japan. Shinsuke's diary, however, is surprisingly cheerful, filled with a wealth of details of ordinary people's openhearted lives. The author draws a lively portrait of Japanese who, despite privation, find relief in laughter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hisashi Inoue (1934-2010) had written a number of scripts, including those for the popular puppet-adventure show *Hyokkori hyotan-jima* (Bottle-gourd Island), which aired on NHK between 1964-1969. He then attracted attention with a number of satiric comic plays. His first novel, *Tegusari shinju* (Handcuffed Double Suicide), a parody on the classical theme of double suicide, was published in 1970. Almost all his novels, including *Tokyo Seven Roses*, are informed by a cutting wit. He wrote for his own theatrical troupe, Komatsuza, and served as president of the Japan P.E.N. Club from 2003–2007.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Matthias Pfeifer is a graduate of Frankfurt University, where he studied both German and Japanese literature. Since 1994 he has taught German languages and comparative culture at the University of Shizuoka. He is the translator of two books: *Deciphering Kafka* by Tadashi Sakauchi and *Flying Trapeze* by Hideo Okuda.

AWARDS

- 1972 Kishida Kunio Stage Drama Award, and Minister of Education Award for New Artists, for the play *Dogen no boken* (Dogen's Adventures)
- 1972 Naoki Prize, for *Tegusari shinju*
- 1981 Japan SF Grand Prize, for *Kirikirijin* (Kirikiri People)
- 1982 Seiun Prize, also for *Kirikirijin*
- 1991 Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize, for *Shanghai Moon*

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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



JAPANESE
LITERATURE
PUBLISHING
PROJECT

TITLE
God's Boat
(*Kamisama no boto*)
AUTHOR
Kaori Ekuni

Translator:
Wolfgang Schlecht

Fiction Genre:

Love Story

No. of Words (Approx.):
53,340

Originally Published by:
Shinchosha (1999)

Rights Sold (Other Titles):
Twinkle, Twinkle

G-013-3

KEY POINTS

- Award-winning and best-selling author.
- Highly popular author among young female readers in Japan.

SYNOPSIS

The author comments in the afterword as follows:
"This is a small, quiet tale, but a tale of madness. And of all the books I have written so far, I think it is the most dangerous". It is a profound tale of the madness of romantic love.

The main character, Yoko, lives alone with her daughter, Soko. In the daytime she teaches piano, and at night she works in a bar. Once she had a passionate, "bone-melting" love affair, out of which Soko was born. Ten years ago the man disappeared after promising, "Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, I swear I will find you again". Yoko believed him without question. The story picks up in 1997, when Yoko is thirty-five and Soko is ten, and covers more than seven years of their daily life from the alternating perspectives of mother and child. Yoko has three treasures: the piano, "him", and Soko. She works without pushing herself, careful to make time for the pleasures of reading, drinking,

and relaxing. She takes every opportunity to sing the praises of Soko's father, and let her know what a wonderful man he was. From their conversation, little by little, Yoko's past emerges.

When Soko asks, "Why do we have to move all the time?" Yoko answers, "Because we're in God's boat". In order that "he" can someday find her, she keeps from forming deep attachments and avoids blending into her surroundings; every year or so they move someplace new.

Amid this peaceful life, Yoko encounters "the greatest crisis of [her] life". Soko says she wants to live in a dormitory. Fearful that she will never be reunited with her lover, and will now lose Soko as well, Yoko grows frightened and distraught. In the midst of ordinary, matter-of-fact life, a lurking madness; love and parting, and death: This is one of the most important works by an author who has extraordinary sensitivity to loss and conveys it with technical skill of the highest order.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kaori Ekuni (1964-) began her writing career in 1987 with a work that won a children's literature prize. In 1991, *Kira kira hikaru* (Twinkle Twinkle) became a bestseller, and Ekuni began to turn her hand to adult fiction. Her essays and love stories, containing delicate portrayals of the suffering of young women, have gained the overwhelming support of female readers.

AWARDS

1992 Murasaki Shikibu Literary Prize, for *Twinkle Twinkle*

2002 Yamamoto Shugoro Prize, for *Oyogu no ni anzen demo tekisetsu demo arimasen* (Neither Safe nor Suitable for Swimming)

2004 Naoki Prize, for *Gokyu suru junbi wa dekite ita* (Ready to Cry at Any Moment)

REVIEWS AND ACCLAIMS

"A work that could have been written only by someone possessing the sensibility of an adult and a child in equal measure". --- Haruo Yamashita, writer of children's literature (from the commentary in the paperback edition)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Wolfgang Schlecht was born in Bavaria, Germany, in 1950. He is currently a professor at Waseda University, where he teaches German language, comparative literature, and translation theory. He has rendered into German a wide array of fiction, including Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen*, Keizo Hino's *Garage with a Skylight*, and Taeko Tomioka's *Marriage*, among other works.

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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

TITLE
Undulating Ground
(*Namiutsu tochi*)
AUTHOR
Taeko Tomioka

Translator:

Jutta Vogt

Fiction Genre:

Feminism; Human Relationships

No. of Words (Approx.):

42,800

Originally Published by:

Kodansha

Rights Sold (This Title, Other

Languages):

English

Rights Sold (Other Titles):

***The Funeral Of Giraffe*
*Nothing To Say "Heirat"***

G-015-3

KEY POINTS

- Award-winning author.
- Challenges traditional gender roles in fiction.

SYNOPSIS

It is the early eighties and the rise of the bubble economy in Japan. The housing industry is booming, and previously unpopulated mountainous areas of the Japanese countryside are being leveled to accommodate new waves of people. Similarly, a new wave of feminism, particularly a change in attitudes to marriage and child-rearing is growing among the women of Japan. Both the physical and social landscapes are in flux.

In the midst of this we meet Kyoko, in her early forties, married, and childless by choice. Smart,

witty, and with no compunction about getting what she wants, she rejects entirely the traditional role of women, and actively seeks lovers outside her marriage. When she begins a relationship with one man who is as traditional and conformist as they come, the result is at times uncomfortable, at others comical, but ultimately fatal.

Beautifully written by Taeko Tomioka, a renowned poet, the novel is at times comic in tone, but always touching in its portrayal of a people fighting to escape old ties, yet at the same swept away by the ferocious waves of change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Taeko Tomioka (1935-) began her literary career as a poet. While still in college, from the age of twenty-one she began to compose poetry, and was fortunate to win quick recognition. From around the age of thirty-five she began to grow weary of poetry and turned to writing prose fiction. She has established a unique literary style imbued with the language sense of Osaka people and is known also for the depth of her scholarship in Edo literature, including the works of Saikaku Ihara (1642-93) and Monzaemon Chikamatsu (1653-1725).

AWARDS

1973 Tamura Toshiko Prize, for *Shokubutsusai* (Plant Festival)

1974 Women's Literary Prize, for *Meido no kazoku* (Family in the Netherworld)

REVIEWS AND ACCLAIMS

"It is not accidental that the author has turned the usual 'man buys woman' story on its head, basing her novel on the premise of 'woman buys man'".

--- Norihiro Kato, literary critic (from the commentary to the paperback edition)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Jutta Vogt is a freelance and award-winning translator specializing in modern and contemporary Japanese literature. She was born in Düsseldorf in 1969 and received a degree from the University of Bonn in 1998. She taught German language and translation at Niigata University from 1999 to 2002. She participated in the 3rd Shizuoka International Translation Competition, winning the Distinctive Merit Award for translation from Japanese to German. She currently lives in Sheffield, UK, working as a freelance translator. She has translated into German Sachio Ito's *The House of My Sitter*.

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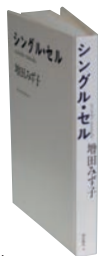
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ADVANCE INFORMATION
GERMAN PROGRAM



J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C T

TITLE
Single Cell
(*Shinguru seru*)
AUTHOR
Mizuko Masuda

Translator:
Heike Patzschke
Fiction Genre:
**Contemporary Urban
Literature**
No. of Words (Approx.):
53,090
Originally Published by:
Fukutake Shoten (1986)
Rights Sold (This Title,
Other Languages):
English
Rights Sold(Other Titles):
**Das Neue Leben,
Blumen**

G-016-3

KEY POINTS

- Introspective novel dealing with the growing number of singles living their "single-cell" lives in Tokyo.
- Izumi Kyoka Prize winning novel.

SYNOPSIS

The main character is a twenty-five-year-old graduate student named Mikio Shiiba. He lost his mother early in life, and ever since his father's sudden death seven years ago he has been living alone in Tokyo. A struggling student, he juggles part-time work as a tutor with his studies in the Department of Agriculture.

Shiiba is spending time in late autumn in an inn. He wants to stay in graduate school and continue his studies, but Professor T. has given up on him and advised him to get a job. Facing graduation in the spring, he has come here to spend a quiet two weeks and finish his dissertation, but in his disappointment he's making no progress. Unwilling to think about his future, his mind turns to sentimental reflections on the past. Looking back, he is appalled to see that after his father's death he

cut his ties with other people, resolving to live alone, and was then forced by poverty to spend his every free moment buried in work.

Managing to finish the thesis, on the last day of his stay he comes upon Ryoko whom he had met briefly once before. When she confides that she can't afford the fare home, they travel back together, have sex, but in the end she goes away. The story reads like a scientific experiment the author designed for her own amusement: if a single-cell individual who has cut all ties to the outer world and is plantlike in the extreme meets up with a single-cell member of the opposite sex who has an animal's sharp sense of smell, what chemical reaction will occur? The author's experiences as a graduate student in agriculture are brought into play, lending realism to Shiiba's detailed characterization. That realism supports this sophisticated literary experiment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mizuko Masuda (1948-) graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture of the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, belongs to two minorities in the field of Japanese literature: women and scientists. From the late seventies, while working in a biochemistry lab at Nippon Medical University, she began to publish fiction. Her short stories have great appeal as well, and she is a repeated nominee for the Akutagawa Prize.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Heike Patzschke took the interpreting and translating course at Humboldt University in Berlin and studied Japanese literature to receive a PhD in 1987. In 1994 she began translating and interpreting on a freelance basis. Since 1998 she has also taught Japanese literature and Japanese-German translation at the University of Cologne. She is the translator of Ogai Mori's *Diary in Germany*, of Ryotaro Shiba's *The Last Shogun*, and of countless short stories by such authors as Keizo Hino, Amy Yamada, and Takeshi Kaiko.

AWARDS

- 1985 Noma Literary Prize for New Writers, *Jiyu jikan* (Free Time)
- 1986 Izumi Kyoka Prize, for *Single Cell*
- 2001 Ito Sei Prize, for *Tsukiyomi* (Moon-viewing)

REVIEWS AND ACCLAIMS

"Though this is a work of realism, it is filled to the limit with thought experiments. Certainly one of the author's most important works, it represents a culmination of sorts".--- Koichiro Tomioka, literary critic

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ADVANCE INFORMATION

GERMAN PROGRAM

J A P A N E S E
L I T E R A T U R E
P U B L I S H I N G
P R O J E C TTITLE
A Room Where
the Star-Spangled Banner
Cannot Be Heard

(Seijoki no kikoenai heya)

AUTHOR

Hideo Levy

Translator:

Matthias Adler

Fiction Genre:

Contemporary Short
Fiction

No. of Words (Approx.):

31,880

Originally Published by:

Kodansha (1992)

G-017-3

KEY POINTS

- Award-winning American author who writes fiction in Japanese.
- Semi-autobiographical.

SYNOPSIS

Hideo Levy symbolizes the richness of contemporary Japanese literature. He is well known as the first non-native novelist to write fiction in Japanese. In this book Levy reveals that his visits to Japan piled up until "my life was split in two, one half spent in Japan and the other in the US." What led Levy to write in Japanese? In the afterword he writes: "My immediate response is, Japanese is beautiful. Why wouldn't I want to write in Japanese?"

The title work of this trilogy is set in Yokohama in the late sixties, when the student movement and protests against the Vietnam War were at their height. A seventeen-year-old boy named Ben Isaac, the son of an American diplomat, lives in the consulate. He is rebellious toward his father and feels antipathy toward his native country. The beauty

of Japanese takes hold of him, and finally one day he runs away from home, disappearing into the teeming crowds of Shinjuku.

Ben's experiences are a virtual recreation of the author's own youth. Wandering the streets of Tokyo, Ben can hardly decipher the signs around him or make sense of the sounds that reach his ears. Eventually the sounds of Japanese sink into his mind with a revelation similar to that of Helen Keller when her "generous and brilliant teacher taught her the letters to spell "W-A-T-E-R". Many Japanese still cling to the conviction that no foreigner could ever hope to understand Japanese. Surrounded by people like this, Ben and author Levy alike succeed in breaking out of their cage. The other two pieces of fiction in this book, both of which also feature Ben, are *Nobemba* (November) and *Nakama* (Comrade).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hideo Levy (1950-) was born to a Jewish-American father and a Polish immigrant mother, in Berkeley, California. He embarked on a career as a scholar of Japanese literature, becoming an assistant professor at Princeton at the age of twenty-eight.

In 1981, he published an English translation of the first volume of Japan's most ancient poetry collection, *Man'yoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), for which he won the 1982 National Book Awards. Now based in Tokyo, he travels frequently to the US and China in connection with his writing.

AWARDS

1982 National Book Awards, for *Man'yoshu*

1992 Noma Literary Prize for New Writers, for *A Room Where the Star-Spangled Banner Cannot Be Heard*

2005 Osaragi Jiro Prize, for *Chiji ni kudakete* (Broken into Thousands of Pieces)

REVIEWS AND ACCLAIMS

"Hideo Levy, roaming the riches and desert wastes of language, has added a fresh page to Japanese literature. His stunning point of departure is this work". ---Koichiro Tomioka, Critic (from the commentary in the Japanese paperback edition)

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Matthias Adler studied Japanese and Korean at the University of Bonn from 1990 to 1996. After that he devoted himself to his Japanese and Korean studies in universities in Japan and Korea. Currently, while working at an airline company, he is engaged in translating some works from Japanese into German.

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