

In this edition of the Japan Society Review we feature three superstars of contemporary Japanese literature, Furukawa Hideo, Tawara Machi and Wataya Risa, all of whom have achieved both critical and popular acclaim.

Furukawa Hideo has been described as the new Murakami, and while the comparison holds true in terms of his popularity and prolific output, his breadth of style and genre set him aside. Not only does he do Murakami-esque magic realism, but his novels are also suffused with history, classicism, autobiography and philosophy. In the case of *Horses, Horses, In the End the Light Remains Pure* he juggles all of these at once as he attempts to come to terms with 3.11.

Poet Tawara Machi's *Salad Anniversary* was released in 1987 when she was only 26 and has sold nearly three million copies in Japan and eight million worldwide, with Tawara herself credited with reviving the *tanka* form. Here Chris

Beckett reviews Pushkin Press's new pocket-sized edition alongside poet Erica Facey's dual-language collection *Images*.

Wataya Risa is another Japanese author to have experienced success at a young age. Her second novel *I Want to Kick You in the Back* won her the Akutagawa Prize at only nineteen in 2003 and has now made a long awaited appearance in English. She offers a fresh perspective on Japan's fan culture.

Elsewhere in this issue, Chris Corker considers Murakami Ryū's *Tokyo Decadence* and asks whether the former *enfant terrible* retains the ability to shock, Charlotte Goff unpicks the many conflicts that characterise University of Hawaii Press's new collection of Okinawan literature, and Dominika Mackiewicz reviews Michael Lucken's reassessment of Japanese artistic mimeticism.

William Upton

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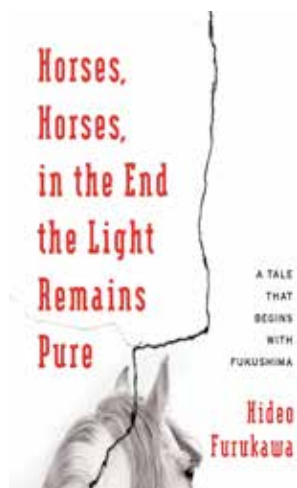
Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure

by Furukawa Hideo

Columbia University Press
(2016)

ISBN-13: 978-0231178693

Review by
Alice French



In declaring *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure* to be 'a tale that begins with Fukushima', Furukawa Hideo sets himself a mammoth task. How to do such a defining event in modern Japanese history justice in just 140 pages? Furukawa certainly seems aware of the enormity of the challenge, and remains until the end torn between tackling it with fact or with fiction. Whether the responsibility is a privilege or a burden, the multi-prize winning author does not take it lightly, putting, as he writes, his 'integrity' on the line in this attempt to provide some sort of closure ('definitive salvation') not only for himself (he was born in Fukushima) but also for an entire nation in mourning and to keep the disaster alive in people's memories.

Horses, Horses was first published in the *Shinchō* journal in July 2011, and therefore can be read as an almost immediate autobiographical response to the 3.11 tragedy. As a Fukushima native whose farming family were in the Tōhoku region at the time of the earthquake and subsequent tsunami, the disaster had a personal as well as national significance for Furukawa. He was on business in Tokyo at the time and so could only watch events unfold from afar along with the rest of the population, distancing him from the reality of the destruction. This part-novel, part-essay follows his trip to the disaster zone and provides a 'real-time' account of his reaction to the devastation. In an attempt to express the inexpressible, Furukawa defines this period as 'spirited away time', conveying his struggle with the overwhelming mixture of emotions through his jumps between past and present, fact and fiction and first and third person. There is no doubt that his writing style is difficult to follow at first – in fact it remains perplexing until the final line – however in time it reveals itself to be nothing short of brilliant.

Furukawa is known for playing with genre in his novels, however *Horses, Horses* does not read as though it is deliberately experimental; rather it unfolds as a natural train of thought. Furukawa interrupts himself

with memories and side notes and gets distracted from the main narrative by an apparent urge to put everything into wider historical perspective. As a result, the novel is studded with discerning and very quotable, if sweeping, lines such as 'our history, the history of the Japanese, is nothing more than a history of killing people.' At the risk of sounding clichéd, Furukawa truly does give his reader a glimpse into the inner workings of his thoughts as he attempts to come to terms with the obliteration of his hometown. With wonderful irony, the confusing narrative makes the narrator's cocktail of emotions (guilt, grief, disbelief) crystal clear. At times, Furukawa is reluctant to address the issue of 3.11 directly, focusing on the effects it has had on the region's wildlife rather than discussing the human impact. He even resorts to writing about the writing of novels in order to avoid the task of writing a novel about Fukushima. The text is full of such riddles and nods to metafiction, the elegance and eloquence of which must partly be attributed to Doug Slaymaker's translation.

Overall, *Horses, Horses, in the end the Light Remains Pure* is an emotional, historical and, above all, literary triumph that really must be experienced first-hand. Although Furukawa himself recognises his inability to provide any sense of closure for the victims of 3.11 (he admits in the last line that 'at this point my essay ends, and begins'), his prose should not be viewed as anything less than a masterpiece. In fact, it would not be hyperbolic to say that, in these 140 pages, Furukawa is able to convey comprehensibly the immediate emotional reaction of Japan just weeks after it experienced the most powerful earthquake in the nation's history. Therefore, if you have the patience for the rather jumbled narrative, this is an absolute must-read. §

I Want to Kick You in the Back

by Wataya Risa

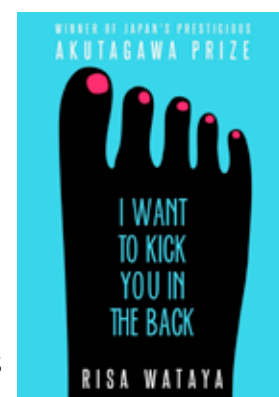
One Peace Books (2015)

ISBN-13: 978-1-935548-88-1

Review by Eluned Gramich

'We were leftovers,' says Hasegawa Hatsumi of her and her enigmatic friend, Ninagawa Satoshi. 'Every time our classmates laughed, we grew another year older.'

Written by a nineteen year old student while she was still at university, the bestselling *I Want to Kick You in the Back* is a slim, deceptively simple tale about



teenage life and love. It won Wataya Risa the biannual Akutagawa Prize in 2003, making her the youngest ever recipient of Japan's most prestigious literary award. Skilfully translated by Julianne Neville, this is the first time Wataya has been made available to an English-speaking readership, and I'm sure it won't be the last.

That the author was so young when she wrote this novel comes as no surprise. The story follows a young girl, Hatsumi, as she moves into Middle School and struggles to adjust to her new environment. She knows nobody apart from her best friend, who has found a new friendship group that Hatsumi doesn't approve of. As a result, she spends her lunchtimes on her own, avoiding other people and complaining about her life. A boy in her science class, the quiet Satoshi, also chooses to avoid socialising with his fellow classmates. They become friends and Hatsumi finds out that he is a super fan of the teen idol, Oli-chan. Very soon, Hatsumi gets sucked up into Satoshi's fantasy world, his lust and obsession for an unattainable celebrity girl who pretends to be younger than she is. Hatsumi puts it this way: 'She (Oli-chan) was an intrinsically young person, a person good at being young. And then there was me, actually young but terrible at it.' Hatsumi's tone is intimate, natural and entirely believable as Wataya succeeds in capturing the mixture of insecurity, defensiveness and put-on bluster of a thirteen year old.

The type of the 'creepy' super-fan is not new to Japan and perhaps partly explains why the novel did so well with readers there. It taps into the contemporary "fandom" phenomenon, famously typified by the legions of male fans who follow the teen pop group AKB48. In Japan, unlike in the UK, this is the terrain of (usually single) men. Wataya approaches this subculture, not by trying to speak from a male standpoint, but by using Hatsumi to voice the confusion and worries that readers might share. Like many women, she fails to understand why Satoshi is more interested in a distant celebrity model than in the living, breathing girl sitting beside him.

The obsession for teen idols embodies so much of what it means to be young: the desire for a role model, the need for guidance and instruction. It's a place where you can put all your feelings: desire, love, loneliness, lust. More than anything the novel is about sexual awakening. This is somewhat hidden at first by the misleadingly innocent and child-like language and setting. Far from being part of a teenage tantrum, Hatsumi's desire to kick Satoshi in the back is bound up with the intensity of his sexual fixation on Oli-chan. It unleashes her 'violent desires... inspired by a feeling stronger than mere love or affection.' At one point, Hatsumi discovers something

shocking, stomach-churning, locked away in Satoshi's 'fan' box: this discovery hails the start of a new kind of longing in her. Even her female friendships begin to glow with sexual tension, because for her, a girl on the verge of becoming a woman, everything is lit up with a new energy she barely understands.

This short novel is the sort of book you can read in one sitting: the sort of book which sends you into another world, another person's life, for however brief a time, and does not let you go afterwards. The first person voice is seductive through its honesty and strength. In the intersection of violence, obsession, and sex, Wataya has caught the whirring-headed confusion of two teenagers who have a lot yet to learn. §

Imitation and Creativity in Japanese Arts

by Michael Lucken

Columbia University Press
(2016)

ISBN-10: 0231172923

Review by Dominika
Mackiewicz



In his book *A Japanese Mirror* (1984), Ian Buruma, Dutch historian and author of numerous volumes on Japan, describes 'continuities behind the façade of constant change' that epitomise so-called Japaneseness. Japanese arts have long been considered as somewhat schizophrenic in their constant attempts to reproduce the West on one hand and their pursuit to portray a 'national identity' on the other. Marked by human and natural disasters, the history of Japan reveals a fascinating need to look into the past with zeal, to rebuild, to reimagine, and to remember.

In his interdisciplinary study *Imitation and Creativity in Japanese Arts: From Kishida Ryūsei to Miyazaki Hayao*, Michael Lucken attempts to both discern the past in contemporary Japanese art, while also focusing on its innovative characteristics, unpicking and complicating the idea of Japan as a nation of imitators. The book is a survey of Japanese 'creative imitation' and the author emphasises throughout the elasticity of mimetism that makes Japanese art so hard to pin down. It explores Kishida Ryūsei's *Portraits of Reiko* (1917-1929), Kurosawa Akira's *Ikiru* (1952), Araki Nobuyoshi's *Sentimental Journey – Winter* (1970-1990) and Miyazaki

Hayao's *Spirited Away* (2001), and the author's method is based on initial description, followed by careful historical and theoretical examination. In this way, Lucken avoids fitting works into a predefined theoretical system, basing his analysis on what can actually be seen. These works present an interesting and chronological array that plays with the idea of art's reflective qualities and forms an enriching dialogue between the old and the new.

The book starts with Kishida Ryūsei's *Portraits of Reiko*, a series of twelve depictions of the artist's daughter, executed one per year around her birthday. The viewer witnesses the striking transformation in the artist's style and technique, from realistic oil painting à la Holbein, to a chilling ink portrait of Reiko's demonic face, comprising simple colour on paper in traditional Japanese style. Through borrowing different methods from other artists but applying them in a highly personalised 'distorted' fashion, Kishida creates an uncanny illustration of the passage of time and his own artistic education.

Similarly Kurosawa Akira, famous for his film adaptations of Western literature, tends to direct attention to the nature of the medium. Watanabe, the dying protagonist of *Ikiru*, a depiction of the last days of a minor Tokyo bureaucrat, wants to make a change, to leave a trace by building a playground in post-war Tokyo's poorest neighbourhood. While the film bears a resemblance to Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), it is also a highly personal statement from Kurosawa, through which he asks, What is the need of recording? What is the nature of mirroring the world in film? Lucken finds that Kurosawa's answers are to seek originality in collective creation and to juxtapose 'the real' with the 'aesthetical'; like Watanabe's impending death, discernible on an X-ray photograph and recorded through the cinematic medium. It is suggested that art is at its best when meeting life.

Araki Nobuyoshi is known for his daily routine of taking photos continuously, often of similar subjects and objects. Repetition is a key part of his oeuvre and he uses it in his *Sentimental Journey*, a series of photographs focusing on Araki's relationship with his beloved wife Yōko, from their honeymoon to her death in 1990. Lucken focuses here on the significant and unexpected image of Yōko's hyoid bone being retrieved after cremation. The author's insightful description highlights how by placing this venerable, yet never photographed, object next to other common ones, such as a Buddhist tablet and Yōko's portrait, Araki confronts his own fears and society's dogmas.

In its excellent last chapter, the book takes the reader on a journey through *Spirited Away* and its recurring visual geographies of verticals, horizontals and 'adventures of the oblique'. The vertical scenes are echoed in the design of the treacherous bathhouse and reference a city with its all-consuming aspirations and power relations. These are contrasted by horizontal, connective passages filled with tranquillity and restorative powers. Lucken notes the conflicting facets of the high-rise and landscape perspectives, with their underlying social implications, subtly offered by Miyazaki. Out of both, the director distils his own diagonal way, which signifies the unstable, but also the transitional and regenerative. Again, as Lucken proposes, it's when the art goes askew, that it highlights the importance of mundane recurrence.

Maybe the subtlest of all of Lucken's interpretations is encapsulated in the outer book sleeve, with the reproduction of *Untitled* (1959) by Gutai member Sadamasa Motonaga. By using familiar materials and inspired by *tarashikomi* (a traditional *nihonga* technique), the painter created a new artistic phenomena in the shape of so-called 'performance paintings'. Led by the words of Gutai's leader, Yoshihara Jirō, 'transformation is nothing other than renewal', he understood that invention lies in the dissemination and reinterpretation of the past – the repetition that comes from profound appreciation. Following Motonaga's example, Lucken also harks back to the fathers of re-invention. S

Salad Anniversary

by Tawara Machi

Translated by
Juliet Winters Carpenter

Pushkin Press (2014)

ISBN-10: 1782271066



Images

by Erica Facey

France-Do (2014)

ISBN-13: 978-4781408149

Review by Chris Beckett



I love the spareness of *haiku* and *tanka*, that feeling of a pebble sending ripples through your head. So I find it

rather daunting to open a collection with over three hundred such poems! To me, it feels contradictory to crowd *haiku*, which depend on the empty space around them on the page and in the reader's brain to breathe and work their magic.

But I need not have worried: *Salad Anniversary*, is a delightfully small-sized book, with a washed pink cover, light but solid. And Tawara Machi's poems are short but lively and personal. I do not think they need a lot of space around them. They feel more like an album of small photos telling a story, so engaging and contemporary that it becomes part of the reader's own album, his or her own story.

The first sequence 'August Morning' charts the arc of a relationship, centred on Kujukuri Beach, from

Is there anything more?
More to believe, more to want?
Sprawled side by side on sand

through tender details of the everyday

Your hand
signalling for a draft beer
catches my eye and absorbs me

to the break-up

Late afternoon –
you and I gaze at the same thing
as between us something ends

Tawara delights in small almost trivial details, and frequently inserts snippets of speech

"Today the public bath was closed."
I want to spend every day
talking of little things like that

and the details are always telling: her poems do not need a lot of space precisely because they are rooted in the urban rather than the eternal. Or perhaps I'd say they are about the eternal as expressed through the ephemeral urban clutter; even the clutter of ephemeral human relationships. She substitutes falling leaves or blossoms with an old toothbrush, a train ticket or, indeed, a salad (which must be wilting, at least by its anniversary). Her poems are set in the contemporary whirl and for all of us city whirlers they are easy to understand and to be moved by. Like sugar they go straight into the blood. They occasionally become a little cute for my liking (*kawai, ne!*), but there is a constant sense of the woman's viewpoint which is clear-eyed and refreshing:

"Call me again" "Wait for me"
Your love is always spoken
in commands

So I can easily appreciate the book's huge bestseller status in Japan, the so-called "Salad phenomenon" (over 2.5 million copies sold!). What I find harder to grasp is why Juliet Carpenter has chosen 3-line stanzas when translating 5-line *tanka*. In the 'Afterword' she points out that the original Japanese poems are normally written in a single vertical line, sometimes interrupted, but not necessarily in accordance with the traditional 5-7-5-7-7 syllable count. Even so, it is strange to see 3-line poems which look like *haiku* but don't sound like *haiku* and then to find out that they are *tanka*! I would have tried to keep the 5 line structure but varied the line lengths with the sense: after all, Tawara apparently keeps to the syllable total of *tanka*.

But in the end, this is just a cavil: I think lots of English language readers will love these poems, like the millions of Japanese, regardless of whether they like poetry or care a fig about poetic forms.

Erica Facey's delightful bilingual collection, *Images*, is made up of one-vertical-line *haiku* in the Japanese, and 3-line *haiku* in English. The Japanese section starts from the right and meets its English counterpart in the middle coming the other way. There is no mention of a translator, so I assume that Facey is a bilingual poet. That is fascinating in itself and I would love to know which language the poems started in; whether this was different for each poem or the same for all; even if some of the poems drifted between languages like the far travelling daughter in the first poem of the book:

My far travelling daughter
falling cherry blossoms
in Japan

I do not read Japanese, but it seems to me that the poems in Japanese keep to the 5-7-5 *haiku* model, whereas the English although 3 lines do not. I think that is a good thing as it means Facey can concentrate on rhythm and meaning, on brevity and concentration. And there is never any sense of padding to match the count. So she summons up scenes of e.g. Japan in the West with an evocative and never cloying charm, for example

The young chef
learning 'whiting' as the English
name for the fish

So yes, there are cherry blossoms and winter cherries and other seasonal clichés (I mean traditions!)

of *haiku*, but Facey effortlessly shows us how the traditional fits into the everyday; how loved places travel with us in our memories and imaginations, but also in translated words, and of course in common things like tea or clothes, even music, which make their own journeys across the globe and down the centuries:

English summer evening
A woman in Chinese dress
listening to Bach

Facey invites us to meditate on contrasts and similarities, through space and time: how the gathering of poets and plum blossoms which sounds like a scene

in Basho's Japan is actually happening today, at Keat's House, Hampstead.

Sometimes I yearn for a little more colour or detail, for example that the wind at Matsushima be more fully evoked than simply 'fragrant'; or that we meet a glass of draft beer perhaps, or a can of green peas, like in a Tawara Machi poem, rather than another cup of tea!

However, there is a natural, unforced quality in Facey's writing which I really admire. And she is a master of repetition, that all-important poetic technique which is a close sister to rhyme: winter cherries, a daffodil village, the wonderfully moving autumn butterfly, even a summer evening, all grow more lovely and significant every time she evokes them. §

Tokyo Decadence: 15 Stories

by Murakami Ryū

Kurodahan Press (2016)

ISBN-10: 4902075784

Review by Chris Corker



There was a time when writing about sex was a taboo, authors treading the line with innuendo-laden prose about as adept at concealment as Adam and Eve's fig leaves. Nowadays, everyone's aunty has read *Fifty Shades of Grey* and, to their younger relations' horror, finds it a bit dull. The boundaries have been well and truly pushed, for better or worse, and what we are left with is a society that is as desensitised to sex as it is to violence. In fact, the recent success of a certain book-come television series goes to show that a little titillation and dismemberment can be just what the sales doctor ordered.

Of course, it goes without saying that between the period of suggestive whispers and the current 'it's nothing I haven't seen before' generation, there was a transitional phase. Even when the envelope seems to be pushing itself, on closer scrutiny there are a group of disgruntled, disenfranchised individuals urging it forward with all their might, if only to see what might happen. We tend to call these individuals pioneers, and there is no doubt that Murakami Ryū was one such man. In a conservative 1970s Japanese society that didn't always see much merit in deviating from the norm, it was inevitable that characters like Murakami and indeed director Miike Takeshi, who filmed Murakami's novel *Audition*, would spring up like weeds through Japan's finely-raked rock garden,

bringing with them an extreme approach poised to challenge preconceptions and cause disharmony.

A rebellious youth, Murakami was placed under a three-month house arrest for barricading the roof of his high-school, before later dropping out of college to focus on his rock band and 8-millimeter film making. Many of his books are heavily-autobiographical, dealing with drug-use, a rejection of the establishment and the cultural abrasions caused by US military bases. His first novel, *Almost Transparent Blue*, an account of a vicious cycle of sex, drugs and rock, was first published in 1972, when Murakami was still at university. It went on to win the Akutagawa Award, Japan's most prestigious literary prize. It is telling that while critics accused the author of decadence and condemned his work, others hailed the book as a stylistic revelation. Murakami had been moulded by the times, and was supported by a strong counter-culture current. Being a man of the times, however, can be a double-edged sword. The question that formed in my mind as I began reading *Tokyo Decadence's* collection of short stories was whether Murakami Ryū was still relevant in an age for which the original revolution is a distant speck on the horizon.

After reading the first stories of this collection, connected by topics of prostitution and unusual sexual proclivities, my initial conclusion was that their intention was simply to shock. From a trucker that enjoys self-emasculatation and dressing up as a woman to the lurid details of a prostitute's clients, Murakami seems at pains to lay everything out, warts and all. In fact, given his cross-oeuvre penchant especially for sex and the sex trade, some of the stories can feel a little familiar. There's something to be said for linking stories through a theme, but when synergy becomes repetition, it's clearly a detractor.

Throughout the book there are moments when it

feels as if the author has gone out of his way to be extreme, only to then lose a little bit of the gritty realism that is his domain. ('In eighteen months Kimiko had aborted three pregnancies, slashed her wrists twice, had sex with countless black GIs, and got herself arrested twice and rushed to hospital with heart failure once.'). You feel that the desire to shock is always at the forefront of the author's mind. There is sexual mutilation reminiscent of *American Psycho*; one character tries to recall a quip about a dead baby, while another opines that 'people who suffer all the time shouldn't be allowed to live.' But the question here must be whether or not a sustained current of the extreme doesn't lessen the impact. Often the most shocking elements of story-telling are nestled between soft, fluffy pillows of serenity or cool understatement.

Comparisons with his namesake, Murakami Haruki, are unavoidable given their joint prominence in Japanese literature. Beyond this, there are also further similarities of topic. Both authors deal frankly with sex, write extensively about jazz and seem equally obsessed with baseball. Even their favoured backdrops have a habit of overlapping, most conversations taking place in either run-down or swanky bars in Shinjuku, and other central Tokyo locations. And while Murakami Haruki's forte is, to borrow the title of Jay Rubin's book, 'the music of words', where the humdrum is elevated to something beautiful, Murakami Ryū is more of a pragmatist, preferring to slap you around the face with the soiled condom of truth than romanticise. Whether admirably truthful or tactless, that's just the way he writes. Although, it is hard not to cringe at lines like: '...penetrated my frazzled brain and body like a vibrator.' And cringe I did at other lines suitable for a man who at times thinks he is far more hip and daring than he now appears.

The second half is stronger. Yes, it deals with sex

but also with human relationships beyond the bedroom. Written later in Murakami's career, these stories feature the autobiographical elements of working in the film industry and the author's passion for Cuban music. Three stories in particular, each featuring the recurring character of Meiko Akagawa, stand out from the rest with their tragically flawed characters searching fruitlessly for their dreams. Also evident here is the unique ennui born of living in one of the most technologically advanced and comfortable countries in the world.

'In this country it's taboo even to think about looking for something more in life [...] something significant is missing, and that's something Japan never had.'

This extract is from the strongest piece, 'Historia de un Amor', a story about the fluxing vividness of life, and one that considers whether being first-world necessarily means being first-rate. Murakami's descriptions of Cuban music are also most prevalent here, and his love for the genre radiates from the page.

So my question from earlier still stands: Is Murakami still relevant for readers in our desensitised age? Is an author, whose *modus operandi* is to shock, but no longer has the power to do so, still serving a purpose? Like a politician I will answer these with a few questions of my own. Are you a fan of what is often termed 'Asia Extreme'? Are you keen to see the – sometimes exaggerated – darker side of Japanese life, hidden beneath Hokusai postcards and pictures of monkeys in hot springs? Are you willing to forego some pretty shameless attempts to shock in order to discover the finer points of a clearly talented author? If you answered yes to these questions, you will find plenty to like in this collection, and perhaps we can allow the revolutionary to reign for a little longer, before he too is dethroned by another. §

Islands of Protest: Japanese Literature from Okinawa

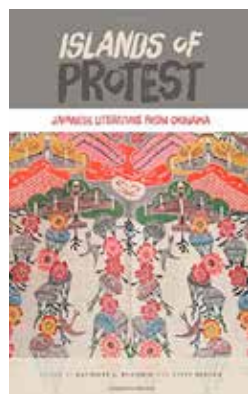
by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson (eds.)

University of Hawaii Press (2016)

ISBN-10: 0824839803

Review by Charlotte Goff

The image of Okinawa presented in the Japanese media is overwhelmingly that of sun-soaked islands where things move at a leisurely pace and action takes place under the shade of the *kuwadiisaa* or the *yuuna* tree: a land of traditional festivals, of drinking Orion beer



and *awamori* and of dancing to the notes of the three-stringed *sanshin*. This new collection of Okinawan literature refutes the image of a peaceful land where danger comes at the fangs of the *habu* snake or the box jellyfish rather than the tensions between its inhabitants. It shows how life on the Okinawan diaspora is dictated by the relationships between outsiders and locals: by the efforts of mainland Japanese and US military to assert their presence on islands which try in turn to reassert their own identities. These are undeniably, Bhowmik and Rabson show us, *Islands of Protest*.

Okinawa comprises just 0.6% of Japan's land area and yet hosts 62% of US military bases in Japan, a disproportionate burden and a cause of tension which

is, unsurprisingly, a central theme in this collection. The literature in this collection spans life on the islands both during and after war, and the line between being in a state of conflict and one of peace blurs as tensions continue, heedless of diplomatic status. It is so much a part of the narrative of the Okinawan islands that one is left wondering what the islands' identity had been before the onset of war and the arrival of American and Japanese soldiers that came with it; had they then been purely, uncomplicatedly, the 'Islands of the *sanshin* guitar/ Islands of *awamor* liquor/ Islands of verse/ Islands of dance...' that Yamanokuchi Baku remembers in the bittersweet 'Okinawa, Where Will You Go Now?' The identity of the Ryukyu Islands as described in this collection is something which has developed in and been defined against battles and their aftermath.

Nowhere is the anger towards the US military clearer and more visceral than in 'Hope', the short story by Akutagawa prize-winning author Medoruma Shun which opens the anthology. Medoruma, who was himself arrested this year for trespassing onto an American naval base in Okinawa as part of a protest, paints a picture of a local man so filled with the need to take action against the soldiers, and equally sure that mere protests cannot effect this, that he abducts and murders a child with 'straw-coloured' hair: for him, the killing of this one American child more effective a protest against the rape of a young Okinawan woman than 80,000 demonstrators could ever be. But relations between the Okinawan islands' inhabitants and the US military are characterised by more than simple, unilateral hostility; the refusal to oversimplify, reducing Okinawan society to that of a schism between 'us' and 'them' make both Medoruma's stories and the anthology as a whole all the richer. Three of Medoruma's short stories are included in this collection, and in 'Tree of Butterflies', written just a year after 'Hope', village women live in anticipation of 'catching' an American soldier and becoming his "Honey."

Just as the relationships between US servicemen and Okinawan people can be peaceful, it is also clear that tensions exist which are just as strong, at times stronger, between Okinawans and mainland Japanese people. It is the Japanese who dictate assimilation to mainland Japan and have in the past punished the use of the Okinawan language – by referring to it as the 'Okinawan Dialect' and forcing its users in schools to wear the 'Dialect Placard' they refused even to admit that it is its own language, distinct from Japanese – and at the same time perpetuated the idea that, try as they might, Okinawans would never be truly Japanese. In Sakiyama Tami's 'Island Confinement', we see some assimilation in the opposite direction, as a woman from Nagasaki who moves to a remote Okinawan island loses her Nagasaki dialect over the course of decades, but does not slip into the island's dialect: 'Her smooth and

flat use of standard Japanese made clear that, although she blended in with the island atmosphere, she had surrendered nothing of her independent spirit.' We see it, too, in Mabuni Chōshin's 'White Ryukyuan Tombs', the protagonist lamenting how 'With feet used to walking the beach/ how painful it is to pass down/ Ginza's boulevards.'

Tensions exist, then, between the US military and the Okinawans, between the Japanese and Okinawans, and at times between Okinawan people of the various islands themselves. One constant is the Okinawan characters' conviction that Okinawan is still superior to 'foreign': in Medoruma's 'Tree of Butterflies', village woman Gozei is forced into prostitution but remains separate from the brothel in Naha, which houses 'Korean comfort women who served the lower-ranking soldiers.' Faultlines exist between dialect and skin colour, but also between the different genders, and across age-gaps. Time and again, we see the determination of elderly inhabitants to keep the islands' traditions and festivals alive in the face of youthful indifference. Much of the texts' action takes place on the small, often unnamed islands, places which are home to the elderly population but for young people have become somewhere to visit. This brings with it, inevitably, change in the islands' demographics: in Sakiyama Tami's 'Swaying, Swinging', the oldest man on the island laments that the 133 years he has lived now outnumber the island's population.

Chinen Seishin's 'The Human Pavilion' is for me the highlight of this anthology. Based on the 1903 national exhibition held in Osaka which offered audiences an exhibition of peoples including Koreans, Jews, Ainu and Okinawans, Chinen's play centres on the relationship between two Ryukyu 'specimens' and their trainer. The trainer, who brandishes a whip and tries to Japanize his charges, ridiculing their Okinawan customs and language and comparing them to the sweet potatoes that they eat, later reveals that he too has been discriminated against and passed over for promotion because he was suspected to be Okinawan.

Chinen asks: when does a war end? For him, the war ends not with the last gunshot, but with the end of the mental turmoil experienced by people who lived through the war, the passing of the 'storm of war that rages in their brains.' The play, which has been performed in Okinawa regularly since its publication in 1978, ends back at its beginning, and can be performed again and again on a loop. The message, which seems appropriate for the collection as a whole (the play comes at the end of the collection) is that the war will not be over until the divisions which it engendered have been removed in the minds of the people, and if that does not happen history risks repeating itself. §