

## Nature vs Nurture?

Susan Meehan on *Like Father, Like Son*

## My Father in a Suitcase

Sir Hugh Cortazzi investigates the mixed legacies of E. J. H. Corner



October's issue is themed around family and our reviewers explore recent books and films that deal with familial relationships; their joys, troubles and complications.

A particular highlight of the issue is Hirokazu Kore-eda's new film *Like Father, Like Son*. For long-time fans of the director this latest release further consolidates his reputation; making spare, unadorned films that explore deeply complex human emotions. The film will resonate with everyone who sees it and I encourage readers to go while it is still in UK cinemas.

Parent-child relationships are also at the heart of other reviews in the issue, from an unlikely bond in the backwoods of rural Japan, to a son reconciling himself with his father's legacy.

For fans of historical fiction, Lesley Downer's *Across a Bridge of Dreams* offers a fast-paced ride through the years immediately following the Meiji restoration. There are plenty of heroic battles for those inclined to epics, tempered with poetic descriptions of Japanese cities on the cusp of modernisation. Fans of the charismatic Saigo Takamori will also enjoy Downer's fictional counter-part, General Kitaoka.

We round off the issue with a theatrical flourish as Sir Hugh Cortazzi re-lives the life and times of the enigmatic Professor Risley - entrepreneur, innovator and acrobat.

Jack Cooke, October 2013

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## Like Father, Like Son - Review and Director Q&A

Directed by  
**Hirokazu Kore-eda**

120 minutes, 2013

Review by Susan Meehan

In his latest film, Kore-eda has once again excelled in exploring the inexhaustible theme of family, focusing on a largely unstudied and fresh concern. He stretches

it and prods the question of nature vs nurture as far as it will extend.

When six year old Keita Nonomiya starts taking all sorts of exams to enter primary school, a blood test reveals that he is not actually Ryota and Midori's son. The news that they have the wrong baby comes as a devastating shock to the couple, though Ryota coolly says that it all makes sense now. What does he mean? Would Keita be a more musical child and a better fit for their stylish Tokyo flat if he shared Ryota's genes? The accompanying music is full of foreboding and one cannot help but feel anxiety for the families involved. It is a troubling, heart-wrenching scene.

Ryota Nonomiya, played by Masaharu Fukuyama, is a dedicated, hard-working architect. He tells his boss that he will make sure that this unexpected family complication won't affect his work. He deals with the situation as if it were one of the 'missions' he regularly sets Keita to single-mindedly accomplish or overcome.

Ryota seemingly has no qualms in choosing blood over the beautiful, well-behaved boy he has nurtured with his wife, but Midori (Machika Ono) is reluctant to let go of a child she has raised for six years.

The Saikis, the family who have been raising Ryusei, the Nonomiyas' genetic son, live outside Tokyo. The cheerful, scatty father works in an electrical shop and his wife sells bento (packed lunches). They are a warm couple with three children.

The complications and emotional difficulties are innumerable. It is difficult not to make judgments about the two different families. Which set would make the better parents? Who would be the most fun? Is fun as important as the provision of opportunities and music lessons? Is it fair to remove a child from siblings? How much of what children pick up is due to environment and familial ways, and will their characters change when the six year olds join other families? There are many shades of grey.

The child actors are all superb. In an interview given by Kore-eda on 12 October 2013 at the British Film Institute, Southbank Centre he revealed that he chooses the children for who they are at the audition and encourages

them to act and talk as they normally would. During the filming process Kore-eda, influenced by Ken Loach, doesn't give the children scripts. Instead he supplies them with background information about the individual scenes and prompts with suggestions.

The issues raised by the film are poignant and resonate, lingering in the mind for a long time afterwards. It is a most thoughtful piece of film-making, very different in style from Kore-eda's recent *I Wish* (*Kiseki*, 2011), but tackling difficult issues as he did in *Nobody Knows* (*Dare mo Shiranai*, 2004) in which a parent's abandonment of her children is the main theme. Kore-eda is one of the great exponents of children and their inner lives, unobtrusive like a David Attenborough in the wild.

Which father will Keita and Ryota turn into as adults? And, conversely, what influence will their boys have on their real fathers? What kind of father's imprint will Keita and Ryusei be left with? The film leaves us pondering these uncertain conclusions.

**Special After-Screening talk with Hirokazu Kore-eda at the BFI, Southbank Centre – Saturday 12 October 2013**

At a special interview with Hirokazu Kore-eda, Jasper Sharp, writer and film curator, introduced him as a consistently innovative director.

His newest film, *Like Father Like Son* (*Soshite Chichi ni Naru*) opened in September in Japan and quickly became the country's top-grossing film of the year. Hollywood is looking into a remake.

Sharp asked Kore-eda why he thought his film had done better in Japan than this year's Hollywood summer blockbusters.

Kore-eda suggested that it was because it features Masaharu Fukuyama, an artist and musician who is and has been very popular in Japan; because the film won a prize at Cannes and because the theme, about family, is close to everyone's heart.

As to whether the film has a factual basis, Kore-eda said that in the 1970s in Japan there were quite a few cases of babies who were swapped at birth – and that he had done considerable research into this theme. In the cases of 40 years ago, children invariably went back to their blood families.

Sharp suggested that whereas Kore-eda's film *Nobody Knows* (2004) is about lack of parental control, *Like Father Like Son* depicts what happens when there is too much parental control.

'During the casting of actors for *Like Father Like Son* Kore-eda recounted that one of the young boys said nothing other than, 'Why?' and 'Oh my God!' Kore-eda used this exact language in the film.'

Kore-eda hadn't previously thought of this. During the ten intervening years from having made *Nobody Knows*

to *Like Father Like Son*, Kore-eda said that he had lost his mother and had a daughter and that these changes in his life's circumstances may have attributed to the contrasting focus of the films.

Sharp wondered how Kore-eda obtained such naturalistic performances from his young actors. Kore-eda said that for the last ten years he hasn't used scripts with his younger actors but has them improvise on set. He helps by talking to them beforehand and whispering the context of the scene to be filmed.

He also becomes aware of the language the young actors use themselves and tries to incorporate this and their natural behaviour into the films.

During the casting of actors for *Like Father Like Son* Kore-eda recounted that one of the young boys said nothing other than, 'Why?' and 'Oh my God!' Kore-eda used this exact language in the film.

Sharp pointed out that at one point Kore-eda had wanted to be a novelist. Kore-eda said that indeed he had gone to university with the idea of becoming an author but soon discovered that university wouldn't prepare him for that. He spent all his five years of university in the cinema.

Sharp asked about Kore-eda's friendship with the late critic Donald Richie. Kore-eda went on to say that Richie had been a great supporter and that their relationship went beyond that of filmmaker and critic. Richie would write back to Kore-eda about each of his films and always included a handwritten personal note. Kore-eda treasures these letters.

Kore-eda also mentioned the critic Tony Rayns and how he values and is interested in what Rayns says. While most critics made references to Yasujiro Ozu when reviewing Kore-eda's *Still Walking*, Tony Rayns compared it to a Mike Leigh film, which Kore-eda valued.

Kore-eda was grateful for these relationships, and said that while he doesn't make films for critics, he appreciates an objective assessment of his work.

In the Question and Answer session with the audience, Kore-eda said that he is still hoping to make a film of Ri Koran, a Manchurian-born actress of Japanese descent who was launched into stardom during the Second World War as a 'Chinese' singer and star of Japanese propaganda films.

Asked which films or directors have influenced him, he said that in his student days he watched and was influenced by Fellini's *La Strada* and *Nights of Cabiria*.

He also admires Ken Loach and the naturalistic performances he achieves with his own young actors. Kore-eda admitted to having copied some of Loach's techniques. While he sometimes is compared to the great master Ozu who is well-known for his studio-films, Kore-eda suggested that he probably owes more to filmmakers operating outside the studio system such as Loach.

Asked about the music in his films, Kore-eda said that he tends to choose an instrument per film. If it is a kids' film he is likely to use a ukulele. In order to build atmosphere he will rely on an accordion. In the film *I Wish*, which is about trains and centred on kids, his motif of kids running was best accompanied with rock music and for that he got the band *Quruli* on board.

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## The Woodsman and the Rain

Directed by Shuichi Okita

2011, 105 minutes

Review by Mike Sullivan

*This review may contain spoilers*

Shuichi Okita was also the director and screenplay writer for the 2009 hit *Antarctic Chef* based on the autobiographical novels of Jun Nishimura. In



Okita's films there are no profound statements or overly dramatic scenes; we are just shown real life with more than a small dose of humour. In *Antarctic Chef* the simple act of cooking and the happiness that small pleasures give are emphasised against the unusual background of a team of scientists based in the Antarctic. In *The Woodsman and the Rain* [キツツキと雨] the interaction of a film crew and the inhabitants of a small village are shown through the eyes of a widowed lumberjack and a young director.

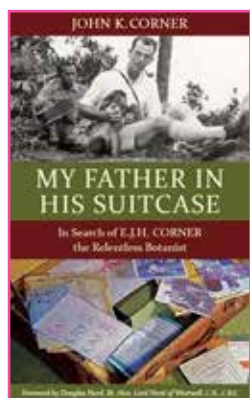
The core of the movie hinges around the relationship between the two main characters, the woodsman Katsuhiko Kishi, played by Koji Yakusho [役所広司], and the movie director Koichi Tanabe, played by Shun Oguri [小栗旬]. Koji Yakusho plays his character perfectly and really anchors the movie. Katsuhiko is a recently widowed logger with a son (played by Kengo Kora - 高良健吾) living a life which is quite unconnected to others. He just lives day to day and gets on with his job. Koichi is a new director working on a movie based on a script he has written. However, he lacks confidence in both himself and in the story that he needs to shoot. Although it is not at first apparent, the two actually have a lot in common and gradually develop a deep friendship over the course of the film.

The movie opens with Katsuhiko alone in the woods cutting down a tree, when a member of the film crew runs up the hillside to ask him to stop. It is a very amusing moment: a socially inept man from the countryside trying to get on with his job, perplexed by a demand to keep quiet from a Tokyoite man who has appeared as if from nowhere. It is a good representation for many other moments in the movie which contrast the behaviour of film crew and actors with that of the villagers. A day or two later Katsuhiko comes across the same member of the film crew and Koichi's vehicle stuck in a muddy road; unwillingly he

is roped into driving them around as they search for a river for one of their scenes. Koichi is portrayed as a sullen, lazy young man and understandably Katsuhiko quickly becomes frustrated with him and often demands that he do something (without knowing that Koichi is in fact the director).

Katsuhiko also has a son of a similar age to Koichi, and with the same name. His son quits jobs easily and their relationship is characterized by a lot of anger on Katsuhiko's part toward his lazy child. It is easy to see the link between how he views Koichi his son, and Koichi the director. However, after being roped into being a zombie, with a comical result, and seeing himself on the screen at a test viewing, Katsuhiko becomes enamoured with film making and fascinated with the zombie story. Koichi for his part has no confidence in what he is doing and, mortified by the test screening, attempts to flee. Recaptured by his film crew he is forced to carry on with the film, but this time he increasingly has Katsuhiko by his side whose enthusiasm is really infectious and whose support helps Koichi discover some measure of confidence in himself and what he is doing. Katsuhiko is also key to gaining the help of the local villagers. We are given the impression that, despite lacking enough extras, Koichi and the film crew never thought about asking the local people to help.

This humorous movie shows Katsuhiko's development, reconnecting with people as, simultaneously, Koichi finds his feet as a director. Across the chasm of an age gap they show how different generations can learn to understand each other. Koichi finds in Katsuhiko the support that he never enjoyed from his own father. The lack of confidence he has in himself and his own script can be linked back to this, while Katsuhiko gives Koichi the absolute faith and support which he doesn't give to his own son, something he begins to understand. In the midst of this they find other things in common, and they both gain a new perspective on their lives.



## My Father in his Suitcase, In search of E.J.H. Corner the Relentless Botanist

by John K. Corner

Landmark Books, Singapore, 2013

413 pages

ISBN: 978-981-4189-47-7

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Professor Corner was 'one of the most colourful and productive biologists and mycologists of the 20th century.' In 1929 he became assistant director of the botanical gardens in Singapore where he produced *Wayside Trees of Malaya*, regarded

as a classic field guide. After the war and employment on a conservation project for UNESCO in the Amazon he returned to Cambridge University where he was appointed Professor of Tropical Botany in 1965 and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The late Dr Carmen Blacker wrote a biographical portrait of Professor Corner for volume V of *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, which I edited and which was published in 2005. This concentrated on Professor Corner's activities in Japan during the Japanese occupation from 1942-45 and on his relationships with Japanese scientists. In 1981 Professor Corner had written a book entitled *The Marquis*, which took as its main theme his experiences in Singapore and the friendship, which developed between him and Yoshichika Tokugawa [徳川義親]. I reviewed this book in 1982 and commented that 'In essence it [*The Marquis*] demonstrates that science, real education and moral spirit know no frontiers.' I also commented that the book was 'a tribute to a small number of outstanding Japanese scientists who by their efforts and devotion helped to preserve the records and achievements botanical, zoological and historical of Raffles Museum and Botanical Gardens in Singapore.'

John Corner became estranged from his father at the age of 19 and they never met again before his father died despite many attempts at reconciliation, but his father left for his son a suitcase of papers about his life. This spurred John Corner, despite his feelings of resentment towards his father and the break-up of his family, to try to find out as much as possible about his father's life and achievements. The result is an interesting story. John Corner writes of his father in the Prologue: 'He was a difficult man with a temper to whom I never felt close.' Professor Corner, who quarreled with some of his colleagues, was clearly not an easy character.

The main interest for members of the Japan Society lies in what the book has to say about the Japanese in Singapore. It covers much of the story as set out by his father in *The Marquis*, but throws some interesting new light on life in Singapore during the Japanese occupation.

Professor Corner and two other British civilian employees of the colonial administration were not interned with other officials and were employed on specialist duties, but they were subject to close and sometimes humiliating supervision. In some of their activities their lives were often in danger. The fact that they were not interned with the other civilians and did not have to suffer all the privations of their colleagues caused much controversy in the immediate aftermath of the war. Although officially exonerated from accusations of collaboration with the enemy, they were vilified by some of those who had been interned and had suffered much privation. John Corner

makes a convincing case that his father had behaved honourably and that his actions had been done in the interests of science and not to avoid incarceration. Whenever there was a possibility of providing help to the internees he did what little he could. No one today can make an informed and objective judgement not least because we cannot know all the circumstances. We must also ask what we would have done if we were in Professor Corner's position in 1942? It is some 70 years since the Japanese occupation of Singapore and this issue should now be laid to rest.

John Corner's research in Japan and elsewhere about the Japanese scientists who worked in Singapore and who befriended and protected his father against the military, show that they were humane and devoted to science. The book reminds us, however, of the more unpleasant aspects of Japanese activities in Singapore especially of the *kempeitai* [憲兵隊 - Military Police Corps, which was an arm of the Imperial Japanese Army]. It has to be remembered that there were Japanese plans directed by Field Marshal Terauchi, Commander in Chief of the Japanese forces in South East Asia, that prisoners were to be killed if Japan were defeated. Fortunately the war came to a speedy end after the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the plans were not implemented.

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## From up on Poppy Hill (コクリコ坂から)

Directed by Goro Miyazaki  
(宮崎 吾朗)

92 minutes, 2011

Review by Mike Sullivan

*This review may contain spoilers*



The latest Studio Ghibli movie is based on the manga series of the same name by Tetsurō Sayama and Chizuru Takahashi, the screenplay was written by Hayao Miyazaki and Keiko Niwa. It follows a common theme in Studio Ghibli movies of innocent romance and the coming of age of teenagers, this time set in 1960s Yokohama. As might be expected this film also evokes feelings of nostalgia with an undertone of sorrow, with references both to the past and the future.

Umi Matsuzaki is a sixteen year old high school student who every day wakes up before the other members of the household, which includes her siblings, a sister and a brother, as well as boarders, and raises a signal flag in the garden for her deceased sea captain father. She then prepares breakfast for everyone else before setting off for school. She is shown as a very responsible and independent person, taking care of the running of the household for her grandmother, but at the same time there is an obvious empty gap where her mother and father should be. Her grandmother as well

comments on how sad it is to her that Umi sends up the signal flags every day to help guide her long dead father home and she wishes for there to be someone in Umi's life.

Unbeknownst to Umi, every day a passing tugboat answers her signal flags, from her garden she can't see it, and from that tugboat a young man disembarks every day to cycle to school. His name is Shun Kazama, he is one of the school newspaper's journalists and also a ring leader in the campaign to save their old, but beloved club house. By chance Umi is invited to help with the newspaper and thus starts to get to know Shun. She begins to understand his passion to save the clubhouse and in the process starts to realize a life outside of her deceased father and running her grandmother's household. This is shown as she starts to make mistakes with her chores and suggests a plan to renew the student's clubhouse which she gets actively involved in.

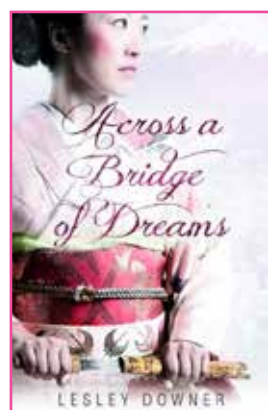
As the story develops we learn about how Umi's mother and father didn't have permission to marry and eloped. At the time of Umi's birth they lived in a very small and simple flat and as a small child Umi hung the signal flags from a window. In the Korean War her father's ship hit a mine and sank, after which it seems that the whole family moved in with her grandmother while her mother carried on pursuing her career in medicine, staying short term in America. After Shun hears her story it sets off developments for Shun which Umi couldn't have expected and which make both of them question not only the past, but also their own feelings. In the meantime the grand clubhouse, a relic of the past, is threatened with demolition in order to construct a new building; students are torn between regarding it as an old, unwanted building or as a historical monument which represents the heart of Japanese culture. After all of the students work together to clean it, repair it and repaint it, they overwhelmingly decide to keep it and to fight against the Board of Education's decision to tear it down.

*From up on Poppy Hill* is a movie which touches upon a number of different perspectives and meanings. Besides the main story around Umi and Shun we constantly see reminders of how Japan was going through a process of renewal. The student's argument over the clubhouse is reflective of an argument nationwide: when an old building is cared for, looked after, then it becomes beautiful and keeps people rooted within their cultural past, however if it is allowed to fall into disrepair then of course people will vote to tear it down. The students are outraged when the Board of Education decide to demolish the building without even looking at it after all their hard work to renovate it. This implies a criticism of the eagerness for new buildings in the 1960s and afterwards. It is an interesting point that the students are well organized, have meetings and votes on matters important to them and actively lobbying

each other, as well as the chairman of the Board of Education. It is again an undertone which reminds us of the intense, yet well organized, student protests of the 1960s in Japan. Authority in this movie is relatively unrepresented; the students criticize the headmaster but he is only seen once. The Board of Education is also relatively invisible apart from the chairman.

Another constant theme in the movie is the obvious transformation Japan was going through. This part of Yokohama is shown as very traditional and at the beginning of the movie you are almost misled into thinking it could be 1920s-era Japan as wooden boats are moored to a wooden jetty, cars are relatively absent and Umi is seen cooking using vegetables stored in a cellar. As the movie progresses more and more cars can be seen, out at sea there is a constant flow of huge cargo ships and smaller tugboats. When the students go to Tokyo we see the forerunner of the city of today with electric signs everywhere as well as seeing Tokyo Tower. As such there is a clear linear line from the small wooden boats shown at the beginning of the movie to a huge and modern liner ship at the end.

It is a very beautiful movie with a clear representation of Japan when it was at a crossroads, there are still links to the horrors of World War Two and the Korean War, but at the same time there is a new hope represented by Umi and Shun. Their past and present is complicated by factors entirely out of their control; however it has to be resolved and the movie makes it very clear that these two children on the cusp of adulthood are Japan's bright future.



## Across A Bridge of Dreams by Lesley Downer

Bantam Press, 2012

448 pages

ISBN-13: 978-0593066829

Review by Christopher Searle

I found it impossible not to compare *Across A Bridge of Dreams* with Lian Hearn's 2011 novel *Blossoms and Shadows* – also an epic tale of forbidden love at the time of the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate [reviewed in issue 39 - June 2012]. While Hearn's book spans roughly 1857 to 1867, Downer's is set in the aftermath of the shogunate. It opens in 1873, five years after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, which instituted the emperor as figurehead and substituted the shogunate with a new form of government.

*Across A Bridge of Dreams* centres on the story of Saigo Takamori, one of the most romanticised and pivotal samurai of the 19th century, who also provided a

model for 'The Last Samurai' in the 2003 film featuring Ken Watanabe and Tom Cruise.

With the demise of the shogunate in 1868, the new government was largely formed of men from Satsuma (present-day Kagoshima in southern Japan) and Choshu (present-day Yamaguchi). Many were samurai, representatives of the old elite, who ended up helping to legislate their own class out of existence, much to the disillusionment of the southern samurai.

The contradictions of the revolution were enfolded in the person of Saigo Takamori, the basis of Downer's character, General Kitaoka.

'... the descriptions of modernising Tokyo and Ginza are very atmospheric as are those of Kagoshima – the satumas sparkling in the snow, the volcanic ash, shochu, palm trees, Sakurajima and the distinctive Kagoshima accent are all vividly evoked by Downer.'

As the book opens, Taka, General Kitaoka's youngest daughter with his mistress, is 13 years old. General Kitaoka, a gallant and brilliant samurai from Kagoshima, has moved to Tokyo with Fujino, a larger than life geisha from Kyoto, and their children. Kitaoka is in Tokyo in order to serve in the new government. When he can no longer bear the series of reforms being enforced, which are stripping the samurai of their privileges, he returns to Kagoshima where he becomes a chief agitator, outspoken against government actions which are hurting the samurai.

Early on in the tale, in parallel to the political intrigue, Taka develops a fondness for Nobu, a lad from Aizu in Fukushima in northern Japan who is hired as her manservant. Nobu reciprocates these feelings but realises that Taka, the daughter of a samurai from Kagoshima is an unattainable, illicit love. Nobu is also from a samurai family, but from the Aizu clan, arch enemies of the samurai from Kagoshima who have only too recently trounced them.

Before long Taka and Nobu are torn apart. Nobu is sent packing from the Kitaoka's Tokyo home by Taka's brother – wary of Nobu's evident love for her – on, inauspiciously, *Tanabata* – the one day of the year, according to legend, that the separated lovers, the Weaver Princess and Cowherd, are able to cross the River of Heaven and meet if the weather is clement.

After a few intervening years during which Nobu has been recruited and trained by the Army Cadet School and Taka engaged to be married, Nobu arrives in Kagoshima in April 1877 with the Imperial Army. Their purpose is to extinguish General Kitaoka's feisty anti-government rebellion. While Nobu's fellow northern samurai are raring to take revenge on their old enemy in Kagoshima, he is torn because of his feelings for Taka, who is also now in Kagoshima, and her family.

The battle between the government forces and Kitaoka's men results in a bloody five months up to September 1877. Up on Castle Hill, a brave and heroic but resigned and tragic General Kitaoka resolutely says, 'We fought to uphold the samurai way of life and we failed. But we can still show the world how samurai die.'

While both Downer and Hearn make use of fortuitous encounters and coincidences to maintain the plot's momentum, Downer relies on this device a little too readily, exhausting one's capacity for suspension of disbelief. She also contrives to draw on her knowledge of geisha – by expanding on descriptions of Fujino and her milieu – and on her knowledge of Japanese-style poems, in what at times can feel a little forced.

All in all, while a well-researched and generally engaging novel, given the story's romance and largely thanks to Kitaoka's (or Saigo Takamori's) entrancing and colourful life, *Across A Bridge of Dreams* is rather long-winded at times and not as erudite as Lian Hearn's book. Nevertheless, the descriptions of modernising Tokyo and Ginza are very atmospheric as are those of Kagoshima – the satumas sparkling in the snow, the volcanic ash, *shochu*, palm trees, Sakurajima and the distinctive Kagoshima accent are all vividly evoked by Downer.

It won't disappoint those in search of Japanese 'light' historical fiction or a fix of the compelling Saigo Takamori.

## Professor Risley and the Imperial Japanese Troupe

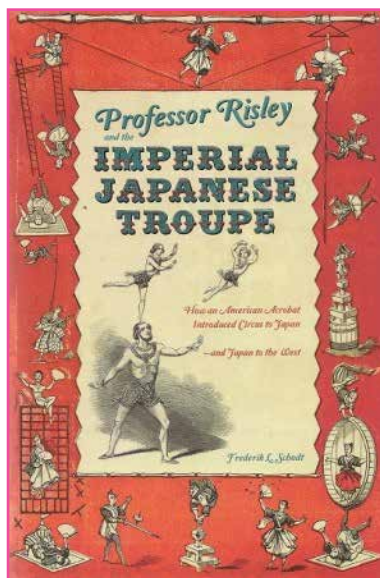
by Frederik I. Schodt

Stonebridge Press,  
Berkeley, California, 2012

304 pages

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Frederik L. Schodt, who has written other books about popular Japanese culture, gives a colourful account of the life and travels of Richard Risley Carlisle, who used the stage name of Professor Risley, although he had no connections with any university and the title of professor was not conferred by any academic institution. He was born around 1814 in New Jersey. He became associated with the circus and the theatre and quickly became prominent as an acrobat performing feats including throwing off his feet, extended above him, his son into the air, who after a summersault landed on his father's upturned feet.



They managed to get the necessary Japanese passports for their group. This was quite a feat as these were the first passports given to private Japanese citizens.'

Schodt follows Risley's travels to the western United States, Europe and Australasia, Hong Kong and Shanghai. On 6 March 1864 Risley reached Yokohama accompanied by an equestrian troupe of ten performers and eight horses. On 28 March the first western style circus opened in Yokohama. As Schodt explains: 'Audiences in the small Yokohama settlement were limited, with the special permission of naval captains Risley was able to expand his reach by staging performances for the sailors of the British fleet in port.' But 'after a month or so, Risley's circus ran out of steam.' Yokohama was too small and most of his performers left him. He managed to recruit an Australian friend and his wife but could not continue to keep up his circus. Instead he used his entrepreneurial spirit to set up an ice importing concern and later went into the dairy business, but this failed. His real metier was show business.

He saw that the traditional Japanese *misemono* (spectacles), *kyokugei* and *kanawaza* (acrobatics) which Japanese were beginning to despise would greatly appeal to western audiences and he began to assemble a troupe of top Japanese performers. He needed financial backing and joined with three others in concluding a contractual agreement on 1 November 1866 before the US consul in Yokohama. One of his partners was Edward Banks, who had been US Marshal in Yokohama and spoke some Japanese. They managed to get the necessary Japanese passports for their group. This was quite a feat as these were the first passports given to private Japanese citizens.

Schodt follows Risley and his troupe to the United States and on to Europe where they went first to Paris for performances to coincide with the 1867 Paris exposition. In Paris their audience included the young Tokugawa Akitake who was representing his uncle, the last of the Tokugawa Shoguns, at the exposition. Their acts included the butterfly trick, top spinning, rope dancing, ladder acts and various other acrobatic feats. In London they ran into some competition from another Japanese troupe known as the Gensui troupe who reached London before them.

The Japanese attracted a lot of attention especially when they wore Japanese clothing. Western languages and customs seemed strange to them and their belongings were sometimes stolen or lost in fires. They and Risley were occasionally involved in disputes which came to court. The members of the troupe did not bring their wives and often visited prostitutes.

After two years abroad and visits to Spain and Portugal, eight members of the troupe returned to Japan. Nine

remained with Risley in the US and revisited Britain where they again ran into competition from the *Royal Tycoon* group led by Tannakker Buhicroson whose 'Japanese Village' in Knightsbridge was the main theme in my book *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Village in Knightsbridge and the Mikado, 1885* (SISJAC, Norwich, 2009 – and reviewed in issue 23, November 2009). The group gradually parted company. Risley returned to the United States and was eventually committed to a lunatic asylum where he died in May 1874.

Schodt's book is based on meticulous research and his account of Risley's life and of Japanese acrobats and entertainers in the US and Europe in the late 1860s will fascinate readers interested in the spread of Japanese popular culture abroad.

