

Editor: Sean Curtin

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In this issue we delve into the murky world of Japanese politics focusing on one of the pivotal contemporary figures in the nation's ever-changing political landscape, Ichiro Ozawa. He was instrumental in toppling the LDP from power in the 1993 and was the master strategist who brought the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) to power in 2009, dispatching the LDP for a second time. While we often think of Japanese politics as relatively stable, Ozawa's career reminds how fluidic it can be and the complexities of the country's political narrative. In four reviews, we look at Ozawa's astonishing career and driving philosophy. Firstly in a fascinating and well-researched biography by Takashi Oka who charts the influence Ozawa has exerted on the Japanese political scene since his election to the Diet in 1969. Ozawa has experienced periods at the top of political power as well as periods in the wilderness, yet he is the great political survivor - seemingly indestructible. The three other Ozawa reviews focus on his political philosophy and ideas, many of which still resonate today.

Moving away from political machinations, Susan Meehan examines a disturbing and grim movie about the underside of the Japanese police. Director Gen Takahashi's *Confessions of a Dog* is a powerful, dark and highly critical examination of the nation's police force based on Takahashi's own encounters with the police. In many respects it's a tragedy as it charts the downfall of a once honest cop. On a brighter note Sir Hugh Cortazzi looks at Karin Breuer image-rich "Japanesque: The Japanese Print in the Era of Impressionism," in which she explores the origins and development of Japanese prints, the aesthetics of ukiyo-e, the impact on European artists and Japanese style in American printmaking. Next Michael Sullivan re-examines the award winning and much loved movie "Departures" (おくりびと) which is acclaimed for its captivating cinematic scenery, beautiful musical score and superb acting. The issue is rounded off by Susan Meehan's look at Hirotosugu Kawasaki monster-packed anime "Legend of the Millennium Dragon" (鬼神伝) and Hugh Cortazzi's review of "Nuclear Dawn" by James P. Delgado.

Sean Curtin

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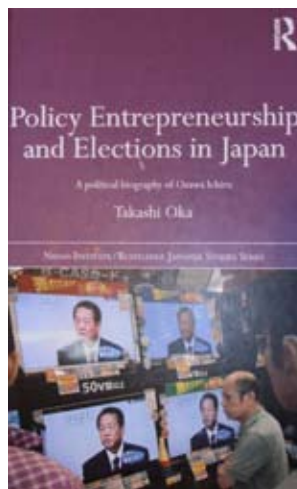
We are grateful to our regular reviewers

Sir Hugh Cortazzi
Fumiko Halloran
Ian Nish

Michael Sullivan
Susan Meehan
Ali Muskett

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Policy Entrepreneurship and Elections in Japan: A Political Biography of Ozawa Ichiro

by Takashi Oka

Nissan Institute / Routledge
Japanese Studies, 2011, 210 pages
£85
ISBN-10: 0415587522 & ISBN-13:
978-0415587525

Review by Sean Curtin

Love him or loathe him, but you certainly cannot ignore Ichiro

Ozawa, one of Japan's most enduring and influential politicians of the last few decades. Takashi Ota, veteran journalist and former Ozawa aid, has produced the first English language political biography of this pivotal figure in modern Japanese politics. In this superbly researched and insightful work, Dr. Ota traces Ozawa's career all the way from childhood to the present, charting its rollercoaster-like ups and downs along with the spectacular twists and turns. He seeks to define Ozawa the man, understand his core political philosophy and explain his actions. Making use of extensive interviews with key political players and other source material, he constructs a comprehensive profile. Is Ozawa, as his critics claim, an old-style, power-hungry, money-centred political dinosaur or a genuine reformer and political visionary who has reshaped Japanese politics or is he perhaps something in-between? Ota's mission is to answer this and other crucial questions about this key political figure.

Ozawa's incredible political journey has taken him from being one of the most powerful figures in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to leader and still powerful figure in the now governing Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Ozawa was the LDP Secretary General in the administration of Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu (海部 俊樹) and de facto deputy leader. When he became Secretary General in 1989 under Kaifu (August 1989 – November 1991), he used his position to try to

change the electoral system and create a more balanced political dynamic (pages 25-38). According to this book Ozawa declined an offer to become LDP Prime Minister in October 1991 (pages 59-60).

Ozawa has distinctive ideas and a clear vision of Japan becoming what he terms “a normal nation.” He set out these principles in his influential 1993 book “Reform Plans for Japan” (日本改造計画)* in which he sees Japan taking a more active role in international affairs (see pages 39-56). Ozawa is a proponent of the independence of the individual as opposed to the more mainstream Japanese trend of emphasizing the importance of the group. He is also committed to electoral reforms and the establishment of a two-party system, something he has largely achieved. Ota observes, “Political reform within Japan and active involvement and participation in the international community became the twin themes of Ozawa’s political career (page 25).”

In 1993 frustration with the moribund LDP and political friction with his rivals led Ozawa to jump ship along with another prominent LDP lawmaker, Tsutomu Hata [羽田 孜], together they formed the Japan Renewal Party (新生党). This action brought down the long ruling LDP and helped usher in the first non-LDP government since 1955 (pages 57-68). Ota explains that Ozawa was instrumental in bringing together a coalition of parties to form the new government and selecting Morihiro Hosokawa (細川 護 熙) as Prime Minister instead of putting himself forward. Ota writes, “Ozawa willingly scarified, at least for the immediate future, his own prime ministerial ambitions in order to create a united political force with enough public credibility to replace the LDP (page 110).”

However, Ozawa’s coalition was short-lived lasting just 9 months, but by changing the electoral system during this period its long term impact changed the face of Japanese politics (page 69-80). He spearheaded “a revolt within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which ended thirty-eight years of one-party dominance and inaugurated a period of shifting coalitions which has continued even after the DPJ’s landslide victory in the August 2009 general election (page 29).”

After the coalition’s demise in 1994 Ozawa was ejected into political opposition for most of the intervening 15 years (pages 81-99). Yet, after a spell in the political wilderness he returned to power as the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and later as DPJ Secretary General after the landslide election of 2009 (pages 128-140). Ota masterfully chronicles the incredible zigzag journey Ozawa undertook to arrive at his current destination, seeing him as a policy entrepreneur who uses his talent to achieve institutional change. Ota utilizes John Kingdon’s theoretical “critical junctures” approach to interpret his actions.

The basic argument of the book is that “by precipitating the [1993] election, winning agreement on the new Prime Minister, and changing the electoral system, Ozawa transformed the dynamics of political competition in Japan to bring about a nascent two-party system (page

67).” Ota states, “the single-seat system is most likely to be considered Ozawa’s crowning achievement, one that changed the nature of leadership both for the ruling party and the opposition in the kind of two-party system that Ozawa envisaged and Koizumi largely achieved (page 157).”

The book is packed with insightful analysis, for example, it foretells of the political gridlock of a divided Diet, Ota observes, “There is an upper house election to be fought in July 2010, the outcome of which will determine the longevity of the DPJ’s hold on power (page 11).

Ozawa has been on an incredible political journey and remains hugely influential. Despite his present difficulties the Japanese media still refers to him as “the kingpin” and “shadow shogun.” In an Epilogue, we are brought up to date with the current chapter of the Ozawa saga, his indicted in a political funding scandal, something he may emerge from unscathed. The author confides, “I believe it is still possible for Ozawa to become Prime Minister, once he is cleared of the charges brought by the citizen’s panel (page 165-66).” While not everyone will agree with this assessment, it is difficult to disagree with Ota’s concluding remark that Ozawa “deserves his place in Japanese history as a statesman who became the agent of long-standing political change (page 166).”



Reform Plans for Japan
[日本改造計画]

by **Ichiro Ozawa** [小沢一郎]

Kodansha [講談社], May 1993
(23rd printing as of May 2006),
258 pages, 1500 yen

ISBN-10: 4062064820 & ISBN-13:
978-4062064828

Review by **Fumiko Halloran**

Ichiro Ozawa is a controversial figure with great political skills and strong leadership ability. He once presided over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as its powerful Secretary General whose ability in raising funds was legendary. He was a protégé of late Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka [田中 角栄], whose ambitious plans to cover Japan with highways and railways transformed regional economies but escalated the corrupt links between industry and politicians. Tanaka was later found guilty of bribery in the Lockheed scandal in which he was charged with accepting five hundred million yen from Lockheed for his role in reversing the selection of American airplanes for All Nippon Airways.

Ozawa was born in 1942 in Iwate Prefecture into a political family, his father having been a member of the Tokyo City Council, and later a member of the House of Representatives. Ozawa graduated from Keio University in 1967 and did graduate study at Nippon University. In 1969, he ran as a LDP candidate and was elected to the House of Representatives

from a district in Iwate. Since then, he has been elected to the Lower House at every election since his first victory in 27 December 1969. He steadily rose in the party, serving at various times as parliamentary vice minister for the science and technology agency, ministry of construction, the parliamentary steering committee chair, then as minister of home affairs, chairman of the National Security Commission, and LDP Secretary General from 1989 to 1991.

In 1993, however, Ozawa split from LDP and with Tsutomu Hata [羽田 孜] formed the Japan Renewal Party [新生党]. Together with other opposition parties, they succeeded in winning the majority of seats in the Lower House election, with Morihiro Hosokawa [細川 護熙] as prime minister. This coup was short lived and the LDP won back a majority in 1994. In 2003, the two opposition parties, the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, joined forces to establish the Democratic Party of Japan [民主党]. Ozawa was elected its leader in 2006. In the summer of 2007, the Democratic Party gained the majority in the House of Councillors, a foretaste of its historic victory in the August 2009 general election for the Lower House. However, Ozawa had been forced to step down as party leader before the victory due to a funding scandal but was appointed DPJ Secretary General after the election.

After Ozawa's book, "Reform Plans for Japan," was published in 1993, it became a best seller. It was rare at that time for a politician to lay out specific policy proposals for reforms in political, economic, security, and social issues. It is still widely read among those who seek answers to solving problems that Japan faces today.

In domestic policies, Ozawa advocates reform in the structure of government. For example, he proposes to introduce the system of special advisors to the prime minister, making the chief cabinet secretary the senior advisor, similar to the National Security Advisor in Washington. To break down the walls between ministries, he proposes that the prime minister's spokesperson, rather than cabinet ministers, announce major policy decisions to increase the stature of the prime minister as the face of the nation.

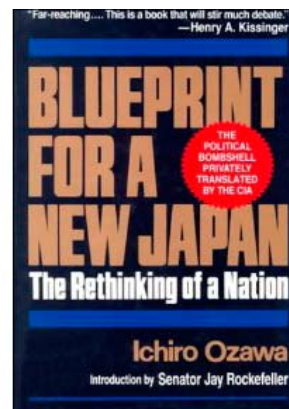
The power of a Japanese prime minister is limited even though he is the head of the majority party in the parliament. Apart from the cabinet, the party's decision-making often supersedes the prime minister's preference. To streamline the process of decision-making, Ozawa proposes to bring senior party leaders into the cabinet by giving them posts as ministers at large, following a British model. By doing so, Ozawa asserts that control on policy matters by the bureaucrats would be eliminated, breaking the tradition of politicians relying on bureaucrats during debates in parliament.

On foreign policy and security, perhaps the phrase, becoming an ordinary nation [普通の国になる], is the best known line encapsulating Ozawa's thinking. He asserts that Japan should not neglect its responsibility in security, sharing the cost of peace and freedom. While keeping the U.S.-Japan security alliance as the basis of Japan's foreign policy, Ozawa wants to change the mission of the Self Defence Forces from defence to participation in peacekeeping missions as a part of the

United Nations collective security apparatus. He believes this is doable under the present constitution.

He allots considerable space to the UN as the vehicle to create a new world order. He appeals to the United States to use the UN and work with UN. His assumption, when this book was written in 1993 during the Clinton administration, was that the U.S. government was moving in that direction. He even proposed creating a separate Japanese military unit that could be called upon by the UN Secretary General who, according to Ozawa, has authority to order such forces to take action.

He would thus abandon the authority of the Japanese government to deploy such a force. Ozawa's belief in the role that the UN could play, and his willingness to let the UN shape the future of the nation's Self Defence Forces has met sharp criticism from lawmakers critical of the ability of the UN to resolve international conflicts. Ozawa to this day, however, seems to stick to his UN initiative proposal.



**Blueprint for a New Japan:
The Rethinking of a Nation**
by Ichiro Ozawa, translated
by Louisa Rubinfien with
introduction by Senator Jay
Rockefeller

Kodansha International Ltd,
1994, 208 pages, ISBN-10:
4770018711

Review by Sean Curtin

Published in 1994 after the long dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had lost the July 1993 election, this is not a direct translation of Ichiro Ozawa's Japanese original (日本改造計画). While the English and Japanese versions are similar, the English edition has a much more visionary feel and is bursting with the energy of Ozawa's electoral success. The book reminds us how different politics could have been if the coalition had stayed together and the Japan Socialist Party had not in June 1994 formed an alliance with the LDP, its erstwhile bitter political foe of five decades. Ozawa sets out his distinctive vision for a new Japan, charting a course for the country to become what he terms a "normal nation."

The English version has an introduction by Senator Jay Rockefeller in which he proclaims, "Japan has also begun a new era in its political life. The 1993 election of a government not headed by the Liberal Democratic Party represented a monumental change in its political circumstances (page 15)." At the front of the book Henry Kissinger is also quoted as saying that Ozawa's mission is "transforming the traditional Japanese way of thinking." After such endorsements, Ozawa does not disappoint and systematically sets out his bold blueprint for the nation.

The book is divided into three sections, the first, "The Urgency

of Political Reform,” makes the argument for both political and electoral reform. Ozawa and his allies in the short lived coalition largely managed to achieve the electoral reform outlined in the book with the switch from the multi-seat constituency system to a single seat one. He bemoans, “The lack of real leadership is not only burdensome to our foreign counterparts, it is also dangerous for Japan itself (page 25).” To tackle this Ozawa sets out how the Office of the Prime Minister could be reformed and its power enhanced (something largely accomplished under PM Hashimoto’s reforms). He also wants to change how the Diet and lawmakers work along with rewriting the role of bureaucrats and how they interact with politicians. Additionally he outlines ideas for reforming local government. To some extent various hues of these ideas have actually been implemented since the book was penned in 1993, although despite various initiatives bureaucrats still hold a relatively powerful position in government.

In the second part of the book “Becoming A ‘Normal Nation,’” the author explains what he means by this phrase, defining it as “a nation that willingly shoulders those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community. It does not refuse such burdens on account of domestic political difficulties. Nor does it take action unwillingly as a result of ‘international pressure’ (page 94).” In the post Soviet era, which had dawned with the demise of the USSR in 1991, Ozawa sees Japan neglecting its international duties and obligations. He argues “The Gulf War revealed the myriad frailties of the politics and government of our country (page 45).”

Ozawa declares, “It is time that Japan recognizes that it is an important participant in this new age in international society. We have to face the demands of the new age head on and plan the best course of action (page 121).” Japan needs to open up its domestic markets while its military needs to participate more fully in UN missions. In 1994 it was controversial to state, “It is my view that even under the current constitution, Japan is able to offer the SDF to the United Nations as a reserve force for operations overseas (page 109).” He also believes that Japan must face up to the historic harm it committed during the war, he writes, “We cannot deny the part aggression has played in our history in Asia (page 128).”

In the third and final section, “The Five Freedoms” Ozawa outlines his vision for a different kind of Japan based more on individual rather than group values and obligations. This section is also full of appealing populist ideas and mirrors the policies Ozawa, as chief election strategist, offered the public before the historic August 2009 landslide victory of his party. The five freedoms of the title are “freedom from Tokyo,” “freedom from companies,” “freedom from overwork,” “freedom from ageism and sexism,” and “freedom from regulations.” Each has its own separate chapter in which Ozawa elaborates his ideas and explains the need for change. He declares, “If we can achieve these five freedoms, we will release our citizens from their social and political shackles and begin to build a society that truly values the individual (page 156).”

Even two decades on his ideas remain refreshing and he manages to identify some of the key problems which still, to varying degrees, plague Japan today. In 1993 when the original Japanese edition came out the book seemed visionary and even now it still retains a certain political resonance. The principles, ideas and philosophy laid out in this work have guided Ozawa and shaped Japanese political policy and discourse to the present. Senator Jay Rockefeller, captures the essence of the book stating Ozawa “seeks a ‘Japanese dream’ to rival the ‘American dream,’” adding, “... at the heart of Ozawa’s ‘New Japan’ is the individual (page 17).”



Strong Arm Restoration [剛腕維新]

by Ichiro Ozawa [小沢一郎]

Kadokawa Shoten [角川書店], 2006, 267 pages, 1600 yen, ISBN:9784046210883

Review by Fumiko Halloran

Strong Arm Restoration (Gowan Ishin) is a collection of newspaper columns written by Ichiro Ozawa that first appeared in the Evening Fuji [夕刊フジ] newspaper between 2003 and 2006. His weekly column touches on politics, the economy, foreign policy, education, and crime. As for the book’s title, “Strong Arm” [剛腕] is an expression with which Ozawa is closely associated as it reflects his sometimes arm-twisting political manoeuvres. He admits he has to try harder to be more consensus oriented if he is to head a party that covers a spectrum of political philosophy and ideology and one day lead the nation. The “Restoration” [維新] part of the title refers to the “Meiji Restoration,” a theme Ozawa often uses to liken himself to the Meiji leaders who transformed the nation from the feudalistic Shogunate’s rule to a modern nation.

A constant theme in his writings is Ozawa’s distrust of Junichiro Koizumi, who was prime minister from 2001 to 2006, overlapping the period in which the columns were written. Ozawa attacks the political direction pushed by the Koizumi administration, sometimes bordering on personal attacks. His criticism of specific issues such as taxes, pensions, and privatization may be valid but he rarely proposes his own ideas beyond moral indignation.

This book makes the reader wonder if Ozawa can step outside of his obsession with contrasting himself against those who are in power either in his own party or the opposition Liberal Democratic Party. He advocates high ethical and moral standards for politicians, but he himself is mired in dubious real estate dealings that are reported in the press and resulted in his current indictment.



Confessions of a Dog [ポチの告白]

directed by Gen Takahashi [高橋玄]

2006, 195 minutes

Review by Susan Meehan

"In Japan there are two things you should never try to oppose – the Emperor and the police!"

Gen Takahashi's *Confessions of a Dog* is a powerful, grim indictment of the Japanese police force based on Takahashi's own experiences of the police and the work of his friend Yu Terasawa, a freelance journalist working in Japan who writes about police misconduct. Lasting three hours and 15 minutes it does seem a long film, but this is worth it given the level of detail, characterisation and display of police transgressions from blackmail to sexual harassment to claiming false expenses to staged drug arrests. It is set in 1999/2000 and has a grainy quality to it which lends it the feel of a documentary.

Completed in 2005, the film was only released in late 2009 and tells the story of a modest policeman by the name of Takeda, superbly played by Shun Sugata (菅田俊). A hulking bear of a man, Takeda works at a *koban*, mini-roadside police station. Diffident and biddable, his meekness is recognised by the appallingly corrupt police captain Mie played by Gen Idemitsu (出光 元), who lures Takeda into joining the criminal investigation department as a detective.

Indebted to Idemitsu for this unexpected promotion and unable to turn down his superior's commands, Takeda becomes embroiled in a murky tangle of police deals from which he cannot extricate himself and falls from grace very publicly.

Takeda continues his extraordinary evolution from moral family-oriented cop to one who abuses his authority and begins cavorting with 16-year old girls. Spiralling out of control, he dutifully accepts his final role of scapegoat as he takes the blame for homicide, embezzlement, bribery and bringing disgrace to the police.

The freelance investigative journalist Kusama, on a mission to unveil police corruption, is barred from Takeda's trial. Armed with plenty of incriminating evidence against the police, he organises a compelling press conference at

the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Tokyo at which all is revealed. It is the Japanese public which is exposed as the unwitting victim, oblivious to police excesses and media complicity.

An utterly broken and betrayed man, Takeda lets rip at the end of the film for a full six minutes. Exhausted and dejected in a prison cell, he delivers an almost Shakespearean soliloquy damning the Japanese police force and justifying his submissiveness by explaining that "no dog can survive by disobeying his master." The absolute contempt shown by the police as described by Takeda leaves the viewer indignant; the camera pulls away from Takeda until he is no more than a tiny speck floundering in a vast prison.



Japanesque: The Japanese Print in the Era of Impressionism

by Karin Breuer

Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Del Monico Books-Prestel, 2010, 156 pages including catalogue and index, copiously illustrated in colour, US \$34.95

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This book is much more than a catalogue (see note 1). Karin Breuer outlines firstly the origins and development of the Japanese prints. The author then describes the aesthetics of *ukiyo-e*. This is followed by a discussion of "European Artists and Japonisme." The last chapter is devoted to "the Japanese style in American Printmaking."

The contents of the first chapter will be familiar to anyone who has some knowledge of the history of Japanese prints and most of the prints reproduced are well known, but it provides a useful summary for someone new to the subject.

In the second chapter the author outlines some of the distinctive features of composition in Japanese prints such as "the division of the composition into sections or simple geometric areas." The author notes that "the uplifting of the background and the strong use of diagonals are evident in many early prints." Of landscape prints it is noted that "In keeping with the Japanese love of decoration and pattern, they were often composed as interlocking areas of land and sea." "Another favourite device was the bird's eye perspective...often combined with a high horizon line." The way in which Japanese artists made effective use of silhouettes is also emphasized. Among the prints reproduced in this section the following prints, by Hiroshige of a festival at the Great Shrine at Izumo, and by Hokuai of the actor Arashi Rikan II, seemed to me particularly striking:



Breuer in commenting on the Japanese use of patterns in ukiyo-e includes a reproduction of the following print by Kuniyoshi Utagawa [歌川国芳] of a woman standing on a veranda wearing "an extravagant black kimono."



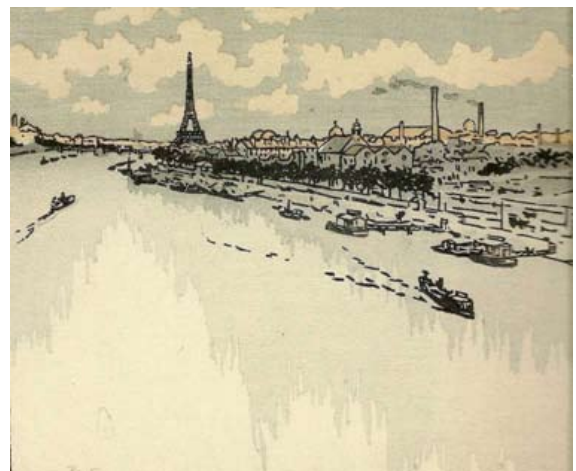
Anyone familiar with the history of Japonisme will be familiar with the influence which Japanese prints had on artists such as Whistler, Van Gogh, Manet, Monet, Degas and Toulouse Lautrec. This lithograph of 1899 by Toulouse Lautrec is justifiably famous.



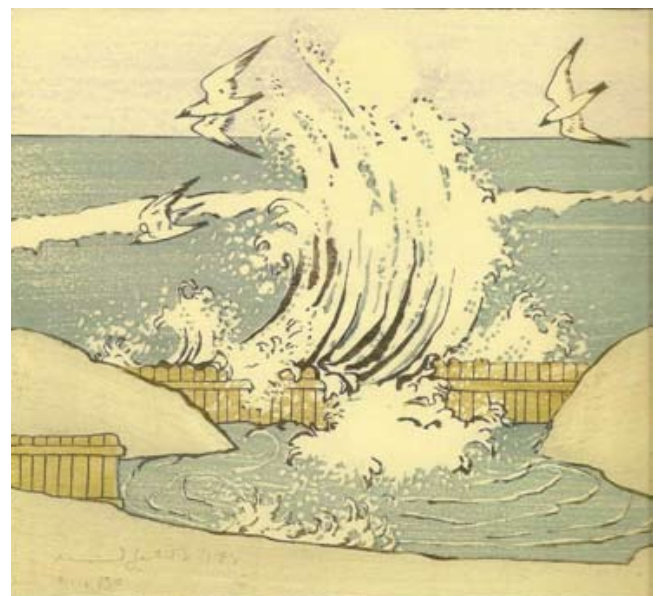
Another artist much influenced by Japanese prints was Mary Cassatt whose woman bathing, a famous colour aquatint, was thought to be greatly influenced by Utamaro [喜多川歌麿].



I was not familiar with Henri Rivière's lithograph series entitled Thirty-six views of the Eiffel Tower featured on the cover of the book. Here is a reproduction of another in this series showing the river Seine:



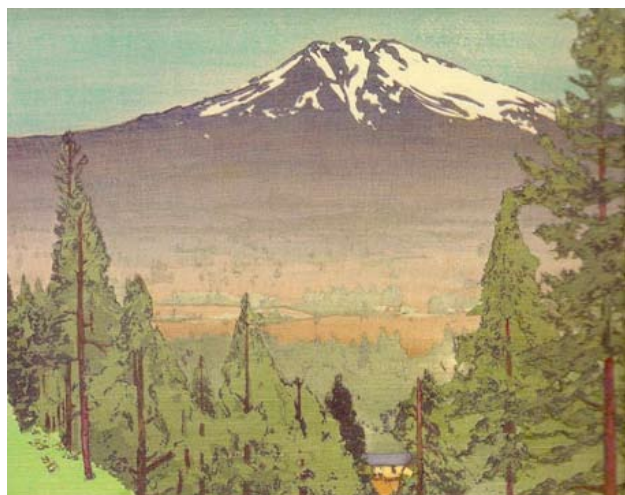
In the chapter devoted to the Japanese style in American Print making the author gives pride of place to this 1906 print entitled The Wave, Moonrise by B.J.O. Nordfeldt which was so clearly influenced by Hokusai's wave.



This woodcut by Alice Smith entitled Moonflower and Hawkmoth is obviously inspired by Japanese flower painting.



Frank Morley Fletcher who came to California from England in 1923 had been captivated by Japanese prints when he was a student in Paris in the later 1880s, the height of Japonisme. Breuer includes a reproduction of a 1900 print of Brotherswater in the Lake District which has elements clearly inspired by Japanese prints but so does the following 1932 woodcut Mount Shasta in California.



This is a book which anyone interested in Japanese prints and their influence on western art will want to have. It can be found on the internet at under £15 making it a good buy.

Note 1

Published on the occasion of the exhibition with the same as the book title and organised by the author at the Legion of Honor Gallery in San Francisco, October 16, 2010-January 9, 2011.



Departures (おくりびと)

directed by Yojiro Takita [滝田洋二郎], 2008, 131 minutes

Review by Michael Sullivan

Departures is based on an autobiographical book by Aoki Shinmon [新門青木] and features Masahiro Motoki [本木雅弘] as Daigo Kobayashi, a cellist who after losing his job moves back to his hometown and starts a new job helping 'departures.' In 2009 it won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film as well as numerous other awards such as the 32nd Japan Academy Prize for Best Film and the 30th Yokohama Film Festival for Best Film.

The most striking features of this movie are the cinematic scenery and haunting musical score, all of the compositions are by Joe Hisaishi [久石 譲], who has also composed the music for many Studio Ghibli films. The music flows beautifully with Yojiro Takita's scenes such as nature, sunsets and a cellist playing his instrument next to rice fields. The film portrays with extreme tenderness the passing away of loved ones, how the families cherished them, while reminding us of the reasons for living.

Daigo and his wife Mika, played by Ryoko Hirose [広末涼子], move to Daigo's family home, his parent's café, in Yamagata after his orchestra is disbanded. His mother had died previously while he had been abroad and his father had abandoned the family when Daigo was six years old. Looking for work he finds an advertisement for what appears to be some kind of travel agency, on arriving for the job interview he is given the job almost immediately and paid for turning up. He finds out that his new job, working for the boss Sasaki played by Tsutomu Yamazaki [山崎 努], involves encoffinment; the art of preparing the dead for their departure from this life.

Daigo feels embarrassed by his new job, he tells his wife in a vague manner that it is a ceremonial job and keeps quiet in front of old acquaintances. His caution is shown to be prudent when an old friend finds out and refuses to let his family talk to Daigo, and eventually Mika finds out too and leaves, finding his touch to be filthy. Meanwhile, through his job he encounters many kinds of deaths, the young, the old, accidents, suicides, and using their delicate care and respect for the body, he and Sasaki bring the dead back to

a life like resemblance which provokes outpourings of grief, anger and regret from the different family members. The departure of a deceased person reflects not just a time of goodbyes, but also of remembrance. Daigo is touched by the sincere emotions he receives from parents, spouses, etc, who thank him and Sasaki for the care and beauty they give to the deceased. Eventually the moment arrives when his wife returns; she has news for him and wants him to quit his job. Before he can answer his phone rings, another person has died, someone they both know.

The film touches upon a number of delicate issues, the grief caused by death, the taboo nature of those who care for the dead as well as the importance of family and life itself. Daigo goes through a journey himself, discovering his past and learning about living. There are striking scenes such as the apartment of Sasaki which in comparison to his job is filled with life, and his motto that life is eating, both of which have a profound impact on Daigo. (This fantastic movie was also reviewed in Issue 20)



Legend of the Millenium Dragon

directed by Hirotugu Kawasaki (川崎博嗣), 2011, 98 minutes

Review by Susan Meehan

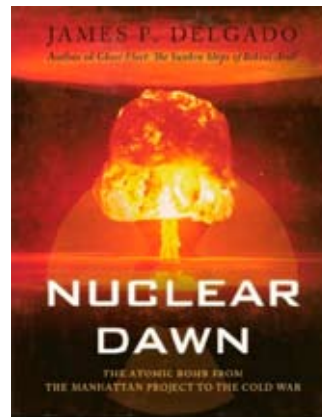
This anime opens with scenes of verdant ancient Japan. Amidst scenes of temples, shrines, mountains, paddy fields and old towns samurai, representing humanity, are fighting huge monsters with blazing red eyes otherwise known as "oni." One is enormous, rivalling Godzilla in terms of size. A monk by the name of Gen'un strikes down the "oni" with supernatural strength as they attempt to destroy his temple.

We are then transported back to the present and to school boys playing computer games. One is no ordinary school boy; Jun Tendo, singled out by his birth mark, turns out to be a Harry Potter-esque saviour destined to bring peace to warring Japan which we've just had a glimpse of, and is sent back to Gen'un's era.

Time travelling Jun, quite a shy boy really, turns out to be a descendant of the Magatama clan. As preordained he wakes up the Orochi, or flying dragon. Orochi will respond to Jun's desires and Jun has to decide which side to join in this perennial battle of good and evil without being swayed by the monk on the one side or the girl he falls in love with on the other. It is a treacherous decision which Jun has to take.

The occasional flashback to present day Japan shows Jun's father as a school boy, having to stand up to bullies and later on as a teacher, dying in an attempt to save a boy at a railway crossing. It is this valiant and noble lineage that has formed Jun.

The animated characters themselves looked similar to those of the superior Studio Ghibli but the similarity ends there. The film failed to capture my interest or imagination and didn't develop the characters sufficiently. It seemed lacking; the plot was rather weak. Admittedly I was not the target demographic and the children in the cinema seem to have loved it. This film was shown at the Premiere Japan 2011 event at the Barbican.



Nuclear Dawn, The Atomic Bomb from the Manhattan Project to the Cold War

by James P. Delgado, Osprey Publishing, Colchester, 2009, 216 pages, copious illustrations, £20, ISBN 978-1-84603-396-4

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This book provides an illustrated and factual guide to the development of nuclear weapons. It starts with an account of research into the nature of atoms. This is followed by a summary of the work which led up to the manufacture of the first atomic bombs in the Manhattan project. The next chapters deal with the bombs ('little boy' and 'fat man') and their delivery over Japan in August 1945. Separate chapters on Hiroshima and Nagasaki describe the devastation caused by the bombs on the two targets. The book then summarises the "reaction and response" to the bombs. The two atomic bombs were just the beginning. The Americans pressed on with their research and the H-bomb was developed and tested at Bikini atoll in July 1946 against a number of old warships. The next chapter is entitled nuclear proliferation and deterrence. The final chapter is on the legacies of the bomb.

Anyone who wants a simple illustrated guide to the development of atomic weapons will find this a useful book, but its discussion of nuclear proliferation is confined to describing the Russian, British and French development of their own atomic weapons. The fact that China, India, Pakistan and Israel (although this is not publicly admitted by the Israeli government) are all now nuclear weapons states is not mentioned. There is no reference to North Korea or to Iran. The discussion of deterrence is cursory and the important nuclear non-proliferation treaty is not discussed. While the reasons for the decision to use the bombs on Japan in August 1945 are outlined there is no in-depth discussion of the moral and strategic issues involved. But in a short illustrated account of the development of atomic weapons it is perhaps unreasonable to expect all these issues to be covered.