The Japan Society Review 45

Book, Stage, Movie, Arts and Events Review

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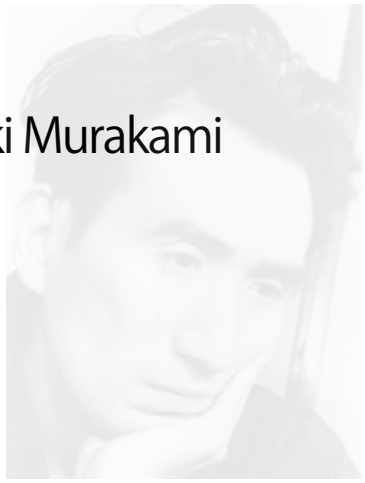
400 years ago

Sean Curtin on history in the making

A tale of two worlds

Chris Corker digests the latest offering from Haruki Murakami



This issue focuses on a selection of Japanese writers in translation, from the current poster-boy of Japanese fiction, Haruki Murakami, to the rarely translated historical novelist, Shiba Ryōtarō.

Any country's literature is essential to a broader understanding of its character and history. The great Japan scholar and translator Louis Allen once wrote:

> In order to know a nation fully you have to go beyond knowing the way it expresses itself in its laws, its military behaviour, and its political systems. You have to know the way it talks about itself unconciously and through its fiction. In other words, the fiction of a nation is as important as the facts of a nation if we want to know it properly.

Viewed in this light, the continuing translation of Japanese novels into English is vital work and this issue presents a broad cross section of translated work, including *1Q84*, Murakami's latest surrealist blockbuster novel; *The Winter Sun Shines In*, reflections on the life of poet Masaoka Shiki by the scholar Donald Keene; a 2013 translation of *Schoolgirl* by the short-lived writer Ozamu Dazai, and *Clouds above the Hill*, an historical epic based on the author's experience of the Russo - Japanese War.

Introducing this array of great literary exports is an article by our editor Sean Curtin, who joined others in celebrating the very first British vessel to sail into Japanese waters, 400 years ago this June. So began a cultural exchange that continues to this day.

Jack Cooke, June 2013

Contents

Britain & Japan – 400 Years: A Voyage Through Words and Music

Tuesday 11 June 2013

All Saints Church Fulham, Bishops Park, London, SW6 3LA

Review by Sean Curtin

Britain & Japan – 400 Years was an absolutely brilliant evening of uplifting music, verse and spectacle to mark four centuries since the UK and Japan initiated official ties. When John Saris, commander of *The Clove*, sailed the very first British vessel into Japanese waters on 11 June 1613, he could not have ever dreamt that four hundred years to the day we would be celebrating a vibrant relationship which has stood the test of time and greatly enriched both countries. Saris spent his final years living in a house just behind All Saints Church in Fulham, where he worshiped and also where he is buried. This special association made the magnificent old church the perfect location to celebrate this unique occasion. The current vicar, the Reverend Canon Joe Hawes, commented 'I think it most appropriate that the event marking this significant voyage is happening here.'

The Japan 400 organizers created a truly memorable evening of visionary content to mark this pivotal milestone and remind the two nations of the deep and long-lasting nature of their friendship. The lyrical evening was divided into six well-crafted sections which together attempted to recreate different stages of Saris' epic voyage. Each segment succeeded in capturing the essence of a particular phase of *The Clove*'s long journey. Using a combination of inspiring music, moving verse, singing interspersed with dancing, and visual imagery, the past was conjured back to life. It was a magnificent show with high production values and a fantastic venue which allowed the audience to feel a sense of connection with Saris and his time. On occasions it was a moving experience which made one reflect on the immense dangers the crew of *The Clove* endured. The evening also succeeded in restoring John Saris and his accomplishments back into the mainstream of historical narrative.

Many of the performances evoked a strong sense of the sea and maritime adventure, a key theme of the evening, reminding the audience of the immense uncertainties seafarers faced. Many who set sail with Saris never returned and it took a gruelling two years for the ship to make its way from England to Japan. *The Clove* departed on 18 April 1611 but did not return until 27 September 1614, arriving in Plymouth.

The evening was anchored by Japan 400 Co-Chairman, Nicolas Maclean with Keiichi Hayashi, Japan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, giving a thoughtful address to launch proceedings. The first part of the music fest was entitled 'Setting the Scene: Music of 1611–1613' and gave the audience a taste of period tunes with some excellent performances.

As part of the effort to rekindle a link with Saris and take the audience back in time, the current Lord Salisbury, whose ancestor advised King James I on the voyage, outlined *The Clove*'s mission as part of the second section. Following this reading the tempo went up a gear as the third segment, entitled 'The Mission,' burst into life. Pianist Noriko Ogawa gave an impressive performance of Debussy's *L'Isle Joyeus*. This was followed by a spirited reading of John Masefield's *Sea Fever* by David Warren after which it seemed the evening was on full throttle with a non-stop succession of impressive performances by various artists. The electrified audience were encouraged to join in a lively sea shanty section. As the atmospheric church resonated with glorious music and singing, it really did feel that one was participating in a very special event. After an intermission the fourth part, entitled 'Arrival,' sprang off the blocks with a lively music and dance routine which included local school children. It was a stunning visual scene which led into another series of dynamic musical performances and thought provoking readings carrying the audience into the final two segments of an incredible commemorative evening.

Every single performer and organiser deserves the upmost praise for what was a real tour-de-force. This fantastic concert is just one of the events Japan 400 has organized to highlight this important anniversary year. This evening and other events have made a significant contribution to bilateral ties by making us re-examine the genesis of our partnership with Japan and rediscover how things all began.

1Q84 by Haruki Murakami

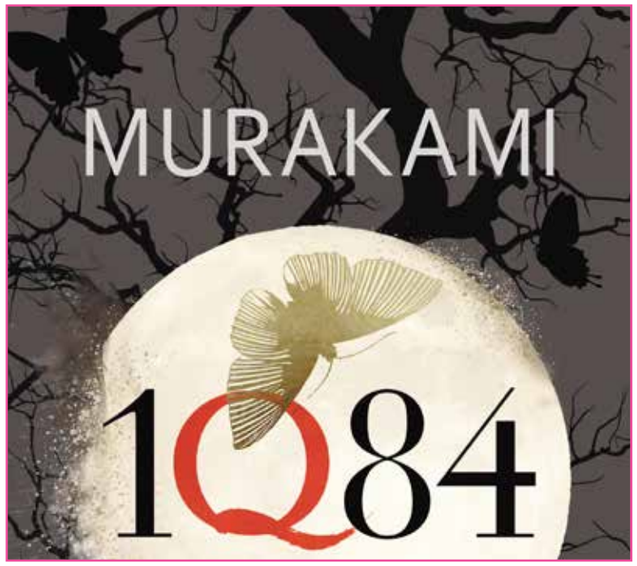
Vintage, 2012

464 pages

ISBN-13: 978-0099549055

Review by Chris Corker

Haruki Murakami's most recent novel *1Q84*, the title being a nod to Orwell's 1984 (the Japanese nine being read *kyuu*), was released in two stages. Books One and Two coming out a week before Book Three. While on one hand this may have seemed like a marketing ploy, it did make an otherwise daunting novel manageable (*1Q84* is comparable with *The Brothers Karamazov* in terms of size). While I don't agree that *1Q84* is quite the Magnum Opus that others have claimed (I feel that *Wind-up Bird Chronicle* may yet retain that title), it is as infinitely readable as so many of Murakami's other works.



On her way to kill a man in a Shibuya hotel, Aomame is forced to take a shortcut from the bridge, climbing down a ladder. After the man is dead, Aomame begins to notice subtle differences around her, indicative of what she decides must be a parallel universe. At the same time, Tengo receives a rough but promising manuscript from a young girl who he later discovers is dyslexic. When he visits the girl to ask for permission to re-write the manuscript, he finds that her family are part of a religious commune, which the girl herself escaped from. The rumours are that everyone there is being brainwashed and conditioned into emotionless robots. This is the intriguing setup to a story that combines elements of detective stories, horror and the supernatural, as the two main characters become entwined in matters above their heads.

The story is nicely set up and starts to flow well. I have to say that I've never been a fan of the alternating perspective of storytelling, a technique that other authors stretch to the limits of usefulness, as it feels like a padding technique. It does, however, in this case give us an interesting pace shift and allows us to share the frustrations of the characters as they search for each other in vain.

Tengo is, in a lot of ways, the archetypal Murakami protagonist. A thirty year-old misanthrope, detached from the workings of society, without a real job, without a real relationship, not really knowing the destination he wants to take in his life. What's different about Tengo, however, is that he seems so much more selfish than the usual type of protagonist employed, making him harder to relate to as a result.

The other main protagonist, Aomame, is a real conundrum. Her motivations for doing what she does seem a little weak (the lady she works for never goes to such extremes herself) and even at the end of the novel, I found it difficult to muster any sympathy for her. She also seems overly fascinated with her own body (perhaps a slightly masculine interpretation of a female protagonist – I am yet to be convinced by Murakami's female characters).

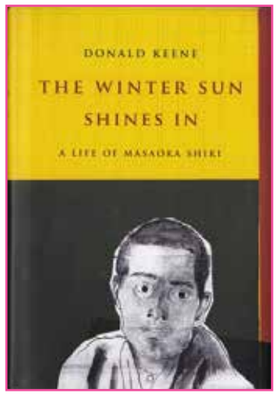
In terms of the storyline, I can divulge very little without spoiling the plot. One of the more atmospheric recurring scenes features a spectre-like NHK (the Japanese BBC) collections officer who slams on the doors of apartments in a brilliant metaphor for a guilty conscience. I also found the New Religion plot to be very intriguing, with a fulfilling conclusion, which is more than can be said of the novel as a whole, which ends vaguely.

The subject of New Religions is one that is far from a dead in Japan and, even now, new religious organisations similar to Aum Shinrikyo (a subject that has also been delved into in Murakami's book *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, which documents first hand reports of the Sarin Gas attacks) are still going strong, with member contributions funding their operations. The claims of these organisations, much like the nature of the magic realism that Murakami employs, are difficult to believe and understand, but easy to accept and often ensnare the unsuspecting. This also is the strength of Murakami. It isn't always clear why he does something, and often there seems to be no reason at all, but his books are addictive nonetheless. I took less away from *1Q84* than I did his other works, but it still had me eagerly turning the page.

Would I recommend it as an entry point for non-Murakami officianados? No, I wouldn't, but it is still a pleasant read where Murakami veterans will find elements of the things that made Murakami such a

beloved author, and this work also gives us hope for his next novel, the long-windedly titled *Colourless Tsukuru Tazaki and the Year of His Pilgrimage*, which was released in Japan only recently. This is a shorter work which was adapted from a short story, much in the way *Norwegian Wood* was adapted from *Firefly*, and may be a more accessible book for newcomers to the Murakami canon.

I've been a Murakami fan since my first year at university. At the time I was trawling through book after book of clearly defined Thriller, Crime and Horror, shamelessly adhering to archaic conventions set down decades ago. Finally, I came to a book with pure white cover featuring a picture of a black kitten. The name, *Kafka on the Shore*, was bizarre enough to interest me and I flipped over the book to read the synopsis. It was totally different to any premise I had read before, seeming part screwball comedy, part magic realism. I read it in a couple of days. Having become more familiar with Japanese culture, his books seem slightly diminished in their novelty, but his gift of storytelling and intrigue still have me eagerly awaiting each new work like *1Q84*.



The Winter Sun Shines In, A Life of Masaoka Shiki

by Donald Keene

Columbia University Press, New York, 2013

248 pages

ISBN: 978-0-231-16488-7

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Professor Donald Keene, who is now a Japanese national and lives in Tokyo, is the doyen of western studies of Japanese culture and history. He began to study the Japanese language more than seventy years ago and has written some thirty scholarly and very readable studies of a wide variety of aspects of Japanese culture, in particular Japanese literature through the ages.

His latest book describes the life and works of one of the most significant poets of the Meiji period, when Japanese literature, in response to the revolutionary changes then taking place in Japan, adopted new forms and styles.

Shiki Masaoka [正岡 子規] is best known as the leading haiku poet of the modern era, but he also, as Keene explains, wrote tanka, modern poems (*shintaishi*), novels and essays as well as a Noh play. His life was a short one (1867-1902) and for much of it he suffered from debilitating and painful ailments.

Keene gives an interesting and informative account of Shiki's life and the many literary figures, including the novelist Natsume Soseki with whom Shike came in contact during his brief career.

Shiki was born in Matsuyama in Shikoku. He was the son of an impoverished low ranking samurai. He was ambitious and in 1883 made his way from Shikoku by sea to Tokyo where he began to study philosophy, but he was temperamentally unsuited to the subject and soon turned to literature and aesthetics. He forced himself to overcome his physical weakness and became intrigued by baseball. The following haiku composed by Shiki in 1890 reflects his enjoyment of the game:

harukaze ya
mare no nagetaki
kusa no hara

Spring breezes -
How I'd love to throw a ball
Over a grassy field.

He took up journalism and determined to become a writer. Despite the handicap imposed by illness he acted as a war correspondent in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 for the nationalist newspaper Nippon. He was highly critical of the way in which the Japanese army treated war correspondents as equivalent to private soldiers. But his primary interest was literature.

Shiki founded the haiku journal *Hototogisu* whose creed was *shasei* which meant that haiku must reflect real life rather than the idealized world. Haiku 'must include the ordinary and even ugly elements of daily life.' Keene in his introduction quotes the following haiku written by Shiki in 1896 as an example of *shasei*:

aki kaze ni
koborete akashi
kamigakiko

As it spills over
In the autumn breeze, how red it looks-
My tooth powder.

The first haiku by Shiki which was printed was, Keene notes in discussing Shiki's student days, the following:

mushi no ne wo
fumiwake yuku ya
no no komichi

Trampling through
Insect cries, I create
A path through the fields.

Among haiku by Shiki, quoted by Keene, the following 'is notable not only for its sensitivity to nature and the seasons, typical of Japanese poetry, but also for its unusual combination of imagery':

ajisai ya
kabe no kuzure wo
shibuku ame

Hydrangeas -
and rain beating down
on a crumbled wall.

Shiki criticized what he considered the excessive reverence for the haiku master Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) and praised the haiku of that other master, the poet and painter Yosa (Taniguchi) Buson (1716-1783), whose haiku had, Shiki thought, been neglected. Shiki attracted a number of disciples including another famous modern writer of haiku Kyoshi Takahama [高浜 虚子] although he and Shiki did not always agree. Basho, Buson, Issa and Shiki (and perhaps Kyoshi) are now seen by many as the leading Japanese haiku poets.

Keene ends his introduction to this biography with the following conclusion about Shiki's contribution to modern Japanese literature: 'The haiku and tanka were all but dead when Shiki began to write his poetry and criticism. The best poets of the time had lost interest in short poems. Shiki and his disciples, finding new possibilities of expression within the traditional forms, preserved them. The millions of Japanese (and many non-Japanese) who compose haiku and tanka today belong to the School of Shiki, and even poets who write entirely different forms of poetry have learned from him. He was the founder of truly modern Japanese poetry.'

We must hope that Donald Keene continues for many years to add to his many books on Japanese culture.

Schoolgirl

by Osamu Dazai, translated by Allison Markin Powell

One Peace Books, 2012

103 pages

ISBN: 978-1935548089

Review by Chris Corker

It isn't always necessary to know the background of an author to enjoy a novel, but it often adds a depth and understanding that is otherwise impossible. This is certainly the case with Dazai [太宰 治 - 19 June 1909 to 13 June 1948], who in many ways epitomises the feelings of his contemporaries, and the younger generation of his time. Some authors steadfastly attempt to write what they don't know; to experiment. Others rely on their knowledge and feelings to write what inevitably becomes a genuine representation of their thoughts. The latter is certainly true with Dazai, whose works all seem to be semi-autobiographical in nature, even (as is the case with *Schoolgirl* 女生徒) when the protagonist of the story is a young girl.

Schoolgirl was the first of Dazai's published works, and gained him national acclaim. The novella is set in Tokyo during the Second World War, a time of patriotism and strife for the general population. Although, the protagonist seems unaffected by both. When being lectured at school, she notes the following:

'She (the teacher) went on and on, explaining to us about patriotism, but wasn't that pretty obvious? I mean, everyone loves the place they were born. I felt bored.'

To describe the plot in any depth would be an exercise in futility, as the novella takes the form of a day-in-the-life, stream of consciousness, similar to an extended diary entry, where the young protagonist begins by talking about certain events that have influenced her life such as the war and the death of her father, only to then be sidetracked on some minor detail and to go off on a tangent, giving us a glimpse into her psyche.

It's obvious that the protagonist is a person, much like Dazai, who is struggling with their role in their particular class. Dazai, who felt great resentment for the ease of his life and the luxury of his social status, was never on good terms with his parents, or in many cases his siblings. He was even a member of the Japanese communist party, whose ideal would certainly see Dazai's class dragged from their pedestal. These acts of self-flagellation were a constant feature in Dazai's years and he finally succumbed to them in 1948, when he committed suicide after several unsuccessful attempts.

The girl in the story seems to be in the same state of conflict as Dazai, not only with her class but also with her emotions, which are so often juxtaposed with how she is supposed to behave. During the course of the story, she struggles to adopt these affectations that more often than not represent the polar opposite of how she really feels. Like Dazai, she believes privilege to be a curse:

'…before I knew it that privilege of mine had disappeared and, stripped bare, I was absolutely awful.'

She is also in a constant state of self-analysis, where every action that she considered a failing is logged and serves as source of shame. Even as her train seat by the door is unashamedly taken from her by a man (an action that is still easy to witness in modern Tokyo), the protagonist, after pointing out his impropriety, still manages to allot some of the blame to herself:

'When I thought about it, though, which one of us was the brazen one? Probably me.'

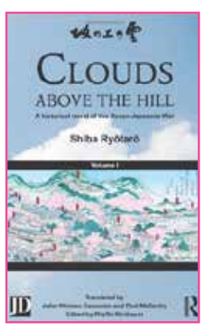
The novella is a form that hasn't enjoyed the same success in the west as it has in Japan. There is no escaping the fact that this book is very short, despite the inclusion of a preface and a foreword, which are themselves quite brief. Standing at just over one hundred pages, and with a third of each page illustrated with the kanji for the title of the book, it could be argued that it isn't the best value for money. I would say that the strength of this medium, and indeed the strength of Dazai's works, is that this brevity facilitates a large amount of imagery in each page. Every paragraph that you read and every page you turn has you thinking back, considering the subtext and significance of seemingly throwaway comments.

If one part of the book could sum up the sentiment and the feeling of Dazai's works in general, it would be this, the imagery and word use being deep but accessible:

'(Waking up in the morning is) Sort of like opening a box, only to find another box inside, so you open that other box and there's another box inside, and you open it, and one after another there are smaller boxes inside each other, so you keep opening them, seven or eight of them, until finally what's left in the box is a small die, so you gently pry it open to find . . . nothing, it's empty.'

A note on the translation. While I think that Allison Markin Powell has done a great job of recreating the voice of a teenage girl, readers from the United Kingdom may find the Americanisms such as 'bogus' and 'the worst' to be irksome. Otherwise, this is a crisp and accessible translation.

I would recommend readers who have enjoyed this book to try *No Longer Human* (Ningen Shikkaku - 人間失格) as it feels like a much more fleshed-out version of *Schoolgirl*, and one that seems to represent Dazai's feelings even more overtly. There are few works of supposed fiction that could claim to be more autobiographical in nature. Fans of the confessional style of Dazai and Japanese literature may also want to try Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask*, a brutally honest but beautifully written look into the life of another of Japan's famous authors.



Clouds above the Hill (坂の上の雲), Volumes I and II by Shiba Ryōtarō

Routledge, 2013
388 pages
ISBN: 978-0415508766

Review by Mark Headley

Shiba Ryōtarō, born in Osaka in 1923, studied Mongolian at the Osaka School of Foreign Languages and worked as a reporter in Kyoto. After the war, he began writing historical novels, mainly set in the Late Tokugawa and Meiji Eras, but also including works on Yoshitsune, Toyotomi Hideoyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. Many of his novels have been adapted for TV and the cinema.

Clouds above the Hill, considered to be Shiba Ryōtarō's most popular work, centres on the lives of two brothers, Akiyama Yoshifuru and Akiyama Saneyuki, and their friend, the poet Masaoka Shiki, all from Matsuyama (Shikoku), against the background of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-95). It originally appeared in a serial publication in eight parts from 1968 to 1972. The first four of these parts have now been published in an English translation in two volumes, and Volumes III and IV are due for publication in November 2013.

In both the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War the newly industrialized Japan scored a spectacular victory over a far larger country in each case. In the former, although China had begun to modernize her forces, acquiring *inter alia* the German-built Dingyuan and Zhenyuan which were then amongst the most powerful battleships in the world and superior to any ships in the Imperial Japanese Navy, a large part of the funds allocated for this purpose were diverted by the Dowager Empress Cixi to such projects as the Summer Palace; in Ryōtarō's words it 'was, in short, something along the lines of a great experiment carried out between a superannuated order (Qing dynasty China) and a brand-new one (Japan)' [Vol. I, page 260]. The Japanese victory was a vindication of the Meiji policies of accelerated modernization over the preceding 25 years and Western armaments, training and tactics; the tremendous boost to their confidence allowed the Japanese to feel they had joined the ranks of the Western great powers, as shown by Japan's alignment with the Western camp during the Boxer uprising of 1900, described in the book with particular reference to Japan and Russia [Vol. I, pages 370 to 375]. That this equality with the Western powers was still something of an illusion was shown after the gains awarded to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki were overturned by the intervention of France, Germany and Russia; it was Russia's acquisition of these territories and, in particular her designs upon Korea, which led to the increase in tension between Russia and Japan which were ultimately to result in war.

The Russo-Japanese War was the first major war of the 20th century and is often considered to be the first 'modern' war. In many respects it was a precursor of the First World War ten years later. Although tanks, aircraft and poison gas were yet to be developed and the submarines already in service in the Russian and Japanese Navies did not play a decisive role, the heavy artillery, machine guns, trenches and barbed wire associated with WW1 were already present in the Russo-Japanese War.

In point of fact, however, Russia and Japan had one important feature in common: both were slow to adopt the modernization and industrialization of Western Europe, and later the USA, i.e. essentially Westernization. Amongst the numerous reformers, Peter the Great (1682-1725) single-handedly forced through a crash programme to turn Russia from a mediaeval backwater into a European great power; he succeeded in military terms by defeating Sweden and the Ottoman Empire, but social conditions, and in particular that of the serfs, remained largely unchanged. In the case of Japan, after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 it was eventually agreed to end the self-imposed isolation (*sakoku*) of two and a half centuries of under the Tokugawa Shoguns and to resist Western encroachment by adopting full-scale modernization, in order to avoid the fate of the Chinese who had revealed themselves powerless to resist Western aggression. Peter the Great's attempts to modernize Russia were borne in mind by the Japanese, the book drawing an interesting parallel between him and the Japanese *daimyō* Shimazu Nariakira of Satsuma and Nabeshima Kansō of Saga who enthusiastically introduced new technology into their domains [Vol. I, page 351]. Not only did Japan prove more successful than Russia in this respect, but it is probably universally regarded as the pre-eminent example of a successful newly industrialized nation.

At the outset of the war, Russia appeared to have the overwhelming advantage: with a population estimated at 130 million, Russia had an army of one million and, despite the conflict taking place at the other end of the Eurasian landmass from the political and industrial heartland, had the capacity to supply her forces by the recently completed Trans-Siberian Railway. Japan had a population of only around forty-six million, and an army half the size of Russia's. Russia's Cossack cavalry was generally acknowledged to be the best in the world, whereas Japan's was virtually non-existent. Russia's attitude to Japan was generally one of overconfidence, grossly underestimating Japan's potential.

That is not to suggest shortcomings in the Russian leadership. General Kuropatkin had visited Japan in 1903 and rated her army (but not the cavalry) and artillery as being the equal of their European equivalents; far from being an incompetent fool, he is described as 'the finest tactician in Europe' [Vol. II, page 267] and portrayed rather as too much of an absolutist, withdrawing from Liaoyang when the situation was less than perfect instead of taking the initiative when victory was still possible.

Conversely the Japanese leadership did not invariably display the degree of efficiency which one associates with Japan: the most prominent example of such failings is Major General Ijichi Kōsuke's not seizing the unfortified 203-Metre Hill overlooking Port Arthur at the beginning of the siege. General Nogi Maresuke's subsequent consignment of thousands of troops to their inevitable death in trying to capture it only after it had been heavily fortified is a recurrent theme of the book; Shiba is highly critical of Nogi, who has generally enjoyed the reputation of a war hero. Sadly, the degree to which blood was needlessly shed is perhaps the ultimate way in which the carnage of the WW1 was foreshadowed; in the author's words [Vol. II, page 206] 'The fort at Port Arthur became a vast pump that sucked up Japanese blood.'

'Russia's attitude to Japan was generally one of overconfidence, grossly underestimating Japan's potential.'

The work is described as a 'best-selling novel', but in terms of depth and detail it goes way beyond even what is generally understood as being an historical novel. It is instructive to compare it with *War and Peace* which, despite Tolstoy's own denial, may be taken as an archetypal example of such a novel. This is centred around a number of fictional characters against the background of Napoleon's invasion of Russia; many of the protagonists, e.g. Prince Andrei, are directly involved in the action, and some non-fictional characters, e.g. Prince Speransky and Field Marshal Kutuzov, also appear. In the case of *Clouds above the Hill* on the other hand, all the characters are non-fictional; in this case the historical events are illustrated through the three central characters, in particular the Akiyama brothers. There is consequently a large cast of characters who serve as vehicles to advance the action; one surprising virtual absentee is the Meiji Emperor himself who puts in a minor appearance only late in Volume II.

In contrast to Tolstoy's philosophizing, *Clouds above the Hill* is enlivened by frequent pithy observations, such as 'The hardest part of foreign relations is the domestic rather than the foreign part.' [Vol. II, page 44] or 'The military profession justifies not just killing enemy soldiers but even more so, killing one's own.' [Vol. II, page 385].

Despite the wealth of detail the book contains, it is fast-paced and the momentum accelerates as the action progresses. As far as I can see, without reference to the original Japanese, the translation is also excellent.

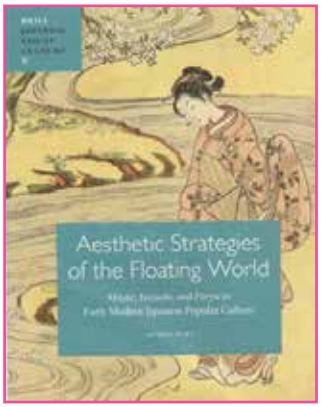
As with any high-quality work, any errors, however minor, become more prominent by contrast with the remainder. I shall confine myself to mentioning the following: It was the English navy which defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, not the British, as this was well before the Acts of Union of 1707 and indeed the Union of the Crowns of 1603 [Vol. I, page 307]. The Spanish

form of Christopher Columbus is *Cristóbal Colón*, not *Cristóbol Colón*. Vladivostok is better translated as 'Rule the East' (the usual rendering) or even 'Control the East' rather than 'Conquer the East', which is quite wrong and gives a misleading impression. Finally I am somewhat puzzled by the statement [Vol. II, page 304] that Napoleon received no formal training, i.e. military, when in fact he attended the military academy at Brienne-le-Château from 1779 to 1784 after which he trained in the École Militaire in Paris, graduating in 1785.

Clouds above the Hill will be essential reading for anyone with an interest in Japanese history, in Russian history and in the history of the 20th century in general. Readers of Volumes I and II will doubtless look forward to the publication of Volumes III and IV in November with the keenest anticipation.

Aesthetic Strategies of the Floating World

by Alfred Haft



Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2013

216 pages

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Alfred Haft works at the British Museum as a project curator in the Japanese section of the department of Asia. He is also a research associate of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC) at Norwich. This book is based on his Ph.D thesis and inevitably is more likely to be of interest to the specialist art historian than the general reader, but the book, which is copiously illustrated with reproductions of relevant Japanese prints in full colour, nevertheless has much to offer to anyone interested in the art and culture of the Edo period.

It is not possible in a brief review to give an adequate summary of Haft's scholarly analysis of the three terms in the title to his book. But readers will note that in his introduction he explains that his study is largely built round the concepts behind the term *gazoku* which may be translated as the refined and the mundane. In the concluding section he sums up the terms *mitate* as 'analogical juxtaposition,' *yatsushi* as casual adaptation and *fûryû* as standards of style, although such simplified translations fail to convey the complexity and nuances of these terms.

In chapter one he brings out some of the implications of the term *yatsushi* in the Edo period. It was for instance used for a man of higher social status who had come down in the world. He 'endured his reduced circumstances in an easy going manner and eventually met with a happy end [p.39].'

He notes that one version of *mitate* involved the bundling of 'elements of the everyday world (household objects) into an organizational relationship modelled on a component of high culture (nature studies)' i.e the combination of high and low culture.

Fûryû was 'the ideal of elegance,' which is such an important element in so much of Japanese culture, but as Haft points out the term came in the eighteenth century to be used as a euphemism for *kõshoku* or eroticism. Prostitution was a major element of the floating world. It was, he notes 'running rampant near the entrance gates to Edo's many shrines and temples, and even on properties allotted for use by the shogun's own retainers [p.29].'

In discussing the use of these terms in the Edo period Haft looks at the Japanese pastime of writing linked verses and haikai. For the haikai poet *mitate* denotes 'the juxtaposition of two objects viewed to have a similar shape [page 91].' This leads him into a discussion of humour in Japanese poetry and art. He notes that the 'culture of Edo Japan was alive with humor [sic], adaption, appropriation, innovation, unexpected juxtaposition, classicism, didacticism and continuity – a diversity of approaches spurring artistic growth in an ambitious range of directions [p.173].'

Haft's book sheds much interesting light on life in the Edo period. The samurai were the elite but the 'floating world' was as much their world as it was that of the merchants and commoners. Actors may have been in theory outcasts but they were depicted by artists such as Shunsho Katsukawa [勝川 春章] in refined actor portraits.

Haft's chapter four entitled 'Harunobu's Textual Pictures' is a stimulating introduction to the colour prints of this outstanding artist. If I had to choose one Harunobu Suzuki [鈴木 春信] print from this book it would be the following print from the Honolulu Academy of Arts in which a young woman wears a robe with dangling sleeves. As Haft notes 'Her slender form is characteristic of feminine beauty in ukiyo-e produced during the late 1750s-60s'.