



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: John Toppon

As life in both Japan and the UK takes on a more relaxing summer tempo, we offer you a simulating selection of books to enjoy during the warm August nights. Elizabeth Ingrams explores Lesley Downer's gripping new historical novel *The Courtesan and the Samurai*. This historical tale is set on the borderline of the Edo and Meiji Periods, two eras which form the backdrop for several of our reviews. Downer weaves her narrative in the turbulent years 1868-9 and tells the story of Hana, a 17-year-old daughter of a samurai caught up in the civil war (also see Anna Davis' review of Downer's *The Last Concubine* in Issue 13).

Staying in the same period, Sir Hugh Cortazzi guides us through the *Art of Edo Japan, the Artist and the City 1615-1868*. This fascinating work surveys the activities of several artists in their physical and socio-economic environments. It is packed full of exquisite prints and provides insights into the development of the Kano and Tosa schools of painting. It also looks at famous individual painters like Kōkan Shiba, Hokuai Shunkōsai, Kōrin Ogata, Kōetsu Hon'ami, Sōtatsu Tawaraya and Jakuchū Itō while also reminding us of the influence of Dutch studies (*rangaku*) on Japanese artists.

Ian Nish reviews an important new Japanese language book *Why Did the Greater East Asian War Happen? – The Economic and Political History of Pan-Asianism* by Professor Masataka Matsuura. The author systematically dissects pan-Asianism from a political and economic perspective in a highly detailed study stretching to over 1100 pages and including 200 pages of endnotes. A swathe of the book is devoted to the activities of General Iwane Matsui, the Greater Asia Association and analysing the thinking of right-wing groups and officers. This is a masterly document-based study, offering many new perspectives on the causes of the conflict and making an important contribution to the study of this period.

Michael Heazle and Nick Knight explore some of the aftermath from the war in *China-Japan Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Creating a Future Past?* A central theme of this thought-provoking work is the importance of historic memory on Sino-Japanese relations, and how it relates to each nation's contemporary perspective of the other, shaping their future outlook. This first-rate original work sets bilateral ties in a multi-dimensional context, covers an impressive range of topics and offers superb cutting-edge insights on East Asia's pivotal bilateral relationship.

Susan Meehan checks out the anime movie *Perfect Blue*, a tension-packed tale with a hard to predict plot. The heroine, pop idol Mima Kirigoe, gives up her successful singing career for acting, taking a small role in the TV drama "Double Bind." It's at this point that the gripping storyline becomes increasingly complicated, fact and fiction appear to merge, and events spiral out of control with a series of gruesome murders.

Adam House looks at *Shot by Both Sides* an imaginative, moving and enigmatic narrative by Goto Meisei which is reminiscent of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The novel follows the

narrator's thought stream on his pilgrimage-like attempt to track down his old overcoat.

This is a first rate translation of the awarding winning Goto's novel by Tom Gill, who deserves a huge amount of praise for bringing this intriguing work into the English language world. We round off this issue with a peek at elaborate Meiji period ivory carvings examined in *The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono*. Ivory carving requires amazing skill combined with patience and the exquisite illustrations in this book show the fantastic craftsmanship of Japanese carvers in the Meiji era.

Sean Curtin

New reviews

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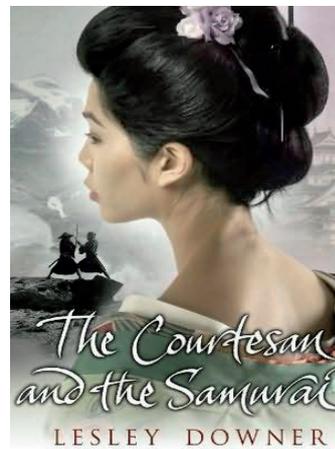
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We are grateful to our regular reviewers:

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Simon Cotterill	Takahiro Miyao
William Farr	Ian Nish
Fumiko Halloran	Ben-Ami Shillony
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The Courtesan and the Samurai

by Lesley Downer

Bantam Press, 2010,
352 pages.
ISBN-10:0593057937,
£12.99

Review by Elizabeth Ingrams

"*The Courtesan and the Samurai*" is the second book in a series of historical fiction by Lesley Downer set in 1860s Japan. This novel is set in 1868-9, a particularly turbulent year, covering the civil war between the shogunate forces, or "northerners," and the imperial Japanese forces, or "southerners" as the two sides are simply called in the novel. This period is usually known as the Meiji Restoration.

Written from the point of the losing side in the civil war, the protagonist here is Hana, a 17-year-old daughter of a samurai married to one of the fiercest commanders of the ex-shogun's forces of the Northern Alliance. The last shogun, Yoshinobu had resigned at the end of 1867, under duress from the Mikado's councillors and the Southern clans.

Hana's marriage is based on Confucian patriarchal ideals. She is expected to obey her husband as she would a father, or even a sovereign. Her husband is not expected to love her, or to treat her particularly kindly. But, like a good samurai, she is trained to fight. While her husband goes to rally forces for the Northern Alliance, she is given the task of being the sole defender of her household in Edo. And when the southerners come to the gates of her residence, she promptly kills one of them with a halberd and escapes at the behest of her servants across the river towards Nihonbashi, or Japan Bridge. There she is sold by a procuress to become a courtesan in Edo's licensed quarters, the "five streets" of the Yoshiwara.

Hana has read about these quarters in the romantic fiction, 'The Plum Calendar' but she has never yet visited. Downer's descriptions of life in the walled enclave of the Yoshiwara (established by the shogunate as a way of controlling prostitution), are a tour de force of literary dramatisation. Downer has previously written about the Yoshiwara in her book 'Geisha: The Secret History of a Vanishing World' (2000), a history of the customs of Japanese courtesans and geisha. In her talk for this book's launch the author provided a rare glimpse of her visit to the courtesans in Kyoto in the 1990s:

"There are five women who still uphold the traditions of courtesan, they are not the same as geisha, but they occupy the same world of the flower and the willow," she said. Courtesans are high-class prostitutes, whereas geisha are women who sell their arts and social skills. Hana is equipped with the ability to write poetry, and so quickly promoted to being a star courtesan, given the honorific title "Hanaogi."

In her talk, Downer described the awesome appearance of a courtesan (a 're-enactor' in this day and age) dressed in many layers of kimono, escorted by child attendants, with a head of lacquered hair pinned together with tortoiseshell combs. She described the "electric" atmosphere among the men on this occasion, who were all lining up for an audience. The scene is recreated in the book when Hana appears in a cage along with her companions. During this viewing she is meant to pick out a man to be her lover. Outdoor scenes of this can also be seen in Utagawa Hiroshige's prints.

The year that Downer chose to portray the life of a courtesan is crucial. At this time, courtesans were still sought after by the elite, but very shortly after, geisha women, partners of the new ruling Imperial elite installed in the newly named Tokyo, were elevated to higher social status. A few years later, the old Yoshiwara was burned down and then moved. Interestingly there are no photographs of the old Yoshiwara. It is as though Downer has chosen a period just beyond our reach to create a lavish world of high romance.

The other half of this story of star-crossed lovers is seen through the eyes of Yozo Tajima, a samurai sailor, fighting on

the side of the Northern Alliance, serving the historical figure of Admiral Enomoto, of the ex-shogun's navy. Both have recently returned from an expedition to the West licensed by the shogun. Part of their mission there was to build and bring back a warship, the Kaiyo Maru (which was later sunk). On their return, they are appalled to find the shogun has in fact resigned but Enomoto refuses to hand over the navy to the southern Imperial forces. Instead he is motivated by a mix of loyalty to the previous regime and idealism gained from his exposure to the more democratic ways of the West, to lead the Northern Alliance to Ezo, present-day Hokkaido. From there, the Northern Alliance "will establish the Democratic Republic of Ezo in the name of the shogun with Hakodate as our capital and from there move South and take the rest of Japan," as Downer has him proclaim.

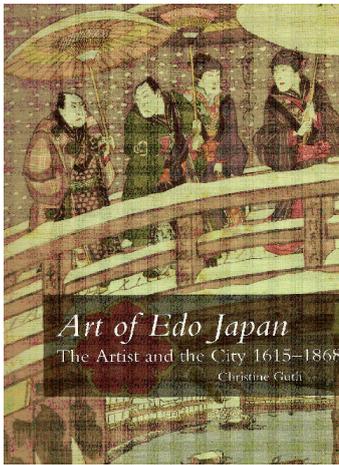
The army of the Northern Alliance, is here led by Commander Yamaguchi, a fictional figure based on the formidable leader of the shinsengumi (the 'new select corps'), Toshizō Hijikata. His story is cleverly woven into Downer's tale of star-crossed lovers. This army included crack troops some of whom had been trained by the French to protect the shogun before he resigned. Thus, historically, nine French officers sailed with the Japanese including Jean Marlin, who features in the novel as Yozo's friend and supporter.

Downer imaginatively recreates the internal tensions of such a dynamic mix of personalities. Yamaguchi turns out to be bitterly opposed to the foreign-leaning Enomoto and Yozo, who is so adept at languages that not only has he read Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species*, but he also sings an English sea shanty to entertain the troops. When Kitaro, a friend of Yozo is murdered mysteriously by one of Yamaguchi's men, Yozo is motivated to take revenge for his friend's death.

The defeat of the Northern Alliance at Hakodate gives Yozo the opportunity to take his chance at revenge but Enomoto, Yozo and his French protector Marlin, are eventually captured and brought back to Edo. They escape to the Yoshiwara, where Hana is preparing for her 'debut' or 'mizuage'. Once a courtesan attracted a wealthy patron who would arrange for her mizuage, she could escape her debts and leave the Yoshiwara. So when the wealthy merchant Saburosuké Kashima catches sight of Hana, her fate is sealed, or is it? The *pièce de resistance* here is the mizuage itself, a grotesque affair where the odious merchant Saburosuké meets his match at last in a manner appropriate to this exaggerated world – gaudy, lascivious and grotesque.

There is a symbolic ending for the other characters too. Yozo and Enomoto survive, their skills are needed in the new Japan. Meanwhile the old-style samurai Yamaguchi is killed, and in fact Hijikata died at Hakodate. Without such inspiring and entertaining books to draw our attention to it, Japan's less well-known history of the 1860s might be in danger of going the way of the Kaiyo Maru herself.

Elizabeth Ingrams is the editor of Japan Through Writers' Eyes, published by Eland Books, £12.99, to order go to: www.travelbooks.co.uk



Art of Edo Japan: The Artist and the City 1615-1868

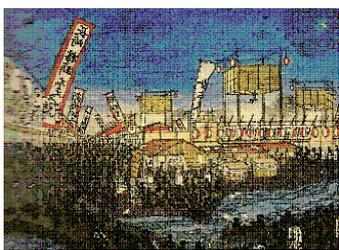
by Christine Guth

Yale University Press, 2010 (soft back edition), 176 pages including index, glossary and chronology, copious colour illustrations, £12.99 ISBN: 978-0-300-16414-8

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This book was first published in hardback in 1996. It is a useful and readable introduction to the painters and print artists of this prolific period in Japanese art. It does not cover, except very cursorily, other aspects of Japanese art in the Edo era. Nor does it directly describe the political, economic or social life or the prolific literature of the age. But anyone who wants a reasonably priced survey of painters and print artists in Edo Japan will find this a useful and reasonable purchase.

Christine Guth declares rather ponderously that “This book takes as its premise that a strong sense of urban and regional identity is one of the distinguishing features of Edo-period culture. It surveys the activities of selected artists in their physical and socio-economic environments to bring into relief the cultural dynamics within and among four major cities, Kyoto, Edo, Osaka and Nagasaki.” Thus after an introduction on “Mapping the Artistic Landscape” the author devotes separate chapters to Kyoto artists, Edo artists, Osaka and Nagasaki artists with a final chapter devoted to itinerant, provincial and rural artists. The chapter on Kyoto artists gives a useful summary of the development of the Kano and Tosa schools of painting and such famous individual painters as Kōrin, Kōetsu, Sōtatsu and Jakuchū. The chapter on Edo artists concentrates on print artists. The chapter on Nagasaki reminds readers of the influence of Dutch studies (rangaku) and the importance of artists such as Shiba Kōkan.



Most of the illustrations will be familiar to students of Japanese art, but I was not familiar with some such as this one (middle) by Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-95), in the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum, of “The Riverside At Shijō,” a nocturnal scene, designed for viewing in a stereoscopic device, where figures are silhouetted against lantern-lit restaurants and theatres while an acrobatic performance dominates the background.



And this (bottom) a print by Shunkōsai Hokuei (d.1836) depicting a dramatic scene where Lady Osuma emerges from the cave where she has been hiding and shines a torch on Hanbei, her brother-in-law's murderer (Victoria and Albert Museum).

Why Did the Greater East Asian War Happen? – The Economic and Political History of Pan-Asianism

(「大東亜戦争」はなぜ起きたのか - 汎アジア主義の政治経済史)

by Matsuura Masataka (松浦 正孝)

Nagoya University Press (名古屋大学出版会), 2010, 1079 pages. ISBN 978-4-8158-0629-3 9975 yen

Review by Ian Nish



In addressing the topic “how did the Greater East Asian War come about,?” Professor Matsuura focuses on the subject of pan-Asianism, but analyses its political and economic aspects rather than its ideological ones. In particular, he asks the question as set out on the dust jacket, “why did Japan, using the ideology of a holy war for the liberation of Asia, take over various countries

as colonies?” and sets out to explain the “greatest riddle of recent history”: how pan-Asianism by its rise during the interwar period pushed Japan to confrontation with China, to southern expansion and ultimately towards what she liked to call “the Greater East Asian War,” virtually colonial war. It is an immense subject, covering commerce, politics and religion, and receives monumental treatment, about 1100 pages including endnotes of 200 pages. It is foolhardy of anyone to try to introduce such an encyclopaedic work, full of new materials and fresh insights, on what is inevitably a sensitive subject for the Japanese.

The author starts out by tracing the origins and development of ‘Asianism’ back to the nineteenth century and highlights the attitudes of Choshu, Satsuma and Saga clans towards relations with China and Korea. As a result of the intellectual ferment following the Russo-Japanese war, the scope of the Asian concept changed in line with the growth of Japan’s economic and military stature in the world. As the result of the failure of the racial equality resolution at the Paris peace conference of 1919 and the US anti-immigration legislation of the 1920s, its exponents began to speak of “Greater East Asia” and the Japanese state portrayed itself as “The Empire of the Seas.”

By the mid-thirties the Japanese economy had revived under the skilful management of Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo and gained ground on other countries still locked in the Great Depression. With the fall in the yen’s value, the author argues that Japanese goods swamped the markets of British India and other parts of the British Empire and, when Britain took steps to restrict this trade

in the interests of Lancashire, this confirmed the pan-Asianists in their anti-colonial views. They could look to the merchant community for financial support for their movement. The author devotes a chapter to the activities of Indians who sought political exile in Japan, part of the diaspora of the British Empire. While the Japanese government trod a cautious path, those like Rashbehari Bose and A.M. Sahay obtained protection in various right-wing quarters until government itself recognized Subhas Chandra Bose as its preferred Indian leader in 1943.

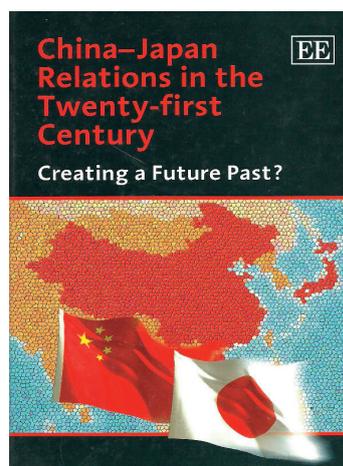
A fascinating chapter tells of the attempts to integrate Manchukuo, which effectively became an economic protectorate of the Japanese after 1933, with other parts of China. Pan-Asianists believed that the colonial economies of Manchukuo, Korea and Taiwan had been successful – the tiger economies of the 1930s – and should be integrated into an Asian bloc. They hoped, with the collaboration of Chinese merchants around the area, to create an economic zone linking Taiwan with the adjacent mainland provinces of China (Fujian, Guangdong), areas largely in the hands of the Japanese military. The practical object behind this was to outflank the tactic of boycotting Japanese goods which Chinese merchants at the main ports were employing.

A large portion of the book is devoted to the activities of General Matsui Iwane and the Greater Asia Association (Dai Ajia Kyokai). Matsui who had been a Japanese officer specializing in Chinese affairs, became one of Japan's top generals and was serving in General Staff roles at the beginning of the 1930s where his views were moulded by the Manchurian crisis. In 1933-4 he was appointed as commander-in-chief in the colony of Taiwan. There he hatched the idea of the Association and came to favour Japan expanding south (Nanshin) instead of north. He was a key figure in what was an influential group which was non-governmental and tended to include the army officers with a few civilians. As the international situation deteriorated, it became a powerful enough lobby that could exert pressure on any government. Recalled to the colours from retirement for the China war in 1937, Matsui was appointed commander of the Shanghai force which captured Shanghai and later Nanking, where atrocities were committed. He was immediately retired again and was ultimately condemned to death by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East for his connection with these atrocities.

Matsuura tries to analyse the independent thinking of right-wing groups like the Greater Asia Association and officers like Matsui. They were motivated by hostility to signs of racial discrimination and commercial restrictions against Japan. They tried by conferences and cultural activities both inside and outside Japan to make propaganda for an expanding role for Japan in Asia. As for government, there seems to have been in effect a tug-of-war between various factions. While some Japanese cabinets seem to have initially resisted and punished such views, they gradually came round to adopting pan-Asian doctrines

in order to mobilize military and civilian opinion behind the war effort. Pan-Asianism was, the author believes, one factor which brought about the war by forming a bridge between Japan's political dissatisfaction with the West and her growing expansionism in 1937 and 1941. But it could be argued that Japan merely used the ideological content of pan-Asianism to justify her continental, and ultimately hemispheric, expansion.

This is a masterly study, carefully based on documents and offering many new perspectives on the causes of the Greater East Asian War. It makes an important contribution to the debate which will continue to surround these years.



China-Japan Relations in the Twenty-first Century: Creating a Future Past?

edited by Michael Heazle and Nick Knight

247 pages, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2007
ISBN-13: 978-1847201126
£59.95

Review by Sean Curtin

This thought-provoking work analyzes the complex dynamics of East Asia's most important bilateral relationship, how it may evolve and what impact it will have both regionally and globally. A central theme is the importance of historic memory on Sino-Japanese relations, how this relates to each nation's contemporary perspective of the other and powerfully shapes their future visions. Several authors argue that competing perceptions of the past are powerfully shaping today's image and are significantly impacting on each country's long-term vision of the other. The editors assemble an impressive line-up of scholars and disciplinary approaches (history, anthropology, sociology, political science and international relations) to examine key domestic and international aspects of this multifaceted dynamic. The book seeks to set bilateral ties in a multi-dimensional context and covers an impressive range of topics including historical interaction, cultural perceptions, nationalism as well as a host of other ideological and regional perspectives.

In the introductory chapter the editors, Michael Heazle and Nick Knight, highlight the key issues analyzed in the following chapters. At the core of bilateral friction are divergent historical views of Japan's colonial past and its wartime behaviour in China and the wider Asia-Pacific region. Heazle and Knight observe, "Many Chinese retain a deep sense of grievance about Japan's pre-war and wartime activities in China, and express anger that Japan

has (supposedly) not shown sufficient remorse for its injurious behaviour stretching back well over a century (page 2)."

In Chapter two Jian Zhang looks at the influence of grassroots Chinese nationalism found amongst ordinary citizens and its impact on bilateral ties. He views it as something that is often difficult for Beijing to control. Jian notes, "The rapid growth of on-line and off-line nationalistic groups has transformed popular anti-Japanese protests from ephemeral expressions of public anger to a potentially sustained grassroots social movement (page 21)." Opinion polls in China consistently show Japan as one of their most disliked nations and when provocative actions or insensitive statements are made by Japanese politicians, anti-Japanese sentiment can suddenly flare up and get out of control. The Chinese government realizes this is a deeply unsatisfactory situation and desperately wants more stable diplomatic ties with Tokyo, but this goal usually conflicts with a high ranked objective of wanting to be more responsive to Chinese public sentiment. Thus Beijing finds itself increasingly constrained and bilateral political ties are frequently held hostage by emotive events such as the controversial annual visits of former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the war-tainted Yasukuni Shrine.

In the following chapter Xia Liping takes an in depth look at the relationship in the wider context of multilateral cooperation within East Asia. There are a host of areas such as trade and economic cooperation where it is beneficial for Beijing to work closely with Tokyo, a fact Chinese foreign policy readily acknowledges. While Xia sees this realization as highly a positive development with long-term future returns, he also acknowledges that frequent friction over sensitive historical issues is seriously holding back the process. Thus great efforts should be made to avoid inflaming nationalist passions, he comments, "Every visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi opened the old wounds of those in Asian countries who suffered terribly from the brutality of the Japanese army before and during World War II (page 51)." He optimistically concludes that if Tokyo can restrain its nationalist lawmakers, historic tensions will naturally recede, greatly benefiting both nations and the region as a whole.

In a highly thought-provoking chapter Nick Knight looks at the distinct perceptions both China and Japan hold of the modern world and associated dichotomies which characterize them, for example developing/developed nation and capitalist/socialist state. These have strongly shaped their perceptions of each other, especially as the two sit in opposing categories which only serves to accentuate the perceived differences between them. Knight concludes, "China's perception of the dichotomies that characterise the modern world, in which Japan is categorised as developed and capitalist, in contrast to China which is developing and socialist, thus serves to reinforce China's negative perceptions of Japan in other, more concrete, areas of disagreement (page 68)."

Rumi Sakamoto looks at the dynamics of popular nationalism in contemporary Japan by analysing Yoshinori Kobayashi's (小林 よしのり) controversial best selling 1998 nationalistic manga series *Sensoron* (戦争論). This highly revisionist comic was targeted at young readers and is considered to have successfully disseminated a right-wing revisionist view of the war to the younger generation. He has a high profile as Eric Johnson notes in a latter chapter, "Kobayashi is given the same status and respect as professional historians and diplomats, and his views are rarely challenged aggressively (page 115)." Sakamoto argues that Kobayashi's and similar works have to be taken into account when we try to understand the current perceptions and controversy over history and memory between Japan, China and Korea. Kobayashi deliberately ignores historical facts in his distorted view of the war which emphasizes the heroic struggle of the Japanese people against murky external forces. He utilizes an array of emotive nationalistic devices to drive home his highly charged ultra-rightwing narrative. Sakamoto comments, "he uses his materials selectively, ignores what contradicts his point, blows them out proportion and without any context, and generally jumps to unwarranted conclusions (page 86)." She observes, "Kobayashi's manga does challenge the mainstream interpretation of history and opens up a dialogue over important issues such as the continuity between Japan before and after 1945 (page 89)."

Barbara Hartley looks at the hotly contested area of historical wartime memory in contemporary Japan and the competing narratives that appear in the Japanese media. She examines how perceptions of this in neighbouring countries powerfully shapes public opinion towards Japan, where it is generally believed a revisionist outlook is in the ascendancy. Hartley challenges this perception demonstrating that there is strong resistance to neo-nationalist interpretations.

However, ultra-nationalists continually manage to grab the headlines over such issues as school text books, creating the impression that revisionism is part of the mainstream narrative. Provocative actions and statements by prominent members of the long governing LDP reinforced this view, drowning out the more moderate, mainstream Japanese opinion. She also explores the highly disturbing documentary "Japanese Devils" (日本鬼子) about the brutal war atrocities committed by the Imperial Army as related by 14 former Japanese soldiers. These veterans bluntly tell of the horrific acts they committed including "throwing babies into bonfires and stuffing women's vaginas with rags before dousing them with gasoline and setting them alight (page 101)" or "a former sergeant who raped and murdered a woman before serving her flesh to his comrades (page 102)." In her conclusion she asserts "many Japanese accept the necessity for a full and frank acknowledgement of the nation's misdeeds of the past (page 108)."

Eric Johnson looks at the current way the Japanese

media portrays China and the two Koreas, focusing in particular on 2005, the 60th anniversary year of Tokyo's WWII surrender. He does not present a positive image, "Japan's increasingly right-leaning mainstream media was either defending the country's brutal colonisation of China and the Korean peninsula, or doing its best to play down such crimes (page 111)." He sees this trend as extremely problematic for Japan in the new globalized world where comments designed exclusively for domestic consumption can be instantly scrutinized worldwide.

He also sees the media as portraying Japan as "the misunderstood victim" and warns, "until Japan realises that it can no longer have a *tatemaie* (what you may encourage others to believe your opinions are) for the international community and a *honne* (your actual opinions or thinking) for domestic politics, it is doomed to find itself bedevilled by these historical disputes (page 112)." Johnson, a talented journalist, produces a highly readable, insightful chapter which is less academic than others, also containing fewer endnotes.

Jian Yang pens a stimulating and highly readable chapter on China's security policy towards Japan. He sees historical issues as strongly influencing contemporary Chinese defence policy towards Tokyo, but also notes that some observers believe, "the friction between China and Japan over the history issue is merely a manifestation of strategic conflicts between the two countries (page 136)." Beijing fears, "It is just a matter of time before Japan revises its Peace Constitution to enable Tokyo to freely send military forces overseas (page 131)."

Joseph Y.S. Cheng takes an in-depth look at China's regional policy from various perspectives, producing some excellent insights into its geopolitical strategy in Central Asia and Beijing's tactics in dealing with what it sees as a US policy of containment. He comes to similar conclusions as many other writers regarding the China-Japan equation, he notes "mutual distrust between China and Japan has been increasing in recent years, and it has been exacerbated both by the Taiwan issue and the failure to resolve the historical legacy of World War II (page 156)."

However, he concedes, "Sino-Japanese relations have been a failure in Chinese diplomacy (page 171)." Nationalism, as Jian Zhang documents earlier, is a growing force in each nation which is shaping policy, Cheng notes, "The spontaneous anti-Japanese protests in several Chinese cities in April 2005 probably caught the Chinese leadership by surprise, and it in turn feels pressure to stand firm in dealing with Japan (page 156)."

Michael Heazle offers an in-depth analysis of Sino-Japanese relations through the trinity of nationalism, security and prosperity. He is not overly optimistic, "The current outlook for Sino-Japanese relations is not a positive one (page 200)." He argues that Tokyo's regional and global role will be significantly shaped by the way

its relationship with Beijing develops as this will define its position in Asia and consequently on the international stage. Ironically, were bilateral ties to markedly improve Japan would become a more prominent global player and less dependent on the US, exactly what Japanese neo-nationalists want. At the time Heazle wrote his paper (about 2005/6) the LDP seemed entrenched in power, a factor he saw as a significant stumbling block impeding progress. With their ouster in August 2009, the future may be more promising for Sino-Japanese relations than Heazle's conclusion envisages.

In a well written and stimulating chapter Michael Wesley looks at Sino-Japanese regional rivalry and the impact on East Asia. He charts how the turbulent relationship has played out over the postwar period, concluding that at the time of writing (2005/6) there was little optimism for a substantive improvement in the short to medium term. He neatly sums up one of the key impediments to progress, "as Japan becomes increasingly concerned about China's and North Korea's belligerence, it becomes increasingly committed to defence transformation within the [US-Japan] alliance; which in turn, further heightens China's hostility (page 218)."

David Hundt rounds off the book with a look at South Korea's relationship with both Japan and China. He points out that historical disputes are not just a China-Japan or Korea-Japan issue but also cause tensions between China and the Koreas as the 2003 dispute over Goguryeo (old Koryo) illustrates. China attempted to claim one of Korea's ancient "three kingdoms" as historically Chinese causing uproar in South Korea. Hundt demonstrates that even on the sidelines of China-Japan relations life is complicated.

This original work offers superb insights and cutting-edge analysis on East Asia's most pivotal relationship. It provides a first-rate framework which enables the reader to understand its dynamics and possible future scenarios. The Sino-Japanese tensions of 2005 were the Promethean spark for this work, thus most of the papers have been researched in 2005/2006 when Sino-Japanese relations were at an extremely low point and the long dominant Liberal Democratic Party seemed unassailable. Consequently, the book's conclusions are a little gloomier than the situation appears in 2010.

The LDP has been decisively unseated from a five-decade stranglehold on power giving a tremendous boost to a fresh type of bilateral exchange under the new Democratic Party of Japan administration. No prime minister has visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine since Koizumi left office in 2006, enabling political ties to stabilize and thrive once more. There are still a multitude of future challenges facing this complex relationship which will shape both Asia and the world. This excellent book offers one of the best opportunities to understand them and is a must-read for anyone interested in East Asia.



Perfect Blue
(パーフェクトブルー)

directed by
Satoshi Kon (今敏)

1998, anime, 82 minutes,
based on novel of same
name by Yoshikazu Takeuchi
(竹内義和)

Review by Susan Meehan

"Perfect Blue" is a tension-packed thriller which had me on the edge of my seat, surprising perhaps as it is an anime. Not a fan of thrillers and having simply tripped over the DVD in a secondhand book and film shop, even I could tell that Perfect Blue is cleverly made, with a psychological and compelling storyline crossing into the grisly towards its denouement. The anime avatars are believable, well-rounded characters, not too dissimilar from their real-life cousins.

Made in the early 1990s, Perfect Blue was an enormous breakthrough. Though it has dated somewhat, most notably in that its young heroine doesn't know how to use the internet and needs her agent's help – this would be unthinkable today – it still has a modern and slick feel to it.

The heroine, pop idol Mima Kirigoe (霧越未麻), is a member of the girl band Cham. Giving up her singing career in favour of acting, much to the grief of some of her music fans, her foray into TV begins with a small role in the drama "Double Bind." Her career move is somewhat blighted when she receives a fax at home accusing her of being a traitor to her fans and a letter sent to her at the TV studio set explodes, injuring the unsuspecting producer who'd opened it.

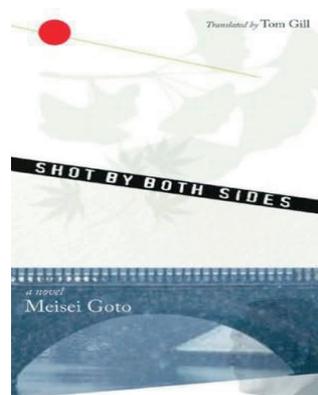
Paranoia further ensues when, learning how to navigate the internet, Mima encounters a "pop idol" blog called "Mima's Room." Whoever is writing it, and it's not Mima, accounts for Mima's every move and reveals Mima's innermost thoughts.

The film plot becomes increasingly complicated and lost me several times as Mima's own life and that of her character's in "Double Bind" become increasingly intertwined, making it hard for viewers to differentiate between them. Events spiral out of control – murders are being committed in the drama and also outside as some of Mima's colleagues working on the TV set are gruesomely killed. Mima seems implicated in some of the murders or is she hallucinating or did I misunderstand? We progressively enter Hitchcockian territory as the concept of "doubles" is introduced bringing to mind Hitchcock's words, "If you meet your double, you should kill him or he will kill you." Applied to Perfect Blue, these words turn out to be prophetic.

As the film nears its end we are confirmed in our belief

that the villainous and fanatical Mr Me-Mania is stalking Mima and penning "Mima's Room." In a scary encounter he tells her that the real Mima emails him every day and tells him to get rid of the impostor. He tries to stab her; she hits him with a hammer. Is this a dream? Is she losing a grip on reality? Are there two Mimas?

All is revealed as the film wraps up, having successfully toyed with the viewer's mind.



Shot by Both Sides,
by Meisei Goto

translated by Tom Gill

Counterpoint Berkeley, 2009,
215 pages (paperback)
ISBN-10: 1582434735
£ 11.99

Review by Adam House

Watching the river flowing under Ochanomizu Bridge, we read as Akaki (our narrator) muses on bridges mentioned in the stories of Kafu, and also that of Gogol, another of his favourite authors. He's on the bridge waiting to meet a man called Yamakawa, we follow his thoughts on Gogol and that in his student days he had a khaki overcoat, where is it now? Lost, mislaid? As his story begins, we learn that he's forty years old and has two children, married for twelve years, he leads a vigil like existence, but a vigil for what we are not sure. Arising early that morning the phrases, "the early bird catches the worm" and the Japanese equivalent, "Early rising is three pence/mon to the good," echo in his thoughts, and thinking about his old coat leads him to think over Gogol's story 'The Overcoat', his name resembles that of the hero too, Akaky Akakievich. His fascination with Gogol is touched upon again, "To me, Gogol wasn't just some Russian guy who lived over one hundred years ago. And he wasn't just a 'great writer of Russian Literature,' nor the founder of realism. You might say he was my fate." Thinking back on the overcoat he had worn some twenty years ago, Akaki begins to recall his childhood. The details of his memories seem difficult to grasp, but it's as if he were turning the dial on the lens of a microscope, trying to focus in to get the clearest image possible of past events, his thought patterns sometime seem to arrive randomly, "What on earth have I been thinking about all this time? True I've stayed alive this whole time so I must have thought about things." He reflects on the nature of his thinking.

The novel follows the narrator on his pilgrimage in an attempt to track down his old overcoat, which he likens to a pilgrimage of sorts, he makes the contrast to Kobo Daishi (Kukai), with a slight humour. Returning to the

places of his student days, we revisit with him the old three-mat room he used to rent from the Ishida family, when he lived with the Koga brothers. This was at the time when he first arrived in Tokyo to study at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, the same university in which the novelist Futabatei Shimei studied Russian. Chapter by chapter we go back further into Akaki's past, things that he encounters as he retraces the places he went to twenty years ago in search of his coat reignite memories of his childhood, the layered Sebald-like narrative isn't too far away, although this novel was first published in Japan in 1972. As Akaki travels along the Keihin-Tohoku train line revisiting places and people from twenty years back, visiting his old pawn shop - in pursuit of his coat, and seeing a cinema poster provokes memories of his childhood in northern Korea, where he was born in the early 1930s. He recalls the house they lived in with its ondol underfloor heating, his old schools, and also the bombing raids as the Soviets advanced. He looks back at himself as a boy and remembers sensing something much larger than himself coming to an end. He recalls listening in to what he thinks was the Emperor's muffled broadcast through a neighbour's wall and recounts the night he and his brother burn their collection of magazines and records of Japanese ballads, singing the songs as the flames engulf the albums, clinging onto his father's army beret, but that too gets consigned to the flames. His grandmother had died in a concentration camp, and their house is impounded by the Korean civil guard, "take what you can in your hands, leave in thirty minutes," they are informed. His story of repatriation changes to that of a confession addressed to his elder brother, telling him of his inner feelings and thoughts. The narrative interweaves between flowing points in time and history, a history not perceived in the grand scale, but seen in the eyes of a boy whose watching history move as if on an opposite shore, or parallel.

This novel is many things, informative, moving, enigmatic, literary and at times has a subtle philosophical humour. Goto Meisei drew from personal experience in writing Akaki's story, and in 1981 won the Tanizaki Prize for his novel *The Courtesan Yoshino*. This translation of Goto by Tom Gill, hopefully not the last work we'll see in English, is seamless.

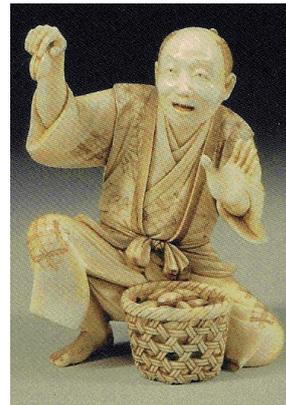


**The Golden Age of
Japanese Okimono: The Dr
A.M. Kanter Collection
Laura Bordignon**

**Antique Collectors' Club, 2010,
302 pages, copiously illustrated
with colour plates,
ISBN 978-1-85149-609-9
£45**

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

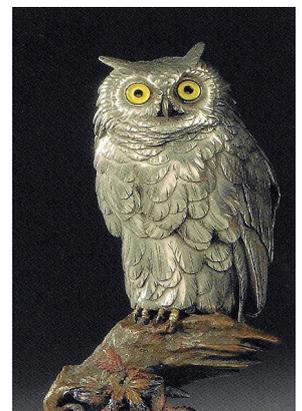
Laura Bordignon is an antique dealer who has developed a close interest in the arts and crafts of the Meiji era. Dr Kanter has collected many fine pieces of ivory carvings made by Japanese artists and craftsmen in this period. His collection focuses on the elaborate ivory carvings called okimono (literally put or placed objects) although it also contains a number of items in metal, cloisonné and lacquer. In addition to colour illustrations of objects in Dr Kanter's collection, the book includes a list of ivory carvers in the Tokyo Sculptors Society with the characters which they used for their names, a list of Shibayama craftsmen, a note about Japanese signatures and an analysis of the different types of ivory used by Japanese carvers.



As Bordignon points out, Japanese craftsmen who had devoted much of their energies to producing swords and sword fittings were deprived of this market following the prohibition on the wearing of swords in the early Meiji period. Instead they began to make pieces for western visitors and for the burgeoning trade in Japanese curios. Netsuke were still produced but carvers

began to produce larger pieces for export. Craft goods in ivory, metal, cloisonné, lacquer and ceramics indeed formed a major element in Japanese exports in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Ivory carving requires great skill and patience. It is also very time consuming. Japanese carvers showed exquisite workmanship in the many examples illustrated in this book. The first section of illustrations of okimono is devoted to depictions of various artisans at work. This is followed by a section of carvings of farmers performing various agricultural tasks. Another section is devoted to animals.



These are followed by carvings of Japanese beauties (bijin), samurai, entertainers and of mythological scenes. The final section devoted to okimono, headed 'miscellaneous', covers carvings which do not fit into any of the other categories

The objects depicted in this well illustrated volume may not appeal to all collectors. Those brought up to believe that the finest Japanese art is restrained and shibui may in particular find these highly decorative pieces over-ornamental, but everyone who sees these objects and looks at this volume must be impressed by the workmanship and skill of the Japanese craftsmen as well as by their imaginative and artistic depiction of the personalities and scenes which they carve.