

variety of modes of presentation in this collection range widely and encompass a variety of creative endeavors in literature, poetry, visual art, and essay. This eclectic assemblage raises a number of questions about the Yamamba figure, in particular the extent to which this figure of folklore embodies female empowerment, evinces a female “voice,” or challenges notions of femininity altogether. While no clear answers are provided to such questions, the volume validates such an approach in demonstrating the complexities of a Japanese cultural icon such as Yamamba and the power held by this mythic figure which even today continues to attract considerable attention not only in Japan but globally, inspiring innovative and interdisciplinary responses such as found in this volume.

Disruptions of Daily Life: Japanese Literary Modernism in the World

By **Arthur M. Mitchell**. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2020. 276 pp. \$55.00.

Reviewed by
Charles Exley

Arthur M. Mitchell’s *Disruptions of Daily Life: Japanese Literary Modernism in the World* operates from the premise that “modernist works were meant to incite social transformation” (2) and mounts a spirited defense of the power of literary language to change the way we think about daily life and engage with our present moment. It consists of four chapters with an introduction and a coda. The aim of Mitchell’s book is to clarify the relationship of literary techniques used in modernist works to the social ideologies of their time, with which they share a dialectical relationship. Mitchell argues for a more precise and historically determined definition of modernist fiction, a term which he prefers to apply to texts, not to authors.

One of the core arguments about modernist works here is that they are inextricably linked to the social discourses of their time. Mitchell argues that modernist works appropriate and redirect the language of social reform in order to disrupt the very notions they cite, to call them into question. Following Eysteinsson, Mitchell suggests that the literariness of

language comes not from rejecting the communicative valence of ordinary language but from the ability to suspend it, interrogate it, and interrupt it. Critics today may have a tendency to see these works as isolated hallmarks of self-conscious linguistic experimentation, “But restored to the context of the social milieu in which they were generated, they reveal themselves to be rude, flippant, and outrageous, openly contemptuous of the visions and worldviews that society embraced” (3).

Chapter 1 discusses Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *A Fool's Love* (1924-5). Most readers of this journal will be familiar with Kawai Jōji's record of obsession with former cafe waitress Naomi. Mitchell focuses on Jōji's record of married life as a subversive reworking of contemporary social discourses focused on daily life aimed at promoting middle class ideals of consumption and domestic life. An extended comparison with Tayama Katai's *The Quilt* illustrates how Tanizaki's work draws on and reverses the expectations of closure in the I-novel. Mitchell argues that this flaunting of literary conventions also represented “a direct confrontation with the social discourses and the ideas they perpetuated about love, lust, marriage, and the home” (83). Tanizaki's novel thus records an arrangement much more radical than the reform of daily life promoted in the press to create model middle-class citizens and national subjects.

Chapter 2 considers a manifesto and short works by Yokomitsu Riichi (1925), “the most self-consciously modernist” (101) writer in this study. In the manifesto, Mitchell calls attention to the use of terms drawn from Kantian phenomenology, which Mitchell suggests accounts for “sensation as a form of cognition that is a synthesis of both understanding and sensibility” (117). This formulation, Mitchell argues, is a direct rebuttal to the conflation of aesthetics and daily life represented in Satō Haruo's essay “Fūryū-ron,” which lays out “a form of cognition in which understanding and sensibility are collapsed, resulting in a process that is impossible to analyze” (117). Yokomitsu's discussion of neo-sensation and cognition in the manifesto reveals a strategy to address specific discourses of his time, particularly those that took for granted the ethnic basis of aesthetic judgement. At the same time, Yokomitsu's work responds directly to the social reform discourse following the Great Kantō Earthquake, a discourse promoting national unity, identification with Tokyo as imperial city, and suggestion of spiritual and cultural identification with the nation. Yokomitsu's two short stories “Heads and Bellies” and “Ruthless City” invoke, then overturn, established conventions of the I-novel like a

coherent narrator, readerly identification with the narrator, and a general expectation of transparent narration.

Chapter 3 takes up Kawabata Yasunari's *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (1929–1930). Rather than a reflection of the fragmentation in the aftermath of the earthquake, Mitchell emphasizes the novel's relationship to media discourse on reconstruction. Mitchell draws our attention to the ways in which Kawabata's novel assimilates statistics and language about infrastructure and renewal after the Great Kantō Earthquake as well as ideological agendas trumpeting progress. The novel's fragmentation strategies exist in contradiction to press coverage of a ceremony celebrating the reconstruction of Asakusa. The novel draws on the language of reportage of the most popular district in the city in order to collapse the differences between the world of the novel and the city space. Mitchell reminds us that “the narrative of the novel did not so much deny the narrative of modernization as it negated its ideological pretensions to teleological purpose and national coherence” (191).

Hirabayashi Taiko's “In the Charity Ward” (1927) is the subject of Chapter 4. Of the four works under analysis, this is the least well known, although Mitchell's analysis will likely contribute to Hirabayashi's work enjoying more critical appreciation. Where earlier chapters called in question assumptions of narrator, reader, and plot coherence in the I-novel, this chapter focuses on the genre's “implicit disavowal of the body, particularly the female body” (201). Hirabayashi's brutal descriptions of the female body in pain interrupt the coherence of the I-novel, and they draw attention to the marginalization of the female from I-novel discourse. “In writing a feminine body that is criminalized, diseased, destitute, and forced to commit infanticide, Hirabayashi expresses the negative consequences of a discourse that leaves no room for the feminine” (237).

Mitchell urges us to think of modernist works not as the pinnacle of literary expression to the detriment of other works, but rather to see these works as products of a particular global configuration. Pinpointing by definition the nature of the modernist text helps to establish a more equitable ground on the basis of which texts from around the world may be compared. Readers will no doubt appreciate the precise nature of Mitchell's definition and historical contextualization of a handful of works by four important authors, though they may also wonder how many other works fit these criteria. Further, because Mitchell is so clear about the conditions necessary for these texts—the literary dominance of the I-novel on the one hand and the historical development of the mass media on the

other—readers may be inclined to ask how and under what conditions does it end. What relationship might this modernist style have to subsequent styles like postmodernism, a topic of interest to scholars Mitchell draws from in his study (Eysteinnsson devotes a chapter to this topic in *The Concept of Modernism*; Harootunian’s important work in *Postmodernism and Japan* is likely familiar to readers of the journal)?

Mitchell cogently argues for a renewed appreciation of the social impact of literary works, as he argues that the book “traces and clarifies how certain types of narrative fiction can make us aware of the discursive structures that undergird the imaginative relationship we have to our social world” (1). This study makes important contributions to rethinking the value and status of modernist texts in Japan and to framing our understanding of the global dimensions of modernism. It deserves to be read widely by scholars of modernism studies, Japan studies, media studies, and historians interested in literature and society in the interwar period.

Learn Japanese Online: Elementary

By **Mariko Wei** and **Atsushi Fukada**. e-Language Learning LLC.
<https://ellllc.com/LJO16/>. \$30.00/term.

Reviewed by Hisae Matsui

Learn Japanese Online: Elementary (hereafter, *LJO*) is online material for beginning Japanese intended to be used for blended and online teaching and learning. As COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our lives, more opportunities to use online materials have emerged in the Japanese education scene. Both instructors and students who had been reluctant to use online materials may now be somewhat less resistant to using them. Although this circumstance was probably not envisioned when the development of *LJO* began, it is an unexpectedly ideal environment for its debut. Included in *LJO* are textbooks, workbooks, audio clips, video clips, and assessment tools.

The content of *LJO* is essentially designed around the structural syllabus, although elements of the functional and situational syllabi are