

techniques, particularly those presented in tables, the latter portions of the book prove most useful.

In conclusion, *RSL* effectively achieves its stated goals and appropriately targets its intended audience, providing valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners across its chapters. However, three points merit consideration. Firstly, regarding content, the guidance on handling orthographical challenges in reading pedagogy (discussed in Chapters 7 and 8) may be too general, particularly for teachers of Japanese who are encouraged to promote extensive reading with these challenges. Secondly, a practical issue arises when using the hard copy of the book: the abundance of acronyms (e.g., PACT, CORI, CLIL, DET, and GISA) throughout the text, not all of which are fully spelled out in the Subject Index, can be challenging for readers. While the online version's search function alleviates this issue, a separate list of acronyms would enhance accessibility and convenience. Lastly, concerning timing, the publication in 2022 unavoidably missed the opportunity to include the impact of generative AI (artificial intelligence) publicly released in November 2022, which significantly influences reading, writing, and their educational practices. If this second edition were published now with such developments incorporated, Chapter 16 on digital reading could have been enriched significantly and thereby appreciated greatly.

Literature in Heisei Japan, 1989 – 2019 平成文学における様々な声

Edited by **Angela Yiu**. Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 2024. 310 pp. ¥2400.

**Reviewed by
Francesca Pizarro**

Literature in Heisei Japan, 1989–2019 presents a rich collection of scholarly essays that showcase the broad spectrum of artistic expression produced during the Heisei era, illuminating “the literary landscape of this thirty-year period” and offering “a glimpse into what is new and exciting in contemporary literature in Japan” (12). The volume contributes to the

growing body of English-language scholarship that examines how narrative forms have responded to the historical, political, and environmental changes defining the era, joining other resources such as Marc Yamada's *Locating Heisei in Japanese Fiction and Film: The Historical Imagination of the Lost Decades* (Routledge, 2020) and the volume *Japan in the Heisei Era (1989–2019): Multidisciplinary Perspectives* edited by Noriko Murai, Jeff Kingston, and Tina Burrett (Routledge, 2022).

The sixteen contributors to *Literature in Heisei Japan* include scholars from various countries who are affiliated with universities across Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The volume consists of an editor's preface by Angela Yiu, followed by essays organized according to three thematic categories: "Language," "Spaces Seen and Unseen," and "Family, Identity, Gender, Body," providing a useful framework for navigating the volume. At the same time, many of the essays also resonate with others across these thematic boundaries, producing cross-category connections that enrich the reader's understanding and appreciation of the literary landscape in Heisei.

Yiu's preface begins by addressing the challenges of defining "Japanese literature" and "Heisei literature," in "an amorphous age that has outgrown the conventional identification with nation and the definable literary genres and standards of previous eras" (9). She proposes considering the volume as an examination of "literature in Heisei Japan." As she convincingly argues, "pairing Heisei with Japan but dislodging it as a modifier for literature simply marks the three decades in the recent past that provide an opportunity for retrospection and taking stock, even though the imperial demarcation of time is not particularly relevant on a historical, political, and quotidian level" (9). Indeed, many of the writers selected for discussion in the volume are notably still active in the current era, and the concerns that define their writing remain relevant in discussions of "literature in Reiwa Japan." But, as Yiu also points out, "Heisei is not without its defining cataclysmic moments," (9) referring to the collapse of the economic bubble, the subsequent decades of existential insecurity and precarity, and the disasters (natural and man-made) that left an indelible mark on the culture and literature of the era.

"Part 1: Language" features five essays that foreground the diversity and mutability in form, genre, and language of literature in the Heisei era, and emphasize the increasing ambiguity behind such concepts as "Japanese (national) literature" and "pure literature." Two essays under

the subcategory of “The Past in the Present” introduce works of Heisei fiction that reflect on and reevaluate the connections to Japan’s literary past. Kyoko Kurita’s chapter on Asabuki Mariko’s *Tracing the Flow* (2009) demonstrates one Japanese author’s purposeful attempts to dissolve the conventions of the *shōsetsu* that have dominated and come to define the notion of “national Japanese literature” in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, Mathew W. Thompson’s chapter explores how Takagi Nobuko’s novel, *Narihira: A ‘Tales of Ise’ Novel* (2019), constructs a modern vision of courtly elegance that is shaped by contemporary popular culture and its relationship with Japan’s classic (Heian) literary past. Three essays under the subcategory of “Plurilingual Literature and Storytelling” explore works of fiction that engage with the multiplicity of linguistic identities, cultural influences, and narrative voices in Heisei’s globalized age. Shion Kono’s chapter on Mizumura Minae’s *An I-Novel* (1995) reads the novel as “drama of language choice” (54) in which the narrator-protagonist rejects English-language hegemony, while also problematizing the easy definition of what it means to be a Japanese writer through her bilingual, hybrid subjectivity. Matthew C. Strecher’s chapter examines Murakami Haruki’s works as narratives of “primordial memory”—universal, borderless archetypes that resonate across cultures—that contest and complicate the once unassailable notion of *junbungaku*, that is “national Japanese literature.” Finally, in the essay that rounds out this section, Dennis Washburn uses Tsushima Yūko’s *Laughing Wolf* (2000), to illustrate the retrospective turn in Heisei fiction and the representation of Japan’s “confabulatory history” through the narrative’s multiple voices and borrowing of indigenous storytelling traditions.

Broadly, the essays in “Part 2: Spaces Seen and Unseen” examine the representation of real-life geographical spaces and natural environments alongside those of memory and imagination. Four essays under the subcategory of “Space” explore how physical, cultural, and psychological spaces are used in works of Heisei-era fiction to reflect, construct, and destabilize prevailing notions of identity and conventional history. In Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt’s chapter, she examines how Yū Miri’s writing uses the interplay of memory and its unreliability to construct new identities and foreground historically marginalized communities. The “space” discussed here is the geographical and cultural landscape that Yū seeks to reclaim and rewrite, particularly from the perspectives of those erased by dominant cultural memories. Justyna Weronika Kasza’s chapter

examines how Shiraishi Kazufumi's novels thematize the relationship between space and memory, particularly the way that spaces trigger memories but also reconstruct this connection to the past. Valentina Giammaria's essay on Murakami Ryū's *In the Miso Soup* (1997) interprets the novel's red-light district setting of Kabukichō as a reflection of the "antisocial" behavior and empty consumerism the author found emblematic of Japan's post-bubble society. In the final essay on "Space," Andre Haag's study of Fukazawa Ushio's *Green and Red* (2015) reveals the complex dynamics of Zainichi Korean identity in Heisei, highlighting how it is negotiated in fraught cultural spaces where Korea-phobia, Korea-phililia, and anti-racist activism coexist.

Three essays under the subcategory of "The Environment" explore works of "postdisaster" literature as they consider the question of recovery and the restoration of humanity's severed connection to nature. Munia Hweidi's chapter on Ishimure Michiko's *Lake of Heaven* (1997) discusses how the author constructs a "narrative of reconciliation" (187) between past and present, as well as modernity and tradition, blending a sense of ecological responsibility with spiritual and cultural renewal in the aftermath of disaster. In his chapter, Dan O'Neill discusses the "creaturely relations" (196) explored in Kawakami Hiromi's short story, "God Bless You, 2011" (2011), and Tawada Yōko's novella, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016), highlighting the shared precarity faced by humans and animals in the wake of environmental disaster. Finally, Doug Slaymaker's essay on "postdisaster" literature concludes the section by exploring Heisei fiction in the aftermath of the 3.11 Triple Disaster, which he observes is marked by confrontations with historical memories of disaster, as well as borrowing from Japanese art traditions to imagine ways of (re)connecting with the past and the dead.

The four essays in "Part 3: Family, Identity, Gender and Body" examine works of fiction (as well as films and manga) that address some of the many shifting attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and the patriarchal family in the Heisei era. Barbara E. Thornbury's analysis of actress Kiki Kirin's roles in Kore'eda Hirokazu's films highlights the figure of the aging matriarch and interprets these works as powerful critiques of normative heteropatriarchal family structures, which bring about gendered disillusionment, isolation, and feelings of abandonment for women. Similarly, Angela Yiu's essay examines the fantastical elements—instances of bodily transformation and ghostly encounters—in Oyamada Hiroko's fiction, which serve as potent metaphors for female discontent in

the context of Heisei-era patriarchal society. In the volume's only examination of the manga storytelling form, Daryl Maude presents Tagame Gengorō's *My Brother's Husband* (2014–2017) as an exploration of LGBTQ identity and experience within a society still often struggling with inclusivity, requiring compromises in how these identities are portrayed for mainstream cultural consumption. Wrapping up the essays in the volume, Maria Roemer's chapter delves into male homosocial narratives in Abe Kazushige's short story "Massacre" (1998), which presents a critique of earlier patriarchal norms and the breakdown of previously celebrated hegemonic masculinities in Heisei-era society.

The essays in *Literature in Heisei*, taken together, reveal significant commonalities and points of intersection across the selected works of Heisei-era fiction, even among those not grouped in the same thematic categories. For example, many of the works examined by contributors give voice to experiences of isolation, vulnerability, and precarity in the aftermath of economic, social, and environmental upheavals. In their effort to process and make sense of these conditions of crises, trauma, and unmoored identities, the Heisei-era fiction examined in the volume often revisits the past—both personal and collective—while confronting the unreliability or malleability of memory. Some works also suggest that while the mutability of memory can be unsettling, it also offers the potential for personal reinvention and the possibility of reclaiming the narratives of marginalized communities. Readers of the volume will also find multiple examples of fiction that draw inspiration from classical literary and performing arts traditions, borrow from narrative conventions across cultures, and cross rigid genre boundaries to express their themes. While these commonalities are notable, they do not coalesce into a single, definitive understanding of the "literature of Heisei Japan." Instead, the overarching condition of destabilized social identities, national and cultural border crossings, and the collapse of dominant narrative traditions suggest—as Yiu argues in her preface—that seeking a single definitive interpretation of "Heisei literature" may not be a very productive approach.

Overall, the volume provides a rich, multifaceted commentary on the ever-shifting landscape of contemporary Japanese culture and society, giving readers an excellent survey of "literature *in* Heisei Japan." Its strength as a sampling of the literary landscape lies in the diverse range of fiction discussed. It does not only feature examinations of works by the oft-studied and globally recognized stars of contemporary Japanese literature, such as Murakami Haruki, Murakami Ryū, Yū Miri, and

Tawada Yoko, but also introduces English-language readers to those works of lesser-known or understudied writers like Asabuki Mariko, Takagi Nobuko, Shiraishi Kazufumi, and Fukazawa Ushio, to name a few. In this regard, it serves as an excellent introduction to the breadth and variety of Heisei-era fiction and a valuable resource for teachers and students of contemporary Japanese literature in English. The volume offers a compelling contribution to the understanding of the literary and artistic expression of the period.