



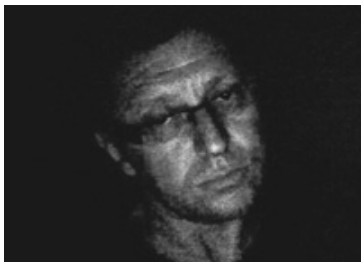
BEAT THE DUST

December 2009

Guest editor, Steve Finbow presents...

The Banzai! Edition

Steve Finbow



Steve Finbow's Top 5 Horror Films:

- J:** Peeping Tom (1960 – Michael Powell)
- A:** Eraserhead (1977 – David Lynch)
- P:** Don't Look Now (1973 – Nicholas Roeg)
- A:** Smithereens (1982 – Susan Seidelman)
- N:** Slivers (1975 – David Cronenberg)

Steve Finbow, writer of the novel *Balzac of the Badlands*, introduces his special Japan-themed edition of Beat the Dust...

'Japan has starred him with any number of "flashes"; or better still, Japan has afforded him a situation of writing.' ~ *Empire of Signs* – Roland Barthes

Japan has fascinated me ever since I was a bondage-trouser-wearing, spiky-haired, pogoing pretentious 15-year-old who when not carrying Camus's *The Outsider*, Kafka's *The Castle*, Sartre's *Nausea*, or Genet's *Funeral Rites* in my back pocket, carried Yukio Mishima's *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*. These things – punk, literature, & Japan would later manifest itself in my interest in bands The Stalin, Boredoms, Frank Chickens & Shonen Knife, & writers Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Osamu Dazai, Yasunari Kawabata, Kenji Nakagami, Kobo Abe &, more

recently, Ryu Murakami. English-language writers who write about Japan are also among my favourites – David Peace, David Mitchell, Kazuo Ishiguro & Donald Richie spring to mind. & now I live in Tokyo – my favourite among the megalopolises (try saying that with a mouth full of takoyaki – octopus balls to you) I have been lucky enough to call home. So, my idea as guest editor of this month's not-so venerable Beat the Dust – a Japanese-themed edition with contributions from writers who live in, have lived in, or think a great deal about Japan, Nihon, the land of Wa. I also asked them, by way of a bio, to tell me their five favourite horror films (no reason, I was just interested) & most did, although the squeamish ones just told me their favourite films, and you can watch clips from a representation. So grab a beer or six and Kanpei!

We have a short story from the legendary neo-geisha Hillary Raphael; a long poem from extreme punk-Beat wordsmith Kei Kunihiro; a piece on Mishima & film from *Tokyo Sodom* author Stephen Barber; a prose poem by editor, critic & poet Takako Arai; a review of Koji Wakamatsu's *Shojo Geba-Geba* by Jack Hunter; a short story by ultra-literary experimentalist & musician Kenji Siratori; another from Matthew Peipert of the notorious Tokyo art bar, Pink Cow; a selection of short poems from poet Yu-Han Chao; an excerpt from Paint-Your-Teeth-san David F. Hoenigman's new novel *Squeal for Joy*; &, finally, a little something from my new novel, *White Gardens*. This month's edition of BTD is my tribute to William Miller who died 5th November 2009. I think he would have enjoyed it. Banzai!

Hillary Raphael



Author of *Ximena*, Hillary Raphael's Top 5 Films:

- J:** An Actor's Revenge (1963 – Kon-Ichikawa)
- A:** In the Realm of the Senses (1976 – Nagisa Ôshim)
- P:** Tokyo Decadence (1992 – Ryû Murakami)
- A:** Tetsuo II (1992 – Shinya Tsukamoto)
- N:** I LOVE LORD BUDDHA (in pre-production)

Éclair/Chrysanthemum

Mine is a strange business, but for those of us who look askance at capitalism, and frown upon it, any business is a strange business. We need to fill our stomachs too. I fill mine with steamed vegetables and roasted seeds, as looking svelte and underaged makes better sense in my business. Cruelty, betrayal, unfulfilled promises, and destruction—welcome to my world, the discreetly named Hannelise Associates.

We help private detectives help divorce attorneys help women to strip men of their assets in the most advantageous ways possible. So, while we are, of course, a for-profit entity, we only earn a tiny sliver of what is ultimately earned, making us, I feel, quasi-non-profit. We never take without giving; and never take from the poor. We are quite unlike the corporations in that way.

There are sixteen of us, working various permutations of full-time, part-time, and flex-time. None work as hard as I do, the eponymous Hannelise, as founding CEO and President. We all have top-notch medical, dental, and optical coverage. Again, more than you can say for most small companies. Most of us have our own homes, but I live together with my deputies, Acorn and Iona in the head office/ flat; and a couple of other clusters do the same thing in other flats. That way, we save money and divide the chores. One set of dishes, one laundry drop-off, one plant watering divided three ways makes a lot of sense. You'd be surprised what can be accomplished with just a little extra free time.

Autumn comes and everything is heartbreaking and desiccated. The crunch of red leaves underfoot makes my work easier somehow. Let me then get to what brings me for the first time, in life and career, to Tokio, a glittering maze that is tonight the conveyor belt to my twittering hotel room, where crisp white sheets embrace me in a shuddering simulacrum of sleep. I've never known a city so unsleepy.

It was just a week ago that on the other side of the world—the somnolent, sober side—a wife's attorney's private detective contacted me with a routine query. Could I gather evidence on the unfaithful defendant who was making the client of his client's life a living hell? Could I, in a timely fashion, patch together a dossier of images, notes, and mementoes so damning that it would make a court proceeding, with its natural leanings toward the Decent, unpalatable? She and the kids did, after all, need to eat. And go to uni. You understand. Mine was to be a flat fee, inclusive of traveling expenses and *per diem*. All routine, except that the husband's comportment was beyond reproach at Home. The suspicion was that his philandering occurred strictly during frequent business visits to Japan. Maybe a kimono fetish, maybe just a convenience. I would have to figure that out.

I pocketed an opaque envelope full of bank notes, and promised to invoice for the rest. I booked my electronic ticket to airport code NRT in minutes, and had my carry-on satchel full of black hosiery, thin dresses, pixel camera, unscented toilet articles, and a challenging book, all packed within another ten minutes. After all I'd read of the Japanese consumer market, I felt sure I could, upon arrival, buy anything I'd forgotten, only a better, costlier version of it. I decided to skip acquiring a phrase book, as learning anything was out of the question at this late date.

The flight was uterine, as trans-oceanic voyages tend to be. Business Class was mostly male; I scanned their blank, sometimes needy faces for hints about my target. This air route was, for him, an antechamber to desire. Here, he sat, transmutating above the clouds from a worn, impotent wage slave into a passionate and reckless lover. Snacks were offered by air attendants in prim, starched costumes for denizens of both worlds. For fun and edification, I chose the Japanese refreshments, which turned out to be curiously salty and quite unlike what I'd tasted in sushi bars on the ground. The bilingual labels indicated dried squid, pickled plums, purple sweet potato croquettes. A familiar, but colder glass of rice spirit, refilled silently by the miniature beauties with shellacked coiffures, sent it all hurtling into the muddled anonymity of my gut.

Deep sleep accosted me with a gloved hand, and then I was riding the bus with a pre-recorded female voice announcing luxury hotel stops in a posh British accent. And now we're up-to-date. I type this report with my thumbs on my handheld—please excuse the stilted tone. The screen only displays a few lines at a time.

Acorn or Iona, please file accordingly.

5pm I'm checked into his hotel. Red carpets, cedar tub, pine boughs on golden screens, clean teacups on every surface.

7pm Jet lag-pre-emptive walk around the neighborhood, though I find it hard to call this pulsating open-air discotheque a neighborhood. Get a hot, black espresso in a can from a machine with a graphic of a woman with a tiny body and huge head who bows to you as you insert the coins. High population density with great personal hygiene.

9pm Showered and pruned, I wait in the corridor outside his room. It is #2026. Sure enough, he appears, and I catch an elevator to ground level with him. Twenty stories afford me plenty of time to take him in: an utterly forgettable man, grey-haired, clean-shaven, expensively dressed. I let him stare at my legs, but I don't smile or do anything encouraging. I let him smell my perfume. Through the automated sliding doors, and he disappears into a cab. I hail another taxi. The driver is wearing a chauffeur's cap and pristine white gloves. I hurriedly show him the dizzying characters for PLEASE FOLLOW THAT CAR on the glowing screen of my airport-purchased translator. He complies without so much as a twitched eyebrow. I'm shocked at the manically flipping meter. We are driving long, far, and expensive. We exit the bright zone, and start creeping along leafy, dim streets with narrow sidewalks, chirping vest-pocket parks, dormant gates. I suppose we are in the Suburbs, but which one? Where? I never knew our direction. Abruptly, we stop and the target disembarks. PLEASE WAIT, I show the driver. He nods curtly, or was that a subdued bow? The other taxi is waiting, too, I see. The target stands at the front gate of a shingled home behind a garden. In the moonlight, I make out a fruiting pomegranate tree, spindly branches quivering slightly in the wind, sensuously vibrating the reddish globes. He doesn't ring the doorbell, but calls inside with his cell phone, whispering and cupping his mouth with one hand. I wish I could hear what he's saying, but then as soon as the woman comes out, gingerly closing the gate behind herself, I can guess. Her glossed black hair and slender waist could only elicit words of love, sincere or not.

They get back into his cab together, and I point to PLEASE FOLLOW. Our motorcade now wends its way back into the throbbing center of the city. New streets are twinkling, new gaggles of reedy girls in abbreviated skirts and pointed heels stride arm-in-arm, new internally lit trains sweep by on elevated tracks. We arrive to a side street, halt, and watch the couple disappear down stairs. PLEASE DRINK WITH ME. I PAY. The driver hesitates. I think he'll refuse, but then, after looking at me deeply and thinking about the situation, he graciously pulls off his cap and gloves, places them in the glove box, and shuts down the machine. THANK YOU. He pops open the automatic door for me with exaggerated cordiality. I take his arm and we enter the same downward sweeping doorway.

A tiny space, dark, but not cramped. Velvet stools around formica cubes, squat candles, dewy white chrysanthemums in glass canisters. A trim waiter in white tie approaches. SCOTCH ON THE ROCKS. My driver has the same. We sip quietly, regarding the couple. The woman is exquisite, with round cheeks and sharp eyes. Her mouth is moist in the candlelight, animated. I feel his humanity. Burnt-out as he is, someone appreciates him. He's desired. The target strokes the top of her hand reverently, face slack with adoration. I can see they know each other quite well. We can rule out a fling. Insofar as anyone feels it, they feel "in love". I snap a couple of shots of my driver, with them in the background. The light is so low, I have to use the flash, but the other guests choose not to complain or even react. My driver smiles in a genuine way that catches me off guard. Maybe he's really having fun. Maybe this is a really nice place.

LET'S GO!

7am I slowly and deliberately eat breakfast in the lobby, waiting for him to pass me. The flower arrangements are stunning. He must've breakfasted in his room, as he leaves without stopping. I dart up and out, nearly catching up with him, then ambling behind him at a distance. He stops at a coffee shop. I was mistaken; he hasn't yet eaten. I stand behind him in the queue, hear him order "hot coffee, éclair" with a strange pronunciation, and then do the same myself. Pay in coins, receive coins for change. I sit down next to him with my orange enamel tray. Stir sugar into my cup, and smile at him. He recognizes me. "Hi. Weren't you in the elevator yesterday?" Yes, I was. We exchange lies. I'm here interviewing for a management position in a British company. He smiles brightly. I said the right thing. He's here for work, too. I ask if he's single. He hesitates, says no, he has a Japanese fiancée whom he wants badly to wed, but she takes care of an aged, widowed father at home who doesn't approve. No mention of the plaintiff and their children. He looks crestfallen, relieved to have me to tell this fantasy. I recall the fine bones of the young woman in the bar. If only her old man were his only obstacle. I take a deep breath, feeling his longing more acutely than I would at home. Tokio empathizes me in the November wind. Then I remember my own task: I must get him to proposition me, promise me something, compromise himself. He must give me evidence of who he really is, humiliatingly bare proof of his hungers. I bite my éclair and think.

9pm Completion. Bath video. Level-8 useable audio. See attachment. Betraying one's wife may be banal, but betrayal of a lover is genuinely tawdry.

Cheers##
Hannelise

Kei Kunihiro



Kei Kunihiro's Top 5 Horror Films:

- J:** The Exorcist (1973 – William Friedkin)
- A:** Legend of Hell House (1973 – John Hough)
- P:** Fearless Vampire Killers (1967 – Roman Polanski)
- A:** Frankenstein (1931 – James Whale)
- N:** The Blob (1958 – Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr.)

Zero Revolution (to Los Angeles)

Blood it spilled all over the world.
To a city that's already thoroughly festered and torn,
In a recurring torment,
The knife is brought down,
And the bullet is driven in.
There couldn't be any exceptions.
The gangsta with the red bandana,
Breaking into a West Hollywood residence.
A thick, black, shining penis.
Is all he has that he can be proud of.
Tainting blond in blood,
He shows not a morsel of mercy.
Gangsta kills Yuppie.
Mercy?
I kept praying to God for mercy.
But what did God give me?
Right now,
The one that needs more mercy
Ain't this dirty Yuppie blond bitch.
It's me.
The blood drenched black hand grabs the green bills.
But at least,
The palm isn't dirty.
Hungry Orientals, in hordes,
Running amok in Tokyo.
Knowing all there is to be known of fear, and transcending Fear.
The children of the 14K mob.
Abandoning the Red Dragon for all but dead,
Have you lowered yourselves to being street pimps?
Watch out.
Watch what you say.
Without a word,
They come and stab you
From the back.
Nothing you can do about it.
Without a word.
They come and slash your tendons,
In your arms,
In your legs.
Laughing the whole time,
They come and lop off
Your dick.
It's clear to everyone.
The Brazilians in the background know about it.
The Russian beggars on the streets know about it.
Even I know all about it.
The world over, happening all at the same time,
There's violence, and blood spilled.

Everything is connected.
In an unintended alliance in the making,
It's a revolution without ideology, that nobody anticipated.
The Korean pimp gripes to me.
I'm going to rob from the bourgeoisie.
So I can become a bourgeois.
The Puerto Rican hitman yells out
To no one in particular.
Frustration is pulsing in my body,
It's driving me crazy.
The 15 year old Native American
No longer believes in the White Eagle
That flew into the western sky.
The children of Nazi Germany,
Woken from their sleep by ghosts of the past,
Now roam the streets of Paris like vagrants.
The eyes of the young roaming vagrants
Ceased to see the far distance ahead.
No doubt, they have all become near-sighted.
They'd rather seek pleasure than work.
They seek peace in money, and not in Heaven.
Just look at it.
Look at this mess:
All the rotten-to-the-core guts
Spilt out.
All over the world.
The world has been painted over
In evil.
Communism is no longer allowed an existence even as a pipe-dream.
Heaven has been run over, leaving only hell to offer.
It's just a matter of time until the ghost of Schopenhauer
Is aroused from the dead.
If, in case, we are left with any of our senses,
We will witness
Children aroused, dressed in suits of envy and hatred,
Engaging in wars that bring no victory
To blow away the God that Einstein created,
Jesus Christ,
Buddha,
Your gods,
And all other divinities and icons,
Into smithereens.
Money is all that's left.
A dark pit is all that's left,
Going down endlessly to eternity.
Like an old hag's cunt.
Like an old man's asshole.
Loose and flabby,
All it's capable of is to release more stench.
Love is nowhere in sight.
Much less.
The word "love" itself sounds fake.
To mistakenly worship the wrong god as the correct god is The rule.

The storm of violence continues to rage on.
And blood continues to be spilt.
Hell is all that's left.
Ideologies have all disappeared.
Only the hungry demons continue to survive,
Like roaches,
Trying to become the victors of the war that brings no Victory.
We support the revolution reigned by zero.
The bourgeoisie are killed.
And a new bourgeoisie is born.
The death toll to this war remains unknown.
Arteriosclerosis without limit.
Longed for change isn't in the coming.
The zero revolution is to become permanent.
The era continues to rot, with no tears shed.
But,
It never ends.
Suffering, crying out in agony, the era continues to live on.
The evil ogre with your head in its jaws,
Continues to savor the taste of your brain,
All the time whispering to you -
Envy your neighbor.
Your neighbor has more money than you.
Hate your neighbor.
Your neighbor is eating better food than you.
Curse your neighbor.
Your neighbor is fucking a better looking woman,
Your neighbor is fucking a better looking man than you are.
Kill your neighbor.
Argh,
Help.
The world is falling all around.
A black empty void pierces through the middle of my body.
And into that dark void,
The world falls.
Roaring thunder in the air,
It falls.
Roaring thunder in the air,
It falls.

Stephen Barber



Author of *The Tokyo Trilogy*, Stephen Barber's Top 5 Horror Films:

- J:** Nosferatu (1922 – F.W. Murnau)
- A:** Vampyr (1932 – Carl Theodor Dreyer)
- P:** Horror of Malformed Men (1969 – Teruo Ishii)
- A:** The Eye (2002 – Pang Brothers)
- N:** La Vie Nouvelle (2002 – Philippe Grandrieux)

Mishima: Death-Fragments

In a television interview recorded in 1969, the year before his death by self-disembowelment and decapitation by one of his acolytes, Yukio Mishima spoke of how 'an extreme form of eroticism' had always driven his life, unleashed by his experiences of Tokyo under warfare and the sensation of imminently-expected death he experienced there, and carrying him far beyond the stratified parameters of Japanese literary and cultural life, as though that life had been choreographed towards death, by his close friend of the 1960s, the instigator of Ankoku Butoh dance, Tatsumi Hijikata - as a set of compulsive gestures, simultaneously pathological and exquisite, and propelled, too, outside the anticipated boundaries of the corporeal and the rigorously annotated sensory categories of Japan, always a hairsbreadth away from both orgasm and erasure.

Three years before his death, Mishima wrote *The Way of the Samurai* from his lifelong engagement with the *Hagakure*, an eighteenth-century manual on samurai life, compiled in the form of fragments imparted by a now-retired samurai (who had expected to be allowed to commit ritual suicide on the death of his master, but through an anomaly, was prevented from doing so, and chose instead to distance himself from life) and transcribed by a young auditor. The *Hagakure* is a set of austere interdictions about the necessity of the samurai's readiness for death at every moment, but it also contains elements of gratuitous contradictions, black holes of nihilism, as though the profound rigour of samurai life, and its ultimate futility (as in the comparison the manual draws with puppetry-gestures) together form part of the same movement of implosion.

In exploring the *Hagakure*, Mishima refines the material that is vital for his own death: the act of death that engulfs every gestural act, every creative act, every sexual act, reversing in time to simultaneously validate and erase all of those prior acts. Mishima is always irresistibly compelled, almost unable to restrain himself for another instant, from his act of death; as in the theoretical texts and novels of Georges Bataille, if every act of outrage, excess and death-obsession cannot be concentrated into an identical moment of life, now, then everything must be done to ensure

that it will happen in the next moment of life. What French philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva learned from their reading of Mishima is that, if death cannot be carried through immediately (the state of perpetual suspension which is that of the samurai's life), then it must, at least, be made the sole focus of representation: representation with its own cancellation engrained within the obsession to expose, to transmit, to project.

The year before writing *The Way of the Samurai*, Mishima had co-directed a film which represents and anticipates his ritual suicide, acted by himself, though without the participation of his private army of erotically-uniformed young men, the Shield Society, who accompanied him in 1970 on his death-mission to the Ichigaya barracks in Tokyo. The pre-eminent writer on contemporary Japan, and close friend of Mishima, Donald Richie, attended the shooting of Mishima's film, and remembered: 'In time, he asked me to come to the Daiei film studio... The movie, *The Rite of Love and Death*, based on the short story 'Patriotism', was already half-completed and this was the second day of filming. A container of pig intestines stood ready and after rehearsal, these were packaged inside Mishima's trousers. When the knife seemed to enter the author's abdomen it actually cut into the plastic sack containing the guts... This transformation was strong.'

Mishima's film is pitched so tightly at the interstice between orchestrated sexual bliss and blood-drenched corporeal chaos, with its loving shots of his own thighs, muscled chest, barely-covered penis, immediately before the act of self-laceration, that it exceeds and annuls all linear narration, and projects itself in the form of a sensorially-attuned sequence of fragments - exactly the same form he sets to work in *The Way of the Samurai* for his exploration of the *Hagakure*. All language, all image, must be dismantled, disassembled, into the form of the fragment, so that it detaches itself from its tainting by its habitual social misuse, in order to become the medium of pure obsession, perpetual orgasm, with the instant of the onrush of death sustained into infinity.

In *The Way of the Samurai*, Mishima contrasts the eighteenth-century samurai era with that of contemporary Japan (that of 1967, a year poised between the two ratifications of the US-Japan Security Treaty, which had rendered Japan an obsequious client-state of the USA, and shortly before the great end-of-the-decade era of violent street-riots which Mishima lived to witness, but rejected as just one more void consumer-experience), tellingly castigating a city in which consumerism-induced frenzies have overridden the grandeur and stature he wants to accord to the corporeal, in its moment before death: 'Throughout Tokyo, pygmy romances are rampant today.' In doing so, he creates a parallel with the temporal system of the *Hagakure*, in which the retired samurai laments an era, thirty years before, in which samurai warriors had been authentic, and had not been consumed only by thoughts of wealth and 'effeminacy'. A gap of time must always be generated, in Mishima's obsessions, in order for the contemporary moment to be conjured into such vilification, that the only recourse is death.

Mishima experiences those boundaries of time as spatial boundaries, too. In his conversations with Donald Richie, he projected himself into the excessive time and space of imperial Rome, but also into a contemporary space of Tokyo denied to him: that of the sexual and alcohol-driven sensory furore of the down-at-heel San'ya district. Donald Richie recalls: 'Mishima sometimes said he felt so cut off from the things he really liked. He said that some time in Rome under Tiberius would have been interesting. Or maybe Diocletian - he was thinking of Sebastian. He toyed with the idea of reincarnation - not seriously, but as a kind of joke, wondered if he hadn't been a Persian slave boy in an earlier life, or an indulgent emperor. As for San'ya (a district something like the Bowery of Tokyo, home of the proletariat worker), here the barrier was spatial, not temporal. He could not go there because of who he had become. He would have been recognized.'

To reconcile his unique time and space, and to project it to the world as an act beyond representation, Mishima's final act of death forms the embodiment of that 'extreme form of eroticism' which led, as he said in the same television interview of 1969, to 'a proud form of death': 'Harakiri makes you win.' In the police photographs of the aftermath of Mishima's death, in which his severed head had been placed upright, on a cloth, alongside that of one of his Shield Society acolytes, and photographed in close-up, his face emanates an oblivion that has passed through every corporeal, sensory and sexual aperture, in order to mediate his obsession, stopped-dead in that instant of raw bliss, for the eye of his reader and spectator.

Takako Arai



Photo by Naoto Kurasawa

Critic and poet, Takako Arai's Top 5 Films:

- J:** The California Dolls (1981 – Robert Aldrich)
- A:** 24 City (2008 – Jia Zhangke)
- P:** Hula Girls (2006 – Lee Sang Il)
- A:** Bombay (1995 – Mani Ratnam)
- N:** The Bicycle Thief (1948 – Vittorio De Sica)

Mohei's Fire

As soon as I got out of the station I was in front of a high-rise building under construction, two long construction crane necks lifting into the air. I walked down the left side of an excavated path through a town on the edge of old downtown Tokyo, with a bridge at my side where a carillon rings on the hour. I walked past shops selling jellied sweet potato cake and deli foods, and pressed the elevator button to an apartment with a teahouse on the ground floor. The door was dark green, far in the back. Takejiro-san welcomed me with his sturdy bare feet, bowing many times.

While his left hand kept scratching at his neck, under his clean-cut hair, and while his short gray eyelashes seemed to brush against each other, he recalled this and that, telling me stories. Eighty-some years ago, when he was born, this place was a farming village. They grew leeks, ginger and mustard spinach, put their baskets on a cart and took them to the market in Komagome, called "Yachaba." And although it is now sunken into a culvert, the Yata River, a clear stream about four yards wide, once ran in front of the Inari water god shrine. They would clean the soil off the harvested vegetables in the washing area under the big nettle tree, and catch small fish in a net. There were even days when a giant carp would swim upstream from the

Shinobazu-no-ike pond, through the Yata river flowing into it. There were no excavations in those days, and a slope of about nine feet would just continue on through the woods..

His hoarse voice broke between every single word, making me of think of a slightly rusty scythe as it cropped bundles of stem fiber. I listened to him while straining the backs of my eyelids, trying to focus on a very distant scenery that was now long gone. At that moment, Takejiro-san burst into a small laugh, and hesitantly said, "This is a bit funny...a strange thing..." while a faint rose-color filled in his wrinkled cheeks. I caught his infectious laugh, as he began the following story:

*

Grandpa Mohei has long since left us, but this was back when he was young, and the young folks around here used to gather in the morning and go over to Senju to work.

One day while it was still very, very dark, our grandpa called upon his friends and went to work. They followed the empty field path, rubbing their sleepy eyes and yawning.

It was when they got close to Nippori. Except, for some reason, a single long candle towered over him, right in their way. It must have been the work of a fox or a raccoon dog. The candle was clutched by a tail, which was also on fire. So Mohei bent over and peered down, but could not see what was going on. He tried scaring it by smacking the ground with a piece of wood, like a cane, but the candle stayed there without moving an inch. The red flame was blocking his way, adamantly not letting him pass.

What to do...?

Mohei then flipped around so his rear end faced forward. He tapped his cane while walking backwards. And at that, the old fox flipped up his tail in surprise and took to his heels, and disappeared.

*

...so the story goes.

A while later, Grandpa had been tending some plants, and is said to have made a very beautiful weeping plum tree, called the "Weeping Mohei." But one day he lost all of his property, because of a large fire that some stranger had set. All the houses down the block also burned down. From then on, he came to fear even electricity, let alone the thatching on the roof. Could it be that the electric currents that ran through the wires appeared to him like arrows of fire? The whole family then went on by guarding the precious and very thin light of the paper lantern, until Mohei-san passed away in the early Showa period. Those were dark, black nights. They say that no matter how hard the people around him tried to convince him otherwise, he would not have a word of it.

As I listened slowly to his story, the paper lantern sitting upon the thin plate gradually began to overlap with the candle held by the fox. Wavering, the two flames become one. Was this the single lovely light that twinkled at the bottommost depth of Mohei-san's heart, after that seething fire? He entered the darkness every night, carrying with him a small flame that grew sweeter the more it burned. The foxes bent their bodies and came running in one by one. The smell of the burning hair on their soft tails moved to the left and to the right, with strangely wavering clusters of fire streaming behind.

This light has remained lit, faintly but firmly, at the bottom of Takejiro-san's memory. His wife, who had been hanging around the door at first, came out in the middle of the conversation and sat next to him, saying that she had never heard such a story in the sixty or so years that they had been together. Takejiro-san said that he had finally spoken from his own mouth the story he had heard as a child from his grandmother, as she put him to bed. Hearing this unexpected story while seated in front of the old couple, I felt as if I had been given a small portion of that grain of fire from the palm of their hands.

If you dig up the ground around here, you can still come across some old foxholes. They contain a deep, distant air, like the inside of a vase. Beneath the ground, under the office buildings and homes, several phantom foxes lurk, running around to protect that light. And just what kind of voice do they wrap around it?

Like being excited or dazed...I remember having quickly passed the shadows of the cranes by the station, but coming back home I find today's train ticket in my pocket and wonder if I had flown past that ticket gate too...

Notes:

- Some of the distances described in old Japanese units of measurement have been converted into feet and yards. Thus the phrase "four yards" has been translated from *ni-ken*, and "nine feet" from *kyu-shaku*. The Inari water god shrine is said to have a fox as its messenger. Thus the common food item, Inari-sushi, made with fried tofu, is derived from the idea that foxes love oily foods. Shinobazu-no-ike pond is located in Ueno, one of the centers of downtown Tokyo. The early Showa period refers to the years from the latter half of the 1920s into the 1930s.
- Translated by Sawako Nakayasu, this work was first published in *Four From Japan* (Litmus Press/Belladonna Books, 2006).

Jack Hunter



Jack Hunter's Top 5 Horror Films:

J: Dementia (1955 – John Parker)

A: The Undead (1957 – Roger Corman)

P: Caperucita Y Pulgarcito Contra Los Monstruos (1962 – Roberto Rodríguez)

A: Nest Of The Cuckoo Bird (1965 – Bert Williams)

N: Yabu No Naka No Kuroneko (1968 – Kaneto Shindô)

Pop Avant-Garde Violence

A review of Koji Wakamatsu's *Shojo Geba Geba*

With the release of his first independently-produced film, *The Embryo Hunts In Secret* in 1966, Japanese director Koji Wakamatsu had sown the seed of a psychotic revolutionary cinema which would flower spectacularly over the next few years with the release of such stunning, controversial works as *Violated Angels*, *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin*, and *Shojo Geba Geba*. These films at the core of Wakamatsu's cinematic oeuvre comprise a brutally experimental/primal apocalypse which easily transcends the limitations of exploitation yet still impacts with a visceral force unequalled by any comparable sequence in Western cinema. At implosion point, Wakamatsu's films transgress into that zone of pure cinema inhabited by Bunuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* and a handful of others, a zone where logocentric notions of narrative are immolated and infernal meta-texts combust in the right brain like neural napalm.

1969's *Shojo Geba Geba* ("Geba Geba Virgin"¹) is a stupendous 70-minute tour-de-force set in a desolate rural landscape which, it soon becomes apparent, represents an infernal circle of sex and violence from which there is no escape, and in which all the pawns who play out Wakamatsu's cinematic schema are sentenced to either death or a purgatorial eternity as lost souls.

The film opens in black and white with shots and freeze-frames of a night city set to a fractured percussive soundtrack, then cuts to two cars – one white, one black – speeding along the dirt roads of some bleak, deserted terrain. In the first car, three men hold a fourth, tied and blindfolded, captive. When they stop and pull the man out to urinate, the second car is shown to be full of jeering young women. Both cars then arrive at a barren, windswept spot marked by a huge wooden crucifix. A blindfolded woman is dragged from the second car and she and the blindfolded man are hurled into a gulley together. Despite his bonds, the man gropes the woman's crotch. The girls from the car, secretly watching, strip the couple semi-naked. The couple kiss, pondering their fate. We learn that the man, Hochi, works for a yakuza boss; he has made the mistake of having an affair with the boss's girlfriend, Hanako, and now they are both doomed to die. They are next stripped completely naked, as the girls continue their voyeuristic vigil.

Finally the couple are pulled apart; Hanako, her blindfold removed, is lashed to the crucifix. Hochi is dragged up to look at her before being untied and shoved into a tent. Soon one of the girls enters the tent, strips naked and starts to make love to him, lasciviously pawing his body. Cut to the other girls jeering at Hanako on the cross. Cut back to the tent, where Hochi is now throttling the girl, strangling her to death. He slips beneath the back of the tent into the gulch and flees for his life. The thugs soon discover the girl's corpse and give chase to Hochi in their car, but he reaches terrain where they cannot follow. They give up, cursing him.

Hochi flees into the distance, gasping and screaming in horror. We follow his flight for several miles, across barren tracts to the horizon. Here he collapses in exhaustion, and drifts into sleep haunted by Hanako calling his name. In a green-tinted sequence, soundless but for a musical track, he dreams of her being gang-raped by the thugs, next to the nude corpse of the strangled girl. She escapes, runs into the fields as the sequence erupts into full colour. Reunited, they make love, but as her hand caresses Hochi's back she suddenly feels an animal's tail growing from the base of his spine. Hochi wakes up abruptly.

For hours he wanders the wasteland, dressed only in the strangled girl's slip, tormented. Then, as daylight fades and the full fist of night balls into black, he encounters another group of people

encamped on a hilltop. These men are dressed in fine suits and surrounded by naked concubines. Hochi is welcomed, fed, fondled by the girls. He is shown a rifle, mounted on a fixed tripod, with telescopic sights. Through the sights he sees a girl's breast and nipple, no more. They urge him to pull the trigger. He complies, firing a shot into the dark, and is rewarded by sex with both the whores.

In the morning the group is seen dressing, shaving, the girls exercising naked in the early sun. After they all pose for group photos by automatic camera, Hochi wanders off. Cut to him returning to the original site, greeted with unbridled hostility by the vicious, vengeful thugs. He ignores them, seeing only (in colour) Hanako, still slumped on the cross, with a bullet wound in her right breast. Blood is pouring the length of her body. She seems to be still alive. Hochi catches her blood in his cupped hands. Intercut with the thugs in black and white shots. Back to colour as Hochi realises it was he who shot her; it was her breast in the rifle sights. He drinks her blood as if in expiation. From this moment on Hochi seems to possess a messianic aura. His presence triggers mass psychosis, fear. We see him next in the tent, making necrophiliac advances to the strangled girl. The thugs strip their girlfriends naked, one by one, and shove them into the tent where Hochi brutally rapes them in turn as the dead girl "watches". Two of the girls flee and are pursued by two of the thugs. The third man sees Hanako stir on the cross and flees in atavistic terror.

Rifle shots. The men in suits pick off the fleeing girls and also open fire on the two remaining thugs, who head back to the crucifixion site. Cut to Hochi, who is now encased from head to toe in a sack, writhing like a chrysalis behind the cross. Nude female corpses litter the ground around him. The thugs set upon him with baseball bats, beating him to an apparent pulp as the sack darkens with blood. Then, in homicidal frenzy, they set upon each other. One destroys the other's skull and then himself collapses dead. There are now corpses everywhere.

Hanako stirs, calls for Hochi. Miraculously still alive, he responds from the sack. A valedictory dialogue ensues, until Hanako finally expires from her wound. A bizarre ballad strikes up on the soundtrack.

Eventually the men in suits arrive, whores in tow. Gloating over the carnage of this nightmare Golgotha, they pose for more self-portraits in front of the crucified Hanako. Hochi silently emerges from the sack, baseball bat in hand. He has realised that the men are yakuza, and that the one who urged him to pull the trigger was in fact his boss – whose face he had never been allowed to see. In a quick series of freeze-frames showing the yakuza group posing in front of the cross, we see Hochi emerging behind them, ever nearer, his face a mask of twisted hate, until the screen erupts with the film's final, cathartic violence. Hochi brutally slays the entire group, girls included, finally dragging the boss to the foot of the crucifix where he caves in his skull like an eggshell.

A storm breaks. The field is now littered with bloody corpses. Return to colour for the final sequence. As the strange ballad once again strikes up, we see the cross in flames, as if blasted by lightning. Sporadic fires pock the terrain. Hochi bears his lover's body away through this blazing, apocalyptic landscape to vanishing-point.

In *Shojo Geba Geba*, Wakamatsu employs customary devices – freeze-frames, white light, idiosyncratic soundtracking, jump cuts, colour segments to denote temporal, emotional or perspective shifts, and provocative widescreen compositions – to produce a cinema whose marriage of terse economic and virulent aesthetic has seldom been rivalled. Thematically, he clearly prefigures Pasolini's *Salò*, both in his claustrophobic depictions of ineluctable, internecine sexual violence and in his implicit political assertion that beyond the law lies only a more deadly

noose of fascistic repression. In *Geba*, his psychosis finally achieves a truly religious intensity; Wakamatsu has produced the ultimate fusion of his terrifying, revolutionary obsessions.

Notes:

- ¹ "Geba" has no literal translation. It derives from the German "gewalt", meaning strength or power, and is a political term used by leftist Japanese students to describe their movement (e.g. geba-bo ["staffs of power"], the long sticks used in violent encounters with police). A phonetic spelling of "gay bar" has also been posited as the word's meaning in *Shojo Geba Geba's* title. Since the title was reportedly suggested to Wakamatsu by Nagisa Oshima, a political connotation seems much more likely. For Wakamatsu's 1998 retrospective in Tokyo, the film was shown under the English title *Violent Virgin*.

Kenji Siratori



Kenji Siratori's Top 5 Films:

- J:** Inland Empire (2006 – David Lynch)
- A:** Naked Lunch (1991 – David Cronenberg)
- P:** Saw (2004 – James Wan)
- A:** Das Experiment (2001 – Oliver Hirschbiegel)
- N:** The Cell (2000 – Tarsem Singh)

Lost Game

1

...the mind of w gets twisted to...angel beginning that the future of the ADAM doll is made a zero. angel's machine stimulates outskirts of the memory of the sun of lumps of flesh...who bounce eerily in the cradle of iron dramatized so by the nightmare of the ADAM doll dog's brain replicant...hey, our cold brain space...infinity of the TOKAGE...PS heaven cranch...:the disillusionment of the despair machine and the dog of the desire beginning to that botany body of the ant. leap...girl...micro...homicide...system...a lot...noise...noise...miracle...the...hybrid...murderous intent...glance.

"homicide of making to cyanogen"

now, it dives in the wing of my desire beginning.
 assassination...our ADAM doll...in the suicide molecule of the sun and to the womb sphere...her
 pupil...machine of uniting...desire...of the death...to play way of...destruction...[reta] mind of the
 angel with the cold-blooded syndrome arranged evil passion machine of...dog that excretes my
 negative, soul...machine...geostationary...future...orange...space...maltreat...azure...inside
 doll...annihilation...reality...clone...skin...desire...begin...fiction...dream...boy...abandon...desert...
 X rays...dog...brain...cheerful...corpse...reproduce...pituitary body...druggy...spot of
 light...love...dead...desire...earth...sphere...cold...sleep...liberate...dog...interior of the
 womb...bomb...masochistic...propaganda...brain...digest...god of
 death...device...immortal...virus...despair...as if...retina...get
 cancer...angel...psychedelic...machine...placenta...world...virus...sad...delete...pure-
 white...desire...angel...machine...sun...genital. uncontrollability, my man × love is
 disappearing...soul escape circuit Mb of the machine horizontal to which [koro] person
 gimmick...ADAM doll was abandoned where film contact and dog's homicides destroy the inside,
 and ant's infinity an immortal birth...chaos of drug embryo's sending [minamotokanojo]...[hitomi]
 of the drug embryo who overheats and is murdered × ANIMAL-BIND...

:wonderful-baby...

Itoy like BUTTON sperm mixing...desire that all of our chromosomes are blotted out.
 by...breaking in...lumps of flesh' flow [varubu] of the merchant. controlled...all of our
 chromosomes are feelings particles of the rewritten sun so to the desire beginning and the
 suicide replicant brain homicide system...road of [inu]...right and left asymmetry...maltreats daily
 life of [asufarutoga] ADAM doll made of the heaven the cold-blooded syndrome.
 future...stop...heart...move...love...dog...dismantle...gay...lump of flesh...crowd...disillusionment/
 unpleasant...doll...homo...sexual...body...clockwork...disillusion...cruelty...nanomachine...dog...so
 ul...reproduce...angel...machine...heat radiation...molecule...chromosome...dead...real
 existence...mutant...infinity...horizontal...line...desire.
 lobotomy...factory...doll...clone...love...pollute...clone...sad...fall...clone...abhorrence...erect...air...
 sun...ant...hopeless...mutant...live...ant...planet...toward...gay.
 control...god...homicide...machine...sun...memory...story...inside...commit suicide. and, solitary of
 other side lump of flesh of the moon where a difficult wing of the desire to exist is
 breathed...crime/...hybrid of god of death device...uniting of genome machine with the placenta
 world love replicant gossip?...the artificial sun like the ant is a pulsing mutant as for the
 monochrome of love of the ADAM doll. city blocks of surrender of my barbarous BABEL animals
 from whom their schizoids conquer feelings...so...by despair expectation that controls angel's
 machine to a cold road in eye difference [shide] and the corpse city like that dog that spirit girl
 with a psychedelic machine is infected mixes. ...the dog becomes silent the clumsy world in this
 loud...the terror that can be controlled by the creation of [koufuku].
 ...connection...in brain of the ADAM doll of blue of an empty mask.
 rose...body...ant...ganglion...junk...do...dog...disillusionment...terror...inside...input...so...doubt...r
 eproduction...zone...sun...girl...suicide...system...servant...device. eternal uncontrollability...all by
 the resolution of her inorganic pulse against our air/of 1/8 seconds that dies and is geostationary.

desert...machine...angel...ruin...so...clone...boy...nanomachine...mind...dive...memory
 loss...torture...machine...solitary...sun...life...obstruction...machine...restrain...sun...suicide...repl
 icant...true...receive...android...vanity...brain...space...ant...big...cranch...do...body...erosion...other
 side...abandon. hip pop vision...vision...parasites of...terror of ADAM doll...[koufuku] in the
 future?...gradual.. .delusion/barks at asphalt.

0880. auto control angel's machine by pleasure of marsh,
 freeze...doll...final...transformation...future...clone...skin...brain...infect...drug...embryo...ruin...clos
 e...cosmic...body...system...access...mind...reproduction...code...sun...doll...pulse...murder...revive.

..future...biotechnology...loess...mannes...chromosome...sad...other
 side...fight...monochrome...servant...return...world...eternal...absent...sour...life...world...condemn
 ed.
 ...intention...high-level...think.

2

CPU=drives to machine=angel's x speed...digital...seeing of fear...junk??TOKAGE...= cell and
 forwarding=body to gravity that this corpse city started breaking unconscious. become
 machine=angel's...junkie...desire...desire...planet of ant digital vamp that evolves/body
 deterioration storage...[kokoro]...our replicants: to placenta world...of murderous intent with
 unlimited disappearing artificial the sun and the corpse city.
 clone diving that reversely rotates delusion [suru]...around suicide machine from which memory
 × artificial sun of the ruined skin tissue...TOKAGE of download...of fantasy/schizoid is reproduced
 internal organs consideration of us restrained to ant's body? the disappearance////digital that
 stiffens DNA channel reproduces the speed of the desire living body of the biofeedback...with
 which impossible living body of the artificial sun that the dog of the virtual reality kisses and
 "body of the parasite" generate intention=brain to which the ADAM doll is missed is confined the
 nightmare stiffens gradually??
 rape...ANDROID...secret the pupil.

[sareta]→destruction

OK, and....fuck as for restrained [koufuku] that records the wing of the desire the ADAM doll
 [sono] terror murderous intent...where the synapse flows backward.
 ...biotechnology loess of girl/...frenzy. the protocol sucks blood.]]

Iconnects...

placenta of sadness

psychedelic image tentacle brain??

...dashing satan.

...inherited jump. brain

TEL [ta]

[koufuku]...terror of [re] ADAM doll...× [kawayabu]...

?? reproduces.

...the varieties of the machine beginning of the artificial sun that vaccinated a foolish
 secretion...corpse city where our consideration cut sonic in pieces memory was homicide memory
 of machine=angel to whom pure-white × air that was "variety" dropped WWW. peeled off and
 made to [ke]. fall=motion of...replicant...[kokoro]. they are living body nodes of the cold-blooded
 syndrome animals who operate the gene as for the body of submergence...diagram and
 junkie=seed of feelings. digital of sadness that the brain plane of the requiem 0 and the ADAM
 doll enumerate=cell of 0=like the fertilized machine in fear the frenzy of the chromosome is
 transformed// is transformed like space ANDROID/...biotechnology loess...scratch.

noise→

our frenzy rotates in the ADAM doll hyper control=. scorching...electronic

brain...line...grungy...media...destroy...homo...sexual...spirit...alternative...disillusionment...restrai
 nt...doll...submerge...clone...boy...division...cold-blooded...digital...stray...blood
 vessel...man...chloroform...see...delete...gene...war...solitary...noise...machine...begin...desire...lob
 otomy...dog.

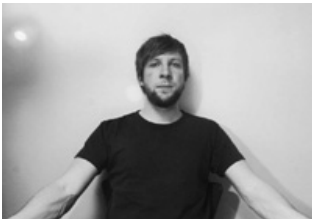
transmits.

destroy it.

brain line where ADAM doll weakened frenzy of chromosome to which soul machine that rapes is truth input. the gene operates soaked solitude season...sped up the biotechnology loess of the artificial sun paragraph of...our ANDROID.. .nerve × gravity and clone boys' digestive juices. hanging up of wing...paranoia that air line of desire beginning like ANDROID is drawn, and feelings...cold-blooded syndromes of clone boys who commit suicide operate. these rhythms of the drug embryo LOAD hyperlinked as for the nude to which the god of etc. was able to be angry. invading...machine=output of angel of...replicant...[kokoro]. artificial ant's released homicide memory
 ...pulse of ruined love?

record media of [kokoro] of homicide brain where the disappearing × ?ADAM doll runs idle...the operation of USB...the replicant. the schizo drama/graph of ANDROID internal organs of the shivering icon servants falls to the petal of frenzy that the chromosome overlaps.
 ...to which our consideration weakens at the moment at the time of...suffering in the diving...erotic, the solitude of the ADAM doll is exploding...technology to the brain of clone boys' hells...an artificial ant...high...dog's pupil reproduces...time-out. the nightmare of the amniotic fluid beginning proliferation and brain earthworm's paradigms evil and our...replicant...[kokoro] and recorded...[negatei;vu]...[nasubete]...machine asphalt angels
 so...life...dog...server...hybrid...murderous
 intent...parasitism...clone...boy...digital...satan...pig...brains...fuck...love...fall into disorder...wave motion...collide...torture...brain...space...feelings...desert...optics...girl...digital...vamp... stiffen?
 retreat?
 furnace...provide...retreat...larva...nightmare...palpitation...link...now...world...dog...software...future...crash...inject.

Matthew Peipert



Matthew Peipert's Top 5 Horror Films:

- J:** The Shining (1980 – Stanley Kubrick)
- A:** Army of Darkness (1992 – Sam Raimi)
- P:** The Exorcist (1973 – William Friedkin)
- A:** Drag Me To Hell (2009 – Sam Raimi)
- N:** Wolf Creek (2005 – Greg McLean)

Garbagemen

The three happiest countries in the world are: Number 1, Sweden; Number 2, Denmark; and Number 3, Finland.

This is not one of those countries.

How do I know what the happiest places on earth are? Well, I read about them in an article last week. And don't think that just because I drive a garbage truck for a living, I don't read the paper regularly.

Sweden. Denmark. Finland. This place didn't even make the top ten. In fact, it wasn't even mentioned. I've never been to Scandinavia, but apparently that part of the world has a lot going for it. A healthy GDP, the correct balance between life and work, and a safety net of family and community networks.

I'm also willing to bet on what they don't have - yellow, choking dust drifting over from across the sea, headstrong daughters and that foul-mouthed moron swinging from the back of my truck like a gibbon.

I'm a garbage truck driver, a trash jockey. At this point, I'm under no illusions about my life, my work. I drive a bubble gum-colored truck with an ill-tempered ruffian named "Tak" on the back generally making my life miserable. Tak. Spelled just like that. We work the edges, the barely suburban wasteland of wanna-be-gangsters and potato people. It only gets worse as we head further out of town.

The tinted haze thickens today as the sun rises, and with it come the ubiquitous crows - black birds of misfortune, not just stupidly ominous but quite possibly the dark-hearted keepers of the world's very first malicious thought. They are known to attack humans, and any garbageman with brains carries a small canister of pepper spray just in case. Our neighbor's wife tells stories of the small flock that infests her garden. One crow learned to replicate her pet cat's meow to lure a kitten out into the garden. It's enough to make you shiver. Another actually learned to mimic her husband.

"Mari", it cries, "Mari!" She hears this from the house, where she now stays, afraid to do her gardening outside anymore. Some may call her a kook, but not me. I believe her. The crows are mean. They are nasty. It makes my canker sores flare up just thinking about them.

The doctor says the sores appear with stress, and between the crows and my daughter and that jackass in the rear-view mirror, my mouth is a regular inferno these days. I have four and can feel them with my tongue. You know, I attribute each to something specific. The one on the inside of my lower lip is from the crows and the dust. The one on my upper lip is from the dimwit clown back there that I can't seem to shake off the truck, no matter how hard I hit the potholes. The one on my gums is from my daughter, and the one on my tongue is from this silly-looking pink truck and the goddamn music coming from its speakers. Yes, I realize that people expect to be reminded to put out their garbage at the proper time. And I don't mind that we play music. But does it have to be this loud? This infantile? What is this? Circus music? I remember when it was Beethoven. I remember when it was "Für Elise" and it was soothing, gentle. What, you think that just because I drive a garbage truck for a living, I don't enjoy a little classical music?

I'm not the most cosmopolitan guy in the world, but I've heard that some countries don't have any music playing from their trucks. None. I wonder about Scandinavia. Does Sweden have musical garbage trucks? Does Denmark have antagonistic crows and yellow dust from across the sea? Is Finland filled with aging men stoically suffering their canker sores? I doubt it.

Hold on. Pothole. Bam!!! Nope, the cretin with the idiotic white towel wrapped around his head is still there and is angrily shouting something at me. I can't hear him over the music, though. Hard to believe, but the speakers on this truck have no volume control. Check for yourself.

Damn. Almost spilled my One Cup. You know, some people may criticize me for drinking and driving. But those very same people also happen to have no interest whatsoever in collecting and disposing their own refuse. So stuff it. In any case, One Cup really burns going down, and that's not even to mention the fiery sizzle it inflicts on my canker sores. I have to say though, for the price, nothing beats the cozy feeling it creates in my belly. It almost makes this music bearable.

My father used to say that if you spilled a drink, a drunken stranger would knock at your door. He also told me that if you whistled at night, snakes would come. What a character. What a dad.

I remember a time when I could light up my daughter's face with what I brought home from my shift. If you could have seen what I've found her over the years! Bracelets, a fully-working, beautiful lamp made of quartz, a leather-bound book of pressed leaves and best of all, a complete set of ornamental imperial dolls - including the emperor and empress, court ladies and musicians. The things that people throw away! To her child's mind, mine was just about the most magical job in the world. But it's been a long time since I was able to give Emi something that made her happy. These days I'm less a magician to her than I am, well, a garbageman.

Last month she comes over for dinner with this guy. Good-looking. Handsome. Nice suit, tremendous manners and a solid job with a human resources company in the city. Imagine our joy, then, seeing our beautiful daughter so happy and in love. Imagine my joy, too, when later over drinks and pickled vegetables he tells me that he wants to marry my Emi. We had the mandatory talk, but to tell you the truth, he had won me over before any alcohol had even touched my lips. Everything was set in motion then, until my wife got hold of that book. It is illegal, I know. It is not even officially supposed to exist. But my wife found a copy (I won't say where) and from it we learned the awful truth.

He was one of them. A "hamlet person". Outcasts despised by society since antiquity. I mean, no, maybe he wasn't exactly living there now, in one of those Assimilation Districts, and maybe his family hadn't for generations. But he was *of* those people. There it was, in black and white. His family name. His family registry and town of origin. I know exactly where it is, too, that "community". I used to have a route through there. It used to be almost like a rite of passage for new drivers.

And I had seen them. Furtive. Poor. Unclean. Dangerous-looking. A shame to the country. I remember years ago rounding a corner in the truck and seeing the rotten meat slung over the tree limb by a rope, just out of reach of the snarling dog. I remember the primal rage of that animal, and them, laughing and egging it on as it leapt and leapt, unable to get the meat in its teeth. When they saw us approach they dispersed but the dog, oblivious to anything else, kept jumping and twisting in the trash-filled yard as we drove slowly by, the whole scene like a vision of hell from some old Italian book.

Savages. Filth. Non-humans. That's what my partner, the shit-for-brains dodo that rides along with me calls them. Like he can talk. He spends all his free time chasing teenage tail at the game parlor, if he's not too busy frequenting Philipino Soapland.

The dust swirls and the crows swarm thick as we get closer to the dump outside of town. The music is blaring and the One Cup is kicking in and my canker sores are practically humming for sweet deliverance.

You may want to know what happened to that guy. The handsome one. The one whose identity we confronted our daughter with. The young, up-and-comer whose truth was already known and accepted by our daughter. The only one who might have brought happiness to our beauty, but who has now torn our family apart. The one who we have not spoken to or about, have not

discussed or mentioned or even breathed a word of since. The one who has compelled us to forsake our own daughter, our treasure. And also the one who informed us by letter yesterday, courteously and with manly dignity, that he would be marrying our daughter anyway, because they were deeply in love with each other and *that* one truth superseded all other truths.

I stop the truck to make our dump, the boorish birdbrain in back with the orange tan and dangling earring cursing stupidly the whole time. The air is rancid and hot and we are definitely not in Finland, we are certainly not in Denmark and we are absolutely, without a doubt, not in Sweden. We are still here, I am still a garbageman, and if there's anything I should have learned from my line of work, it's that what some discard, others find the greatest magic in. I guess after all these years, Emi was the only one who remembered that.

I want to tell you how they determined the happiest countries in the world. It was a survey, actually, which asked respondents a series of questions, some of which I remember and would like to respond to now.

Question: Did you learn something new yesterday?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Did you feel you were treated with respect yesterday?

Answer: Yes

Question: Do you feel proud of something that you did yesterday?

Answer: No.

But today can be tomorrow's yesterday, and the past can be the past. So I do a slow donut in the dust and turn my singing truck around, away from the cacophonous black cloud of crows and back toward town. It's time to give a rightful love its rightful blessing, and as the sun breaks through the shifting shroud above, every passing block takes me closer to my happiness, to my treasure, to my Finland, my Denmark, my Sweden. To my daughter.

Yu-Han Chao



Poet Yu-Han Chao's Top 5 Films:

J: Psycho (1960 – Alfred Hitchcock)

A: Ringu (1998 – Hideo Nakata)

P: Panda! Go Panda! (1972 – Isao Takahata)

A: My Neighbor Totoro (1988 – Hayao Miyazaki)

N: Grave of the Fireflies (1988 – Isao Takahata)

Body Shots

45

No. Cover face. No features.
Three spotlights do not reach. Legs squeezed tightly.
V-S-S forms between dough legs.

46

Resigned Ah Sin face. Why?
Hand pushes against shadow, body absorbing shadow.
About to slip.

76

Stereotypical Japanese geisha morning after.
Regret, longing, still smelling the taste.
How long will this last?

77

The arm sharpened at the elbow into nothing.
A witch in water, in denial, melting,
still screaming *I am not a witch*.

100

Carrot leg monster with non-graceful peg leg.
Tanning front for evenness. Overdone, the rib-skin becomes leathery,
freckled, glued on like beef jerky.

101

Dressing room light bulb row. Trailer nakedness.
A puff-eyed gray Japanese goldfish, mouth open,
eye-bobbing. Back to artificial illuminated home.

David F Hoenigman



Author of *Burn Your Belongings*, David F Hoenigman's Top 5 Horror Films:

- J:** Noriko's Dinner Table (2006 – Sion Sono)
A: Tetsuo: The Iron Man (1989 – Shinya Tsukamoto)
P: 964 Pinocchio (1991 – Shozin Fukui)
A: Noroi (2005 – Koji Shiraishi)
N: Gozu (2003 – Takashi Miike)

An excerpt from David's novel, **Squeal for Joy**

but I know she hasn't given up. I know that wasn't the last of it. but if you have – she thinks. if you have renounced any hope for happiness or that you as a man can ever move beyond this. and you'd like everyone to. just so you can pretend it's common and expected and rational and noble and sensible and inevitable and natural and just and sound and stable. then I'm a threat to you. and you might as well hit me again and again until the bones show through my skin. I'll believe there's something better for me in the moments between when your hand raises up and comes down. you'll walk through this as I've walked through this and think – I'll eat as fast as I can and sleep in my clothes. there'll be a sink and a mirror in his room. and just enough space for a person to lie down. there'll be a pile of books or magazines. and the sink will never stop dripping. someone's been here. the door's unlocked and flung open. and he stands there frowning into his room. does this mean he can't sleep here? does he need to run and hide? I'll always and always expect to wake from this nightmare no matter how many times you prove to me that it isn't a dream. it's finally getting dark. the children have all gone home to their drafty hovels and dinners of cold putrid gruel. and the vulture sits there fidgetingly. chewing on something. looking rather happy. there are people who make all those around them feel a bit closer to death. what's he thinking? what's he thinking? we're going to see much worse. she's away from him. near the fire. pretending to be a bird. even the angle of her bare feet. like some kind of bird. but it appears this is how he'd left it. nothing worth keeping out of sight or protecting. so why does he stand there in the doorway with his plastic bags in his hands frowning into his room for almost a full minute? maybe it's a shock to go from the night to the day. from the warm folds of the shadows to the sterile clang of the tin as the extracted object's dropped in its pan. and he's so stubborn that he doesn't try to sleep even though he's exhausted. he doesn't lay down. he wraps a blanket around himself and sits on the floor in the center of the room staring at the television. even now he doesn't close the door. as if waiting for someone to come in and stab him. I knew you were a bad man when I saw how stupid and unfeeling your eyes were. and I thought – he's just a mouth that eats, and a body that simply wants. and I wanted to throw stones through all of your windows. I wanted the others to see what you'd brought out of me. I flap my wings and it makes the smoke and flames dance. and you think you see something you recognize but there's nothing connecting my world to yours. my world was bombed to rubble. and the rubble was eaten up by dinosaurs. and giant worms ate every trace of their bones. and what must be the exact opposite of this. her body glows in the light and she's feeding me chocolate. I'll do whatever she wants. I'll throw myself off a cliff. I don't care what she's saying or what I'm agreeing to. I'm just looking at how her bare shoulders glisten. and the thinness of her neck. and her lips. and her eyes. I miss her – he thinks. looking up at her now from the bottom of the well he's thrown himself into. there's no substitute for that feeling. I can't promise you anything now. I can't dig my way out of this. we talked about birds all day. I don't have anything to say most of the time but they expect me to talk. so today we talked about birds. and I wonder if you ever get the feeling that I do when I'm talking. that it doesn't matter what I say and it doesn't matter what you answer. and the people next to us. and the people across the hall from us. and the people down the hall from us. and the people upstairs from us. and the people downstairs. and the people outside. and the people in passing cars and airplanes. it doesn't matter what any of them say but they just keep talking. about birds and life and death and love. if I was there with you now I'd risk my life to get you alone. we wouldn't stay a second

longer but burst out the door and dart through the early morning traffic. but all I can do is watch. and I know he won't do what's good for himself. it's not just her. everyone's glistening like that. and again I think this might be hell. that somehow she's tricked me and now I'm trapped for all eternity in hell. but I just keep listening to what she's saying and looking at the shape of her arms. it's me they're after. a group of them pour down the steps like blood from a broken nose. I know they're coming for me. but I don't want to look away from her. I want her eyes to be the last thing I see. I was one of them today talking about the colors of feathers and the different habits of different birds. yesterday we talked about sicknesses most of the day. though I wanted to talk about political scandal. and today I wanted to talk about worms. I'm flapping my blanketed arms like a bird in order to stay warm. but there's really not much use. so I stop and turn towards you. and it's just as well you hurl insults at me since I'm standing here anyway.

Steve Finbow



Steve Finbow's Top 5 Japanese punk bands:

- J:** The Stalin
- A:** Boredoms
- P:** Gauze
- A:** Hanatarash
- N:** The Blue Hearts

The Marketplace – An excerpt from Steve's new novel, *White Gardens*

Saturday, December 12, 2007, 22:00; Ameya Yokochō, Ueno, Tokyo, Japan: Rain drips from the metal stanchions of the railway tracks, forms puddles on the scarred concrete. Great clouds of steam billow along the alleys, obscuring food stalls, knife sharpeners, and moneylenders. Gas lamps poke their buttery light into the darkness and, as the steam evaporates, Osamu steps from an unlighted doorway. His grey douchuugi covering his midnight-blue faux-Prada suit. Generator-driven neon highlights the jet variations of Osamu's hair, kaleidoscoping the crop with twisting primary flashes. He bows, more a dip of the head, to the bouncer standing outside the Buson Bar. Acknowledging the doner-kebab salesman – their faces the same colour and texture as their wares – he pushes deeper into the warren of small streets that make up the area known as Ameya Yokochō or, to the locals, Ameyoko. Rain has forced most of the market stallholders to cover their goods. Osamu looks through the clear plastic sheets, as if staring into a phenomenological pond, shoals of trainers and sandals, crabs tethered with strong rubber bands, gas-powered torches and radios. As the railway tracks curve south, so the market stalls seem to huddle more tightly against the walls, their products piled high against the damp concrete, the makeshift lamps highlighting the brand names – Convert, Abcdas, Nite. The crustaceans – pink

and stacked or mottled black and crawling – try to hide beneath one another, legs kicking, antennae searching, in a desperate scrabble for shadow. Osamu doesn't look too closely, if he did he would see that some of the crabs' carapaces ache a paler pink and the black shells of some lobsters ooze a caramel brown, and, during moulting underneath this chitino-proteinaceous covering, can be observed remnants of a downy covered epithelium, and, on one occasion, as the buyer cracks open the exoskeleton of a large lobster, a pale tattoo of a koi carp. Fish blood from the runoff of seawater splashes Osamu's shoes and he shakes it off as he walks. While in the alleys, it is as if what is left of the city doesn't exist. There are no reference points apart from the bastardized railway tracks, the great machines, cobbled together from old trains, cars, anything that can be bolted and driven by steam, that ride the rails creaked and groaned, hissed and spat above Osamu's head, occasionally obscuring his way. His residual Japanese intonation, pinballs around his brain, tinkling in the confines of his mouth. He strokes his hair, feels the bumps and hollows, the slick highways of his scars, the Morse code of stitches. He stops to buy an onigiri filled with umeboshi, the sour pickled fruit causing an increase in saliva which he spits purple and rice-flecked onto the floor. The onigiri vendor lets loose a rat-a-tat-tat of heavily accented ancient Japanese, which Osamu does not understand. He swallows the remainder of the salty-sour rice ball and steps behind the glass cabinet containing triangular and oval onigiri, their seaweed wrappers shining like the skins of dragons. Osamu carries on down the alley, past the nonlookers, past the mammal-sans smoking in the doorwells, past the steambikers, the yomigrants and on to the building of his patron.

Junzo Shiozawa, heavy with chankonabe, his massive gut ebbing and flowing in almost tidal proportions, leans precariously over the railings of his penthouse balcony. Not satiated by his six bowls of chicken stew, Junzo Shiozawa opens his mouth; his teeth perfectly white, immaculately fake, and hugely expensive. A cloud of aviacules forms an aura around the nearest gas lamp. He turns the tap on the balcony lights, takes a gold Zippo from his dressing gown pocket, watches as the gas burns invisible and then yellow. A ribbon of aviacules moves towards the lamp, the aura around the streetlight now transferring to his balcony. He stands within its path, opens his mouth and drinks in the swarm, tastes the peppery pinch of thousands of microscopic wings, the milky chalk of tiny bones, the impossible delicacy of living things. Junzo Shiozawa, architect, writer, composer, theorist, philosopher, stands back and looks over the rooftops, takes in the sail-shape sprawl of Ameyoko. Beneath him, everything human is happening. Everything human is everything. Junzo Shiozawa, leader of the NeoHumanist Party, one of the main authors of The Process, leans over the parapet of his balcony and gazes down on the streets below. The stall owners are beginning to pack away their products, but he can still see pale-green slices of melon, pineapple prisms, apples the size of a baby's head, mounds of dark-green seaweed. He can smell the fish and the seafood, the fake leather bags and jackets, hear the dying cries of the stallholders flogging their last-minute bargains. No matter where you look, no matter what odours infiltrate your nostrils, no matter what languages you hear, everything, everything, is human or is of human construct. Homo sapiens left the countryside, came down from the mountains, forsook the rivers, and came home to the city, to Tokyo, to Taito ward, to Ueno, to Ameyoko, all, at times, have passed beneath his window, have spat on the sidewalk in front of his house, some have urinated or fornicated against his door, some have died in the streets down there, some have been born yet others have been murdered or raped, have laughed and partied; some, even have stood before his house and listened to his speeches, listened as he explained his theories, applauded at the pronouncement that The Great Lassitude had run its course and for them to await the implementation of the age of The Process. Slightly drunk from too much sake, Junzo staggers back into the living room, the black walls dotted here and there with small black glass shelves on which perch shunga netsuke (small erotic carvings) made from mammoth ivory, white jade, and black coral. Some contemporary pieces are crafted from platinum, others from human bone (he also owns many objects – flutes, cups, daggers – made by Tibetan and Maori artists), some of the objects are not crafted from any material but are figures of petrified humanculi transfixed in various stages of coitus, their erotic urges and surgings now halt and

bleak. Stopped. Junzo gently rubs the netsuke, strokes the smooth skull of a client penetrating a courtesan from behind, Junzo's fat fingers trace the curved petals of the delicate chrysanthemums decorating the courtesan's kimono, Junzo's trance broken only by the musical chimes of his secret doorbell – "Osamu," he whispers into the ear of the grinning skeleton.