Teaching Japanese Popular Culture

National University of Singapore Department of Japanese Studies 11-12 November 2012

Peeping Tom's Virtual Over-the-shoulder Drunken Salaryman LatenightTokyo Train Tabloid Experience **Tom Gill** Meiji Gakuin University

Let me stimulate you

I am going to introduce you to one particular facet of Japanese culture. I am not going to analyse it. I want you to do that. Please listen to my talk and think about what this tells us about Japanese culture in general... and salaryman culture in particular.

Let me stimulate you

I will ask for comments at the end, so please pay attention!

Welcome to my world...

- It's a Thursday night in autumn, 2012, and we are on a late-night commuter train heading out to the suburbs from Tokyo.
- The passengers are packed together like a can of sausages, marinating in their own sweat. Wedged into the crowd next to us is a tired, middle-aged man in a rumpled suit and tie.
 - He has a tabloid newspaper in his hand.

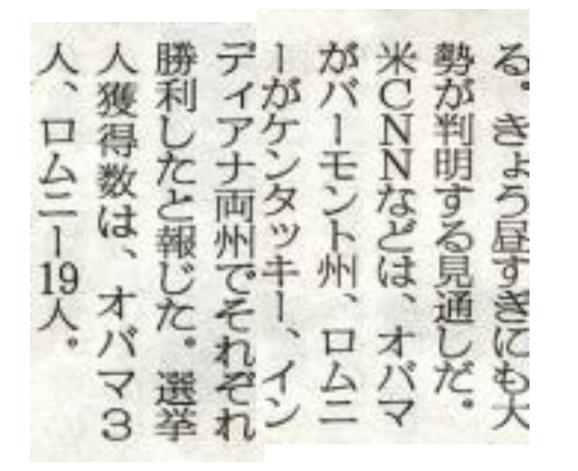
As the train rumbles through the night, its swaying and silent human cargo of strangers pressed together in intimate contact, you can't help looking over his shoulder and seeing what he is reading.

... and this is what you see.

Obama reelected! (Nikkan **Gendai** called this election very early)



At press time he had only won one state, and had 3 electoral college votes to Romney's 19





... that's the tabloids for you.



Obama's reelection was a very rare case of a foreign news story on the front page. Usually it's domestic politics.









Autobigraphy out already

3ページ

Star of NHK drama: shock opinion

14~->>

Justice minister Tanaka to quit: sex scandal exposed

Evil ex-cop: see his face



Are they trying to take this country back to its totalitarian past?

The big newspapers have forgotten their crimes of compliance and are taking us back down the road to ruin

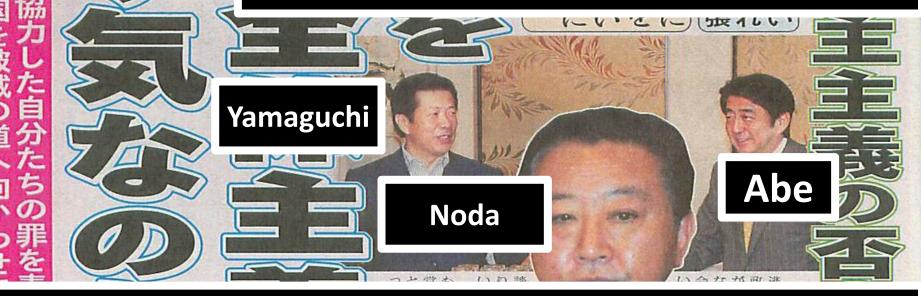
This denies democracy!

Noda

Ab

Yamaguchi

No election – instead the leaders of DPJ, LDP, Komeito decide our future in closed meetings



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Prime minister Noda refuses to open a special session of the Diet. Important bills lie neglected. LDP's Abe calls for 3-party talks. The mass media all join the chorus. *How about a proper election?* That is a typical *Gendai* front page. A fairly dull topic – should these three parties have a meeting to break up the legislative log-jam? This is portrayed as a threat to democracy. Gendai likes to compare the present age to the early Showa period (the 1930s) when democratic politics broke down and the military seized power. Is that really likely to happen again?

A Cassandra warning of doom

Japan is sinking into ever worse economic and political crisis while pygmy-like politicians squabble about trivia.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.

O tempora, o mores

Language is inflammatory. Politicians are idiots; mentally ill; traitors; criminals. Japan is endlessly humiliated – her spineless leaders ignored by America, China, Korea etc. Inability to stand up for her rights – inability to communicate in international forums. Diplomats can't even speak proper English.

A few individual cases

Noda Yoshihiko [DPJ] – incompetent, unprincipled, lying, preening, overweight, alcoholic, doomed. Abe Shinzo [LDP] – stupid, unmanly, right-wing nutter. Headline when he won the LDP leadership: "Nippon chinbotsu" 日本沈没 Japan sinks. Yamaguchi Natsuo [Komeito] – dangerous brainwashed cult mouthpiece. Hashimoto Toru [Isshin no Kai] – upstart pup, downright fascist [luckily no-one will vote for him]. Ishihara Shintaro – Senile, power-mad, destructive self-important nutter.

In the old days, the LDP were always in power and Nikkan Gendai was rock-solid anti-LDP. Now the political scene is more complex and the paper is hostile to all political parties and hates all politicians...

... except one.



Ozawa's secret strategy to win election and rid Japan of nuclear power plants Gendai once compared **Ozawa Ichiro to wartime** prime minister Tojo Hideki (In the 1993 Hosokawa cabinet, where Hosokawa was cast as Konoe Fumimamaro, another ineffectual aristocratic leader in wartime Japan.) But now he can do no wrong. There must have been some kind of deal...





One last look at the front page.

The cutting power of the black

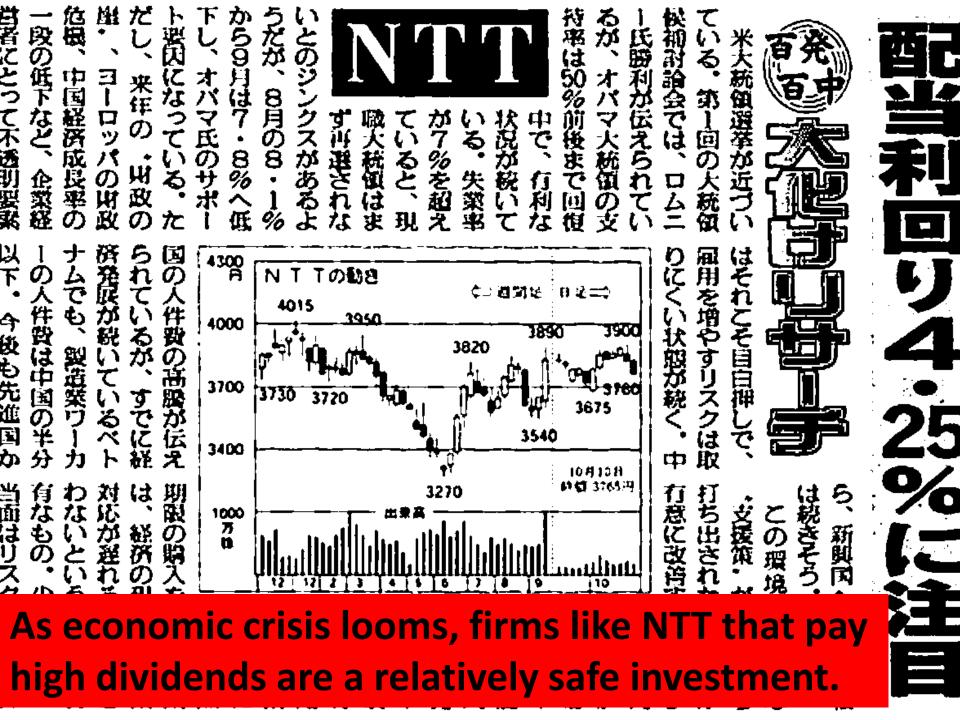


Yu Darvish: Japanese but half foreign: associated, by advertising men at least, with the colour black.

Cf. Kane Kosugi (Kaku-Ranger Black in 1994): Another 'half' Japanese who was made an honorary black.



After 3 pages of solid politics, *Gendai* turns to business news.



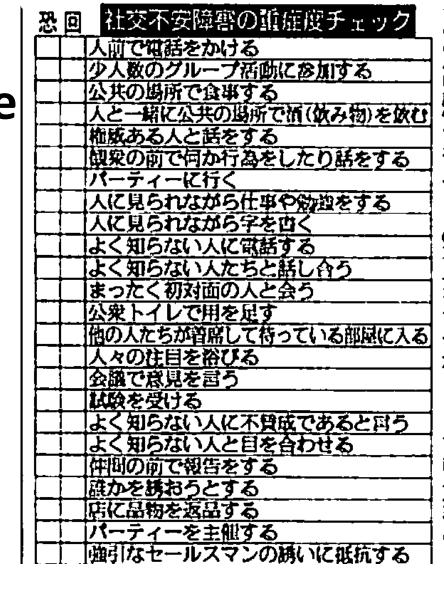


iPhone 5 will make Japanese deflation worse as young people save money to pay for overpriced gadgets. Time to buy stock in 100 yen shops.

Messes up job interviews... can't get on with work colleagues... **Could your** child be suffering from **Social Anxiety Disorder**?

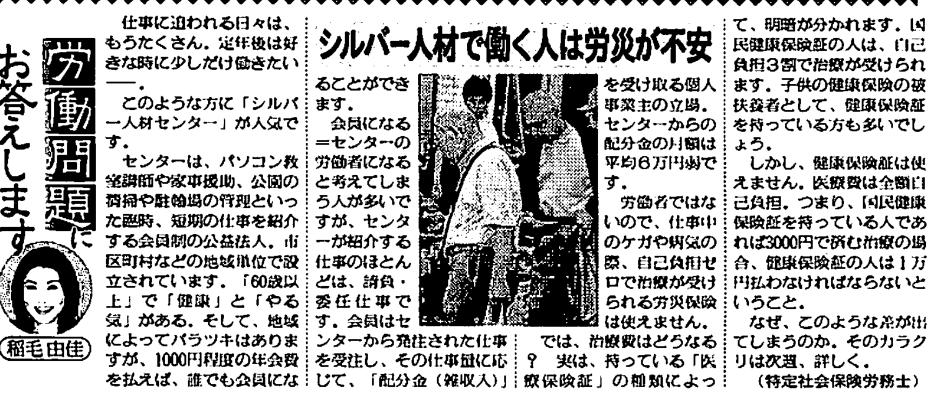


A questionnaire may help... does s/he make eye contact with strangers? Does s/he use public toilets? **Paroxetine** is the stuff you want! If you feel an improvement in 1 month, you'll be totally cured in 3 to 6 months.





Labour advice by charming lady



Can I get compensation while working for pensioner employment programs?



ゲホッ、カーッ、ペッノ 女子からの冷たい視線を裕び ながら、のどの設れや痛みに 憤んでいるおやじのみなさ ま、 * 食べるのど始ケア。を 始めましょう♪

呼吸器系をつかさとるのは 中医学でいうところの「肺」 とよばれる疑器です。肺が弱 ると咳、たん、のどの痛みと いった症状を引き起としやす くなります。特に空気が乾燥 する秋は、肺も乾燥して気管 支トラブル全開に、肺の機能 を高め、潤いを与え る食材を取り入れる ことが大切です。 おすすめの野菜は レンコン、白菜、大 根、白ゴマなど。そ う、肺に潤いを与え て元気づけるのに育 効なのは「白い」 食 材なのです。 ランチ にはレンコンのきん びら、白菜の煮物を チョイス、ついでに 白ゴマをまぶせば完 髢です! のどの痛みがひど い時は「人根はちみ つ」に挑破! 細か く切った大根を器に 入れ、ひたひたにな るまではちみつを投 入。しばらく置いた 後、処み出た汁を飲 んでみてください。 のどの炎症や咳止めに絶大な 効果を発揮します! カラオ ケを欧いすぎた翌日、どれだ けこれに 彼われたことか。 コンピニの牛乳、ヨーグル

コンピーの中和、ヨークル、ヨークル、ヨークル、シークをもおすちめです。 人事なプレセンが近いというのに、咳が止まらず「第該、 おやじ」になっているお父さ んは、「木の実テク」を実践 しましょう。ピーナツは肺の 母節を始めて咳を止める効果 人、柿ピーは「咳止のサス リ」だったんです、 さらに、ギンナンは中国で は「ぜんそく解消にもいい」 どされる優秀食材、目満民の ギンナン串で回復を、

Dietry advice from charming young lady using only things you can buy in a convenience

store



Radish and honey will put your sore throat right! 「ゲンダイ 2012年(平成24年)10月12日(11日発行) 第3日纪受切思问

〔企業モデル小説〕 Those who refuse to lose との一かな 目リク上い かよう લ્ ف が留つで フのか 打って一介の は製造相当 Corporate 大灰 model novel" by Egami Tsuyoshi ダれ 韓国や中国企業に席巻き かせるのはBtoBの分野 は日本企業は弱くなるばか **にからです** だと思います ります 日本企業の技術力を生 どもかつてBt 企業であったのにB ● B分野に転じて BtoC 分野 け しかしこれで

企業は成長するのだと考 どうしてだね? げるべく努力するからと 目に晒され、 一般消費者の厳し 我が社がコダック その評価を い評価

イルムという

日本企業は電機メー

えます。

(うつく)

ーに背を頂け

ってくるだろうな

■Bのウエイトが 商ま

承知し

しております。

し聞かせて

「ああ、

しかしこれからは

般消費者間取引のとと

て替いん

ले

ては、一般 というお符め ません れいな写真コ 『良いフィー あるのか? 見つけたい やらせてい の分野を掲 せん、経営 「そういう うのかね」 的く喜びやき 「君は、私の が意味があ それ以上に はあるでし く意義のな になります 個く社員の 反応を裕び 年比向上す なる会社か に努力したからです。 取消費者に 「フイルム 「それに? 「は何かを表 「日本写真 利益が上 だせる製品をね……」 大森の表情が緩んだ。 そこまず 働く自びや意義を見 Chapter 2: The Fossil Project 1C 4 1C



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のニーズに如何に応えるか

(10)

明(ゲンダイ)

8386666**5**5



Our hero works for a company that make film for cameras. Demand has collapsed. The president wants to put our hero in charge of a top secret mission to find a substitute project ... involving fossils.

This week's top book recommended by "a beautiful bookshop clerk"



Whistle, a novel about a corporate whistle-blower

Corporate philanthropy



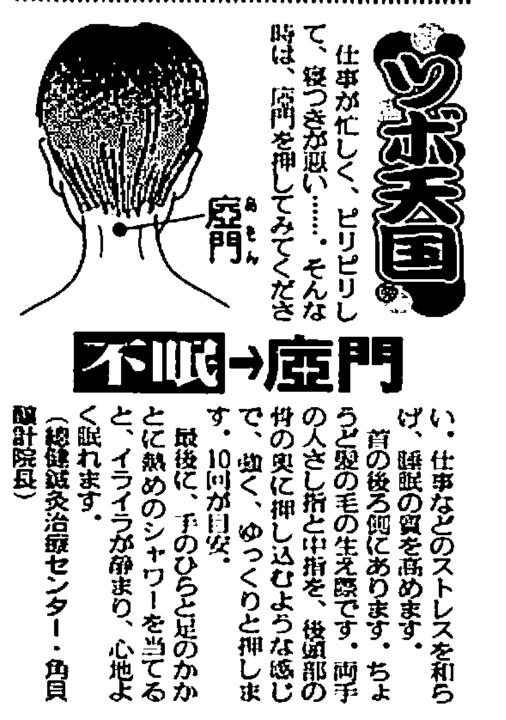
Meiji and Yasuda Life Insurance Companies, sending volunteers to the Tohoku disaster zone

Health and lifestyle

Gendai contains useful advice for salarymen on how to cope with the kind of health problems salarymen are prone to: tiredness, bad backs, stress, indigestion, high blood pressure, hangovers, liver problems, and of course, sexual diseases.



Diabetes is a major obsession



Pressure point on the back of the neck to combat insomnia



The Happy Bowel column, vol. 56 **Laxative reduction** program, part 3



And as this article scientifically explains, the best treatment to relieve stress is... sex.

ロったのは

下を通じて知ら

田とらが

にばかり

A子は妊娠5カ

必ず驭と即如する」

へつて

んです」

数日の1

もあっ

Playback: Showbiz scandals of yesteryear When Hirota Mieko was stabbed by the wife of her adulterous lover in **January 1977**

Reminiscences by Saison Group chairman Seiji **Tsutsumi: The day in June** 1989 when he invited 3 top LDP leaders to view his priceless Modigliani. **Abe Shintaro and Takeshita** Noboru proved total Philistines, but Miyazawa Kiichi knew his stuff...





Veteran rocker Yuzawa Ekichi (63) now has his own record label and is promoting his daughter's career

(He admits that 40 years of swinging microphone stands around his head have given him a chronic back problem)



What have we here?



Don Juan in salaryman shoes?

Ē

る

のも、

斜め側臥位が安定して人

気があったことはたしかであ った。 しかしそのと

ર્ 知ったとき、 は少し前のとも ちの反応で繁美 それより、 そういえば・ 気楽堂が初め 自分で自分

以外の、

正常位に近い形や、

ملح

きには後背位に近い形で求めた こともあったが、そのいずれよ

ば同様であったと思う。 もちろん彼女たちには、 その他の の場合も手 女性 それ ほ 裕 だろう・ るようで、

の体位と、 なにやら などとき そんなど



位とこちらの体位と、 いるときの女性の反応、 けではない ر ۲ いうと燃えかたというか、 かしその形で性交を続けて など ŗ **かめたわ** どちらが 具体的 乱

かたはかなり頤著で、好まれ

7)

たととは間違いないようであ

第344年但物認可

実際、

各々の女性に「との体

の場合も、

それは既村夫人

からない

へ気があっ

たかどうかはよくわ

る

臥∘ 位…

ごが、

女性たちに、

とくに

気楽堂が主に用いた「斜め側

2年(平成24年)1

第七部

性のかたちの

、說 the second states 連截 <77>

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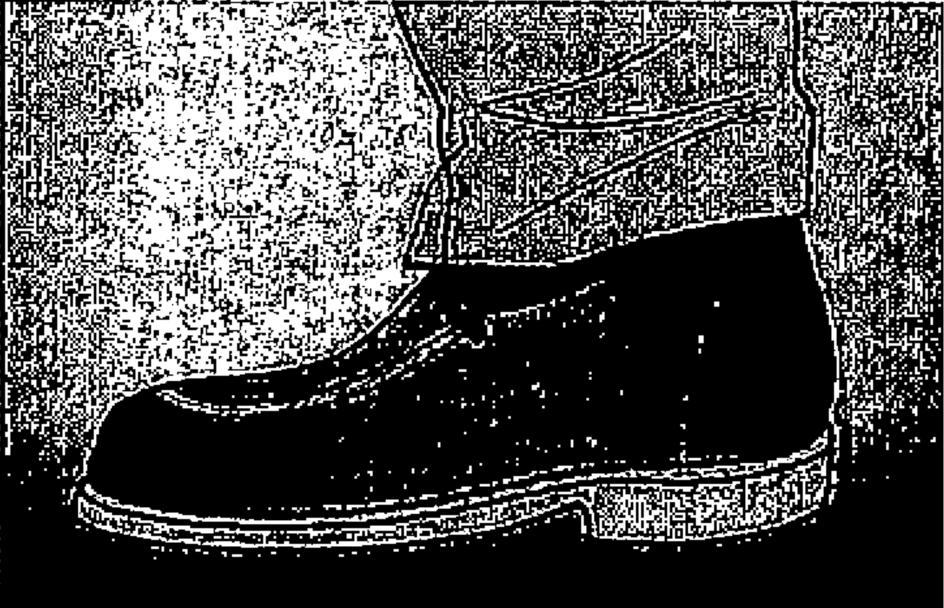
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Ai Futatabi "Love once more" Novel by Watanabe Jun'ichi, episode 77 Sexual styles, part 3

Kirakudo's favored sexual position was the naname sokugai (it involves lying on your side at an angle like a patient on a hospital bed...)... what sort of effect did it produce on his lady friends? The way they blazed, the way they went wild... was rather striking. It had a firm, enduring popularity.

木楽堂斜め側臥位





With a nice picture of a shoe....

Dear students,

For professional reasons, I had to delete some slides here.

The point is that Gendai reviews the sex industry as well as restaurants, films, etc.

(The word "kind" (yasashii 優し い) is surprisingly frequent amid the more titillating vocabulary.)

"Three kind girls"

(Review of strip cabarets)

Full-page advert for alternative impotence remedy

Over 100,000 users!!



95.2% can really feel it: Coupling power!!

Each pill has the extract of 20 scallops.

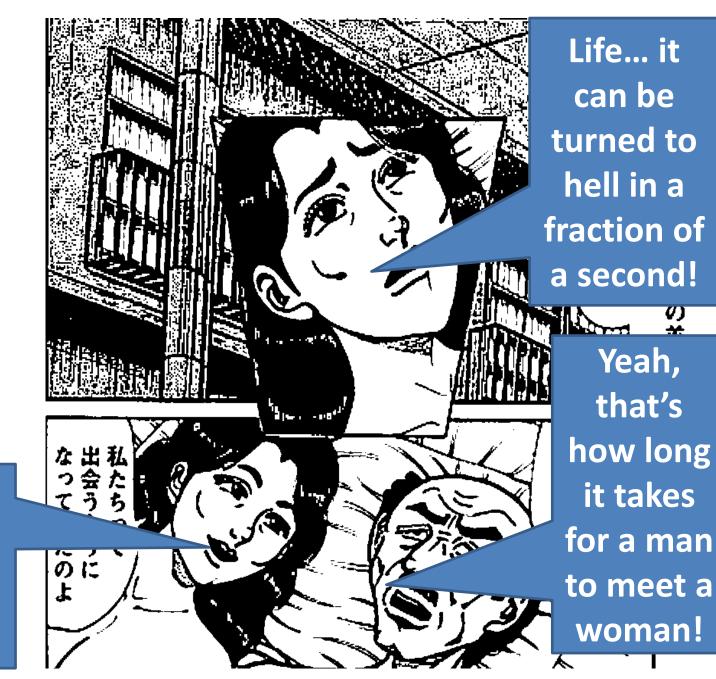
A box of 3 pills for just 1,980 yen, only to the first 300 applicants. Stocks are limited, so only one box per applicant.

MANGA

Tadano Hitoshi, special section chief

Section chief Sagawa and his mistress debate predestination

> You and I were fated to meet!



That seems

ł.

たち

やあ

So our

future's

already

right...?

I guess it's better to think of all our lives being decided from the very beginning

I wonder what's been decided too, decided...

ねエ

to

follow

...

出

か

なが

... for

US...

どう

答



It's because they don't know the future that people are able to carry on living, Kazumi san...

It was all decided at birth that you'd managed to avoid cancer and live this long, darling That's what I think!

So everyone's life is determined at birth... whether they'll have a long life or a short life...

But then it might be decided that we're going to die tomorrow...

Could be! We'd better make sure we have fun tonight!



基本的に引き揚げは完了 条約の捕庫 リス代表も 「本人の帰 理事会 しまつ

抑留

た話を間

メリ

も戦後も知らない人たちのため

るからと し〇人を帰国させ 言疑者など そしてい 約25 《送り

書記長にかかわ

兵は日

期で、国会は徳田の証人喚問を決戦追放を受けて地下に潜る前の時 報員や マスコミに える証 言が相次 「徳田要

衆院考査委員会で反論する共産党の のたりに伝えた 心に送ったか

徳田

しされる。 政争の 性を突き崩 つ保守の 頁められ 日祥寺で中 政治将校や たのが引き全 に付き合う そうと しまう 5

員会では菅を含む 3月18 をはじめた した元収 各員会も3 ところが

Long-running series on the history of the allied occupation

period, here on Japan-Soviet negotiations over repatriating

Japanese nationals left in Soviet territory after the war.

の参院在

した 本共産

主流派と志

流派に分

本政府が直

旬にカザフ共和 のる第99捕虜収容 カラカンダに 9月 軍の政治

C



Itsuki Hiroyuki's "Daily Chronicle" *Nagarete yuku hibi* was launched in the first ever issue of *Nikkan Gendai*. It has been running for 30

It's interesting to be alive



Nagarete yuku hibi The days that drift away

Everything around us is uninteresting these days. Is it just because of my age? No – I asked the young editor here. He said "No, it's true. There isn't a thing that gets my pulse racing. It's a boring old world!

All around me I see bored faces. We seem to need some kind of technique to make this dull world more interesting.



Nagarete yuku hibi, vol. 9055 "It's interesting to be alive" by Itsuki Hiroyuki So I thought I'd take a close look at myself. I'm not talking about something posh like reforming my mind – just taking another look at everyday things like sleeping, eating, walking and breathing.

I decided to try eating just 1 meal a day – it turned out to be very interesting!

Nagarete yuku hibi, vol. 9055 "It's interesting to be alive" by Itsuki Hiroyuki **Knowing you only have 1 meal today** makes you appreciate your food – you can't afford to fuss about whether it's tasty or not, you just chew it very carefully to get any nourishment you can out of it.

Chewing carefully, I realized that the way I used my teeth was totally unbalanced. I was chewing almost exclusively with my right molars.

Nagarete yuku hibi, vol. 9055 "It's interesting to be alive" by Itsuki Hiroyuki 流 **Perhaps people favor one side of their** teeth, like being right or left-handed or EI favoring one eye over the other. Now I Ì take good care to balance left and right, N and to make full use of my front teeth. 2 Somehow it feels good to chew properly, making full use of all your teeth. F I've got a feeling that those teeth I wasn't using properly may have been weakening from the disuse...

Err, is this racy tabloid journalism?

On following days he goes on to devote an entire column each to sleeping and breathing.

... and that is how the days drift by.



関車やへ ちどころに出現する 畑のさまざまな乗り物がた ックなどの重から、 言わせるととで、 さな乗り ドボートまで なら た無個性のパ やオフロード 井 ヤ 百出自任 リコ ベッ を積んだト 陷 ٥ を朝 蒸気機 化 쫖 スピ



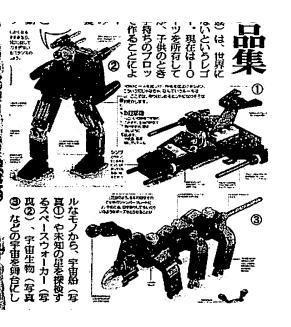
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Review: The Lego Idea Book

"You can freely make the kinds of vehicle that children love with Lego. City cars, off-road cars, a truck loaded with cabbages, a steam engine, a speedboat, all can be made from the same standardized, featureless blocks – anything that goes on land, air or sea you'll find in this book."



Page 21 Erotic novel, walking tour of historic Tokyo, cheap restaurant guide, crossword

(21)

ゲンダイ

a



くさいって、彼氏は何もしなかった、と涙目に

ろう。

「たぶん、梨穂ちゃんの彼氏

ても、

恥ずかしいだけなのだ 性器の匂いを褒められ 子大生の頬が赤らむ

女

い。そして、彼女がシャワー が傷つかなかったはずがな だろう。 たの相性が大切だって言った 気にしてだったのだ。 を招びたがったのも、 ないととを言われて、若い娘 のときの屈辱を思い出したの んです」 うとしました。だけど、 て、三雲さんみたいに舐めよ し、それ以上何もしなかった じゃあ、結婚相手にはから しのアソコがくさいって言っ 。彼はわたしの下着を脱がし 男からそんなデリカシーの 梨穂が再び涙目になる。そ 匂いを わた

なって、

イヤだって言われた

させたくなかったんだ。アリ

ーもいい匂いで我慢できなく

から、おれはシャワーを浴び こもかしこもいい匂いだった らず正直に答えるべきだと広

に、ことは言葉を飾

不安けな問いかけ

からし

インコーー

「だけど、 何けない。

わたしの 本当にい

い匂いだったんです

イラスト・小玉英章

い大人なのに、若者

60もがっつくとは

は肩をすぼめた。い

なじられて、広志

シャワーを浴びたい

チでした。

わたしは

すっとエッ

って言ったのに、さ

セてくれなかった

志は悟った。

「本当だよ、梨穂ちゃんはど

のに舐めちゃったんだよ」

のは?」 が抱いてくださると思って… しくれるんじゃないかと期待 「そとまで言えば、三要さん 大人の男性なら、優しくし

けど、おれは梨穂ちゃんのい

いところが、全部わかるから

たんです」

視がクスンと鼻をすする。

精一杯アピールすれば、私

ましげな視線を向けてくる。 答えてから、梨穂が恨みが

でも、三雲さんは前の彼氏

ように礼を述べた。

「ありがとう」と、 200 つぶやく

さ、要はお酒の味を知らない たからくさいなんて言ったの

」供といっしょってこと。 だ

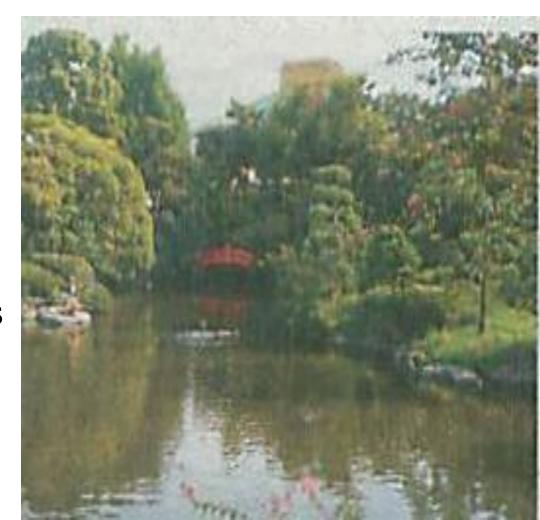
さがわからなかったんだよ。 たった男は、女性の本当の良

Walks around old Tokyo/Edo No.54: Ryogoku. The remains of the Yasuda zaibatsu dream

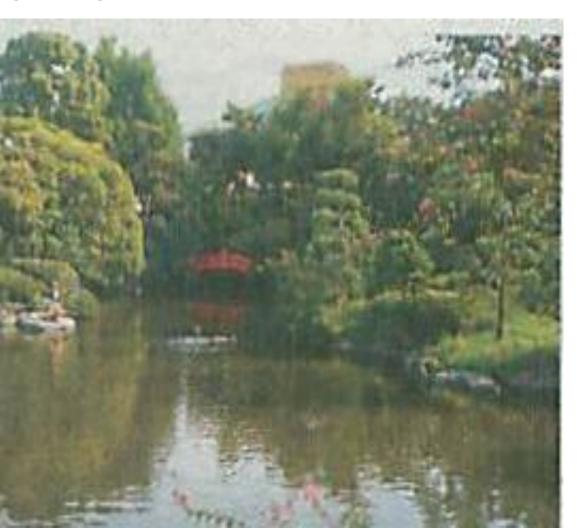


Built in memory of Yasuda Zenjiro, founder of the Yasuda business empire and one of the richest men in pre-war Japan.

Often condemned as a robber baron, he was assassinated by a selfstyled patriot and his business empire fell into ruin after the war. Only after his death did his many charitable donations come to light, including the money to build Yasuda Hall, at Tokyo University.



The garden is open to the public, but it's only a couple of acres and not many people know about it.



This tranquil urban oasis is worth a visit.



Super tasty lunch exploration unit... the ramen and gyoza at this hole in the wall (anaba) in Nakameguro are just right for the older customer... being relatively low in fat and cholestrol

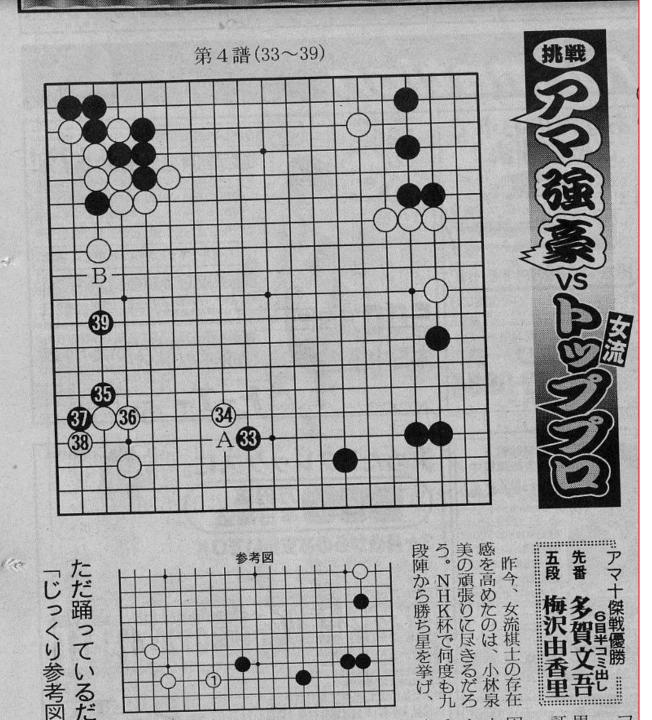
...and the prize crossword.



(not too difficult... no cryptic clues.)

Numerological analysis of the **lottery:** numbers in the 30s have come up a lot, so should continue to do so...



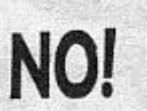


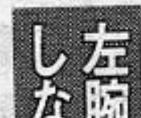
How to improve your go

... and your shogi...



And your golf swing...





GOOD!

Political advertising from the *Zenroren* union federation



... deploring the spread of unstable, short-term employment conditions and erosion of labor standards

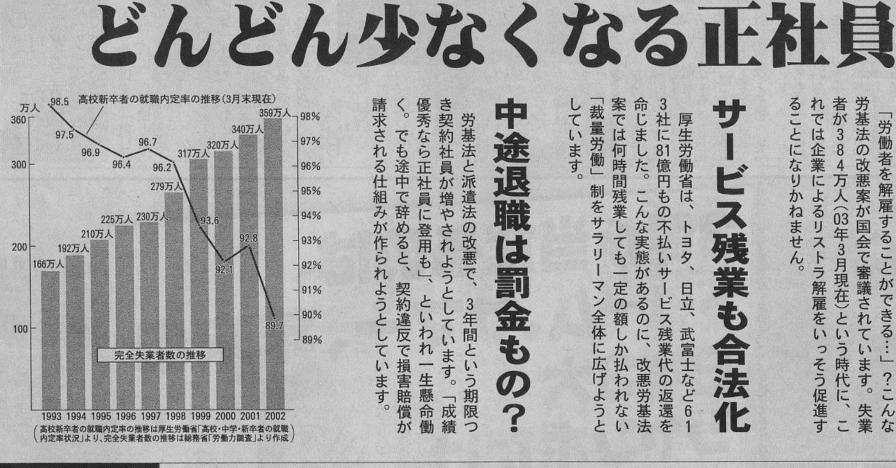
ĒĒ Ξ

ることに れでは企業に 者が384 労基法の改悪案が国会で審議され 労働者を解雇することができる なり 万人 よるリ ねません (03年3月現在) ラ解雇を う時代 61 ます そう促進す ?: 0 h 失業 た

案では 3社 しています。 叩じま 裁量労働」 厚生労働省は した。 81 何時間残業 億円も 制をサ こん 0 な実態 不払 ヨタ IJ サ 定 日立 ある マ Ø Ĕ 全体 額 Ø ス 残業代 12 武富士など6 払 改悪労基法 われ の返還 げようと な を

も

請求される仕組みが作られようとし 優秀なら正 き契約社員が増や 労基法と派 でも途中で辞める 一社員 遣法 12 0 され 登用も の改悪で、 よ う 契約違 3年間と T 反 わ 61 C ます いう期限 ます 生懸命 0 成



Adverts for betting systems...



...that claim to correctly predict results of 90%+ of horse races...



(The price, just ¥30,000, is in the small print right here...)

Characteristic advertising....











Booze and shoes, health drinks and hair tonic...

The back page





In 21 years in pro baseball, **Hanshin Tigers megastar Kazuhiro Kanemoto has** earned well over 5 billion yen. You might think he'd be looking forward to a life of luxury after retirement.





まこ もは貧もれて こナはけ か試さいち む に2と赦 に3ころ場れ金



Right now you may be looking chubby and self-satisfied with your big bunch of flowers but...



Kanemoto, hell awaits thee!

....how the mighty are fallen. That's another theme that keeps coming back in Nikkan Gendai.

Tabloid schadenfreude?

We've arrived at our station...

The salaryman gets out of the train, walks unsteadily along the platform, and tosses his copy of Nikkan Gendai into the overflowing bin. There are many other Gendais and Fujis already in there... the readers have no further use for them and do not want their wives to see them. The screaming headlines and erotic photographs flutter weakly in the cold breeze of a suburban midnight.



A few of my own thoughts

- 1. Oppositional identity
- ---- One enduring image of Nikkan Gendai is its violent opposition to the political and journalistic establishment. (Not so much the business establishment... perhaps because Gendai takes the side of business against politics)

2. Dual identity

---- Most readers will also be reading a mainstream newspaper in the morning, with a totally different tone and approach. Jeckyll and Hyde? "In scurrilous, scabrous attention to the **lowest common denominator Japanese** tabloids admit no superior. They pander, quite literally, to the Mr. Hyde in every loyal, work-worn salaryman... In comparison the stupid-and-proud-of-it heartiness of the British tabloids seems positively refreshing." (Peter Tasker, *Inside Japan* 1987, p.133).

3. Blurred class issues

Sometimes Gendai sounds more like Socialist Worker than the Sun. Labor rights, union issues, workplace health and safety, lottery and gambling information, cheap places to eat and drink... working-class themes in the UK. But golf, shogi (=chess), golf, buying and selling shares, interviews with company presidents... that sounds more like the bourgeoisie. Itsuki Hiroyuki column and literary/historical

features would work in the Guardian.

The meaning of "salaryman"

It reminds us that the identity of "salaryman" floats interestingly between the British identities of "worker", "manager" and "businessman".

4. Social positioning of sex

- Gendai reviews massage parlors and strip shows in much the same tone as it uses for restaurants and sports reports, albeit with a little more élan.
- Good thing? Sex treated as a non-taboo part of a continuum of human activity.

Bad thing? It demeans women by treating them as comparable to cuisine or baseball as an enjoyable activity for men.

Gendai-style sexism

Nikkan Gendai is of course drenched in sexism. But there are various styles of sexism. Gendai never condemns women the way it condemns politicians or fallen pop idols. The reviewers who check out the brothels adopt a tone where they enjoy playful badinage as well as sexual play – "asobi." The usual implication is that the reviewer is much older than the girl, a slightly pathetic "ojisan" grateful for the service he gets from the kind "oneesan".

The fact that the men are customers and the women are selling means of course that this is fundamentally unbalanced power relationship. But we never quite forget that the men are paying because of their greater *need*, as well as their greater *resources*.

After reading Nikkan Gendai, I always feel slightly sad at the image of the aging oyaji, losing his hair and his vigor, overweight and diabetic, still looking for commercial sex and checking the phone number of the VD clinic for later. And I also feel sad about their wives, their marriages, and about family life in Japan generally.

Relevance to this course

All of human life is there in *Gendai*. It relates to Japanese politics, business, labor relations, sport, gambling, and of course, sexuality....and in general, the way the worlds of work and play relate to each other in contemporary Japan.

What is <u>NOT</u> in Gendai?

- Sarakin adverts (now illegal)
- Job recruitment adverts
- Detailed reports on yesterday's sports
- Exposes of business scandals?
- Gay sex